

**The Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan, 1956-1986.
(Conference delivered in Islamabad
on the 26th of October 1986)**

Domenico Faccenna

Edited
[Alice Casalini]

Editorial note

The present manuscript was recently retrieved in the archives of the Mission House in Saidu Sharif by Prof. Luca M. Olivieri, Director of the Italian Archaeological Mission, who asked me to edit the manuscript and update the references. The manuscript is the text of a public lecture given by Domenico Faccenna in 1986. The lecture was delivered on October 27, at a conference in Islamabad, which was jointly organized by the International Islamic University and IsMEO, and promoted by the Italian Embassy.¹ In the lecture, Faccenna gives an overview of the activities

¹ See IsMEO Activities 1986, *East and West*, 36, 4 (December 1986), pp. 341-348. See in particular p. 344: "With the aim of illustrating the Institute's 30 years' uninterrupted work in Pakistan, a Conference promoted by the Italian Embassy and organized jointly by the International Islamic University and IsMEO was held in Islamabad on October 27 and 28. The President of IsMEO took part in the Congress and reports were presented by Dr D. Faccenna, Prof. U. Scerrato and Prof. M. Tosi on the Institute's three main areas of activity. The Congress, which was closed with a final report by the President, was attended by numerous scholars, experts and representatives of the institutions concerned. Subsequently, on October 29 and 30, a series of lectures promoted by the Italian Consulate General was held in Karachi to illustrate the work carried out at Mohenjodaro, and IsMEO organized a documentary exhibition of photographs for the occasion. Here too the proceedings were closed by the President, who dedicated particular attention to IsMEO's future plans for Mohenjodaro and the southern provinces (Sind, Balochistan). Again, the occasion met with considerable success. During his prolonged visits to Pakistan the President has had many meetings with representatives of the Government and Pakistan culture and has consistently encountered real interest in Italy and IsMEO and a spirit of true friendship." According to Prof. Olivieri, the text was prepared for a publication (only figs, captions and references are missing in the manuscript), which was never published. It is no coincidence that this text is published in this journal, as the *Journal of Central Asia* (JAC) was deeply appreciated and read with interest by Faccenna. Whenever Olivieri or other young Faccenna's collaborators traveled to Pakistan, Faccenna would give them a letter or postcard for Prof. Dani, asking them to

carried out by the Mission over the thirty years of uninterrupted presence in Pakistan—from the beginning of the work in 1955 to 1985-1986—and highlights the three main areas of inquiry: pre- and proto-historic period, pre-Islamic historic period, and Islamic period. fig.

*While it may seem that they come late, it is still important to publish Faccenna's words even now, more than 35 years after this lecture. This piece in fact lays out in a quick but incisive sketch many of the ideas that Faccenna would later develop in other work, such as his masterpiece, *Il fregio figurato dello stupa principale nell'area sacra buddhista di Saidu Sharif I* [*The figured frieze of the main stupa in the Buddhist sacred area of Saidu Sharif I*], published in 2001, still one of the foundational text for the study of Gandhāran art.² It is fascinating to trace historically the first instances of many of the ideas we read about in his later work: we are seeing here Faccenna thinking in sweeping strokes through the archaeological objects and through the territory to give his audience a summary of thirty years of accomplishments by the men and women of the Italian Archaeological Mission. It is a grand overview that takes into consideration not only the materiality of the things themselves, but also their relationships with their archaeological context—which is historical and cultural, but also human and environmental. The present manuscript, therefore, offers a great counterpart to Faccenna's more specialized academic work while at the same time, it also clearly recaps thirty years of archaeological work in the Swat Valley and connects it to other work carried out in the neighboring regions by both Pakistani and other European archaeological excavations.*

In an effort to remain as close to the script of the lecture as possible, I have tried to preserve the semi-formal nature of the text, and I edited it minimally for the sake of consistency and clarity. This operation included moving some paragraphs to group together similar content so

visit him and bring him his greetings, and if possible, to have two copies of the latest issues (or missing issues) of the JAC delivered, one for the Mission Library in Swat, the other for Faccenna's personal library in Rome.

It should also be noted that in 1985, which was the 30th anniversary of the Mission, Faccenna had some of his collaborators' contributions published in a special issue of the CNR (Italian Council for Scientific Research) (see his introduction to them: Id. (1985) *La Missione Archeologica Italiana dell'IsMEO in Pakistan, Quaderni de «La ricerca scientifica»* (Scavi e ricerche archeologiche degli anni 1976-1979), CNR, 112, 303-304).

² D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato dello stūpa principale nell'area sacra buddhista di Saidu Sharif I (Swat, Pakistan)*. IsIAORepMem 28. IsIAO, Rome, 2001.

that it could be put under headings, and changing some language to make it more legible. I have also added footnotes with references to the works of other scholars mentioned in the talk, as well as to recent fundamental work by scholars who have developed some intuitions and ideas Faccenna is advancing in this conference. Although my edits cannot in any way improve on the clarity of Faccenna's ideas, I hope that my editorial intervention³ (albeit minimal) will make the content of the talk widely accessible to all.

Keywords: Swat, Proto-History, History, Gandhara Art.

1. Introduction

I am sincerely grateful to His Excellency, the Italian Ambassador in Pakistan, Mr. Amedeo de Franchis, for the opportunity to illustrate the research carried out by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan and the results recently obtained. Recent as it is, our research has consistently followed the guidelines established since the Mission was founded in 1956 by Prof. Giuseppe Tucci, to whom we owe eternal gratitude. Our aim was to get a detailed, analytic, and complete picture of one of the most important areas in northern Pakistan, Swat—or Uḍḍiyāna, to give it its ancient name. Uḍḍiyāna means “garden”, and so it must have appeared to the Buddhist pilgrims arriving here from China and Central Asia, having crossed the forbidding inland areas. There are echoes of the wonder Swat aroused in the memoirs of Fa-hsien [Faxian] (c. 403) and Song-yün (520), who described a verdant land of flowers and over a thousand monasteries.⁴

³ References and bibliographic updates were added to footnotes. Therefore they do not follow the standards in use in this Journal.

Only in a few cases was it possible to find a substitute for some of the original illustrations referred to in the manuscript. The position I think Faccenna would have wanted to give these illustrations is indicated with [fig.] without numbering, to avoid confusion with the numbering of the replacement figures (Fig.), which are indicated with a number.

⁴ J. Legge (tr.), *Record of Buddhistic kingdoms, by Fa-Hsien, being an account by the Chinese monk Fa-Hsien of his travels to India and Ceylon (AD 399-414) in search of the Buddhist Book of Discipline*, Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc., 2016, first published in 1886. As demonstrated by L.M. Olivieri in his *Stoneyards and Artists* (L.M. Olivieri, *Stoneyards and Artists in Gandhara. The Buddhist Stupa of Saidu Sharif I, Swat (c. 50 CE)*. Serie Marco Polo, 1. Edizioni Ca' Foscari, Venezia, 2022), the interpretation of Uḍḍiyāna as garden was certainly the result of a fortunate paretimology, the original

Today the eye is drawn along by the practically uninterrupted line of brown remains of monuments, stupas and viharas, fortifications and dwellings, stretching along the mountain slopes around the whole valley. The historical and artistic remains in this region provide evidence of human activities covering a very long period of time, from the third millennium BCE to the most recent Islamic period. The name of Alexander the Great, who arrived here in 327 BCE, is still closely associated with these valleys—it is a name that has acquired a certain symbolic significance, representing a link between East and West, and between Classical, eastern Iranian, and Indian culture. The link in fact became a concrete reality thanks to the historical and cultural unity represented by his successors, the Indo-Greeks, who were then absorbed by the Parthians, the Sakas, the Kushanas, and the Sassanids.

In this later period, Swat was one of the greatest centres of Buddhist culture and a vital nucleus for the dissemination of the doctrine throughout Asia. It was here that Buddhism passed from Hinayāna to Mahāyāna, became increasingly universal and subsequently underwent a profound process of transformation towards gnostic, tantric, and magic approaches which then fused together in the esoteric doctrines of Vajrayāna. Swat was also the birthplace of the great exorcist and thaumaturge Padmasambhava, who arrived in Tibet in the eighth century. Here King Indrabhūti wrote his tantric commentaries, the *Uḍḍiyānapīṭha*. It was here in Swat that, finally, Islam arrived brought by the great Mahmūd of Ghazna (c. 1000): a new era had begun.

After the first surveys carried out by the British archaeologist and explorer Sir Aurel Stein in 1926, and by Evert Barger and Philip Wright in 1938—of the University of Bristol and the Victoria & Albert Museum respectively⁵—Tucci turned to the historical study of the area, approaching it through a deep study of Chinese, Tibetan, and Indian classical literary sources. In 1955 and 1956 he proceeded to carry out a careful field survey, finally determining in 1956 the precise locations to be

meaning having most probably to do with the “land of the Oḍi” the royal family ruling in Swat in the last centuries BCE and until the time of Kujula Kadphises.

