Journal of Asian Civilizations

Journal of Asian Civilizations

**(Founded by Late Prof. Dr. Ahmad Hassan Dani in 1978
as
Journal of Central Asia)**

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Wooden panel with the figure of Maheśvara from Dandan Oilik
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The So-Called "Pelliot Chinois 4518.24"
Illustrated Document from Dunhuang and Sino-Sogdian
Iconographical Contacts

Matteo Compareti

Abstract

Sogdian artists constantly adopted external religious iconographies from Mesopotamia, Greece, and India to represent local deities without major problems. Apparently, they did the same in their colonies abroad and especially in Buddhist Dunhuang where the main cultural milieu was Chinese. Two deities represented on a paper fragment from Dunhuang have been puzzling scholars since the 1990s. They present very strong Sogdian religious elements that, however, should be studied within the framework of Sino–Uighur art and culture of the Western Regions and Dunhuang. Many scholars considered the two deities both to be women. This article discusses the possibility that they actually represent a couple despite their aspect. Only one of them is a woman who can be identified with Nana. The other deity is probably Tish who was Nana's husband and corresponded to the Avestan rain god Tishtrya and, in the Mesopotamian cultural sphere, to Nabu. Nana and Nabu formed a divine couple in Mesopotamian religion. Nabu was in origin the patron of scribes and corresponded to Greek Hermes and Egyptian Thoth. He was also connected to the planet Mercury that Chinese artists represented as a woman. Nana and Tish formed a powerful icon that Sogdians reproduced on inexpensive material that could be easily transported and possibly invoked as protectors of the family.

Keywords: Dunhuang, Sogdian art, Chinese art, Sogdian deities, Zoroastrianism, Nana, Tishtrya, Tir

1. Introduction

A ninth—or tenth—century paper fragment measuring approximately 38 x 30 cm and kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France embellished with a controversial ink drawing has been puzzling scholars since the 1990s. The famous sinologist Paul Pelliot found it during his stay at the Mogao Buddhist Caves in Dunhuang (February-June 1908) and, for this reason, the document is called "Pelliot Chinois 4518.24". The scene includes two

confronted haloed deities in three–quarter view that do not seem to respond precisely to local artistic traditions (fig. 1). As is well known, Dunhuang was an important Buddhist center along the so–called "Silk Road" that is famous because of the paintings in the Mogao Caves and the great amount of ancient written documents (especially Chinese and Sogdian) found in the famous cave 17 or "Library Cave" and at present dispersed throughout many collections (Rong 1999-2000).

Fig. 1 - Pelliot Chinois 4518.24, Dunhuang. Ink on paper,
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. Sketch: Li Sifei.

Jiang Boqin and Frantz Grenet were the first scholars proposing a Zoroastrian interpretation for this "paper icon" because the two deities share many iconographical aspects with Sogdian art (Jiang 1991; Grenet 1995). According to Grenet, both deities are women because of their hairstyle, jewels, and garments. In fact, they present an elaborate hairstyle that was typical of Uighur and Chinese noblewomen in the late Tang and,

above all, Five Dynasties and Xi Xia period Buddhist paintings at Dunhuang (Wiercimok 1990; Russell–Smith 2005: 99–103). In his seminal study, Grenet identified these two deities with the she–devil (*Daeva*) or "bad Daena" and the "good Daena" that is the personification of a complicated and multifaceted concept of Zoroastrian religion. Scholars mainly relied on Zoroastrian texts for the identification of Daena as a woman usually accompanied by dogs. However, those scholars never completely agreed on the iconography of the Daena in visual arts (Gnoli 1993; Shenkar 2014: 94–95; Shenkar 2015: 100–109).

Frantz Grenet restated his hypotheses in another paper written with Zhang Guanda (1996). Grenet and Zhang realized that whoever painted that piece of paper used the iconography of the goddess Nana to represent the "bad Daena". Some other scholars who studied the Pelliot Chinois 4518.24 document agreed with Grenet's initial identifications and even enriched them with new evidence rooted in Zoroastrian literature (Zhang 2000; Reck 2003: fig. 8; Azarpay 2011; Hintze 2016: 83-92; Azarnouche, Ramble 2020: 369–71). Most of the scholars still prefer the Zoroastrian interpretation although some experts on Central Asian arts proposed different identifications.

Chiara Silvi Antonini (2007) argued that the Pelliot Chinois document presents Mithraic elements and, in her conclusion, she identified the divine couple with personifications of "faithfulness to contracts" and "supreme justice". In her paper on Turfan temple banners, Chhaya Bhattacharya–Haesner (2004: 44–46) did not propose any definitive identification although she presented a complete list of possible candidates that were rooted in the Sogdian and Chinese religious milieu. In her opinion, the multiarmed deity has strong connections with Avalokiteshvara but she was extremely cautious in proposing such a precise identification for one of the deities in the Pelliot Chinois document. Some years later, Almut Hintze (2016: 86-89) pointed at some researches by Lilla Russell–Smith (2005:101; 2015) who found very interesting parallels between the two deities depicted on the Pelliot Chinois document from Dunhuang and other unusual Turfanese "female divine couples" that could have originated in a non-Buddhist sphere. In this group of "female divine couples", one could include also Toyuk Buddhist cave 66 where the female deity on the left presents also an animal looking like a dog while the one on the right is definitely a man (The Research Institute for Turfan Studies, The Turfan Museum 2017: figs. 101–102; Russell–Smith forthcoming a).

Finally, Lilla Russell-Smith and Antonio Panaino presented in their forthcoming articles some new interpretations based on the female counterpart of Sirius rooted in the Egyptian astrological-astronomical milieu who could have easily been adapted to the Chinese name of Sirius: the Celestial Wolf (Panaino 2019: 31). All scholars assumed – with the only exception of Silvi Antonini (2005) – that the two deities in the Pelliot Chinois paper document are women.

In this paper, I would like to contribute to the discussion mainly following the points already highlighted by Bhattacharya–Haesner.

2. Sogdian deities in Dunhuang

Few doubts exist about the identification of the two persons with deities although the conclusions by Grenet still present unclear points. The deity on the left of this drawing is sitting on a rectangular seat supported by lotus petals. This deity wears a long dress and scarf the extremities of which reach the ground and holds metal objects with both hands: a cup in her right hand and a plate with the reproduction of a sitting dog in the left hand. This detail immediately called the attention of Frantz Grenet since it is very similar to the iconography of Sogdian deities who, sometimes, hold a plate in one hand with a small reproduction of their symbolic animal above. On the right of the scene, a four–arm deity is sitting on a ferocious animal with an open mouth. She is holding in the upper hands the symbols of the sun and the moon while the lower hands present an insect (a scorpion according to Grenet) and a snake.

The sun and moon in her upper hands, the throne in the shape of a symbolic animal, and the same presence of four arms are all Sogdian iconographic elements typical of Nana, the main goddess of pre–Islamic Central Asia who originated in Mesopotamia many centuries earlier (Shenkar 2014: 116-128; Farridnejad 2018: 268-69). At least since the sixth century, Indian iconographical elements became very popular in Sogdiana to represent local deities. For this reason, it is common to observe Sogdian divinities with four arms, in some cases with three heads, attributes, and symbolic animals used as vehicles (*vahana*) exactly as in India (Compareti 2009; Grenet 2010).

The adoption of Indian religious iconographies represented the final phase of a process that actually involved local elements and also Mesopotamian and Greek ones. Sogdians were extremely receptive to iconographies from other cultural spheres and abandoned older

iconographies (possibly, even genuinely Sogdian) with great ease (Grenet, Marshak 1998: 8-9). This can be proved to be actually correct in the case of the Jartepa II Temple paintings that represent local deities identified, by the way, with Nana and Tish by Marshak and Grenet (in Berdimuradov, Samibaev 2001) without any trace of Indian iconographical elements because they were executed in the fourth or early fifth century (Shenkar 2014: 122). The change and adoption of external iconographies also implies another curious phenomenon. In fact, more than one Sogdian deity could appear according to various iconographies depending on the period and not just the personal taste of the artists or sponsors of religious paintings from Jartepa, Penjikent, and other sites.
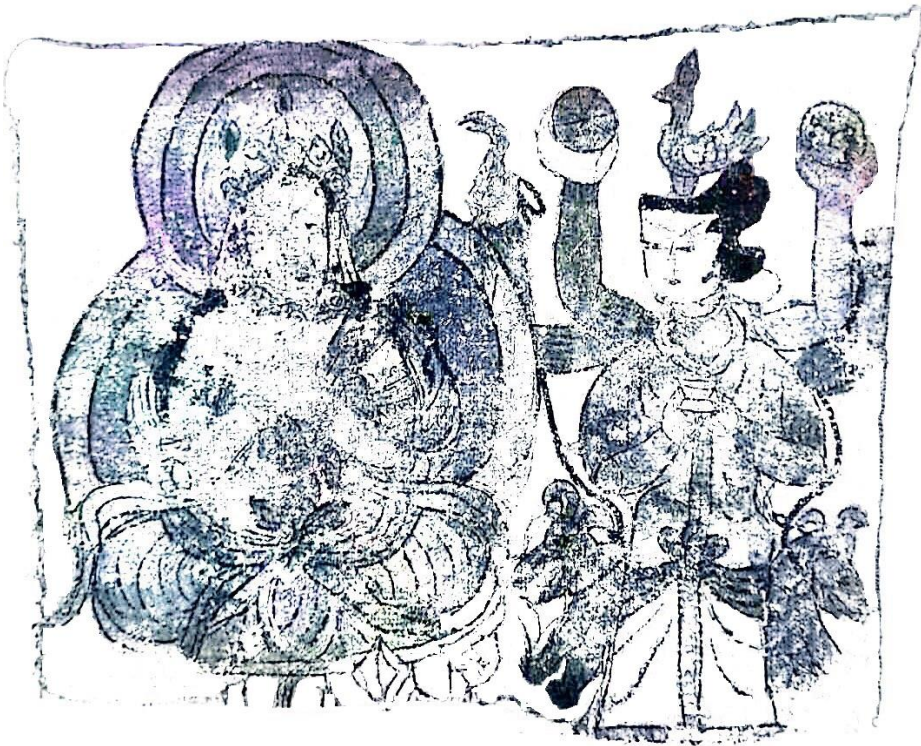

Fig. 2 - Fragmentary Buddhist banner, Turfan. Painted cotton,
Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin (III 7243).
(After: Bhattacharya–Haesner 2004: pl. 9.)

All scholars who studied the drawing of the Pelliot Chinois in the Bibliothèque Nationale recognized the similarities between the goddess

sitting on the ferocious animal and Nana (Azarpay 2011: 75; Shenkar 2014: 35). However, they mainly accepted Grenet and Zhang's identification of the evil *Daeva*/bad Daena with the only exception of a few of them. Bhattacharya–Haesner compared the Pelliot Chinois document with a tenth– or eleventh–century fragmentary Buddhist banner in cotton from Turfan now kept in the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin (III 7243) embellished with a divine couple (fig. 2).

The main difference between the Pelliot Chinois paper fragment and the Turfan banner pointed out by Bhattacharya–Haesner is the figure on the left. In fact, in the Turfan banner this figure is definitely a haloed Buddha sitting on a lotus. Bhattacharya–Haesner (2004: 44) convincingly identified him as Amitabha. As Grenet and Zhang (1996: 179–80) had already noticed, some other Buddhist "icons" from Dunhuang often presented the image of Amitabha in front of a standing and multiarmed Avalokiteshvara who usually holds the sun and the moon in his upper hands. Avalokiteshvara is the Bodhisattva of compassion that, as is well known, Chinese Buddhists represented as a man or a woman (Guanyin).

The deity in front of Amitabha in the Turfan banner presents a typical elaborated Chinese female hairstyle that includes also a *fenghuang* (the so–called "phoenix" bird). However, in this case, the arms of the deity are six and there is no throne shaped as an animal but (according to Bhattacharya–Haesner) two wolfs or rams behind the standing deity. Only the head and a small part of the body of those animals is visible. The deity is holding the sun and the moon in her upper hands while with both lower hands she holds a cup. In the middle pair of hands, the deity holds the leashes attached to the necks of the two animals. Only the right middle hand is completely visible despite its poor state of preservation. This hand is holding a snake and the final part of the leash together. The portion of the banner with the left middle hand is now lost but it is clear that the deity was holding the end of another leash still visible just above the head of the animal. It is however possible that together with the leash also an insect or scorpion was depicted on this hand as in the Pelliot Chinois fragmentary paper from Dunhuang.

At this point, Bhattacharya–Haesner's conclusion appeared obvious: the Turfan icon does not represent a couple of deities but an unusual representation of Amitabha on the left and Avalokiteshvara as a woman on the right. According to local traditions, women who wanted to have children had to pray to Avalokiteshvara/Guanyin and, for this reason, Chinese artists insisted on the feminine touch of the Bodhisattva. In my

opinion, however, the iconography of Avalokiteshvara/Guanyin in that Turfan icon was rooted in Sogdian art or, in any case, presented an intermediary iconographical phase between India and (western) China (Turfan in the Tarim Basin or Dunhuang in western Gansu Province) that probably passed through Sogdiana or Sogdian colonies along the so-called Silk Road. For this reason, I think that the animal heads beside Avalokiteshvara/Guanyin considered by Batthacharya-Haesner to be wolfs or rams could actually be lions represented in a very approximated way, which reflects Chinese artistic standards.

3. Mesopotamian iconography in Central Asia

Bhattacharya–Haesner (2004: 44) compared the presence of leashes, the snake, and the scorpion in the Pelliot Chinois document and the Turfan banner with a second century CE marble slab from Hatra embellished with the image of the Babylonian god of the underworld Nergal together with his wife Ereshkigal. This Mesopotamian divine couple presents symbolic animals that are similar to the ones in the much later Dunhuang and Turfan specimens. Hatra was a caravan city in northern Mesopotamia that had very close cultural relations with Arsacid Persia until its destruction by the Sasanians in 240 CE but also had cultural exchanges with the Greco–Roman world (Sommer 2003: 19). We should return shortly to Hatrean religious iconography.