⁵A. Stein, *An Archaeological Tour in Upper Swat and Adjacent Hill Tracts*. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, 38. Calcutta, 1930; E. Barger and P. Wright, *Excavations in Swat and Explorations in the Oxus Territories of Afghanistan: A Detailed Report of the 1938 Expedition*. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, 64. Calcutta, 1941. See also L.M. Olivieri, ‘Frontier Archaeology’: Sir Aurel Stein, Swat, and the Indian Aornos, *South Asian Studies*, 31(1), 2015, pp. 58-70.

excavated. It was this decision that prompted the work of the Italian Mission, which, as soon as it was formed, inaugurated the work of IsMEO (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente) in Asia. The work here in Swat—including the excavation, preservation, and study of the material—is now in its thirtieth year. It has been covered by a number of publications as well as exhibitions both in Italy and Pakistan, the latest of which was held in Peshawar in 1982.

The first sites destined for excavation were Udegram and Butkara, near Mingora. They constituted two basic fields of study, the former concerning dwellings, private and public buildings, and the material culture of everyday life, the latter concerning a sacred Buddhist area with its monuments, art, and votive objects. As time went by, the excavation was extended to other centres, and the research area has expanded consistently both chronologically and culturally. The constant flow of new data spanning a period from proto-history to the Islamic age called for in-depth studies along with the creation of new guidelines. The Mission was therefore organised around three phases in diachronic sequence: 1) pre- and proto-history; 2) pre-Islamic history; 3) Islamic history. Interdisciplinary inquiry is brought to bear on each phase, with the intention of performing a thorough survey of the territory both from the archaeological and the environmental point of view. Our eventual aim is to have a complete picture of the past in this area, including everyday life, historical events, and culture.

The following are some of the main points of interest that have emerged after recent research on subjects connected with the protohistoric and historic pre-Islamic periods. Inquiry into the area of Islam was undertaken by the Mission under the guidance of Prof. Umberto Scerrato, who has already illustrated some of the most significant results obtained with the excavation of a mosque of the Ghaznavid period—the most ancient in North Pakistan.⁶ News of these results have also appeared in the daily press.

⁶ Faccenna is here referring to the lecture given by Scerrato before him. For references of Scerrato's work at Udegram see A. Bagnera, *The Ghaznavid Mosque and the Islamic Settlement at Mt. Raja Gira, Udegram*. ACT Field School RepMem, V. Sang-e-Meel, Lahore, 2015. For an overview of the relevant publications by members and collaborators of the Italian Archaeological Mission, see L.M. Olivieri, *The IsIAO Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan: A Selected Bibliography (1956-2006)*, *East and West*, 56, 1/3, 2006, pp. 301-318.

2. The protohistoric period

Before the Mission started its work, there was practically no documentation on the protohistoric period. It was thanks to Tucci's rare intuition that between 1956-1958 came the discovery of a number of graveyards, which were subsequently excavated between 1961 and 1965—the graveyards of Butkara II, Loebanr I, and Kātelai I (2nd half of the 2nd millennium—c. the middle of the 1st millennium BCE). Excavation in the area sheltered by rock in Ghālīghai, guided by Prof. Giorgio Stacul, produced an uninterrupted sequence of seven periods.⁷ The sequence served as a time-scale to map out the succession of cultures in Swat from the 3rd to the middle of the 1st millennium BCE, while at the same time it provided a key to trace the relations between the cultures of the Indus, Iran, and Central Asia over an even larger area.



Fig. 1 - Vase inv. no. A 380 from Aligrama (after Stacul, Tusa 1977: fig. 75).

⁷ G. Stacul, Excavations in a Rock Shelter near Ghalighai (Swat, W. Pakistan), *East and West*, 17, 3-4, 1967, pp. 185-219, and Id., Excavations near Ghaligai (1968) and Chronological Sequence of Protohistorical Cultures in the Swat Valley (W. Pakistan), *East and West*, 19, 1-2, 1969, pp. 44-91.

While the graveyards were being excavated, research also went ahead on the settlements of the same period, and exploration in Aligrāma has recently been completed by the team led by Dr. Sebastiano Tusa.⁸ The settlement, on the right bank of the river Swat, had a very long history, covering seven periods from the 18th century BCE to the 4th century CE. Here we only have time to briefly describe the most significant stages of its existence. In the beginning (I period) there was a village of circular huts dug into the clayey riverbank. In the successive periods II to IV, various phases of settlement alternated with alluvial periods. At this time, the dwellings were built of stone and had square rooms. The pottery was fashioned on a slow wheel: we have one exceptional example of this pottery type, a pot from period IV (beginning of the 1st millennium). The find is almost unprecedented in the whole of the subcontinent, with the exception perhaps of one object found in Kalibangan [fig].⁹

The paleosol, covered by a thick layer of alluvial shingle, reserved the surprise of showing the furrows made by the plough when the land was last tilled in a perfect state of preservation. They are regular, parallel, somewhat shallow and V-shaped in section, one side steeper than the other, suggesting that they were of the “spillway” type, a type that is no longer found in the area. The Aligrāma ploughed field, then, attests to the use of this revolutionary kind of plough centuries before the Romans introduced it to most of the known world. Evidence that agricultural techniques were particularly developed in Aligrāma is also provided by a study carried out by Dr. Lorenzo Costantini on vegetable remains singled out by bio-archaeological research on soil samples.¹⁰ The wide range of

⁸ G. Stacul and S. Tusa, Report on the Excavations at Aligrāma (Swāt, Pakistan) 1966, 1972, *East and West*, 25, 3-4, 1975, pp. 291-32; Eid., Report on the excavations at Aligrāma (Swāt, Pakistan) 1974, *East and West*, 27, 1/4, 1977, pp. 151-205. See also A.V. Rossi and L.M. Olivieri, Sebastiano Tusa e gli scavi dell'IsMEO. In S. De Martino, M. Marazzi, L. Milano (eds), *Orizzonti d'Oriente: tra Mediterraneo e Asia centrale: studi in ricordo di Sebastiano Tusa*. Orizzonti d'Oriente, Firenze, 2022, pp. 179-186.

⁹ It is unclear which vessel Faccenna was referring to. Given this uncertainty, Olivieri suggested publishing another rare vase from Aligrāma instead (inv. no. A 380), which is associated with a chronology in phase with the Maurya period (Fig. 1).

¹⁰ L. Costantini and L.C. Biasini Laboratory of Bioarchaeology, *East and West*, 35, 4, 1995, pp. 331-336. See also G. Forni, Irregolarità dei solchi fossili e presunta presenza dell'aratro asimmetrico ad Aligrāma (Nord Pakistan) nel secondo millennio a. C., *Rivista di storia dell'agricoltura*, XXV, 1, 1985, pp. 73-78; S. Tusa, L'insediamento protostorico di Aligrāma, *Quaderni de «La ricerca scientifica»* (Scavi e ricerche archeologiche degli anni 1976-1979), *CNR*, 112, 1985, pp. 315-325.

crops—rice was grown from the earliest times of the settlement, as well as barley, wheat and oats—is a useful indicator for the reconstruction of the environment and anthropic activities.

Period V (8th—5th centuries) marks the settlement's richest period. The buildings had various rooms and beaten clay floors. The area distribution inside the structures of the different functions can clearly be discerned: the cooking area, where hearths with terracotta andirons were installed; storerooms, with moveable or fitted containers made of clay, such as large pitchers; cylindrical pits lined with stones for foodstuffs. The flourishing pottery industry produced further developments of terracotta and metalwork, attested to by the moulds for ornaments and utensils found on the site. A large isolated building with a square ground-plan was erected towards the end of this period. It must have had a rather special function, as a hearth-altar stands at the centre of it with a large round stone, and is surrounded by a semicircle of smaller stones in front of it. We can suggest that this building was perhaps a temple.

The following period (Period VI, 4th-3rd centuries), marked by a shrinking of the settlement, offers some novelties in the pottery industry. Along the earlier types, new kinds of pottery such as carinated bowls were produced. The end of this period coincides with the destruction of the settlement, as evidenced by traces of a great fire and the hasty interment of bodies in the ruins themselves. This event must have occurred at the time of Alexander the Great's expedition and might have even been a direct or indirect result of it. The inhabitants were probably the Assakenoi—and this is the name of the people Alexander fought and conquered. The city was probably Māssaga or Māzaga.

Well into the historic period (Period VII), in the Maurya and the Kushana ages, the area was built up as a military post, with walls and rooms following the line of the mountain ridge enclosing the valley to the East. Aligrāma, with its complex and subtle phasing of periods, offers thus an invaluable key for problems relating to the sequences in the late 2nd and early 1st millennium BCE (the Iron Age) in the North-West area of the subcontinent.