As I have tried to demonstrate in another paper of mine, Mesopotamian elements played an important role in the formation of Central Asian art and culture. In that paper, I specifically focused on the Mesopotamian divine couple formed by Nana and Nabu that Sogdian artists continued to represent in eighth century CE paintings from Penjikent after superimposing the image (and functions) of Tish with that of Nabu (Compareti 2017). Actually, Mesopotamian texts mentioned Tashmetu as Nabu's wife and, at the same time, they equated her with Nana/Nanaia (Azarpay 1975: 35; Pomponio 1978: 50, 139, 169; Westenholz 1997: 71, 73, 75). Sumero–Akkadian Nana/Nanaia should not be confused with another goddess of the Sumerian pantheon: Inanna who had been already superimposed to Semitic Ishtar and Greek Aphrodite in ancient times (Westenholz 1997: 64; Potts 2001: 23-25). According to ancient Mesopotamian sources, both Nana/Nanaia and Inanna had some connections with the planet Venus (Heimpel 1982: 9-17).
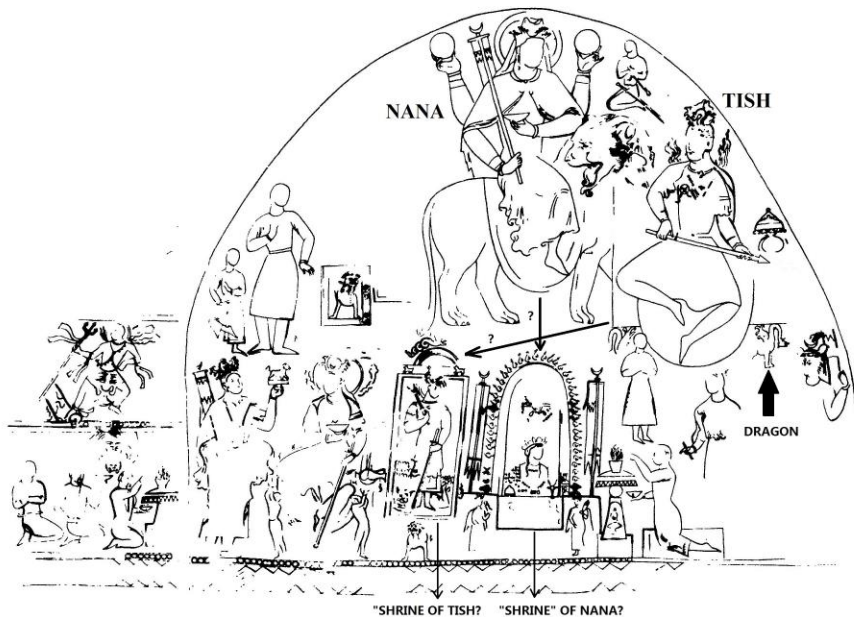
Fig. 3 - Eighth–century Sogdian painting, Penjikent room 12/sector XXV. The State Hermitage Museum. (After: Maršak, Raspopova 1991: fig. 3.)

Sogdian Tish was assimilated with the Avestan rain god Tishtrya whose attribute was probably the arrow. Nabu too was connected with rain and water although this was not his primary function in Mesopotamian religion (Panaino 1995: 76). Sogdian artists possibly carried out a transformation of the attribute of Nabu – the stylus since, originally, he was the god of scribes – with the arrow of Tish. Tish had retained some memory of his original function as patron of scribes also in the Iranian cultural sphere (Panaino 1995: 61; Panaino 2020: 363) and Akkadian texts already associated him with the arrow (Panaino 1995: 29-33, 47-59; Rochberg 2009: 62, 73). Sogdian artists, moreover, kept the symbolic animal of Nabu (the *mushuhushshu* dragon, see Lambert 1984: 88) and transferred it to Tish as is possible to observe in at least one painting from Penjikent room 12/sector XXV (fig. 3) (Maršak, Raspopova 1991: fig. 3). Interestingly enough, the dragons supporting the throne of Tish in Penjikent have an elongated neck that does not seem to be exactly the one of the Mesopotamian *mushhushshu*. Possibly, Sogdian artists modified or changed quite easily also the iconography of symbolic creatures exactly as they did in the case of their deities. As it will be observed below, other

dragons could change iconography in Sogdian art according to their chronological frame.

The identification that I propose for the divine couple in the Pelliot Chinois document is quite simple. In my opinion, the goddess on the right is Nana. She is dressed like a Chinese or Uighur noblewoman of the ninth or tenth century Dunhuang while sitting on her symbolic animal that is the lion. However, for some reason not completely clear, the person who did this drawing represented the lion as a wolf or another ferocious animal.

According to Martha Carter, *Xiwangmu* the Chinese "Queen Mother of the West" of Han art would have had some iconographical connections with Nana since the third century CE. In fact, Chinese artists usually represented *Xiwangmu* sitting on a lion that, by the way, they did not depict in a realistic way (Carter 2008: 110-124). Sometimes Zoroastrian deities appeared on funerary monuments of powerful Sogdians who migrated to China in the sixth century and were mainly buried in Chang'an (modern Xi'an). These monuments are commonly known as Sino–Sogdian art objects and they are not numerous. Only on one panel of the unexcavated Sino–Sogdian funerary couch in the Miho Museum collection (Shigaraki, Japan), there is an image of Nana standing frontally with four arms (Juliano, Lerner 1997: 72–73). The lower part of her body is hidden behind a wall where two lion heads appear probably in place of a throne or a vehicle shaped like an animal (fig. 4). For which reason did Nana appear together with the lion in the sixth–century Miho Museum funerary couch and she was sitting on a wolf-like animal in the ninth– or tenth–century Pelliot Chinois document from Dunhuang?

As pointed out by Jessica Rawson (1984: 110–13), Chinese artists were unfamiliar with lions. These animals began to be depicted in China only after the introduction of Buddhism and with much artistic license (not to say fantasy). According to Guitty Azarpay (2011: 75), the artist who painted those deities in Dunhuang changed the animal of Nana because the lion could had very strong Buddhist connotations. However, this does not explain its resemblance to a wolf that, from a Zoroastrian point of view should be a negative animal like the scorpion and the snake.

The Sogdians have probably always represented felines as wolves. One seventh–century silver dish in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France considered by Marshak (2017: fig. 51) to be Sogdian presents a walking tiger with typical stripes on its body whose head looks like that of a wolf or some other ferocious animal. Some centuries later, the lion could appear shaped like a wolf (and vice versa) in Islamic illustrated

astronomical–astrological treatises (Hartner 1938: fig. 17; Caiozzo 2011: fig. 5). In a thirteenth–century *Daqa'iq al–Haqa'iq* "Degrees of Truths" Persian manuscript from Anatolia at present kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (ms. persan 174), the personification of the Sun with four hands is sitting on an animal that should be a lion but actually looks very similar to the beast in the Pelliot Chinois fragmentary paper (fig. 5).

Fig. 4 - Nana on one panel of the unexcavated Sino-Sogdian
Miho Museum funerary couch (Sketch: Li Sifei).

Other details of the Pelliot Chinois paper should remind one of the Sino–Uighur cultural sphere where such a drawing was produced. The bird in the sun and the tree in the moon in her upper hands are definitely rooted in

the Chinese cultural milieu. Very clear Chinese elements such as the use of coins with a square hole in the center or the adoption of a vertical writing system began to appear more and more often among the Sogdian immigrants in China, the Sogdian commercial colonies along the so–called "Silk Road", and Sogdiana motherland itself (Yoshida 2013). There is therefore nothing surprising about the presence of strong Sinicizing elements among medieval Dunhuang's Sogdian immigrants.

Fig. 5 - The Sun sitting on a lion, Daqa'iq al–Haqa'iq (thirteenth century). Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms. persan 174, Aq–saray, 1272, f° 110v° (After: Caiozzo 2003: fig. 91).

Let us now turn our attention to the deity in front of Nana. He seems to be Tish/Tishtrya who presents a hairstyle like the goddess but a completely different garment. In fact, on his chest, there is stylized armor and his long dress could actually point to trousers that almost completely cover his feet. His jewels too are very similar to those of Nana: the earrings are the same although the necklace could be a torque that was a typical male accessory in pre–Islamic Central Asia. For some reason, the artists choose to represent him sitting on a rectangular chair supported by lotus petals and not a dragon like in the painting in room 12/sector XXV in Penjikent. However, in his left hand he is supporting a plate with a dog that, as already proposed by Grenet and Pinault (1997: 1058) almost twenty–five

years ago, could be considered the symbolic animal of Tishtrya/Tish because of the association between this god and the star Sirius.

Exactly as in the Mesopotamian, Greek, and many other astronomical–astrological systems, ancient Iranians made each planet correspond with a deity of their own "pagan" period. According to this system, ancient Iranians connected the enigmatic Tir to the planet Mercury whose Sogdian and Persian name is also Tir. As already observed above, Tishtrya was associated with the star Sirius that is the brightest star in the night sky and part of the constellation Canis Major. There was some connection between a western Iranian deity called Tir associated to Greek Hermes and the planet Mercury, Mesopotamian Nabu, Avestan Tishtrya (Middle Persian Tishtar, Sogdian Tish), and Egyptian Thoth (Panaino 1995: 76-77). Moreover, the arrow was the symbol of Tishtrya/Sirius and Tir/Mercury (Gnoli 1963: 230-240; Panaino 1995: 63-64, 68, 70-78).

Such an association is however ambiguous because, according to Iranian astrology-astronomy, the planets were demonic entities (Panaino 2019: 553-55). In Middle Persian Zoroastrian literature, Tishtrya was considered to be the general of the eastern quadrant of the sky who had to fight the planetary demonic Tir/Mercury (Panaino 1995: 65). The demonization of the planets is ambiguous too in Zoroastrian literature since every planet of ancient astrology was associated with a deity without any problem. For example, Jupiter corresponded in Middle Persian literature to Ohrmazd (Avestan Ahura Mazda, Persian Hormazd) and Venus to Anahid (Avestan Anahita, Persian Nahid) and such names are still used in Islamic Iran exactly like in the Western "Christianized" world we still say Mercury, Venus, Mars, etc. Antonio Panaino dedicated many studies to this extremely complicated aspect of Zoroastrian astrology-astronomy that scholars could not fully elucidate (Panaino 1990: 48; Panaino 1995: 64-68; Panaino 2019: 53-55; Panaino 2020).

In any case, as already noted by Frantz Grenet and Boris Marshak (1998: 10-16) there are strong connections between Tishtrya, Tir, and Nabu which seem to represent a kind of adaptation to the functions of the latter at least in visual arts. In fact, Nabu formed a divine couple with Nana already in the Mesopotamian milieu and Sogdian artists depicted sometimes this "icon" in Penjikent paintings and on one ossuary from Kirmantepa. Antonio Panaino too discussed this association between Tishtrya, Tir, and Nabu. He concluded that "the eastern Tištrya-Sirius *yazata* was probably associated as early as the Achaemenid period with Tīriya, a Western Iranian divinity of as yet unclear origins linked to the

planet Mercury (cf. the Mesopotamian Nabû) and the art of writing" (Panaino 1995: 108).

The role of western Iranian Tir is not completely clear in Central Asia although it is very unlikely to imagine that Sogdians completely ignored him in referring exclusively to Nabu as the god related to the planet Mercury. Sogdian theophoric names included both Tish and Tir that seem to be therefore two distinguished deities from the linguistic point of view (Gharib 2004: 9753, 9758; Lurje 2010: 1278-79, 1289, 1292-95). Sogdians were used to give proper names that sometimes included deities usually considered to be negative such as in the case of the famous Devashtich (*dev* = demon) who claimed to be king of Sogdiana between 708–722 CE (Gharib 2004: 3805, 3806; Lurje 2010: 471). There are however, a few iconographical details in Sogdian religious art which could shed some further light on this specific problem.

Even though Tishtrya/Tish/Tir(?) in the Pelliot Chinois document is not sitting on the dragon, one could expect the dog to be equally acceptable as a symbolic animal of this god. The dog on the plate seems to be there in order to highlight expressly the importance of astronomical–astrological peculiarities of both deities. The dragon was a direct Mesopotamian inheritance for Nabu while the dog was the animal of Iranian Tishtrya. The presence of planetary deities in the Iranian Buddhist milieu (that, as is obvious to expect, presented strong Indian elements too) occurred in Kakrak paintings in the Bamyan region where a possible personification of Mercury (Persian Tir, Indian Budha) appeared as an archer with a dog sitting next to Buddha (fig. 6) (Compareti 2008: 142–44). Grenet and Marshak (in Berdimuradov, Samibaev 2001: 59) supposed that the way in which Tish is holding the arrow in Sogdian art is the same as that of Indian Budha. At least one eighth–century sculpture from Lucknow (northern India) presents a precise parallel with the ideas of Grenet and Marshak (Hartner 1968: 362). One more ancient non-Buddhist western Bactrian representation of Tishtrya was individuated in fourth-fifth century Ghulbyan paintings in Faryab Province, Afghanistan. Frantz Grenet identified Tishtrya sitting on a throne and holding in his right hand a beribboned arrow. Curiously enough, a pond with fishes under his throne seems to remark his aquatic nature since in the Avesta he is the rain god (Marshak, Grenet 1998: 13-14; Shenkar 2014: 150).

Fig. 6 - The so–called "Hunter King" from Kakrak, Bamyan. Kabul Museum.
(After: Compareti 2008: fig. 1.)

Even though the Sogdians kept Tish and Tir distinguished in their
theophoric names, the association of both deities (western Iranian Tir and
eastern Iranian Tishtrya/Tish) with Mesopotamian Nabu in their local
form of Central Asian Zoroastrianism could allow one to assume that the
husband of Nana became a kind of syncretic deity among the Iranians. He
possibly resumed the characteristics of Sirius and Mercury. Moreover,
Sogdian artists who knew extremely well ancient astrology-astronomy
attributed to them the symbolic animals and attributes of Mesopotamian
Nabu, Iranian Tish/Tir, Indian Budha, and, even those of Egyptian deities

such as Thoth and Isis-Sothis. As Antonio Panaino (forthcoming) and Lilla Russell-Smith (forthcoming a; forthcoming b) argued, the fact that Isis-Sothis appeared still in Roman Egypt as the lady of the star Sirius riding a dog could represent another explanation for the feminine appearance of the deities in the Pelliot Chinois document. One could assume that the ideal intermediary between Roman Egypt and the Iranian world could have been Arsacid Persia

Astronomical–astrological connections in the Pelliot Chinois document had called the attention of several scholars. As already observed above, both L. Russel-Smith and A. Panaino focused on the astronomical-astrological aspect in their forthcoming articles. According to Shen Ruiwen (2019: 366–68), not only the sun and the moon in the upper hands of Nana but the snake and scorpion too had astronomical–astrological connections. There are unfortunately no clear representations of the zodiac in pre–Islamic Iranian arts. Archaeologists found a first century CE complete zodiac in Palmyra (Colledge 1976: 38–39) and Hatra (Neugebauer 1954). From an iconographical point of view, they both depended on Greek models. Despite its schematic reproduction, the sign of the Scorpion of the Palmyrean and Hatrean zodiacs looks very similar to the small animal in the right lower hand of Nana in the Pelliot Chinois document. Syrian cities such as Palmyra, Europos Dura, and Edessa (modern Urfa today in south-eastern Turkey) and, as already observed above, Hatra in northern Mesopotamia had very strong cultural connections with Arsacid Persia. Those cities were also religious centers and important nodes along the caravan routes between Iran and the Roman Empire (Dirven 2009: 51). Greek art was very important in those cities and some scholars had already highlighted some possible cultural ties between the Syro-Mesopotamian region and Gandhara that, on the other side, has been connected with Central Asia and the rest of India at least since the Kushan period (Bussagli 1994: 171-72; Hauser 2014).