We have now acquired far more data on this period, above all on the material culture —rather less on the social and religious culture. The data derive from excavations of graveyards—including those performed by our Mission in Swat and Buner (under the guidance of Giorgio Stacul,

Chiara Silvi Antonini, Sebastiano Tusa, and Editta Castaldi),¹¹ by the Archaeology Department of the University of Peshawar in Dīr (led by Prof. Ahmad Hasan Dani)¹² and by the Pakistan Archaeology Department at Zarif Karuna near Peshawar (led by Rafique Mohammad Mughal and Gulzar Mohammad Khan).¹³ New data also comes from excavations of inhabited areas, such as the excavation now in progress at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai (Barikot), those carried out earlier at Udegram, Bārāma, Butkara, Gōgdara III by our Mission,¹⁴ and those at Balambat and Damkot in Dir, carried out by Prof. Dani of the Archaeology Department of the University of Peshawar.¹⁵ To these we can add Sir R. E. Mortimer Wheeler's excavations of Bālā Hissar and Charsadda,¹⁶ the excavations of Bhir Mound carried out by Sir John H. Marshall, Sir Wheeler, Mr. Muhammad Sharif Ghosh,¹⁷ and those of Hathial in Taxila conducted by F.

¹¹ G. Stacul, Scavi a Loebanr III e Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai (Swāt). Scavi e ricerche archeologiche degli anni 1976-1979. *Quaderni di ricerca scientifica*. CNR, 112, 1, 1985, pp. 305-14; Id. Transhimalayana. Testimonianze archeologiche della prima metà del II millennio nelle valli del Kashmir e dello Swāt. In G. Gnoli, L. Lanciotti (eds), *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci memoriae dicata*. *SOR*, LVI, 3, 1985, pp. 1385-90. Roma. S. Tusa, Notes on Some Protohistoric Finds in the Swāt Valley (Pakistan). *East and West* 31, 1-2, 1981, pp. 99-120. C. Silvi Antonini and G. Stacul, *The Proto-historic Graveyards of Swāt (Pakistan)*. *IsMEORepMem*, VII, I II. Rome, 1972. E. Castaldi, La necropoli di Kātelai I nello Swāt (Pakistan). Rapporto sullo scavo delle tombe 46-80 (1963). *Atti della Accademia dei Lincei*. Memorie, VIII, III.7, 1968, pp. 485-486.

¹² A.H. Dani and Durrani, F.A., A new grave complex in West Pakistan. *Asian perspectives*, 8(1), 1964, pp. 164-165.

¹³ F.A. Khan, *Pakistan Archaeology*. Karachi, Department of Archaeology, 1964. G.M. Khan, G. M., Excavations at Zarif Karuna, *Pakistan Archaeology*, 9, 1973, pp. 1-94.

¹⁴ Among others, see G. Gullini, *Udegram*. *IsMEORepMem*, I. *IsMEO*, Rome, 1962. D. Faccenna, Preliminary Report on the 1963 Excavation Campaign of Barama I (Swat Pakistan), *East and West*, 15, 1-2, 1964-1965, pp. 7-23. Id., *Mingora: Site of Butkara I*. *IsMEORepMem*, I. *IsMEO*, Rome, 1962.

¹⁵ A.H. Dani and A. Rahman, Report on the Excavation of Balambat Settlement Site, *Ancient Pakistan*, 3, 1967, pp. 235-288. A. Rahman, Excavation at Damkot. *Ancient Pakistan*, 4, 1968, pp. 103-250.

¹⁶ M. Wheeler, *Chārsada, A Metropolis of The North-West Frontier*. Government of Pakistan and the British Academy. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1962.

¹⁷ J. Marshall, *Taxila: An Illustrated Account of Archeological Excavations Carried Out at Taxila*, 3 vols. Cambridge, 1951. M.S. Ghosh, Taxila (Sirkap), 1944-45, *Ancient India*, 4, 1947-1948, pp. 41-84, with a postscript by R. E. Mortimer Wheeler. M. Sharif, Excavation at Bhir Mound, Taxila, *Pakistan Archaeology*, 6, 1969, pp. 6-99.

Raymond Allchin, and by G. M. Khan of the Pakistan Archaeology Department.¹⁸

While the relative chronology of this period has been fairly well established, the absolute chronology remains a vexed question, as recently demonstrated by Hermann Müller-Karpe¹⁹ and Reinhard Dittman,²⁰ through a re-examination of the relevant materials and a clarification of certain elements which had been misplaced and had thus affected dating).²¹ The imminent publication of the Aligrāma excavations conducted by Tusa and his collaborators, with a detailed examination of the stratigraphy and materials, promises to represent a decisive contribution in this respect, as Aligrāma provides the links between the protohistoric and the historic period—evidence of which came from the other excavation of the Mission.²²

In the course of inquiry into the protohistoric settlements, with special attention being paid to the period corresponding to the earliest stages of Aligrāma (Period I, 18th-15th centuries=Period IV in Swat, 1700-1400), the excavation under way at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai, near Barikot, headed by Stacul, has proven to be of great significance.²³ Here too the earliest features are pit-like structures, between circular and oval, with vertical walls and generally of rather small dimensions. Around the middle of the second millennium, they are supplanted by dry-stone structures with a four-sided ground plan. Animal and vegetable remains on the beaten floors of the houses shed light on the inhabitants' diet and on some of their economic activities. Among the remains of cultivated plants identified by

¹⁸ M.K. Khan, Hathial Excavation, *Journal of Central Asia* 6, 2, 1983, pp. 35-44. See also F.R. Allchin, How old is the city of Taxila? *Antiquity*, 56(216), 1982, pp. 8-14.

¹⁹ H. Müller-Karpe, *Jungbronzezeitlich-früheisenzeitliche Gräberfelder der Swat-Kultur in Nord-Pakistan: unter Zugrundelegung der Fundvorlagen von A.H. Dani, G.M. Khan, C. Silvi Antonini u. G. Stacul* (MAVA 20), Beck, München, 1983. Reviewed by G. Stacul in *Praehistorische Zeitschrift*, 61, 1986, 90.

²⁰ R. Dittmann, Problems in the Identification of an Achaemenian and Mauryan Horizon in North-Pakistan, *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, 17, 1984, pp. 155-193 (pp. 172-174).

²¹ The *vexata quaestio* of the chronology of the protohistoric Swat graveyards was definitely solved by the recent excavations of the Italian Mission in Swat (see M. Vidale, R. Micheli and L.M. Olivieri *Excavations at the Protohistoric Graveyards of Gogdara and Udegram*. ACT Field School RepMem, III. Sang-e-Meel, Lahore, 2016).

²² For an overview of Tusa's work in Swat, see Rossi and Olivieri 2022 quoted above.

²³ G. Stacul, Excavation at Bir-kot-ghundai (Swat, Pakistan), *East and West*, 28, 1-4, 1978, pp. 137-50.

Costantini were wheat, barley, rice, rye, lentils, peas and even vines, pointing to one of the most varied diets evidence has been found for in the protohistoric sites in the subcontinent.²⁴ The animal remains identified by Dr. Bruno Compagnoni included the main species of domesticated animals, among which was the horse (*equus caballus*).²⁵



Fig. 2 - Equid attacked by a bird or other fantastic creature (inv. no. BKG 500)
(after Stacul 1987: pl. XLIVa).

The pottery type of this period is represented by a very fine production in red clay with black painted decoration, showing not only linear and geometrical patterns but, interestingly enough, others of naturalistic design, with plant patterns such as the pipal leaf. Animals often include birds such as peacocks, oxen and felines. Usually they appear alone, but in one case there is a scene of an equid attacked by a bird or a fantastic beast (Fig. 2).

²⁴ L. Costantini, Notes on the Palaeoethnobotany of Protohistorical Swat. In M. Taddei (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1977*, 2. Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples, 1979, pp. 703-8.

²⁵ B. Compagnoni, Preliminary Report on the Faunal Remains from Protohistoric Settlements of Swat. In M. Taddei, ed., *South Asian Archaeology 1977*, 2. Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples, 1979, pp. 697-700.

The representation of the equid is the earliest found in the subcontinent—the small clay Pirak horses are of a later date.²⁶ In another case, a bird of prey (possibly an eagle) swoops down on two other animals (a dog and an antelope) according to the “aggression pattern” known from the Mesopotamia area. There are also trident and sun patterns. Altogether, these designs invite us to draw some parallels with the pottery found at Cemetery H at Harappa (about the middle of the 2nd millennium). Apart from these, there are also examples of polished grey-black pottery production with a great variety of styles, some of which recall those dating from between the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 2nd millennia BCE found on sites in the northern Iranian plateau (Hasanlu, Gyan, Shah Tepe). Recent excavations in Afghanistan (at Dashly, for example) have shown that the latter type gradually spread east, and therefore it seems likely that there is some direct connection with the findings in Swat. However, we have not as yet sufficient evidence to say whether the arrival of these styles in the north-west regions of the subcontinent was due to trading, cultural importation, or actual ethnic migration.²⁷

There can be no doubt, however, that the culture attested to in the earliest Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai settlements reflected a society that was already specialised in short and long distance trading or, in other words, in interregional, intercultural exchanges. This is demonstrated not only by products that are clearly coming from the southern plains areas and even from the ocean shores—such as shell ornaments, coral, onyx, and cornelian—but also by products coming from the opposite direction, beyond the great mountain chains that separate the subcontinent from Central Asia. This is in fact the only possible explanation for the existence in Swat of a number of objects peculiar to the Chinese cultural area (including bone pins with *t'ao t'ieh* [taotie] heads, green jade ornaments, pierced stone knives). The likelihood of such trans-Himalayan relations there is also attested to by the culture of Burzahom in nearby Kashmir, dating between the middle of the 3rd and the middle of the 2nd millennia BCE, where elements seemingly deriving from northern China appear. Traffic between the opposite sides of the great mountain chains is likely to have used various passes in the Karakorum, Hindukush, and Pamir. It is

²⁶ G. Stacul, Swāt, Pirak and Connected Problems (Mid-2nd Millennium B.C.). In J.P. Gerry, R.H. Meadow (eds), *South Asian Archaeology* 1989, Madison, Wisconsin, 1992, pp. 267-71.