The reference to Palmyra and Hatra is not accidental since in both cities there was a temple dedicated to Nabu. According to one of the excavators of this temple in Hatra, Nabu was associated with scorpions (al–Salihi 1983: 144). The possibility should not be ruled out that this animal had some connections to the planet corresponding in Mesopotamian astrology–astronomy to Nabu = Mercury (Pomponio 1978: 202-05; Panaino 1995: 75-76) that was later transmitted directly or indirectly to other religious systems (Deonna 1958; Deonna 1959). In Palmyrean religious art, the snake and the scorpion were the symbolic

animals of Shadrafa, originally a Canaanite god. Shadrafa probably means "healer" (or "satrap" according to a more recent hypothesis, see: Lipiński 1995) and his snake–entwined spear was probably adopted from the iconography of the Greek god Asclepius (Colledge 1976: 160). Nana was also very popular in Mesopotamian (Assur, Hatra, Babylonia) and Syrian (Europos Dura, Palmyra) centers as evidenced by archaeological investigations (Ambos 2003: 238–249).

The artistic production of Palmyra and Hatra represents an ideal intermediary in the process of transmission of later Mesopotamian iconographies to the Iranian world. Such a process probably started much earlier, even before the Achaemenid period, as argued by Dan Potts (2001: 30-31) in a study dedicated only to Nana. However, Palmyrean and Hatrean artists could have contributed to refresh ancient iconographies among the Persians and Central Asians possibly through the Parthian Arsacids at least until the third century CE (Ambos 2003). After this period, only the city of Harran (ancient Charrae) continued to keep alive ancient Mesopotamian beliefs at least until the eleventh or twelfth century (Green 1992: 175–76). Harran was a famous center for the study of astrology–astronomy (Caiozzo 2003: 128–35) and it could have maintained some relations with the Iranian world both in Persia and Central Asia for a very long period. Unfortunately, there are no late images from Harran before its definitive Islamization.

Other interesting elements for the identification of the divine couple under examination could be found in a much later Islamic illustrated manuscript. An early fourteenth–century Arabic copy of *'Aja'ib al–mahluqat wa ghara'ib al–maujudat* "The Wonders of Creation and the Oddities of Existence" by Zakarya ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud al–Qazwini at present kept in the British Library [Or. 14140] devotes a lot of space to astronomical–astrological investigation. The personification of planet Mercury (Arabic 'Utarid) is not depicted as a typical scribe but as a haloed bearded man sitting on a fantastic bird holding a book and a more enigmatic coiled snake in his hands. According to Stefano Carboni (2015: 59), the snake could refer to the caduceus of Hermes/Mercury with obvious implications rooted in Greek mythology. The caduceus or (winged) snake–entwined wand was also the attribute of Asclepius whose iconography Palmyrean artists had probably imitated for the representation of Shadrafa. Moreover, Mercury/'Utarid was called *munafiq* (hypocritical) in Arabic because did not have positive nor negative influences. In conjunction with a lucky planet, it brought good fortune, and with an

 unlucky planet bad fortune. This concepts appeared also in the *Mirajnama* texts where the Prophet riding the *buraq* flying creature was described passing by the planets whose characteristics reflected their depiction in Islamic astrological treaties (Toutant 2021: 442-43). 'Utarid presided, moreover, over Gemini and Virgo. The first sign is possibly the most ambiguous of the entire Zodiac while, in conjunction with Virgo, Mercury was represented as a beardless young man (Carboni 1997: 13). Middle Persian sources too mentioned the ambiguous conjunction problems with Mercury and its neutral influences (Panaino 1995: 74). Such textual and iconographical elements rooted in astronomy-astrology could further explain the feminine aspect of Tish in Sogdian art.

If it could be assumed that the snake and scorpion were associated with Nabu/Mercury and were somehow transferred to his wife in the Sogdian religious milieu, then each element of the divine couple Nana–Tish of the Pelliot Chinois would indeed be traceable to the very ancient iconography of Mesopotamian and Greek gods. This supposed exchange of attributes and symbolic animals between the divine couple under exam could better explain also the presence of a "canine" lion for Nana. In fact, it could be just another reference to Tish/Sirius. Such observations could corroborate the identification of the two deities in the Pelliot Chinois document with Nana and Tish who had very strong astronomical–astrological connections.

One aspect of the identification of the figures in the Pelliot Chinois as a divine couple still deserves further discussion, namely the female appearance of Tish.

4. Tishtrya/Tish/Teiro/Tir (?)

Many scholars considered the deities in the Pelliot Chinois document to be women because of their hairstyle, jewels, and garments. Their observations are definitely correct at a superficial level. In fact, a female attire or appearance does not necessarily indicate a goddess. This phenomenon is common in both ancient Iranian and Greek art. For example, Dionysus was depicted with female garments and hairstyle in Greek, Roman, and Byzantine art at least until the sixth century CE and the Sasanians reproduced him on some silver vessels according to this feminine style. Some scholars have not been able to understand the representation of Dionysus according to the hairstyle of Ariadne or the maenads around him in those late Sasanian silver vessels and, for this

reason, they preferred to identify that god with Anahita, the Avestan goddess of fertility (Compareti 2019).

For some undefined reason, Tishtrya has been depicted as a woman already in one second century CE Kushan gold coin of Huvishka kept in the British Museum (fig. 7). Kushan coins have the great advantage of bearing inscriptions in Bactrian language that determine the name of the depicted deity. In Bactrian language, Avestan Tishtrya corresponded to Teiro and his iconography was probably based on that of Artemis. Michael Shenkar (2014: 149) remarked that the iconography of Teiro as Artemis is very similar to one of the typologies of Nana in Kushan coins. Such a similarity could be not accidental. Nana had some lunar connections and Kushans were possibly aware of this. In fact, Nana appeared with a crescent in Kushan coins (Carter 2010). However, according to H. Falk (2015), she had also some connections with Venus.

Fig. 7 - A unique Huvishka gold coin with the image of a deity called Teiro. The British Museum (After: Shenkar 2014: pl. 25).

As is well known to experts of ancient Iranian arts, other Kushan deities had iconographical features borrowed from Greek art. Religious

iconographies transmitted by Kushan numismatics presented other anomalies such as in the case of Druvaspa who was a goddess in the Avesta but appeared in male attire on Kanishka and Huvishka gold coins (Shenkar 2014: 96–97; Farridnejad 2018: 317). Nevertheless, Teiro was the only male deity of the Kushan pantheon represented as a woman (Grenet, Marshak 1998: 12; Shenkar 2014: 149–50). Curiously enough, Kushan artists sometimes used the iconography of Greek Hermes to represent Pharro (Avestan *Xwarenah*, Middle Persian *Xwarrah*), the personification of an Iranian concept to be translated as "glory" or "charisma" (Gnoli 1996). Not only Sogdian but Bactrian deities of the Kushan period too presented more than one iconography and Greek elements always received great attention.

As already mentioned above, Mesopotamian elements played a very relevant role in the transmission of religious iconographies from the Sumero–Akkadian original cultural milieu into the Iranian one. The latter included Persia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus region. In fact, written sources (Classical, Zoroastrian, and Islamic) clearly mentioned a goddess called Nana in all those regions during the pre-Islamic period (Shenkar 2014: 19-22, 116-28). It would be interesting to investigate some cases of sexual ambiguity among Mesopotamian deities that involved Nana and her husband. There is actually one unique Parthian silver coin of Fraates II (138–127 BCE) embellished on one side with the image of a bearded goddess who, at first glance, could remind the one of the Greek Tyche. According to Fabrizio Sinisi (2008: 236), she could be Nana although Michael Shenkar (2014: 118) did not accept completely such an identification. It is however worth insisting on the Parthians as the more probable intermediaries in this process of iconographical transfer. In fact, Arsacid rulers controlled not only Iran and Mesopotamia but also the Caucasus and, probably, maintained some connections with their ancestral motherland in Central Asia. The situation is not completely clear under the Sasanians although it seems more obvious to prefer the Parthians since, during their reign, Christianity did not spread yet in Mesopotamia and northern Arabia where traditional religions were still strong. For this reason, it seems more probable to imagine Parthian intermediaries between Mesopotamian and Central Asian cultures.

The Parthians probably kept strong relations and cultural ties not just with Mesopotamian but also other Semitic regions of the Syro-Palestinian coast, Palmyra, the Nabateans, etc. For example, Sogdian Christians and Manichaeans used alphabets strictly connected to the

Syriac Estrangela and Palmyrean variants (Lurje 2021: 67). Interestingly enough, Nabateans, Palmyreans, and other northern Arabic tribes represented the god al–Kutbay according to the iconography of Greek Hermes. In some cases, Hermes/al-Kutbay's iconography included also hermaphrodite traits (Zayadine 1997: 618). As already underlined by Károly Kerényi (2012: 86-88), Hermes too was a hermaphrodite deity as also one part of this term itself (*herm-*) points at. Moreover, Hermaphroditus in Greek mythology was the son of Hermes and Aphrodite. Written sources are very few but as some scholars tried to demonstrate, Arabic medieval literature knew Hermes Trismegistus and attributed to him important properties usually referred to the magic and astronomical-astrological sphere (Cottrell 2015: 353-72).

Greek names and attributes of Zoroastrian deities appear sometimes in ancient sources. A second century CE Heracles bronze statuette from Seleucia with a bilingual Greek and Parthian inscription allowed one to imagine that there was some kind of well–established correspondence between Classical and Zoroastrian gods during the Arsacid period (Bernard 1990; Morano 1990). In that bilingual inscription, Tir explicitly corresponds to Apollo and one would expect such a parallel to be confirmed in Arsacid Armenian sources. In his *History of Armenia*, Movses K'orenac'i always identified Tir with Apollo (Tavernier 2005: 364). However, the Christian Armenian author Agathangelos (fifth century) only mentioned Tir as "interpreter of dreams, the scribe of pagan learning, who was called the secretary of Ohrmazd" in his *History of the Armenians* (Tavernier 2005: 364–66). Other Armenian sources and even some earlier versions of the New Testament in Armenian rendered Hermes with Tiour/Tir (Panaino 1995: 61-64). Agathangelos did not give any description of statues or other pre–Christian works of art; he just limited himself to describe the destruction of pre–Christian temples and shrines by Gregory the Illuminator in the early fourth century (Thompson 1976: 317).

According to Greek written sources, more than one Classical deity could correspond to different Iranian (including Armenian) and Mesopotamian divinities. In his study on Zoroastrian deities, Michael Shenkar (2014: 150) was extremely critical about the connections between Apollo, Nabu, and Tishtrya. Nevertheless, if Apollo corresponded to Tir among the Parthians and Apollo also corresponded to Nabu in the Mesopotamian cultural milieu, there would be then more evidence to associate Nabu with Tir and, possibly, Tishtrya. Despite the common association with Nabu, some other Mesopotamian deities corresponded to

Apollo (Schwartz 2005: 148). According to Paul Bernard (1990: 58-60), the inscribed bronze statuette of Heracles from Seleucia points at the correspondence Apollo/Nabu and Artemis/Nana. However, such correspondences still present some unclear points.

At Nimrud Dag (ancient Commagene), the situation is even more complicated because the association was "Apollo–Mithras–Helios–Hermes" (Dörner, Young 1996: 437–440). It is interesting to observe that those inscriptions at Nimrud Dag associated Hermes with Apollo in the Greek cultural milieu although there is little doubt that Apollo was of non-Greek origin. According to one theory, he could have been even a Hyperborean (that is to say, Scythian) deity later adopted by the Greeks (Dodds 1973: 140). Apollo was represented very often on Hellenistic (and especially Seleucid) coins as a young man holding an arrow in his left hand (Iossif, Lorber 2009). In Greek literature, the Hyperborean Abaris was a traveling healer and fortuneteller who carried an arrow explicitly mentioned as a symbol of Apollo [*Lycurgus*, fragment 5a]. However, in those inscriptions from Nimrud Dag, Apollo is identified with Mithra and not, as one could have expected with Tir (Panaino 1995: 74). It is worth observing that Apollo (Nabu's Hellenistic counterpart) can be represented on the back of a monster, specifically a griffin. This is the so-called image of Apollo Hyperboreus and it can be found fairly often on Greek red and black painted vases from the Black Sea region that is another area of intense interaction between Greek and Iranian (Scytho-Sarmatian) cultures (Onajko 1977).

Since the dragon is the animal that supports the god seated together with Nana in the XXV/12 Penjikent painting, it could be considered that some artists still had clearly in mind the original iconography of Mesopotamian deities in seventh-eighth century Sogdiana. Actually, it is not possible to establish on which basis such ancient Mesopotamian elements had arrived so far and how did they reappear after so many centuries. It is however clear that Nana and Nabu were Mesopotamian deities and, therefore, Sogdian (and other Central Asian) priests or artists could have some memories of their original cultural background. Moreover, the caduceus (*kerykeion*) of Hermes sometimes terminates with a point or a very clear arrow head that did not call much attention among scholars of Classical art. On the contrary, some experts noticed that the caduceus could be related to similar objects in Mesopotamian art (Halm-Tisserant, Siebert 1997). There are unfortunately no representations of Tishtrya nor Tir in Arsacid nor Sasanian art (Tavernier 2005: 363). One

fifth century fragmentary Sasanian stucco panel from Bandyan (Dargaz, northeastern Khorasan) presents a person holding a bow in front of a horse that the excavator of the site proposed to identify with Tishtrya (Rahbar 1998). A stone object embellished on four sides from Bishapur (Fars province) that Roman Ghirshman (1948: 293-94) considered to be a Sasanian ossuary presents also the image of a person dressed as a woman with one fish on each side. Ghirshman proposed to identify the deity wearing a long dress as a woman and also Michael Shenkar (2014: 75) accepted her identification with Anahita. In the light of the fishes on the base of Tishtrya's throne at Ghulbyan already observed above, there could be some connection between these animals and the Avestan rain god. Unfortunately, no inscription nor other element could prove such an idea. Pre-Islamic Persia still represents a kind of missing link in this process of iconographical transfer. Our main source of information therefore remains pre–Islamic Central Asian art.

Tish has possibly been a popular deity in Sogdiana at least since the third century CE. A seal impression from Erkurgan (Karshi, Uzbekistan) dated to that period presents a god riding a dragon in front of a woman who seems to present some offerings (Isamiddinov, Sulejmanov 1984: fig. 30). There are a seven–pointed star and a crescent behind the god (fig. 8). This "unknown local deity" holds one object identified by Michael Shenkar (2014: 169) as a whip that actually could be the arrow of Tish with some kinds of ribbons or standards attached to the top. The presence of the dragon and the astronomical–astrological symbols could point to an early iconography of Tish. As already observed by Shenkar, the woman offering a cup and holding the reins of the dragon seems to be a donor and not a goddess. In fact, one would have expected Nana to be represented sitting on a throne or lion. Deities sitting on a throne with the foreparts of their symbolic animal on each side are very frequent in Sogdian art. Among the early eighth–century burnt wooden friezes from Penjikent, there are also the representations of several deities under arches. Next to Mithra sitting on his horse–drawn chariot it is possible to observe a deity sitting on a throne with the foreparts of horned dragons on each side (fig. 9). That deity is depicted frontally holding a flower in his left hand and a stick (the arrow?) in his right hand (Belenitsky 1975: fig. 109).