²⁷ See G. Stacul, *Prehistoric and protohistoric Swat, Pakistan, c.3000-1400 B.C.* IsMEO RepMem, XX. IsMEO, Rome, 1987..

hard to say, however, whether this is really evidence of long-distance trading, or whether there was an intermediate cultural “strip” along the upper mountain valleys that could have acted as go-between in these relations.

As the excavations demonstrate, the Swat Valley was on the fringe in the formative processes of the great civilizations, but fully active or, at any rate, playing an autonomous role. After a period of close contact with the regions of Kashmir, China, and with the Indus Valley until the middle of the 2nd millennium, the valley seems to have shrunk back on itself. As a result, many elements peculiar to what is now defined as Gandhara Grave Culture,²⁸ North-Western Culture, Swat-Complex, or Swat-Aspect²⁹ (or, alternatively, Swat Culture)³⁰ were developed independently, as local autonomy increased in the regional culture, particularly in agricultural technology.

This state of affairs lasted until the 5th-4th century, when again the valley became more outward-looking. Local craftsmanship was significantly affected by the change. Alongside traditional pottery styles, in fact, new forms appeared, such as carinated bowls and tulip bowls, and Northern Black Polished (NBP) Ware arrived in Swat. This was a period of new political unity, when various kingdoms arose and united at first under the Maurya, and subsequently under the Kushana dynasty. Buddhism was to play a significant role in this process of cultural integration.

The Italian Archaeological Mission’s pre- and proto-historic research was devoted to obtaining a concrete diachronic view of the cultural development in the Swat Valley of this period. The results so far achieved can be considered satisfactory, as they give a fairly clear picture of the human activities. At the same time, a whole series of new historical and archaeological problems has emerged—we now call for extension of the research area.

The main issues to explore are:

- a. The human presence in the area before the 3rd millennium;

²⁸ According to Dani 1967.

²⁹ According to Müller-Karpe 1983.

³⁰ According to Dittmann 1984. The current definition is Swat Protohistoric Graves (SPG) (see Vidale et al. 2016, quoted above).

- b. The mechanisms that led society in Swat and the north-west part of the subcontinent to adopt the model of an agricultural and pastoral economy;
- c. The exact nature of the links between Swat cultures in the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE and other cultures, ranging from Kot-diji to Early and Mature Harappan Civilization;
- d. The extent to which Swat was integrated with the neighbouring areas to the south during the development of Gandhara Grave Culture (*i.e.* North-Western Culture), which characterised the Iron Age in the north-west area of the subcontinent.

The first campaign organised to tackle these problems began a survey to the south of Swat under the guidance of Tusa this spring. Attention was focused on the area of the Kalpāni River basin, in the Mardan District. The results have so far been encouraging: much evidence of pre- and proto-historical settlements has been found, confirming the importance of this area as a link between the Indus cultures and those of the valley and mountain areas.³¹ Specific archaeological research on this issue in the future should prove fruitful.

Along with all the research now in progress, we also returned to the hard task of examining the archaeological deposit in the well-known Sanghao Cave, for the knowledge of which we are indebted to Prof. Dani.³² He was the first to explore it: subsequently, a survey was conducted by Peshawar University by Prof. Farid Khan and Farzand Ali Durrani, and by the American team of Temple University.³³ The brief investigation so far performed has revealed stratigraphic seriation up to the Neolithic period. Another aim of this survey in the Kalpāni River Valley is to draw up an archaeological map of an area which also shows a great wealth of monuments of the historical period, and to trace out their context in the road system linking the area with the north.

³¹ S. Tusa, Report on the First Archaeological Survey in the Kalpani Valley and on the Soundings in the Sanghao Cave, *East and West*, 36, 4, 1986, pp. 479-95.

³² A.H. Dani, Sanghao Cave Excavation - The First Season: 1963. *Ancient Pakistan*, 1, 1964, pp. 1-50.

³³ A.J. Ranere, Human Occupation in Northwest Pakistan During the Late Pleistocene. In S. Pastner, L. Flam (eds) *Anthropology in Pakistan*. Karachi, 1982, pp. 124-144. See also D. Faccenna and S. Tusa Pakistan-1: The Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan, *East and West*, 36, 4, 1986, pp. 473-511.

3. Historic period

But let us return to the theme of settlements in the historical period. When excavation was suspended in Udegram, Gogadara III, Bāramā, and Butkara I, the attention was moved onto the excavation in progress at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai, carried out by the group led by Dr. Pierfrancesco Callieri. Above the protohistoric levels dating up to the 4th century BCE, there stand the historical-age structures of one of the greatest ancient centres in Swat.³⁴ The hill of Barikot stands alone in the middle of the Swat Valley, where it widens out and is joined by roads coming from the north, south and east, from Buner—a position of considerable commercial and strategic importance. The top of the hill, surmounted by the remains of a stupa, is surrounded by fortifications of the late Hindu-Śāhi period, and impressive bulwarks can be seen to the north. The trenches dug there have revealed sections of walls superimposed on each other to a height of ten metres, showing how long and complex the life of the settlement must have been. In fact, it covered ten main periods through successive phases, from the Indo-Greek period (2nd century BCE) to the Hindu-Śāhi era (8th-10th century CE), with some signs of activity even in the following Islamic (11th-13th centuries CE) [and Dardic [14th-16th centuries CE) periods]. The walls are superimposed in such a way that each level cuts into the one before. Two great parallel walls belonging to Period V (1st century CE) must certainly have formed part of the public works. The walls belonging to Period VII (1st-2nd centuries CE), with a series of rooms and a stretch of road, are the most clearly visible in extension. At the foot of the hill stands a tower belonging to a later period [8th century CE]. The front follows a straight line, with semicircular bulwarks at the sides, and the whole is built in small blocks alternating with slabs with excellent technical finesse. It is not clear how this “tower” was connected at the sides, but it certainly formed part of a defence system. A number of

³⁴On the chronology of Barikot and the Indo-Greek fortification see L. M. Olivieri, F. Marzaioli, I. Passariello, F. Terrasi et al., A new revised chronology and cultural sequence of the Swat valley, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan) in the light of current excavations at Barikot (Bir-kot-ghwandai), *Nuclear Instruments and Methods in Physics Research Section B: Beam Interactions with Materials and Atoms*, 456, 2019, pp. 148-156; L.M. Olivieri, Urban Defenses at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai, Swat (Pakistan). *New Data from the 2014 Excavation Campaign, Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia*, 21(1), 183-199.

isolated buildings standing on top of the hills on the other side of the river must have belonged to this defence system as well.³⁵

During the last campaign, some sturdy structures belonging to a third and older defence system were discovered in an area lower down in the plain. They consist of a three-metre wide wall still standing up to a height of three metres, running straight in a north-south direction with a series of towers on the outer side. The towers are rectangular in plan with escarpment at the base. They probably date back to the Indo-Greek period, when the city was founded (or rather re-founded).³⁶

This discovery has added significant detail to our picture of the organisation of the town and the events it lived through as well as the great changes that must have taken place in the course of its long history. Various factors help us place these events, such as the study of the material remains—above all pottery—and the results of thermoluminescence analyses which are being carried out by the Laboratory of the Physics Institute's Solids Group of Milan University, in collaboration with ENEA and Prof. Ninina Cuomo di Caprio.³⁷

The objects found include:

- 1) A small female head in terracotta with decidedly Hellenistic features;
- 2) Some terracotta figurines of various kinds and techniques;
- 3) A grotesque terracotta mask of the Hellenistic kind;
- 4) Among the coins, one of Apollodoros I, the Indo-Greek king (160 BCE);

³⁵ See Olivieri 2003. Recent excavations at the site revealed that the tower was an isolated building, it had a cultic function, and it is associated to a 8th-10th centuries CE palatial area.

³⁶ As already commented, many recent publications have been devoted to the urban fortification, which is now firmly dated to the Indo-Greek period (see Olivieri et al. 2019 with refs). Evidence of an earlier fortification (4th-3rd centuries BCE) was also documented. The first urban levels documented at the site go back to the 5th-4th century CE.