Fig. 8 - A third century CE seal impression from Erkurgan (Karshi, Uzbekistan)
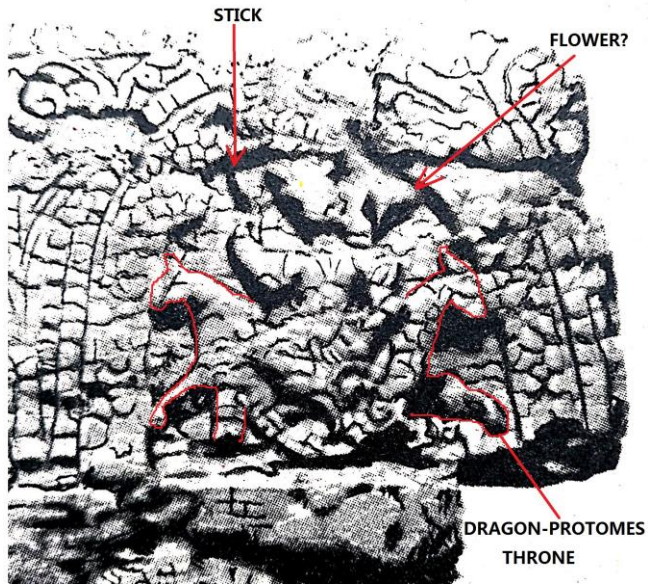(After: Isamiddinov, Sulejmanov 1984: cover)

Fig. 9 - Burnt wooden frieze from Penjikent, the State Hermitage Museum
(Sketch: author).

Shenkar (2014: 151) rightly observed that Tishtrya was venerated also in Chorasmia because of local personal names containing some forms attributable to that deity. However, he also observed that several Chorasmian silver bowls were embellished with the image of Nana but no image of Tishtrya had come to light. There is actually one interesting eighth–century Chorasmian silver bowl found in Daghestan with the image of a crowned deity sitting on a dragon while holding a small stick in the left hand (fig. 10). According to Boris Marshak (2000), this deity should be a woman because of her clean–shaven face, long hair, and dress. However, in light of the observations exposed above, I would prefer to identify the deity in the Chorasmian bowl from Daghestan as Tishtrya/Tish. Every detail, such as his symbolic animal, the stick that could be an arrow, and his female attire, strongly suggests such an identification.

Fig. 10 - Eighth–century Chorasmian silver bowl from Daghestan,
The State Hermitage Museum (Sketch: author).

The main characteristic of the dragon in the Chorasmian bowl from Daghestan is constituted by a pair of horns that deserve further discussion. This characteristic does not seem to refer to Greek art that had a strong impact on ancient Central Asian art and culture during some periods. Focusing specifically on the image of the dragon, recent excavations by

the Karakalpak–Australian Expedition at Akchakhan Kala revealed that a snake–like composite creature that was assimilated to the Greek *ketos* existed in first century BCE–first century CE Chorasmian art (Minardi 2016). In the light of the incompatibility of horns with the Classical image of the *ketos*, Greek elements should not be regarded as pertinent for the image of the goddess sitting on a dragon in the Chorasmian silver bowl from Daghestan.

Horns like those of the dragon in the bowl from Daghestan remind one of elements on the head of the monstrous animal called in Mesopotamian texts *mushhushshu* that was the symbol of Marduk and Nabu (Lambert 1984; Black, Green 1992: figs. 7, 31, 53, 76, 195, 110, 137, 159). One of the best–preserved ancient representations of the *mushhushshu* embellishes the very famous Ishtar Gate at present kept in Berlin Pergamon Museum (fig. 11). In that case, the dragon of Marduk presents two distinguished horns: a pointed and a curly one. Such a strange curly horn occurs also behind the ears of a composite winged creature that is part of the throne of a deity (also called "White Goddess") in a late fifth–early sixth century Sogdian painting from Penjikent Temple II, eastern wall of chapel 4–6, room 5 (period III). The wings of that composite creature present scales and there is a flower on its cheek. Its head looks like one of a dog (fig. 12) (Belenitskii, Marshak 1981: fig. 34). It is possible that the deity on the Chorasmian silver bowl and the Sogdian painting are exactly the same because of their symbolic animal that is a composite creature or dragon with curly horns.

Horned dragons that remind one of Mesopotamian prototypes appeared on some unexcavated Iranian metalwork objects. A *mushhushshu*–like dragon with a musician sitting on it embellishes an early Islamic (?) silver plate from Tomys (Udmurt Autonomous Oblast, Russia) at present kept in the State Hermitage (Marshak 2017: fig. 184). In this specific case, the person on the dragon does not seem to be a deity and the dragon has some vegetal parts on the chest and tail. Another image of a deity sitting on a horned winged dragon appears in the center of a silver dish kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Grenet (2016: 214–15) focused on the four female couples around the central deity on the dragon. He proposed to identify each female couple with a specific Zoroastrian seasonal festivity because of their attributes. For the deity with a dragon in the center, Grenet accepted B. Marshak's hypothesis that compares it with the Tomys silver plate but was quite skeptical about a parallel with a similar deity sitting on a griffin from Kuiruktobe that he preferred to

identify with Spandarmad, the Zoroastrian earth goddess. One last unexcavated bronze statue of a winged dragon with the same horns as in the Tomys and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France silver dishes allegedly said to come from the Helmand River region (Afghanistan) is at present part of the British Museum collection. Scholars have considered it to be early Islamic (Harper 1978: 97–99) or even first-second century Parthian (Simpson 2013). In light of the hypotheses expressed in this study, it should not be excluded that the deities represented on the metalwork objects observed above could refer to Tishtrya/Tish/Teiro and his dragon. As already seen, Tishtrya could be dressed as a woman in Central Asia. For this reason, it is very probable that those metalwork objects could be seventh– or eighth–century Bactrian or Sogdian products.

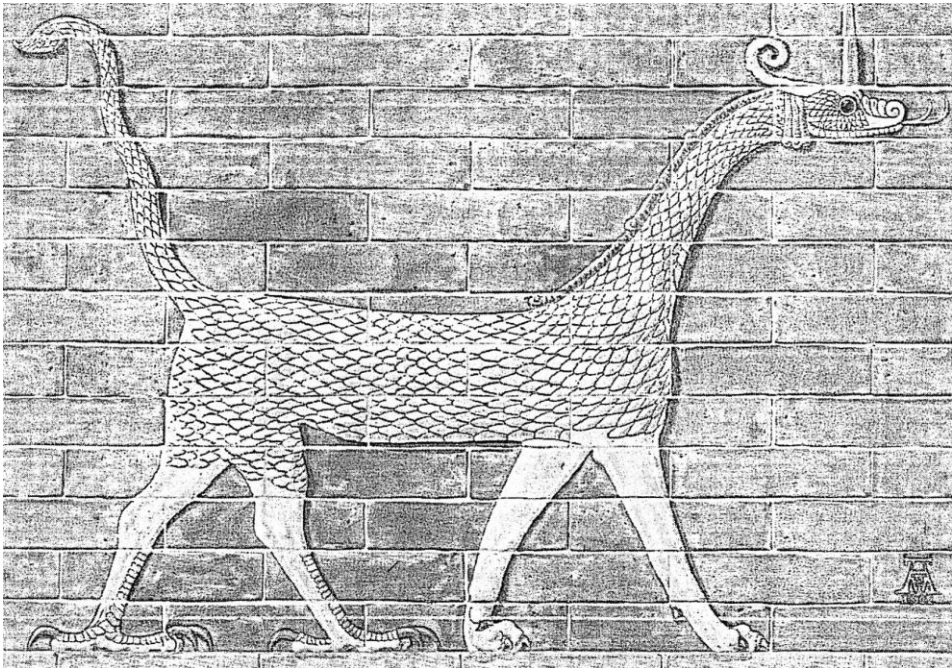
Fig. 11 - Mushhushshu on the Ishtar Gate. Berlin Pergamon Museum
(After: P.O. Harper, The Senmurv, *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*,
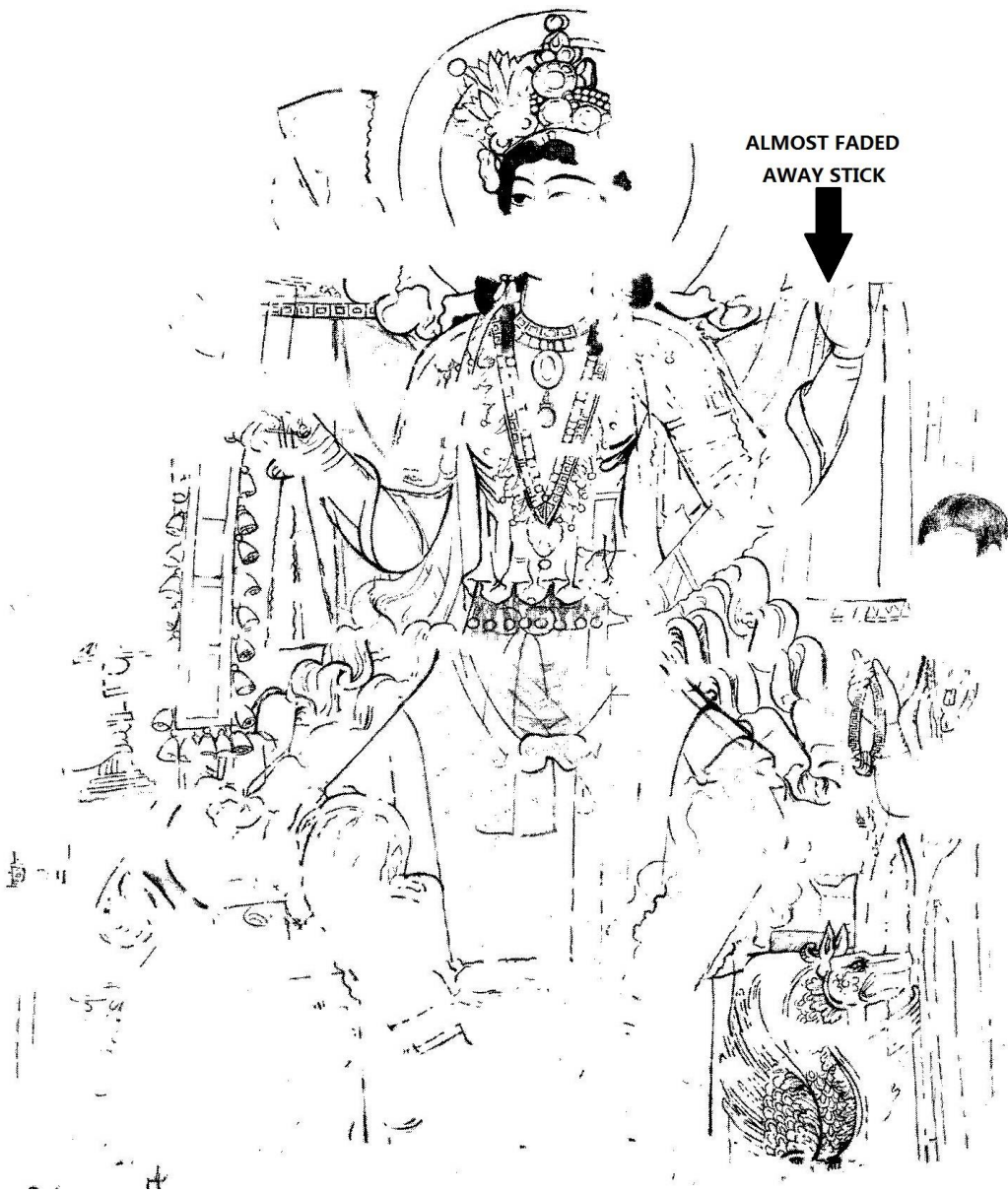1961: fig. 6).

Fig. 12 - Late fifth–early sixth century Sogdian painting from Penjikent Temple II, eastern wall of chapel 4–6, room 5 (period III), The State Hermitage Museum, (After: Belenitskii, Marshak 1981: fig. 34).

According to Michael Shenkar (2014: 78) and Frantz Grenet (2020: 23) the deity in the Sogdian painting from Penjikent chapel II/4–6 could be Anahita while the dragon should actually be identified with a winged or water dog (*sag i abig*) of Middle Persian texts. Guitty Azarpay (2011) too insisted on the dog–like aspect of the creature depicted in that Sogdian painting and, for this reason, she proposed identifying that deity with the personification of Daena.

Only the horn is a constant characteristic in all representations of that dragon while the wings, scales, and the head could be depicted quite freely. According to Marshak, not only was the deity of the Penjikent Temple II chapel a woman but also her symbolic animal was a Sogdian variant of a representation of a typical Iranian concept called in Avestan literature *xwarenah* (Middle Persian *xwarrah*, Persian *farr*, Sogdian *farn*) that we could translate as "glory" or "charisma". Scholars initially confused this composite winged creature with a representation of the *simurgh* of Persian literature (Middle Persian *senmurv*) although Alessandro Bausani (1978) and Boris Marshak (2002: 37) had correctly identified it with the symbol of Iranian glory.

In my opinion, the winged creature in chapel II/4–6 is not exactly a representation of the symbol for Iranian glory: the horn behind the ears could be better explained as a direct borrowing from ancient Mesopotamian art that Sogdian artists still reproduced after many centuries with some other variations. In fact, they probably added the wings and, more interestingly, a dog head. As already observed above, the dog could be considered an appropriate substitute for the *mushhushshu* of Nabu/Tish because of the astronomical–astrological connections of this deity with Canis Major constellation and its main star, Sirius. The canine aspect of the creature under the throne of the deity in Penjikent chapel II/4–6 represents a precise parallel with the dog on the plate in one hand of the god in the Pelliot Chinois 4518.24 paper fragment. For this reason, I think that the so–called "white goddess" from Penjikent is not a goddess at all but a god. In one of the best photographic reproductions of this painting, the enthroned deity wears a long garment that seems to cover a pair of trousers (Marshak, Grenet 1999: fig. 162). In his left hand, there are traces of a short stick embellished with square decorations in sequence. Unfortunately, the upper part of this stick is not preserved but some ribbons and even banners still visible in the background could have been attached to its final part. This stick could be the stylus of Nabu that Sogdian artists transformed into the arrow of Tish. In the other hand, there

was another almost completely faded attribute with some ribbons attached to it. There is finally to observe the sitting position of the deity that reminds one of similar royal scenes in Sasanian rock reliefs and also the deity on the Chorasmian bowl from Daghestan observed above. That sitting position had begun to suit the image of Anahita in Central Asia at least since the Kushano–Sasanian period (Grenet 2020: 23–24). It was introduced after the Persian conquest of Bactria in the third century CE although it pointed originally at kings. Only the absence of a beard and the hair falling on the shoulders seem to have suggested that this character may have been a goddess. Obviously these are unconvincing elements as even a god could have long hair and a clean–shaven face.

Another deity sitting on a dragon without horns can be observed in a sixth–century fragmentary painting from the niche on the western wall of chapel 4–6, room 5 (period IV) of Temple II at Penjikent. In this case, the iconography is definitely rooted in Indian art as clearly suggested by the four hands and the throne–dragon that is very similar to a *makara* (fig. 13). Scholars did not propose any definitive identification for this deity although they all agreed that she was a woman and called her the "red goddess" (Shenkar 2014: 170; Mode 2019: 96–97).

Guitty Azarpay had already proposed to identify the "white goddess" and the "red goddess" as the same deity represented according to different styles that pointed at two separate periods (Azarpay 1975: 27). Even in this case, there does not seem to be sufficient evidence to establish whether this deity is a woman or a man at first glance. On close inspection, the object held in the left upper hand looks like the stick decorated with square elements in the left hand of the Tish painting dated to period III in the same chapel. In addition, the terminal part was embellished with banners whose lower part can be seen just above the head of the dragon. Attributes such as the beribboned stick (possibly an arrow) and the dragon are the same in both paintings and, in my opinion, this is just another image of Tish depicted according to the Indian style that had started to become very popular for the representation of Sogdian deities in the sixth century. The god is the same but the style is different because local artists depicted them in two separate periods. In addition, the garments of the god are very similar in both paintings: they are only partially visible in the mural of period IV because a curtain and some other drape covered the deity (Mode 2019: 95–97).

As highlighted in one recent and extremely informative article by Markus Mode (2019: 94) focusing on the "twin temples" at Penjikent, the

southern wing inside the courtyard of Temple II was decorated with sixth–century sculptural reliefs reproducing an aquatic scene and a podium with traces of a statue (period IV). A *makara*–like dragon appeared in the aquatic scene in the reliefs and the same podium presented another *makara*. Mode argued that all this allusion to water and Indian water creatures should be associated with local rivers, the Oxus and Zerafshan. He was definitely right in proposing connections to a water deity although I think that Tish would better fit such a reconstruction both from the chronological and stylistic points of view. In fact, Tish was the Sogdian name of the Avestan rain god Tishtrya who was a water deity and was sitting on a *makara* in a painting of period IV in chapel II/4–6. At this point, one could propose that Temple I and II at Penjikent were dedicated to a couple of deities who, in all probability, were Nana and her husband Tish.
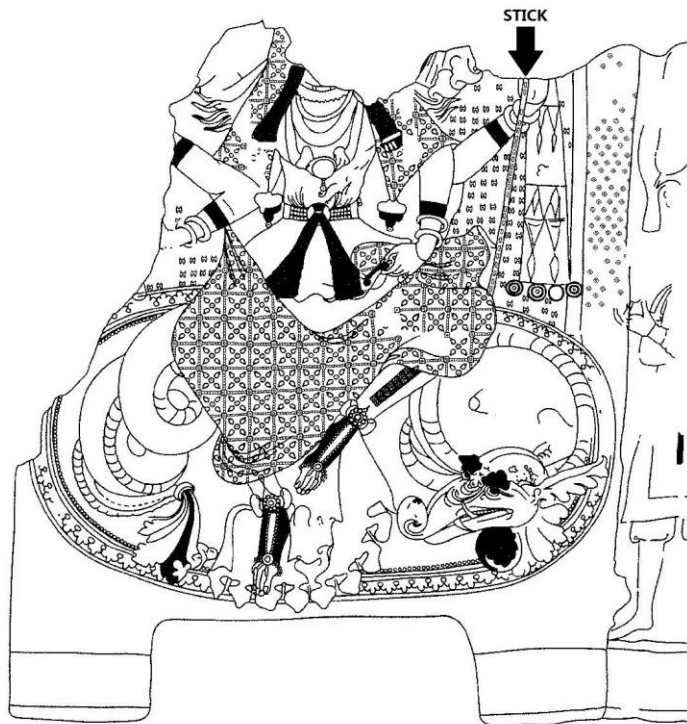

Fig. 13 - Sixth–century Sogdian painting from Penjikent Temple II, niche in the western wall of chapel 4–6, room 5 (period IV), The State Hermitage Museum, (After: Mode 2019: fig. 20).

On the western wall of chapel II/4–6 the archaeologist found traces of a painted image of Nana sitting on the lion (Mode 1991/92: fig. 9b) while on the eastern wall there is the image of Tish enthroned with all his typical attributes and a canine *mushhushshu* (ex "white goddess"). Markus Mode (1991/92: 181; 2019: 95) completed the triad inside chapel II/4–6 (period III) inferring that a third deity should have been painted on the northern wall but no traces are preserved. Sogdian artists depicted images of Nana and Tish facing each other in one of the Penjikent city temples because this was probably a very important icon. They reproduced this icon in private houses such as in room 12/sector XXV and on at least one terracotta ossuary from Kirmantepa in southern Sogdiana (fig. 14) (Shenkar 2014: 123–126). Curiously enough, in the lower left hand of Nana on this ossuary, the goddess is holding an object that could be a scaled monster or a fish shaped as a mace (Mode 1991/92: 185). Nana holding a mace shaped like a fish swallowing a round object also appeared on a sixth–century wooden frieze recently excavated in Kafir Kal'a. Frantz Grenet (2020: 23–24) did not identify another enthroned goddess with a fish–like mace in at least two Sogdian terracotta medallions with Nana. He preferred to identify that goddess with Anahita or the Fravashis. However, on the bases of the mace–like fish and the early chronology of those terracotta medallions (fifth century) this deity could be identified only with Nana whose iconography did not yet present Indian traits.
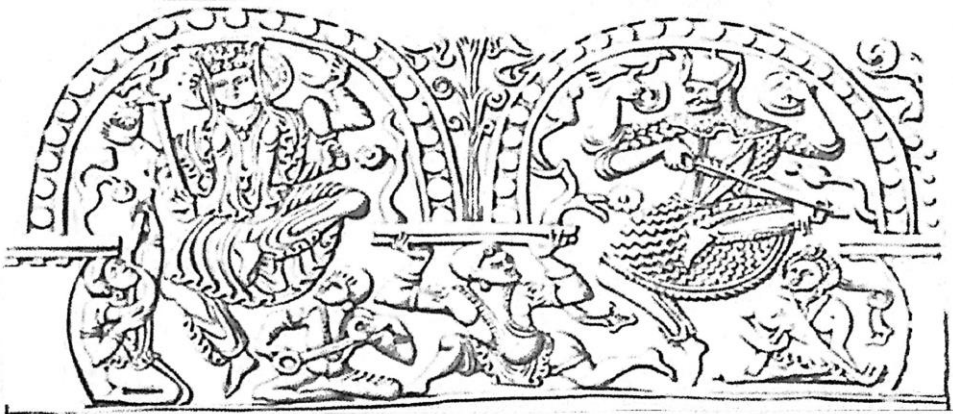
Figure 14. Sogdian ossuary from Kirmantepa, Kashka Darya region. University of Tashkent. Sketch: Li Sifei.

The same image of Nana from Kafir Kal'a presents some other interesting elements. In fact, that goddess seems to remove a piece of textile with her lower left hand to reveal herself (Grenet 2020: fig. 2). This attitude could remind one of the images of Tish from the niche in the western wall of chapel 4–6, room 5 in Penjikent Temple II (ex "red goddess") that M. Mode considered to be represented in the act of disclosing himself to the worshipers (Mode 2019: 95–97). Such a detail suggests that both Nana and Tish could have been part of ceremonies that included the sacred couple to be shown on special occasions. At this point of our investigation, one could argue that their attributes too could have been interchangeable.

Let us now focus on the mace of Nana. In ancient Mesopotamian religion, the fish appeared among the attributes of Atargatis who was sometimes confused with Nana and Ereshkigal (Colledge 1976: 36). As already observed by Bhattacharya–Haesner (2004: 44), the marble slab from Hatra embellished with the image of Nergal and Atargatis/Ereshkigal presents a demonic dog, snakes, and scorpions around the god while two facing fishes appear on the base of the throne of the goddess. Nergal was the brother of Sin – the main god of the northern Mesopotamian city of Harran (Charrae) – and among his epithets, "Lord with his dogs" (of possible Parthian origin) was still popular in the fifth–sixth century (Green 1992: 58, 72–73; Dirven 2009: 63-68). Since Nabu was closely associated with Sin in late antique Harran, it is not improbable that Nabu and Nergal could have been associated too with some possible iconographical outcomes. Dogs, scorpions, and snakes that were the symbolic animals of Nergal could then be related to Nabu as well. Lucinda Dirven (2009: 68) observed that the association of Nergal with dogs occurred only after the Parthian period probably because of the importance of these animals among Iranians. If this is the case, it could be argued that the Parthians promoted the association between Nergal with Nabu/Tir. Despite the absence of images, archaeologists found several ostraca from Old Nisa that included Tir in theophoric names (Shenkar 2014: 149). It is then worth observing that Apollo too had chthonic associations in western Anatolia because, he was originally a (Hyperborean?) healing deity who lived in the underworld and could cause pestilences. For this reason, Martin Schwartz accepted the parallel between Apollo and Nergal as proposed by other scholars. According to Schwartz, those two gods also shared the same symbolic animals (Schwart 2005: 148).

It is worth remembering that, among the debris found together with the podium inside the southern wing of the Temple II courtyard at

Penjikent, archaeologists excavated fragments of a fish. In his reconstruction of the statue of this water deity (that, in my opinion, is Tish), Mode (2019: 94) reproduced the *makara* on the podium and a plate with a fish in the hand of the hypothetical cult statue according to a typically Sogdian iconographical formula. It should not be ruled out that Sogdian artists could have chosen from various symbolic animals that in the case of Tish were the dragon, dogs, scorpions, snakes, and, possibly, the fish. Interestingly enough, a very ancient Central Asian goddess that Martha Carter associated to Nana could be represented sitting on a dragon. That American scholar concluded that "both lion and dragon appear to have been retained as her vehicles in these instances" (Carter 2008: 123).

Among the numerous deities represented in the painting from Penjikent room 12, sector XXV (fig. 3), there is also the representation of two curious architectonic elements that scholars proposed to identify as the representation of the "gate of hell" on the left and the "gate of paradise" on the right. According to this interpretation, the warrior clad in armor inside the "gate of hell" could be Yima (represented according to the iconography of Indian – or, better, Buddhist – Vaishravana) who had connections with the underworld as remarked by the image of the animal standing below the architectonic structure. F. Grenet, in fact, identified it as a lion or a feline that in Zoroastrian religion was a demonic creature (Grenet 1995/96; Grenet 2010: 94). Inside the "gate of paradise" there is just the bust of a woman and her entire structure is supported by a couple of angels. Markus Mode (2019: 97) has recently proposed to identify the so–called "gate of hell" and the "gate of paradise" as "portable shrines housing divine icons". These architectonic structures could be actually some kind of constructions that Sogdian artists rendered in a bi-dimensional and schematic way. Grenet (1995/96) was definitely right in identifying some elements of the armored god as belonging to the Indian religious milieu. However, his identification with Vaishravana/Yima does not seem justified. Pavel Lurje (2020: 459-64) has recently associated the name of Vaishravana to the Semitic Baʿal Shamin (Aramaic "Lord of Heaven") who was definitely known among Iranians and Armenians as well as a very prominent deity.

From an iconographical point of view, the armored god does not seem to have any negative connotation in Sogdian art and, in fact, he is standing on the figure of a demon inside the "gate of hell". He could remind a multiarmed image of Tish in the Sogdian ossuary from Kirmantepa who is holding an arrow (fig. 14). One more detail seems to

point in this direction since, above the so-called "gate of hell", there is the fragmentary representation of a dragon-like creature or *ketos* that could be just another allusion to Tish. If this identification could be convincing then the fragmentary animal below the "gate of hell" would be a dog and it should be considered just another symbol of Tish. At this point, it seems obvious to identify the goddess inside the "gate of paradise" with Nana despite the fact that she has no attributes and her entire structure is supported by angels. Practically, in the same scene of room 12, sector XXV there could be a divine couple reproduced, for some reason, twice. Another very fragmentary eighth century painting from Penjikent room 2, sector XXVI presents at least five divine figures whose identity is not easy to determine. The central one is probably Nana sitting on the lion while on the left there is just the same god clad in armor who is killing a dwarf at his feet with a spear or a very long arrow exactly as in the painting from Penjikent room 12, sector XXV (Shenkar 2014: 123). This was apparently another late Sogdian iconographical variant of Tish.

Let us now consider again the attributes of the divine couple in the Pelliot Chinois paper. If we assume that the ancient Mesopotamian–rooted attributes of Nana and Nabu/Tish were interchangeable in the Sogdian milieu, then the snake and scorpion in the lower hands of the goddess in the Pelliot Chinois document and the fish on the plate in one hand of Tish at Penjikent might be definitely disclosed. Tishtrya/Tish ambiguity in the Zoroastrian sphere points to this exchange of attributes. He is moreover the only deity possibly associated with Mercury/Tir and, at the same time, Sirius. Planets were considered demonic entities in Zoroastrian astronomy–astrology while stars had a positive nature (Tavernier 2005: 363; Panaino 2020). This ambiguity seems to be much accentuated in the case of Mercury/Tir and could possibly explain his feminine appearance or even an interchange of attributes with his wife Nana on the iconographical level. In ancient Mesopotamian texts, Venus and Mercury are assigned two genders (Rochberg 2009: 73). Ishtar/Aphrodite/Venus too could be described with a beard and she possibly even transmitted such characteristics to other female deities of the Near East (Heimpel 1982: 13-15). It should not be excluded that the ambiguity of Mercury had persisted among Iranian people such as Persians and Sogdians at least since the Achaemenid period. As already observed above, in Islamic astronomical-astrological system, Mercury/'Utarid was considered "hypocritical" that is to say, neutral. This peculiarity of Mercury/Tir could be rendered in visual arts just as sexual ambiguity.

One last hypothesis by Mode could shed light on the practical use of the Pelliot Chinois fragmentary paper. In fact, according to Mode (2019: 97), Sogdian merchants used to carry portable icons for protection or to worship them in every place at home or during their travels. It should not be ruled out that Sogdian travelers produced and sold them abroad as they did in the motherland. Narshakhi (tenth century) reported that still in early Islamic Bukhara local people bought "idols" in a bazaar in the city twice a year according to traditions rooted in pre–Islamic times (Lo Muzio 2010: 179). They used terracotta statuettes in Sogdiana but, possibly, in China they preferred some other inexpensive material such as paper. As is well known, Buddhism had no big problems in accepting divinities that belonged to other religious systems in a subordinate position to Buddha. So, the recovery of a paper fragment embellished with a Sogdian divine couple in a Buddhist center such as Dunhuang should not surprise us at all. One other scholar proposed very similar ideas although, in her opinion, the original artistic milieu should have been Uighur and not directly Sogdian (Russell-Smith 2005: 103).