³⁷ These data were later published in P. Callieri and L.M. Olivieri, *Ceramics from the excavations in the historic settlement at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai (Barikot) Swat, Pakistan (1984-1992)*, 2 vols. (Serie Orientale Roma n.s. 22; ACT-Field School Reports and Memoirs, Special Volume, 2). Sang-e-Meel, Lahore, 2021.

- 5) Among the pottery fragments, one bearing graffito inscriptions in Kharoṣṭhī letters.³⁸

These objects give us an idea of the historical succession that took place here: the Indo-Greeks entered the region at the beginning of the 2nd century BCE with the Greek-Bactrian King Demeter; then the Sakas, a nomadic people originating in Central Asia, arrived from the north and south-west to supplant the Indo-Greeks at the beginning of the 1st century BCE, in turn superseded by the Parthians with king Gondophares in the first half of the 1st century CE. Finally, they too were overwhelmed by newcomers, the Kushanas, who were originally also nomads from Central Asia. In the middle of the 3rd century, the Sassanids arrived from Iran. Then came the Śāhi from Kabul and the Hindu-Śāhi from Hund between the 8th and 10th centuries. Finally, Mahmūd of Ghazni conquered the region.

The name attributed to the town of Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai as a result of the identification suggested by Stein and accepted by Tucci is Bazira/Beira, mentioned in classical sources and conquered by Alexander the Great. Curtius Rufus wrote of its opulence, and Arrian described its lofty and extremely well-fortified citadel in his *Anabasis*.³⁹ The present place-name, Bīr-kot/Barī-kot, bears out the probability of this identification. Barī/Bīr supposedly derives from Bazira, and from Bazira it is possible to reconstruct the palatal form Bajira/Bayira which would then become Baira/Beira, becoming Bīr. Evidence also appears in a Sanskrit inscription referring to the last Śāhi king, Jayapaladeva, which was in fact found near Barikot and is now in the Lahore Museum. It mentions the city of Vajīrasthāna, corresponding exactly to the name Bajira-Bazira.⁴⁰

³⁸ Many more Indo-Greek coins and inscribed shards have been documented in recent excavations at the site (see refs above).

³⁹ Curtius Rufus, VIII, 34 and Arrian, *Anabasis*, IV, 27.

⁴⁰ See on this S. Baums, A survey of place-names in Gāndhārī inscriptions and a new oil lamp from Malakand. In W. Rienjang and P. Stewart (eds) *The Geography of Gandhāran Art Proceedings of the Second International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 22nd-23rd March, 2018*. Archaeopress, Oxford, 2019, pp. 167-174. L.M. Olivieri, Vajīrasthāna/Bazira and beyond: Foundation and current status of the archaeological work in Swat. In H. Prabha Ray (ed.) *Buddhism and Gandhara. An Archaeology of Museum Collections*. London, Routledge India, 2017, pp. 173-212. L.M. Olivieri, Temples of Swat: the Śāhi archaeological landscape of Barikot. In H. Prabha Ray, S. Kulshreshtha, U. Suvrathan (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Hindu Temples. Materiality, Social History and Practice*. London, Routledge India, 2022, pp. 253-278.

Our excavation brought to light two pottery shards with graffito inscriptions of Greek letters, one of them undoubtedly written in the Greek language, as Prof. Giovanni Pugliese-Carratelli has demonstrated.⁴¹ Another shard with graffito Greek letters bearing the name “Nous” — also published by Prof. Pugliese-Carratelli⁴² — was found by Prof. Giorgio Gullini in his excavation of Udegram, identified by both Stein and Tucci as Ōra (from Ude), the other city in this region conquered by Alexander the Great.⁴³ It is certainly no mere chance that Greek inscriptions were found in these two sites.

The study of towns of the historical period must take into account the general layout, individual dwellings, private and public, as well as military architecture—as in the case of surrounding walls. Swat offers plentiful documentation of all these aspects: some of the houses are detached, others are arranged in rows along the ridges and slopes of the hills, or form larger agglomerations; some have extremely simple ground-plan and elevation, others are spacious, complex in structure and rise to several storeys, at times in the type of tower-houses such as can be found in the Jalada-Landakai area of between Tana and Kandag Valley. Circuits of fortified walling can be seen at Udegram and Aligrāma, while fortresses with round bulwarks at the corners are typical of Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai and Parrai, which stands on the opposite bank of the Swat river and must have belonged to a look-out and defence system together with other sites standing at various points along the river.

4. Buddhist archaeology

As we pointed out in our introductory notes, one of the main themes the Mission is engaged on is the study of sacred Buddhist architecture. A number of excavations have been carried out in this regard and include the

⁴¹ G. Pugliese Carratelli, Greek Inscriptions of the Middle East. *East and West*, 16, 1-2, 1966, pp. 35-36. See on this O. Tribulato and L.M. Olivieri, Writing Greek in the Swat region: A new graffito from Barikot (Pakistan), *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 204, 2017, pp.128–135.

⁴² Gullini 1962.

⁴³ See on this O. Coloru and L.M. Olivieri, Mount Aornos and the Operations of the Macedonian Army in Swat. Sources and Archaeological Data, *Pakistan Heritage*, 11, 2019, pp. 105-122.

well-known Butkara I and Panr, and the recently completed Saidu Sharif I.⁴⁴

These excavations represent a great contribution to our knowledge of a style of architecture which still holds a number of puzzles for the scholar, despite being fairly familiar by now. Apart from the usual monuments, such as stupas and *vihāras*, a new kind of structure has appeared in Saidu Sharif I. It consists of a solid, four-sided structure standing on a base and topped by a dome inside which the funerary reliquary was placed.⁴⁵

Additionally, our excavations yielded many examples of the column monument, otherwise not at all common. It stands on a pedestal that may be square or circular in plan, smooth with moulding. It is composed of a base, a shaft, and a capital which supports one of the Buddhist symbols, either the lion or the chakra. The stupa and the column, as our excavations in the sacred areas show, were designed on different planimetric patterns: at Butkara I, the columns stand in a crown-formation around the main stupa, which is circular in plan. At Panr, they are placed diagonally at the four corners of the main stupa, which is rectangular in plan. At Saidu Sharif I, they stand at the sides of a flight of steps to the north in front of the main stupa which, again, is rectangular in plan.

The stupa at Saidu Sharif I, which can be dated to the beginning of the 1st century CE, has another very interesting feature: the columns are not only set by the staircase leading up to the podium, but also on top of it at the four corners. We found them at the sides where they had collapsed, and noted the canonic Gandhāran-Persepolitan capitals. This type of stupa with columns obviously reflected a particular cosmic-religious symbolism in its architectural language: the four columns, symbolising Buddha in the world of phenomena, radiate from the main axis which is, in fact, the

⁴⁴ See also Olivieri 2022. On the question of Gandhara and Hellenism, see P. Callieri, Barikot : An Indo-Greek Urban Center. In D. Meth Srinivasan (ed.) *On the Cusp of an Era: Art in the Pre-Kusana World*. Leiden, Brill 2007, pp. 133 - 161. On p. 160, Callieri wrote about the likelihood that Bactrian-Greek workshops were established in Gandhara that explained some of Barikot's findings as well as the important transmissions of certain styles into the region (see on p. 161 Taddei's thought that Gandhara itself is a province of late Hellenism).

⁴⁵ Here Faccenna refers to the typology of the so-called pseudo-*viharas*. Faccenna termed as *vihara* – in this following A. Foucher – a shrine or a chapel. *Vihāra* should only refer to the inhabited part of the monastery where monks reside.

chattravali, symbolising the *noumenon*.⁴⁶ A large ‘column stupa’ of this type can be found also in Swat at Tokar-Dara, near Najigrām, while smaller ones are to be seen at Taxila (Sirkap, Block G), and Hadda (TK 1a), belonging to the Saka-Parthian period. The stupa at Giaur-kala (Merv), in Turkmenistan, is of a later period, but a parallel example to this one is the ‘pillar stupa’ in Andhra Pradesh, at Āmarāvātī and Nāgārjunakonda, both dating to a period later than the one we are concerned with.

What we see represented in concrete architectural terms can also be seen faithfully reproduced in different media:⁴⁷

Reliefs. Those illustrated here are reliefs in the Museums of Saidu (Fig. 3a), Peshawar (Fig. 3b), Lahore, Berlin, and Milan (Fig. 3c); see also the *ayāgāpatas* at Mathura, now in the Museums of Mathura and Lucknow (Fig. 5);

Reliquaries. Schist or bronze reliquaries and models represent in their small dimensions authentic forms of micro-architecture (Fig. 4). The one in [fig.] is in a private collection, and the one in [fig.] was found in an antique market. We can also include the base of the monk Naradakha’s reliquary, from Shaikhan Dhari and now in the Museum of the Archaeology Department of Peshawar University. The slots for the four columns at the corners can be seen on the base, while the central element has yet to be identified.⁴⁸

Originally the top of the column came up as far as the base or tip of the *chattravali*, but subsequently, when elements of Indian style were introduced, the columns became shorter than the star-shaped stupa. Such elaborate plan for the stupa form can be seen in the clay seal-impressions of Harwan, in the small stupa models in clay at Ghazni, and in examples in bronze now Peshawar and Rome, as well as in the rock graffiti at Chilas.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ This interesting intuition by Faccenna plays out in the inspiring work of Anna Filigenzi on the double temporality of the stupa (A. Filigenzi, *L’arte narrativa del Gandhara*. In P. Callieri and A. Filigenzi (eds) *Il Maestro di Saidu Sharif. Alle origini dell’arte del Gandhara*, Museo Nazionale d’arte Orientale, pp. 93-106. ISIAO, Roma, 2002). For the chronology of Saidu Sharif I Olivieri proposes a date around 50 CE (Olivieri 2022).