Tish's feminine aspect is also confirmed in the Chinese cultural milieu and specifically in Dunhuang. In the painting on silk called "Tejaprabha Buddha and the Five Planets" (British Library, Stein painting 31) precisely dated to 897 by a Chinese inscription that Aurel Stein found in Dunhuang, the personifications of the planets appear around the central rayed Buddha on a chariot. According to the description of this painting by Lilla Russell–Smith (2006: 100) "Mercury who is always male in the West, became a female figure in China, but was still portrayed as a writer holding an inkstone and a brush". The same scholar argued that the anthropomorphic representation of the planets became popular in China after the arrival of Buddhism from India. This is definitely true although, in light of the ideas expressed in this paper, the feminine attire of Mercury was probably a Central Asian (most likely Sogdian) and not an Indian borrowing. In fact, as observed above, Indian Budha (Mercury) was a man holding an arrow with both hands. At least one other expert on ancient astrological iconographies described "anomalous" Mercury female appearance in Chinese paintings of "Tejaprabha Buddha" type (Kotyk 2017a: 51). Such an anomaly would appear much clearer if one considers Sogdian (most likely Buddhist) and not Indian intermediaries in this process of iconographic transmission of "western" astrology–astronomy. The planetary deities around Tejaprabha Buddha (Chinese *Chifengguangfo*) along with the symbols of the "western" and Indian signs

of the zodiac represented a popular subject among the Tangut Xixia artists who represented them in some eleventh century *tangka*s at present kept in the State Hermitage Museum collection (Samosjuk 1993).

There is finally to observe that the planet Mercury had always been called in Chinese "Shui xing", literally the "water star (planet)". This name seems to be very ancient (probably even pre-Han) and has no direct connections to Tishtrya/Tir as an aquatic deity. Some late Tang Chinese astronomical-astrological texts even rendered the names of the planets according to their Sogdian (and not Middle Persian) names: Tir is usually called *diè* (Panaino 1990: 198; Kotyk 2017b: 43). However, as Jeffrey Kotyk kindly pointed at me, in at least one case (CBETA 2021.Q2, T21, no. 1311, p. 460a23) the anonymous Chinese copyist rendered Mercury/Tir as *dī* that literally means "drop" (Kotyk 2021: 98-99). Even though it would be impossible to establish that the Chinese copyist tried to connect in this specific passage the name of Tir with a more suitable (and "aquatic") character, its semantic meaning is curious.

This allusion to water could be once more associated to the aquatic nature of Tishtrya/Tish who possibly corresponded to the planet Mercury/Tir in the Iranian world. His original Indian iconography already adopted by the Sogdians in the seventh-eighth century included a warrior clad in armor holding an arrow with both hands. A very similar position appeared for the representation of the *lokapala* of the east Dhrtarashtra in tenth–century Uighur Buddhist paintings in cave 9 at Bezeklik (Turfan, Xinjiang Province) (Meng, Zhao and Geng 1995: 143). Not only the iconography of Dhrtarashtra (Chinese *Chiguo tian*) but also his dominion over the eastern direction could be associated with Tishtrya. In fact, according to the Iranian cosmological system, the sky was divided into five parts each one dominated by a "general". Tishtrya was the general of the eastern part of the sky and had to fight against the planet Tir/Mercury (Panaino 1995: 65). There are unfortunately no pre–Islamic representations of these five Iranian generals. It is however very probable that, in Sogdian art, Tishtrya could have been represented as a warrior clad in armor and holding an arrow as in the Kirmantepa ossuary and some other Sogdian paintings from Penjikent that presented strong Indian elements typical of the iconography of local gods after the sixth century.

5. Conclusions

Central Asian artists have been depicting Tishtrya in women's attire since his very first representation in Kushan coinage and, for some reason, they continued to represent him in this way in Chorasmian toreutics and Sogdian paintings until Islamization. He formed an important icon with Nana that was as revered in the Sogdiana motherland (for example, in the "twin temples" at Penjikent) as in the colonies along the so–called "Silk Road". The Pelliot Chinois 4518.24 document attests the spread of this type of icon in Dunhuang well beyond the complete Islamization of Central Asia. In Dunhuang and the Tarim Basin (that is to say, in the Buddhist milieu), Sogdian, Chinese or Uighur artists probably superimposed the Nana–Tish icon on the Amitabha–Avalokiteshvara icon that was considered a powerful talisman for the protection of the family and children. For this reason, it is possible that Sogdians considered the Nana–Tish divine couple as a powerful icon to be prayed to for the protection of family affairs. Since in origin Nana and Nabu/Tish were Mesopotamian deities, also this component should not be underestimated. Mesopotamian elements represent the less clear components in this complicated pattern of iconographical transmission. The feminine appearance of Nabu/Hermes/Tish should be possibly searched in the Mesopotamian milieu.

This is just one possible reading that, in my opinion, could offer a good interpretation for the couple in the Pelliot Chinois 4518.24 document and a solution to many other iconographical problems in Sogdian art. Those publications based on Avestan and Middle Persian texts by experts on Zoroastrian studies are definitely a great expression of erudition but seem to have addressed a very small circle of intellectuals (perhaps Sogdian priests) and not the common people. Due to the cultural milieu in which the Amitabha–Avalokiteshvara icon was produced, it seems more likely that relatively inexpensive illustrated objects of worship of this type were aimed at a very large audience including mostly illiterate people.

Biographical note

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Specimens of Religious Scenes on Sino-Sogdian Funerary Monuments and Sogdian Ossuaries

Li Sifei

Abstract

Richly embellished tombs of powerful Sogdian immigrants found in China have greatly increased our knowledge on Central Asians who were active along the so-called Silk Road during medieval times. Sino-Sogdian funerary monuments often display scenes such as banquets, hunts, and funerals with images of Sogdian Zoroastrian deities that offer interesting parallels with Sogdian paintings and ossuaries from pre-Islamic sites in modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The comparative study of the representations of the passage into the Zoroastrian underworld in Sino-Sogdian art and several Sogdian ossuaries could shed new light on the identification of Zoroastrian deities and rituals.

Keywords: Sino-Sogdian funerary monuments, Sogdian art, Zoroastrian deities, ossuary.

The immigration and settlement of Sogdian people in China represent a well-known subject among researchers of Central Asian and the Silk Road studies. According to Chinese written sources, Sogdian Buddhist missionaries started to arrive just after the fall of the Han Empire (206 BCE-220 CE) while, during the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589), these immigrants were mainly traders and they followed other religions as well (De La Vaissière 2005: 77-9). Richly embellished tombs excavated in Gansu, Shaanxi and Shanxi, and even family cemeteries found in Xinjiang and Ningxia definitely demonstrated that many Sogdian immigrants had settled in China especially during the sixth century CE. Scientifically excavated funerary monuments to be certainly attributed to powerful Sogdians were found in the northern suburbs of Xi'an. Investigations conducted on these monuments allowed to include in the group of "Sino-Sogdian" funerary objects also unexcavated ones that are now part of public and private collections (Marshak 2001, Zheng 2001, Lerner 2005, Wertmann 2015).
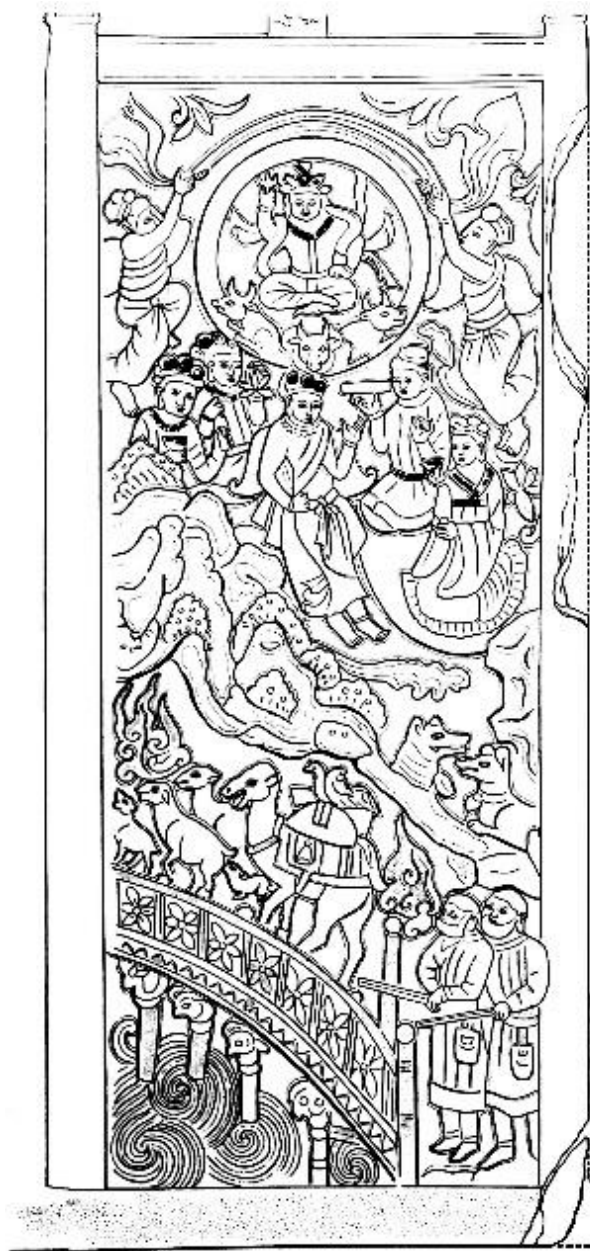
Fig. 1 - Shi Jun/Wirkak funerary monument. Shaanxi History Museum (after Grenet, Riboud, Yang 2004: fig. 3).

The term "Sino-Sogdian" art started to be adopted by experts to describe those monuments that included both "sarcophagi" shaped as houses and funerary couches that were quite common in pre-Tang northern China (Müller 2019). As it is obvious to expect in situations like this, powerful Sogdians in China preferred to display local habits to appear as much as possible to be Sinicized officials. Some Chinese sources do not hesitate to disapprove of Sogdian funerary habits rooted in Zoroastrian traditions such as next-of-kin marriage and exposing the dead to be eaten by dogs (Grenet 2015: 142-3).

Studies intensified in the last twenty years on Sino-Sogdian monuments. They should be considered most likely the creation of Chinese artists. However, the scenes and subjects depicted on Sino-Sogdian monuments are clearly rooted in the religion and culture of Sogdiana with very little Buddhist or Manichaean elements. Scenes such as banquets, hunts, and funerals can be found often on Sino-Sogdian monuments. Images of Sogdian "Zoroastrian" deities also sometimes appear on Sino-Sogdian monuments and a parallel can be usually traced with Sogdian paintings from pre-Islamic sites from modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Shenkar 2014).

Chinese authors used the specific term Xian (祆) to describe Sogdian religion that could be considered a local form of the faith usually called by scholars "Zoroastrianism" or "Mazdeism" (Riboud 2005). Many Avestan deities (and even Mesopotamian Nana) preserved their relevance in Xian religion. According to written sources, Ahura Mazda (called in Sogdian Adbagh) was an important deity in Sogdiana but not like in pre-Islamic Persia (Shenkar 2014: 63-5). Sogdian artists modelled the iconography of Adbagh on the one of Indian Indra; the elephant was his symbolic animal and the lyre his attribute (Compareti 2016: 228-30). Curiously enough, he does not seem to appear in any Sino-Sogdian monument while his description along with some other Xian deities can be found in Sogdian Buddhist texts exclusively found in China (Compareti 2009: 177-80).

On the other hand, Sogdians and other Central Asian people such as Chorasmians had different funerary habits in their motherland (Grenet 2013). Archaeological investigations that scholars have been carrying out since the end of World War II revealed that Central Asians mainly exposed the dead whose flesh had to be eaten by animals. They later collected the bones in special terracotta ossuaries that, in many cases,

presented interesting decorations. There were several differences between Sogdian and Chorasmian ossuaries while Bactrian ones have never been found (Bogomolov 2021). In this presentation, I would focus on religious scenes on Sino-Sogdian monuments excavated in northern China and Sogdian ossuaries that were found in the territory of modern Uzbekistan.
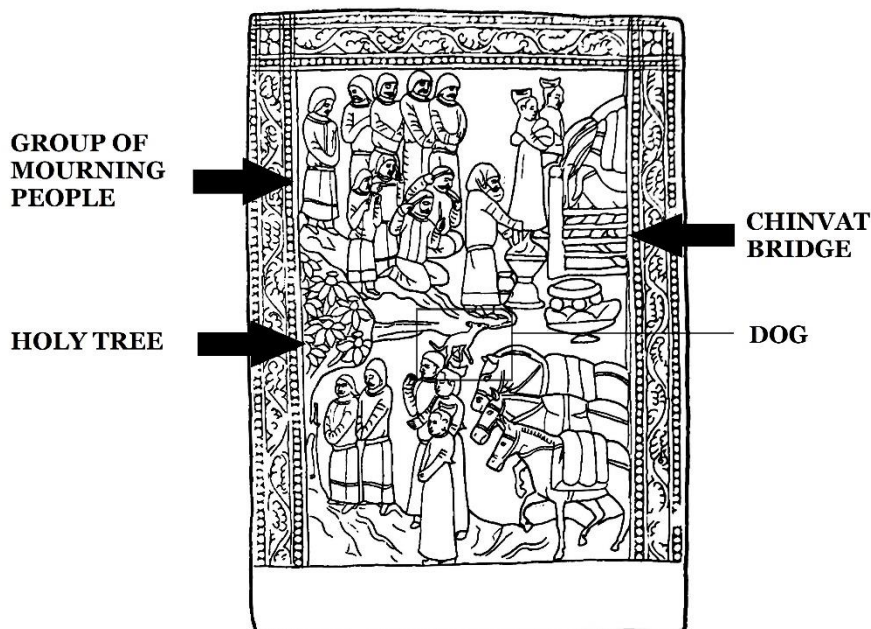

Fig. 2 - Miho Museum funerary monument. The Miho Museum, Shigaraki (Japan) (after Zheng 2001: fig. 25).

Zoroastrian deities appear sometimes on Sino-Sogdian monuments, the most interesting one being a god sitting on three bulls while holding a trident on the late sixth-century Shi Jun "stone house" (Fig.. 1). He should be identified with Weshparkar who corresponded to the Avestan wind god Vayu. In fact, for some reason not completely clear, Sogdian artists had adopted the iconography of the Indian god Shiva to represent Weshparkar since the sixth century CE (Compareti 2009, Grenet 2013: 26-7). One inscription in Sogdian language on an eighth century painting from Penjikent (room 1, sector XXIV) definitely allowed to identify Weshparkar (wšpr) with a multi-armed and three-headed god who is even holding the typical trident of Shiva (Shenkar 2014: 154). Two attendants beside Weshparkar in the Shi Jun funerary monument are holding a drape

blown by the wind that reminds one of the iconography of wind deities in Greco-Roman art. This drape was an appropriate substitute for any other attribute connected to the Sogdian wind god whose iconography is the result of a mixture of different religious traditions.

Fig. 3 - Fragmentary ossuary. Tashkent History Museum, Tashkent
(after Bogomolov 2021: fig. 8.1).

The representation of Weshparkar in the Shi Jun stone house constitutes a very interesting funerary element. In fact, the scene in the lower part of the panel with Weshparkar is probably a representation of the passage of the Chinvat Bridge that Zoroastrian believers had to cross in the underworld: for the good believer the passage was very comfortable while for the sinner the bridge was going to become sharp like a blade. At the beginning of the bridge there are two Zoroastrian priests wearing a typical ritual mask (padam) and with sticks (barsom) in their hands. Two dogs, almost hidden behind some rocks, complete the scene that reminded scholars of Zoroastrian funerary rituals (Grenet, Riboud, Yang 2004: 279).

  Another partial representation of the passage of the Chinvat Bridge appears in one panel of the so-called Miho Museum funerary couch that was probably excavated somewhere in China and is at present kept in Japan (Fig. 2). It is worth observing that also in the Miho Museum panel, there are camels and probably other animals of burden on the bridge

because the dead was a leader of a local Sogdian colony or, in Chinese, sapao (萨保 or 萨宝), a term that in origin pointed at the caravan leader. Next to the passage of the Chinvat Bridge there is a lamentation scene and some other people who seem to be praying in front of a (holy) tree (Lerner 1995: 185). As it was already recognized by some scholars, another panel of the Miho Museum funerary bed presents the prominent Sogdian goddess Nana with four hands behind a wall embellished with two lion heads. She is superseding a music and dance scene in the lower part of the panel (Marshak 2001: 234).
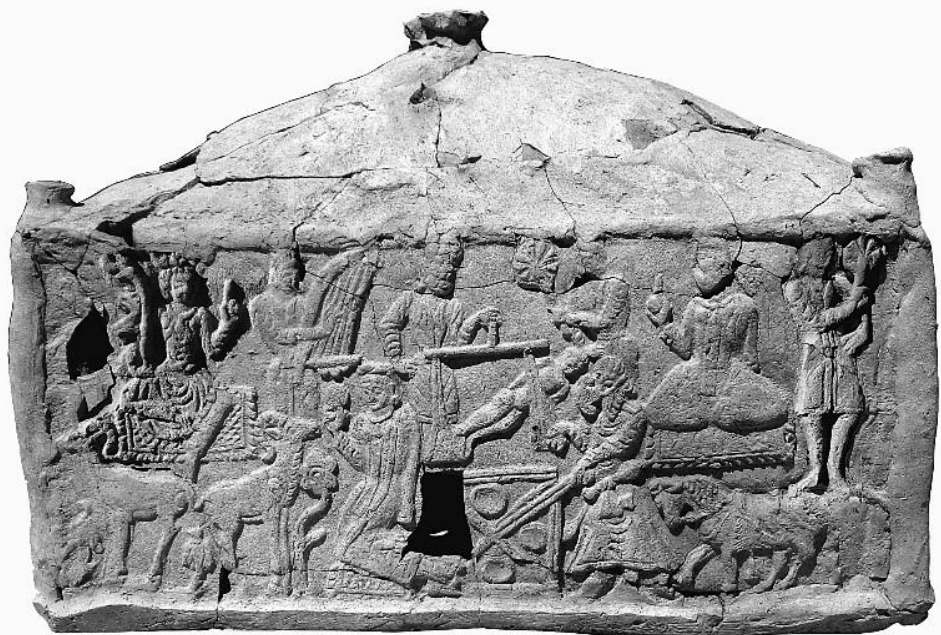
Fig. 3 - Yumalktepa ossuary. State Museum-Reserve of Shahrisabz
(after Berdimuradov, Bogomolov, Daeppen, Khushvakov 2008: fig. 1).

One fragment of a non-scientifically excavated Sogdian ossuary kept in the Tashkent History Museum presents a scene taking place on a structure above water that could actually be the Chinvat Bridge (Fig. 3). In this case, there is no caravan passing the bridge but a scene that seems to be rooted in Zoroastrian traditions as well. There are two persons on the bridge: one is standing with a portable altar or another similar object in his right hand. With his left hand, he is holding the hand of another person

(possibly the soul of the dead) that is completely lost. In front of the standing deity, there is a person sitting cross-legged with a scale in his left hand. Most probably, this is a representation of the god Rashnu, whose attribute was the scale.
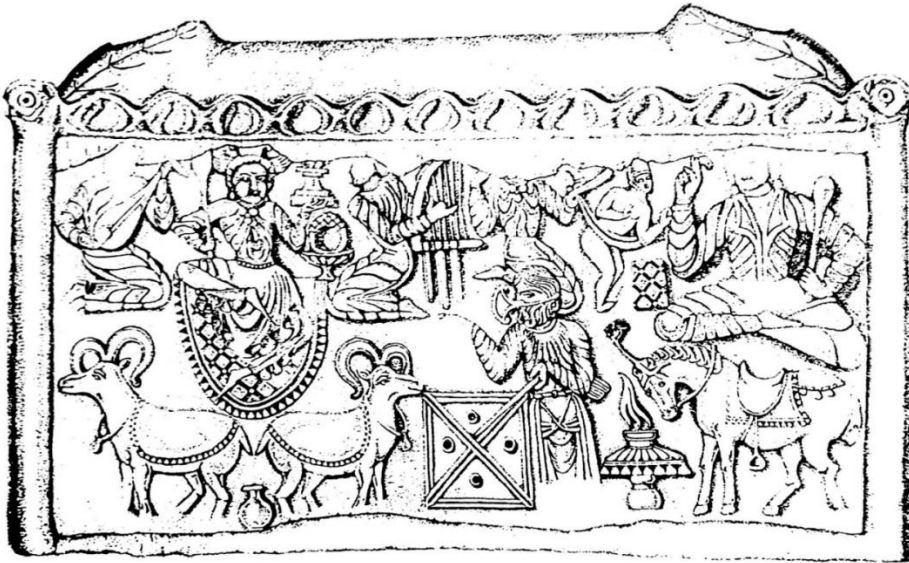

Fig. 4 - Sivas ossuary. Tashkent History Museum (after Grenet 1993: fig. 6).

According to Zoroastrian texts, Rashnu was a judge and he used a scale to test the soul of the dead (psychostasy) during his passage into the underworld (Grenet 1999: fig. 226). The other deity standing in front of Rashnu should be another important Zoroastrian god of the underworld. In the beginning of the fourth chapter of the Zoroastrian Middle Persian "Book of Arda Viraz" there is a clear description of the visit into the underworld of a good believer. Two gods, Srosh and Adur, welcomed and took the believer by his hand during his visit (Gignoux 1984: 155). This ossuary in the Tashkent History Museum corresponds pretty well to the scene described in the Book of Arda Viraz. For this reason, the deity standing in front of Rashnu could be actually Adur holding the hand of the dead and a fire altar that could be his own attribute. In fact, Adur was the personification of fire. Grenet and Minardi (2021: 156) preferred to identify this deity with Srosh although also Adur could be a reliable alternative because of the description in the Book of Arda Viraz and, above all, the fire altar.

Rashnu did not appear in Sogdian art exclusively in connection with the Chivat Bridge. Some other fragmentary ossuaries from Yumalaktepe (Kashka Darya region, Uzbekistan) present funerary scenes with at least three deities, two attendants, one priest and, possibly, one family member of the dead (Berdimuradov, Bogomolov, Daeppen, Khushvakov 2008). One can recognize Rashnu with a scale in his hands and two more enigmatic deities whose identification is extremely hard to determine (Fig. 4). One deity sits on a rug suspended above two rams standing back to back. On the other side, another deity stands on a rug above a horse. It should not be ruled out that the animals could be related to those gods since Sogdian deities were often represented sitting on their symbolic animals and, sometimes, even holding a dish with a small reproduction of that same animal. For this reason, one could speculate that the solar god Mithra referred to the horse while it is not easy to establish any clear identification for the deity above the rams.

Fig. 5 - Khantepa ossuary. Tashkent History Museum (after Grenet 1993: fig. 7).

Another Sogdian ossuary very similar to the one from Yumalktepa was found in Sivas (Tashkent region). The Sivas ossuary is very similar to the Yumalktepa one with some slight differences. In the Sivas ossuary, the image of Rashnu does not appear and in its place, there is another deity holding a piece of textile attached to a small naked figure (Fig.. 5). This could possibly be a symbolic representation of the soul of the dead (Grenet 2013: 24). However, the scene looks almost the same except for the dissimilar attributes the deity on the upper left side sitting above two rams presents and is less fragmentary than the Yumalktepa ossuary. In this case,

it does not seem that the two deities are exactly the same and, therefore, one should admit that they could be two different deities and possibly the rams are not referring to them. Michael Shenkar (2014: 85) recently argued that the deities beside Rashnu with his scale on the Yumalakptepa ossuary and the god wrapping in a textile the soul of the dead in the Sivas ossuary could be the Avestan god of "Good Thought" Vohu Manah on the right above the horse and the goddess of Fortune Ashi on the left just above the rams.

Fig. 6 - Painting from Penjikent room 28, sector XXV.
The State Hermitage Museum.
(after Shenkar 2014: fig. 130).

Another Sogdian ossuary from Khantepa with the representation of a deity sitting on a throne covered with a rug could be useful for our research (Grenet 1993: fig. 7). From one side of the rug, a lion-protome come out while, on the other side the figure in not preserved (fig. 6). All deities in the Yumalaktepa, Sivas, and Khantepa wear very similar garments that, at first glance, could be male clothes. However, as already mentioned above, the lion is the symbolic animal of Nana and, so, the deity in the Khantepa ossuary should be connected to her. One could assume that the central deity in the Khantepa ossuary is Nana represented according to unusual iconographical features. Such an iconographical incongruence could be valid for other Sogdian ossuaries as well. For this reason, even an identification of the deity in the Yumalktepa ossuary with a goddess and not a god (as already proposed by Michael Shenkar) could be acceptable. In order to propose any further identification, a short digression is necessary.

At least three eighth century Sogdian paintings from private houses in Penjikent (rooms 2 and 13, sector XXIV and room 28, sector XXV) present the same divine couple including a god sitting on a throne shaped as a camel and a goddess on a ram (Shenkar 2014: figs. 128-30). They both hold in their right hand a dish with a miniature image of their symbolic animal above (Fig.. 7). As already mentioned, it is not easy to identify the deity above the two rams in the Yumalaktepe and Sivas ossuary although one should not exclude the possibility that this deity is not a man but a woman who could be actually the "wife" of the god on the camel. In fact, some details of the Yumalktepa ossuary are not well preserved and it is not completely clear which garments and accessories appear in that point. If the identification with a female deity could be convincing, then who could she be?

According to recent researches by Matteo Compareti (2021: 139-40), the Sogdian goddess sitting on the ram could be connected with the planet Venus whose Iranian counterpart was Anahita, the Avestan goddess of water and fertility. One aspect of Greco-Roman Venus called Aphrodite Pandemos (Aphrodite of sensual pleasures) appeared sometimes in Classical art as a goddess completely dressed while riding a ram or goat (Fleischer 1984: 98-100, Schmidt 1997: 292-5). Compareti argued that the correct reading of Sogdian deities is sometimes rooted in the iconography of astrological-astronomical symbols that are very difficult to decipher. This could be the case of the Sogdian ossuary from Yumalaktepa and Sivas as well. It is, in fact, worth observing that the deity in the

Yumalaktepe ossuary is holding a flower that could be a very appropriate attribute of Anahita. Some connections between Anahita and vegetal elements under arches occur, for example, in Sasanian art such as on the column capital from Bisutun that was later transported and displayed in the park of Taq-i Bustan in Kermanshah (Compareti 2018: 25). Moreover, the vase between the rams in the Yumalaktepa ossuary could remind one of the ewer from which Anahita is pouring water in the upper level on the back of the larger grotto at Taq-i Bustan. Scholars considered this ewer in late Sasanian art as a very appropriate attribute of Anahita as a fertility and water goddess (Shenkar 2014: 71).

However, while Rashnu and Mithra were definitely connected to the passage into the Zoroastrian underworld, the position of Anahita is not so clear. She started to be represented in Central Asian art only after the Sasanian conquest of Bactria-Tokharistan in the third century (Shenkar 2014: 75). In fact, the main female deity of pre-Islamic Central Asia was Nana. Since Nana had Mesopotamian origins, it seems obvious to think that other "western" cultural elements were always very important in Central Asia especially in the astrological-astronomical sphere. As already argued by Compareti (forthcoming), Aphrodite Pandemos could have some associations with other Near Eastern fertility goddesses (such as Ishtar) who had among their symbolic animals the ram or goat and were definitely associated to the planet Venus. Moreover, Nana and Anahita could have shared some common elements among Iranian people such as the Parthians who originally migrated from Central Asians into Persia.

Such observations could be particularly appropriate for the (female?) deity above the two rams in the Yumalaktepa and Sivas ossuary. In fact, the animals are represented back to back, a position that could remind one of Sogdian divine thrones. On the other side of the main scene on those ossuaries, there is a deity suspended above one single horse that could be associated to Mithra. In fact, Mithra too was a god of the underworld. However, Grenet (1993: 61) already argued that the horse could be part of a Zoroastrian sacrifice called chaharom. If Grenet's hypotheses were correct, there would be then some evidence to consider the horse as a sacrifice animal in the lower part of the scene not necessarily connected to the god sitting above. For this reason, it should not be ruled out the possibility that in the upper part of the scene in the Yumalktepa and Sivas ossuary there is actually a divine couple including

Anahita above rams and her husband whose symbolic animal is not represented possibly because of lack of space.

Compareti (2021: 140) cautiously accepted Boris Marshak and Valentina identification of the husband of Anahita with Washaghn (Avestan Verethraghna). He was the Zoroastrian god of war and victory whose symbolic animal in Sogdian art was probably the camel. Such an identification should be considered from the point of view of Iranian astrology-astronomy in Central Asia that had some connections with Mesopotamian and Greek cultural elements. As it is well known, Venus and Mars (who possibly corresponded in Sogdiana to Anahita and Washaghn) formed a couple in Greek mythology. It is however, worth reminding that, some other scholars hypothetically proposed to identify the divine couple sitting on a camel and ram with Washaghn and Ashi (Shenkar 2014: 85, Farridnejad 2018: 414-18).