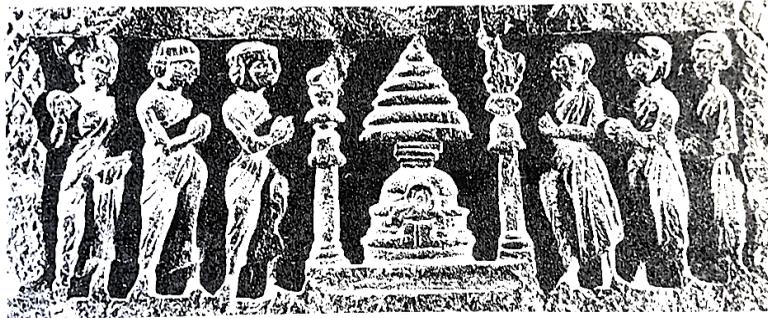
⁴⁷ The original illustrations here indicated as figs 3-10 are substituted by some of the plates of D. Faccenna, *Saidu Sharif I (Swat, Pakistan). The Buddhist Sacred Area. The Stūpa Terrace*. ISMEORepMem XXII, 2. ISMEO, Rome, 1995 (Figs 3-6).

⁴⁸ A.H. Dani, Shaikhan Dhari excavations. *Ancient Pakistan*, 2, 1965, pp. 17-714.

⁴⁹ See M. Taddei, Inscribed clay tablets and miniature stūpas from Ġaznī. *East and West*, 20, 1/2, 1970, pp. 70-86.



a - Saïda Sharif, Swat Museum, Inv. no. MK 3; detail. See p. 567.



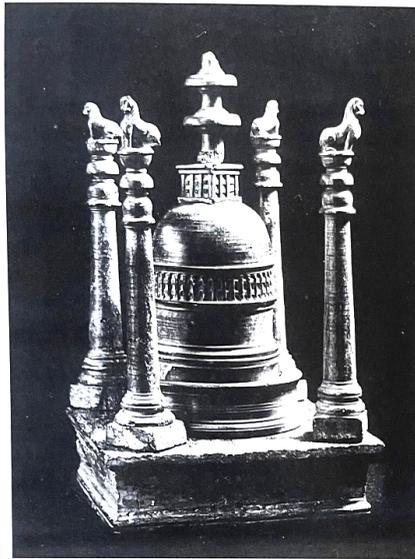
b - Peshawar, Peshawar Museum, Inv. no. 1846; detail. (After Ingholt 1957: no. 167D). See pp. 542, 567.



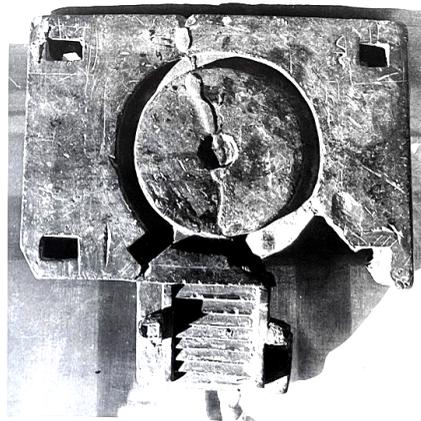
c - Milan, Civiche Raccolte Archeologiche, Inv. no. A 18500. See p. 567.

Fig. 3 - After Faccenna 1995, pl. 274.

Pl. 280

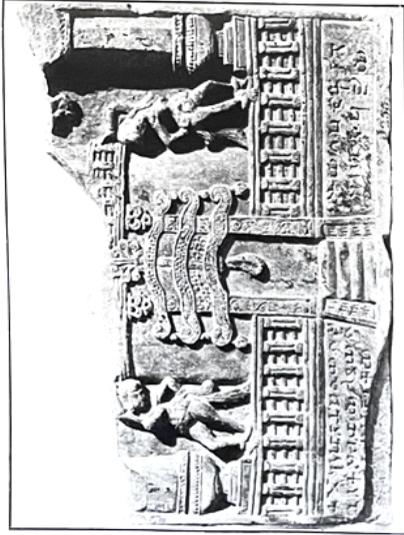


a - USA, private collection. (After *Octagon* 1979: 6).
See pp. 529, 550, 568.

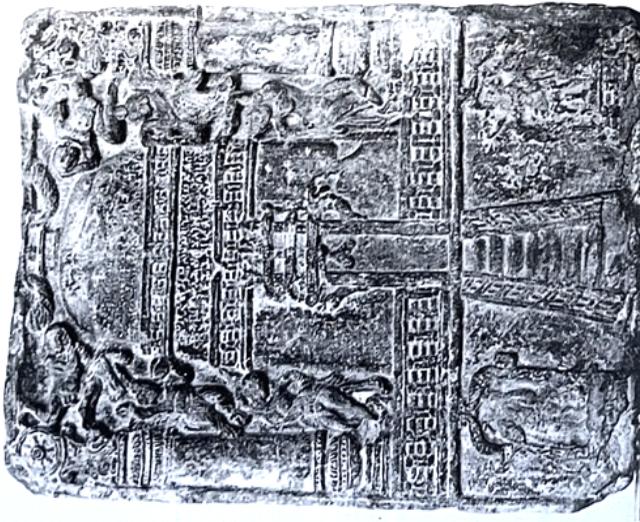


b - Peshawar, Museum of the Department of
Archaeology, University of Peshawar; from
Shaikhhan Dheri; reliquary of the monk
Naradakha. See pp. 53, 569.

Fig. 4 - After Faccenna 1995, pl. 280. The stupa reliquary at the top is now in the Art Institute of Chicago, acc. no. 2006.185.



b - Lucknow, Lucknow Museum: *āyāgapata* of Śivayāsā. (After ASIAR 1922-23: pl. XXXVIIIc). See p. 571.



a - Mathura, Mathura Archaeological Museum; *āyāgapata* of Nādā. (After Franz 1965: fig. 222). See p. 571.

Fig. 5 - After Faccenna 1995, pl. 284.

In this context it is worth mentioning another construction that belongs to this general typology. It consists of a stupa which is circular in plan with columns beside it—the structure is all set on a Gandharan-Corinthian capital which serves as a base. It can be seen in reliefs in Peshawar and Lahore, and documentation suggests there was actually a full-scale one in Taxila, at Kalawan.⁵⁰

Other problems being examined at present involve the upper part of the stupa, the *harmika*, the *chattravali* with the disks and the intermediate elements and the supports. These were mostly found scattered in fragments in the excavations and often had not received due consideration. However, the assembling of the whole superstructure shows a great degree of complexity that required a wide range of technical devices for the connection of the various components. This operation involved technical skills and craftsmanship that was often quite subtle and deserves further study.

The main stupa at Saidu Sharif I gives us the opportunity to consider another very interesting aspect, that of figurative decoration—which is important because it also concerns the consolidation and restoration of the stupa itself according to an agreement with the Pakistan Archaeology Department. Around the stupa we found a number of fragments—about 140, but unfortunately only fragments—belonging to one single frieze that must have decorated one of the cylindrical components of the stupa, probably the second. This cylindrical part must have measured 13.58 metres in diameter, and so the frieze must have extended to a length of 42.70 metres, practically 43 metres. It was composed of panels of green schist, each including to the left a semi-column with Gandharan-Corinthian capital within a cornice, and a figurative scene to the right. The panels were set on a smooth base and topped by a cornice of acanthus leaves. Panels, base, and cornice were carefully locked together and held to the surface of the wall with nails passing through the panels, and cramps on the back of the cornice. All the elements were finished before being assembled according to the signs cut into each piece.

Each panel was 44.5 cm high and probably about 60 cm long. Therefore the frieze, which was about 43 m long, consisted of about 65

⁵⁰ One later example of this type is the bronze reliquary in the shape of a stupa now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no. 1985.387a, b.

panels.⁵¹ Unfortunately none of them have survived intact. The fragments we have must have formed part of at least 21 panels, as can be deduced from the upper parts of the semi-columns and capitals that have survived. Each panel (or group of panels) showed a scene in the life of the Buddha: the dream of Māyā, the birth of Siddhārta, the elephant killed by Devadatta, the Great Departure, the change of clothes, Kanthaka's farewell, the transport of the relics, and so on. Apparently, the scenes follow the established canons, and the division of the frieze with semi-columns is also a traditional feature that can be seen in many examples, including the friezes from Sikri in the Lahore Museum [fig.].⁵²

The artistic quality is particularly striking, as can be seen in the following examples. The fragment in Fig. 6 shows a group of hunters in the scene of the meeting with Siddhārta and the change of clothes, after the abandonment of the bride. The hunters wear armour on the dhoti and turbans with chin-straps. The one on the right bears a slaughtered goat on his left shoulder, holding the four legs together in his left hand, the tail in his right, with a perfectly easy air. Another occupies the foreground, bending with his left leg stretching out in front of him. Behind him stands yet another, and the crisscross patterns of arms and legs in various attitudes according to the various actions the figures are engaging in creates an atmosphere of liveliness and spontaneity. A tree in the background shows that the action takes place in the open air. The figures are somewhat elongated, and great care has been taken over all the details of parts of the body and dress. The composition is also noteworthy: the figures are not isolated, but grouped through various planes of depth. Despite this spatial arrangement, the heads are all shown at the same level. The figures in the middle ground are shown with part of the body, those in the background only with the head and the relief thins as the planes recede.

⁵¹ The recent discovery of parts of the central panel lead L.M. Olivieri to reconstruct the Frieze in 60 panels and a central larger panel (Olivieri 2022).

⁵² The illustration named as fig. 11 has been omitted as the Sikri friezes are certainly well known to the reader.



Fig. 6 - Hunters. S48. After Callieri and Filigenzi (eds.) 2002, pl. V.



Fig. 7 - Horsemen. S 709. After Faccenna 2001, pl. 37.



Fig. 8 - Competition scene. S 246. After Faccenna 2001, pl. 22.

The overlapping of various planes, conveying a sense of spaciousness and vitality, can also be seen in another fragment [fig.].⁵³ It shows two warriors struggling together: the one in the foreground, armed with a sword, is seen from behind. Beside him, there are other warriors in armour with disks on their chests. Again, there is a tree in the background. Yet another fragment shows horsemen riding out through a city gate (Fig. 7). A sense of depth is conveyed with the foreshortening of the walls, shown sloping upwards. The horsemen, who are supposedly aligned, are in fact shown at different levels, with those towards the background further forward as if seen in a three-quarter view from the left. The elephant-gift fragment [fig.]⁵⁴ offers another example of the representation of a group with all the heads appearing at the same level.

The relief of a competition scene (Fig. 8) is extremely interesting. In the foreground a row of seated figures must represent the judges, and behind them are other standing figures. The attitudes of their bodies and positions of the heads all tend to the right, towards the focal point represented by a youth shown frontally at the margin of the scene, holding the staff of a flag that waves above. Great care has been taken to convey the relationships between the judges and the protagonist of the scene with a refined sense of depth. Even though the heads may appear uniform, as they are all of the same elongated and compact type, they are in fact subtly different and distinguished by outwards elements such as moustaches, turbans or jewels—but above all by their attitudes, glances, and gestures. The attitudes and positions are calibrated in such a way as to draw attention towards the centre of the scene: heads shown frontally, in three-quarter view, and in profile. Some of the heads in the background face the opposite direction with the result that, while attention is focused towards the centre by the converging gazes and lines of the bodies and heads, monotony is nevertheless avoided and the scene has a lively, spontaneous air. The flag waving in gusts of wind above casts shadows on the heads, partially concealing them. To judge by the position of the figure with the flag to the far right of the panel, the scene must have continued on an adjacent panel. Therefore, the semi-column that must have stood there originally was not conceived of as a dividing element, but rather as an architectural feature behind which the scene was enacted.

⁵³ S 708. Callieri and Filigenzi (eds) 2002, pl, VIII, p. 187.

⁵⁴ S 1112. Callieri and Filigenzi (eds) 2002, p. 137.



Fig. 9 - Youth taking part in a competition. S1124. After Faccenna 2001, pl. 49.



Fig. 10 - Detail of the head of an elephant in S 241, after Faccenna 2001, pl. 21a.

The attitudes of the bodies and the positions of the torsos, arms and heads are all significant compositional elements, while at the same time they reveal the relationship between the characters and create a sense of space and depth. Let us take another example. The torso of the seated figure in [fig. 17: missing]⁵⁵ twists around with a powerful sense of tension, the right arm folded in front and the left opening in a complex play of perspective. Complexity of planes and perspective is also a feature in the scene of a youth taking part in a competition (Fig. 9). He holds a vase under his left arm, pouring water from it into the hands of a companion who is about to splash it onto a fallen figure. The anatomical features of these elongated bodies, legs, torsos, and arms, are represented with great attention to detail. The female heads are strikingly expressive. We can admire the craftsmanship and naturalistic approach revealed by the head of an elephant in Fig. 10. All such devices reveal real powers of expression in the artist.⁵⁶

We can better appreciate the features of the frieze from Saidu Sharif I if we compare it with the frieze already mentioned above of the Sikri stupa, now in the Museum of Lahore. This is the best preserved of all complexes. As in the previous case, the scenes are divided by semi-columns with Gandhāran-Corinthian capitals. Since it is of a later date (3rd-4th century), the Sikri panels reveal a totally different stylistic approach. This can be observed in many elements, such as the composition of the scenes that are all based on a central axis; the rigid and simplified spatial distribution of the figures, who are also superimposed or standing alone in a space that becomes a neutral background to the whole scene, all converging in oblique parallel lines towards the central axis; finally, in the formal elements displayed in the representation of the figures themselves.

As its length would lead one to suppose, it seems fairly certain that a number of craftsmen worked on the Saidu Sharif I frieze. In parts the details are sharp and somewhat flattened, the articles of clothing and the Gandhāran-Corinthian capitals of the semi-columns have an almost metallic look, while in other parts the forms are softer and relatively full-bodied. However, the conception and style have a basic unity. The fact that a number of hands were involved reveals the organisation of a

⁵⁵ Perhaps here Faccenna refers to the fragment S I 1246.

⁵⁶ The original illustrations (indicated in the manuscript) are substituted by plates in Faccenna 2001 and Callieri and Filigenzi (eds.) 2002.

workshop that could produce works of great stylistic unity from a team of craftsmen. The near 43 metres of this frieze represent a triumph of art and faith. It is the product of a person of real artistic distinction who amply merits the title “the Saidu Sharif Master.” His work belongs to a particularly happy period of artistic production in Swat.

These artists conceived things on a large scale, tackling ambitious works with the considerable skill and understanding of their medium they had by now acquired, assured of well-organised and well-trained assistance in their workshops. A number of works from other sites is evidence of this approach to the décor of large monuments. One such work of considerable technical interest is the Butkara I frieze. It is made of juxtaposed panels, each of them occupied by a figure, that form a sort of procession around the stupa. Another is the Great Departure relief, also from Butkara I [fig.]. It can be reconstructed from several surviving fragments to a height of about three metres.⁵⁷

In the research on the art of Gandhāra, the excavation at Butkara I has represented the first opportunity to study a complex of sculptures coming from one single centre. Butkara I may well have been the region’s most important artistic centre at the time, with neighbouring centres like Panr and Saidu Sharif I gravitating around it. Analysis of each individual piece was carried out on the basis of extrinsic and stylistic elements, thus leading to the definition of three groups which we have labelled “drawing style,” “naturalistic,” and “stereometric.” The first group owes its name to the particular way of representing hair, drapes and the folds in them, with a sense of lines predominating over volume. In the naturalistic group the images are rich in tones, with a marked sense of form. The stereometric group is so called for a certain conception of large volumes, where solid and fleshy bodies stand out with simplified folds in the drapes. Each group includes various series and has a typological repertory of its own, together with a characteristic way of distributing figures over the surface area of the panel, and employs particular techniques for figurative representation. Reliefs that have undergone re-elaboration on either side at different times can be chronologically placed relative to each other, while some of the data derived from excavation offer absolute chronology, at least for some group series.

⁵⁷ See D. Faccenna, Note Gandhariche -2. Sulla ricostruzione di un grande rilievo da Butkara I raffigurante la partenza di Siddhārtha da Kapilavastu. In G. Gnoli, L. Lanciotti (eds), *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci memoriae dicata*. SOR, LVI, 1, 1985, pp. 325–41.

Stupa 14 and 17 and pillar no. 135 in Butkara I are of particular significance for our research. Stratigraphic evidence suggests for them a dating around the end of the 1st century BCE and the beginning of the 1st century CE. They show a series of figurative, decorative, and stylistic elements—that can also be found in cornices with busts and some reliefs—belonging to the group we call “draftsmanly.” The Saidu Sharif I frieze, which can be dated to the beginning of the 1st century CE, also belongs to this group. This dating has been endorsed by Prof. Johanna E. van Lohuizen de Leew, subsequent to examination of some of the sculptures from Butkara I, and through comparison with sculptures from Mathura.⁵⁸ As we have seen, the Butkara I complex is far larger than Saidu Sharif I and covers a much wider range.

An interesting point which I can only deal with briefly here is the connection between these sculptures and the problem of the origin of the image of the Buddha, and in particular whether it is to be attributed to the school of Mathura or of Gandhāra, or whether it derived independently from both schools at the same time. This is the “great debate” between Alfred Foucher and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, which has involved recent contributions offering different solutions, and different chronological attributions.⁵⁹ Van Lohuizen-de Leew and Joe Cribb attribute the creation of Buddha in human form to Mathura, the former dating it between the end of the 1st century BCE and the beginning of the 1st century CE, the latter in the period of Kanishka.⁶⁰ According to Tanabe, it occurred at the same time in Gandhāra and Mathura under the Kushanas at the time of Kanishka, as a consequence of the influence exerted by the Kushana religion at the time of Kanishka on the original Indian Buddhist conception, combined with Graeco-Roman technique and iconography (in

⁵⁸ J.E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, New evidence with regard to the origin of the Buddha image. In H. Härtel (ed.) *South Asian Archaeology 1979*. Dietrich Reimer Verlag, Berlin, 1981, pp. 377-400.

⁵⁹ A. Foucher, *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art: And Other Essays in Indian and Central-Asian Archeology*. Paris and London, Paul Geuthner and Humphrey Milford, 1917. A. Coomaraswamy, The Indian origin of the Buddha image, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 46, 1926, pp. 165-170.

⁶⁰ van Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1981; J. Cribb, The Origin of the Buddha Image—The Numismatic Evidence. In B. Allchin (ed.) *South Asian Archaeology 1981*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 231-244. Note that J. Cribb since 1984 was in favour of a mid-1st century chronology for Kanishka.

this case, however, dating Kanishka around 200).⁶¹ Finally, John Huntington cites an image of Buddha on a small urn or jar of steatite in the National Museum of History in Taipei, which can be dated to 36 BCE.⁶² The real problem, however, is not the origin of the images, but why and exactly when they were first produced in stone, if we accept the evidence of a literary tradition suggesting that images in perishable materials like wood had previously existed.

Arrangement, classification and study of the sculpted material for further contribution to what has so far been published is by now nearly complete. Our work should represent a real step forward in the understanding of Gandhāran art which, thanks to the contact it had with various civilizations and cultures, acquired a composite character that was at the same time highly original. As our study approaches completion, we are bearing in mind the possibility of carrying out a project I proposed at the Peshawar Conference.⁶³ This would entail digitization of a corpus of sculptures using video-disks, and has already aroused the interest of Pakistani, French, and English colleagues, suggesting that there are very good chances of accomplishing the task.

5. Rock sculptures

Another field being studied at present includes the rock sculptures and steles of Swat. A survey carried out by Stein, Tucci, and Dani in Dīr has

⁶¹ K. Tanabe, Iranian Origin of the Gandharan Buddha and Bodhisattva Images. *Bulletin of the Ancient Orient Museum*, VI, 1984, pp. 1-28.

⁶² J. Huntington, A Note on a Buddha Image from China Dated to the Year 36 of the Pre-Christian Era (Former Han Chien Chao Third Year). *Lalit Kalā*, 22, 1985, pp. 27-31. A note on the pot, however: experts in Chinese ceramics and epigraphy convened that the pot was as a fake, a fact first confirmed in writing to Rob Linrothe (he wrote about it later in R. Linrothe, Inquiries into the origin of the Buddha image: a review. *East and West*, 43, 1/4, 1993, pp. 241-256). Huntington retracted his previous work on the pot via a short note published as The Buddha Image of 36 B.C. Published in *Lalit Kalā*, No. 22 is a Fake. *Lalit Kalā*, 23, 1988, pp. 44-45.

⁶³ Italian Archaeological Mission (IsMEO) Pakistan, Swāt, 1956-1981. Documentary Exhibition. On occasion of the First International Conference on Pakistan Archaeology, Department of Archaeology, Peshawar University, Peshawar March 1-4 1982. Peshawar 1982.

revealed that they are in fact very numerous.⁶⁴ The sculptures belong to various periods, some being decidedly ancient but the majority rather late (6th-9th centuries). They stood in sacred places or along roads where monks, pilgrims, armies, tradesmen, and artists were wont to pass. They reveal the role of Swat as a link between the Peshawar plain and the northern regions (Gilgit, Hunza, and Baltistan).

On the basis of the topographical and historical picture largely defined by Prof. Tucci and enhanced by Prof. Dani and Prof. Karl Jettmar's discoveries, an archaeological survey is at present being conducted in the valleys of Kandia (Swat), Darel and Tangir (Gilgit). In these northern areas the Pakistan-German Study Group, led by Profs. Dani and Jettmar of Heidelberg University, has been producing widely acclaimed results in the fields of history, topography, religion, ethnography, linguistics, and the visual arts.⁶⁵ This research has shed new light on the complex and therefore intriguing border-situation of these areas, dwelt by peoples of various traditions and ethnic roots. The Mission looks forward to a period of undoubtedly fruitful collaboration with the Pakistan-German Study Group, assured that it will prove reciprocally advantageous.

The study of certain aspects of the later Buddhist period and the dissemination of the doctrines in the direction of Tibet leads us in the footsteps of the great thaumaturge Padmasambhava along the northbound roads with their sculpted images. And so we find ourselves actually following the scheme long cherished by Prof. Tucci. In fact, at the beginning of his report on the Swat surveys of 1955 and 1956, Prof. Tucci had written: "It is Tibet that led me on to Swat."⁶⁶ And many years later, he wrote in his preface to the catalogue of the exhibition on our activities, held in Peshawar in 1982: "Thus the road which led me from East (Tibet) to West (Swat, Dardistan, Gilgit) must be inverted: West-East."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Stein 1930; G. Tucci, Preliminary Report on an Archaeological Survey in Swat, *East and West*, 9, 4, 1958, pp. 279-328; A.H. Dani, Buddhist Rock Engravings in Dir, *Ancient Pakistan*, 4, 1968, pp. 251-257; A. Filigenzi, *Art and Landscape: Buddhist Rock Sculptures of Late Antique Swat/Uddiyana*. Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, Vienna, 2015.

⁶⁵ Jettmar's contributions are numerous; the reader can find a complete bibliography in the special number of this Journal, XXI, 1-2 (*Masters of Understanding. German Scholars in the Hindu Kush and Karakoram 1955-2005*).

⁶⁶ G. Tucci, *La via dello Svat*. De Donato, Bari, 1963. (2nd ed., Roma 1978).

⁶⁷ *Italian Archaeological Mission (IsMEO) Pakistan, Swat, 1956-1981. Documentary Exhibition. On occasion of the First International Conference on Pakistan Archaeology*,

6. Conclusions

We have traced the outlines of research at present undertaken by the Italian Archaeological Mission, and we have seen some of the results that have been achieved, starting with a full in depth inquiry into the Swat region, and then looking north and south at the neighboring areas. This is an attempt to reconstruct the cultural and historical environment of the valley in the context of the north-western region of the subcontinent—an area that is rigidly considered a crossroad between east and west, a crucible where the blending of many various ideas and experiences has produced a wealth of interest. Our work has offered us the opportunity to approach the great problems of history and material culture in concrete terms, superseding the traditional divisions between the classical and eastern worlds in order to offer a new vision of Eurasian unity. This is the contribution that the Italian Archaeological Mission wants to make to Pakistan, a country as close to the Mission as Italy is. In the course of its activity, our Mission has assembled a sizable collection of graphic material, photographs, and files. We are now proceeding to a general review and arrangement of all this material, with direct examination of buildings of which very little has been published, if anything at all. Settlement by settlement and area by area, we intend to outline the history of sacred architecture. Many aspects of the subject are generally ignored, and yet it has some extremely expressive and at times magnificent examples to offer.

It is hardly necessary to say that all our tasks require much time and the constant involvement of our scientific and technical staff, as well as considerable economic resources. But above all it is the respect and friendship of the Archaeological Department of Pakistan that has made the collaboration with the Italian Archaeological Mission so felicitous over our thirty years of activity. The feelings are mutual and fully reciprocated. And here, a special mention must be made of the past directors of the Archaeological Department, Dr. F.A. Khan and Dr. Ishtiaq Khan, and of the present director, Mr. Sheikh Khurshid Hasan, as well as of all the officials and technicians of the Department. Our thanks also go to the federal and local authorities, and in particular to His Majesty Major General Miangul Jahanzeb Abdul Huq, the former Wali of Swat, and to

Department of Archaeology, Peshawar University, Peshawar March 1-4 1982. Peshawar 1982.

Prince Miangul Aurangzeb and Prince Ahmedzeb, whom we fondly remember after his recent and tragic death. Our thanks are also due to the Italian Embassy, to its officials, the ambassadors, and in particular the present ambassador His Excellency De Franchis, who has been constantly attentive to our scientific work and logistic problems. Finally, we extend our gratitude to the local workers' intelligent help in our excavations.

To all of you: my most heartfelt thanks, which I can also express on behalf of the Mission as a whole, of IsMEO, and of Prof. Gherardo Gnoli, the present chairman of the Institute—together with the wish that our collaboration may not only continue, but also increase in scope and results.