One would expect to find on Sino-Sogdian monuments in China and ossuaries in Sogdiana motherland just funerary scenes or Zoroastrian deities of the underworld such as Rashnu, Srosh, Adur and Mithra or, possibly, even the main god of the Sogdian pantheon Ahura Mazda/Adbagh. This is not the case of the Shi Jun and Miho Museum stone house where two panels are embellished with the images of Nana in the Zoroastrian paradise and Weshparkar above the Chinvat Bridge. These deities could have therefore had some funerary connections for the Sogdian immigrants in China. This point suggests that the identification of the deity sitting on a lion throne on the Khantepa ossuary with Nana could be correct. Weshparkar too had some role for the passage of the soul into the underworld (Grenet, Riboud, Yang 2004: 282, Grenet 2013: 24).

Possibly, Sogdian Zoroastrians considered also other deities of their pantheon as connected to funerals and the passage into the underworld. Unfortunately, Sogdian funerary habits are not yet completely clear. Not only in Central Asian but in Persia too Zoroastrian rituals presented some controversial points. Avestan and Middle Persian Zoroastrian texts represent a very important source of information in order to identify enigmatic deities in Sogdian, Chorasmian or Sasanian art but, at the same time, they should be cautiously used.

It should not be ruled out that the excavation of more Sino-Sogdian monuments in China and the acquisition of illegally excavated ones by Chinese authorities would allow in future identifying more Zoroastrian deities and rituals. This process could be extremely useful for both Sino-Sogdian monuments in China and Sogdian ossuaries found in Central

Asia. In the present note, I just wanted to call the attention on other possible interpretations for deities whose identification was not clearly established.

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Divine disguises on the crossroads of Khotan:
The iconographies from Dandan Oilik

Ginevra Palmeri

Abstract

The oasis of Khotan represents a fascinating crossroad of cultures and artistic influences mixed in a unique environment. Paintings, which are visually eloquent, yet very elusive with their mysterious symbolism, have fascinated scholars since the beginning of the 20th century, when they emerged from the sands of the Taklamakan desert. The oasis, one of the largest and most prosperous on the Silk Road, functioned as a transit point between the two huge cultural entities of India and China and, inevitably, absorbed inspirations from all the visitors passing through. It became a Buddhist stronghold whose monastic establishments were praised and where monks travelled to obtain sacred scriptures. Such a heterogeneous environment favored the birth of original artistic manifestations which in many cases resist a unanimous interpretation. For the large quantity of materials spread across different sites in the oasis of Khotan, a restrictive choice was made to better fit the format of this article. The site of Dandan Oilik has been selected as an example, principally because of the great variety of themes represented on mural paintings as well as on wooden votive panels and tablets. The primary goal of this study is to attempt to identify and classify the iconographies of deities belonging to an auxiliary Buddhist pantheon, therefore depictions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are purposely left out. The aim is to describe what could be foreign or local admixtures to an iconographic heritage already heavy with significance and symbolism at its South Asian origins.

Keywords: Khotan, Dandan Oilik, Iconography, Buddhism, Silk Road.

1. The Kingdom of Khotan

Known also as Yutian in Chinese, the oasis of Khotan was one of the major Buddhist kingdoms on the southern route in eastern Central Asia during the first millennium CE (Rhie 2007: 257).[1] Today the oasis is a prefecture of the autonomous region of Xinjiang in Western China, in older sources also known as Chinese or Eastern Turkestan.[2] It is located in the depression of the Tarim Basin, on the southern border of one of the most arid regions of the world, the Taklamakan Desert.[3] The oasis extends for 40 km in an East-West direction. The homonymous modern capital Hotan/Hetian preserves the name of the ancient kingdom, although the old capital city was identified by Stein in the nearby site of Yotkan (Lo Muzio 2017: 343).[4]

   To the south of the oasis rises the mountain range of the Kunlun, from it the rivers Karakash (*Black Jade*), Yurungkash (*White Jade*) and Keriya originate. The Karakash and the Yurungkash join into the river Khotan on the northern side of the oasis, which flows into the river Tarim during wintertime. The rivers contribute to the fertility of the oasis by transporting loess rich in minerals from the mountain range. Another crucial resource brought down from the mountains is the precious jadestone, a commodity particularly sought-after by the Chinese, which led to extensive commercial and cultural contacts and provided great wealth to the Khotanese kingdom throughout its existence.

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[1] The southern route was one of the three main pathways used to travel around the Tarim Basin and it connected the chain of garrisons and agricultural oases to the Han capitals of Chang'an and Loyang. After the Hexi corridor, through Gansu province to Dunhuang, the silk roads divided into northern, southern, and central branches. The southern branch began at the Yangkuan gate, outside of Dunhuang, and continued to Miran and Niya. Then it followed the northern foothills of the Kunlun Mountains to Khotan, Yarkand and Kashgar. Another alternative was led from Dunhuang to Loulan on the Lopnor lake, where the itinerary diverged south to Miran and north to Karashahr.

[2] Referred to as Western Regions (*xīyù* 西域) in old Chinese sources, a general term for Central Asia, but more specifically applied for eastern Central Asia. Also known as Serindia, Kashgaria, and Chinese Tartary (Härtel and Yaldez 1982: 18).

[3] The core of this desert area is formed by shifting sand dunes, whereas the periphery changes into a gravel desert dotted with occasional oases, crucial for the successful transition through this inhospitable region since ancient times.

[4] The site was identified by Stein on the basis of the topographical accounts reported by the Chinese sources, the character and the great number of archaeological findings, and its position related to the Buddhist shrines described by Xuanzang (see Stein 1907: 190-210).

To investigate the earliest history of the oasis of Khotan one must rely mainly on Chinese sources. With the expansion of the Han empire in Central Asia, Khotan made its appearance in Chinese dynastic chronicles, which became fundamental for the reconstruction of historical events related to the region. The Chinese became aware of the existence of Khotan thanks to the envoy Zhang Qian sent by the emperor Wudi (141–87 BCE) of the Western Han dynasty to create an alliance with the clans of the Greater Yuezhi against the threat represented by the nomadic tribal confederation of the Xiongnu. His journey is reported in vivid details in one of the chapters of the monumental *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shǐjì* 史記), as well as in the *History of the Former Han* (*Hànshū* 汉书), where information about the size and position of the kingdom of Khotan is included. The *History of the Later Han* (*Hòu Hànshū* 后汉书) and the *History of the Liang* (*Liáng Shū* 梁书) record the names of several Khotanese kings for the first two centuries CE, but unfortunately the original Khotanese forms of these names are impossible to recover (Kumamoto 2009).

The region became involved in a permanent conflict between the Han Empire and the Xiongnu between the 2nd century BCE and the 2nd century CE. Khotan was also in a constant dispute with its Western neighbors, the kingdoms of Yarkand and Kashgar. The predominant influence of the Xiongnu confederation was later replaced with a new power emerging from the south – the Kushan dynasty. The Bactrian kingdom of the Kushans and the Han empire contended the southern part of the Tarim Basin until the general Ban Chao expelled the Kushans from the area. Even though the territory was no longer under their direct influence, the Indo-Bactrian culture continued to spread, as attested by numerous archaeological findings like coins, textiles and other objects (Kumamoto 2009, Compareti 2020: 90–91).

The emergence of local documentation can be tentatively placed in the period of the Later Han, with the appearance of the so-called Sino-Kharoṣṭhī coins, discovered mainly in the oasis of Khotan starting from the end of the 19th century. On the coins it is possible to identify short legends in Chinese and in Prākrit written in the Kharoṣṭhī script. The Kharoṣṭhī legends bear the title of *yuti/yudi rāja,* implying the issuing by Khotanese kings.[5] The most adequate dating for these coins would be the

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[5] The names of the kings on the coins do not match those reported in other sources

2nd to early 3rd century CE (Kumamoto 2009). In this timeframe the kingdom of Khotan was supposedly politically independent and the international trade on the Silk Route between China, India and Bactria stimulated the Khotanese kings to create a coinage for local use (Cribb 1985: 141).

Another interesting piece of evidence is a document in Kharoṣṭhī found by Aurel Stein in Endere, dated to the 3rd century CE – the preserved contract of a purchase of a camel written in Prākrit dated to the 3rd year of king Vijita-siṃha. It represents the earliest local form of a king name, also accompanied by an epithet of Iranian origins *hīnāza* (army leader), together with other personal names, clearly Iranian. It is plausible to assume that the royal family and at least part of their subjects were of Iranian-Saka descent (Kumamoto 2009).

Although the written records suggest otherwise, according to archaeological findings the arrival of Buddhism in Xinjiang has been collocated in a period following the first half of the 3rd century CE, as attested by all the artifacts, monasteries, and shrines connected to this religion found in the area.[6] This paradox may be explained by the lack of data, which might be retrieved in future scientific endeavors, but it is also important to consider the hypothesis of long-range proselytism targeted mainly to China, as the great scholar of Buddhism Erik Zürcher conjectured in his work.[7] This would explain why master translators from the Tarim area are reported later than those of Western Central Asia – not only the Parthian An Shigao (the earliest known translator of sacred Buddhist texts in Chinese), but also those from Bactria and Gandhāran regions (Lo Muzio 2017: 313–314).[8]

From the 4th to the 6th century Central Asia witnessed a period of changes and tumults, caused by the presence of Hunnic tribes. Khotan became a tributary state of the Hephthalites (Compareti 2020).

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unfortunately, so a different chronology, either much lower or higher than that of the recorded kings, has been hypothesized. Considering the fact that in later periods (Tang and Five Dynasties) the Chinese transcriptions/translations of the Khotanese royal names had barely any resemblance to the original, the aforementioned problematic identification does not present an insurmountable obstacle (Kumamoto 2009).

[6] The general Ban Chao in addiction tells in one of his accounts from 73 CE that the people of Khotan practiced a form of shamanism or Zoroastrianism (Ma, Y. Sun, Y. 1999: 237).

[7] See Zürcher 1959 or the 2007 reprint.

[8] The most famous translators of Buddhist scriptures from Khotan known from Chinese sources are Mokṣala and Gītamitra (Lo Muzio 2017: 314).

For the period between the 4ᵗʰ century up to the 8ᵗʰ and 10ᵗʰ century, when copious amounts of local documents in Khotanese appeared, the sources of information are limited to Chinese dynastic histories and biographies of eminent monks, who travelled to the Western Regions from China, or came to China from India or from one of the oases in Central Asia, passing through Khotan. The accounts of three Chinese pilgrims are especially precious, all of them confirming the predominance of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the region (Kumamoto 2009).

The first one, Faxian (340–418 CE), who visited the oasis between 399–402 CE, reported a detailed description of monasteries, temples, and Buddhist Mahāyāna rituals, but no significant historical information (Legge 1886: 16–20). Songyun (unknown–528 CE) described the conversion of a legendary Khotanese king to Buddhism (Beal 1869: 180). Xuanzang (602–664 CE) is the one who brings by far the longest account (Beal 1884: 309–326). He discusses in his records the country's official name, which he claims to be *Kustana* or "Earth-breast" in Sanskrit. The origin of said name is explained in the foundation legend reported by Xuanzang, in which the divine origin of the kings of Khotan is affirmed. The story claims the exiled ministers of the son of king Aśoka laid the foundation of the kingdom, which was then seized by an exiled prince from the East (probably China). [9] The prince was unable to have a son, thus directed his prayers to the god Vaiśravaṇa (one of the Four Heavenly Kings), who granted him an heir and suckled the child with a magical breast, which swelled up from the ground (Stein 1907: 157). [10] In other sources, the son of Aśoka figures as the exiled prince, who is fed by the miraculous breast and later becomes the founder of Khotan. This and other legends of the same nature should not be taken as historical facts, a direct Indian colonization of Khotan being highly improbable (Kumamoto 2009).

Khotanese legends are reported by a variety of sources in Khotanese, Chinese and Tibetan and all have essentially a Buddhist background. The most valuable documentation comes from Tibetan texts,

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[9] Emperor from the Mauryan dynasty from 268–232 BCE. Great protector of Buddhism, he promoted the spread of the religion throughout ancient Asia and consequently became one of the most important characters of Buddhist legends.

[10] The Heavenly Kings in Hindu and Buddhist traditions are *lokapāla*s, guardians of the four cardinal directions. Vaiśravaṇa is based on the Hindu deity Kubera; both are guardians of the North. As Kubera, he is also considered the king of *yakṣa*s.

probably translation of original Khotanese works which no longer exist. The *Prophecy of the Li Country* (Li yul lung bstan pa ལི་ཡུལ་ལུང་བསྟན་པ་) and the *Religious Annals of the Li Country* (Li yul chos kyi lo rgyus ལི་ཡུལ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་) are particularly important since the legends described are arranged following a genealogy of Khotanese kings. The stories narrate mainly Buddhist epiphanic events and report the foundation of monasteries, whose existence is stated in several documents from Khotan and in Chinese historical literature. The legends promote a connection between Buddhism and the Khotanese royal lineage, conveying a message both religious and political (Forte 2020: 43–44).

At the beginning of the 7th century, Khotan became the vassal of the Western Turks, consequently to their expansion into the Western Regions. After many disputes and revolts, the region was alternately occupied by Chinese and Tibetans, who became interested in Khotan in the second half of the 8th century, when the Tang empire was no longer able to maintain control over the region. The kingdom succumbed to the Tibetan conquest by the end of the 8th century but regained independence in 851 CE (Beckwith 1987: 171). After the collapse of the Uyghur kingdom in Mongolia, this Turkic people started to settle in the Tarim Basin and gradually became the predominant ethnicity, inhabiting the region to these days. In 1006 BE the Karakhanids conquered Khotan and Islam came to be the prevalent faith (Compareti 2020: 91).

2. The site of Dandan Oilik

Dandan Oilik is located in the Cele County, Khotan prefecture of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in China, 90km north of Domoko, 60 km east of the Khotan river and 30 km west from the river Keriya. It was discovered in 1896 by Sven Hedin and excavated mostly by Aurel Stein between 1900-1901. Stein was able to find 6 dwellings, 11 religious buildings and various artifacts (Lo Muzio 2017: 350). The British explorer dated the site to the 8th century CE, based on Chinese documents found at the site.[11] Later, the site was also visited by the American geographer

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[11] The documents were discovered in the northern sector of Dandan Oilik, in buildings D V, VII and VIII. In total Stein found eighteen Chinese documents, concerning primarily the business of a convent. Five of them reported dates corresponding to 781–789 CE. Most were found on the ancient floor level of building D VII. According to Stein, the documents would not survive in such a state of preservation for a long time before the

Ellsworth Huntington in 1905, and by the German geographer Emil Trinkler and the Swiss botanist Walter Bosshard. A hiatus of almost seventy years made the site disappear back in the sands of the Taklamakan, until a team from the Xinjiang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology led by Wang Bihua resumed the studies and visited Dandan Oilik in 1995. In 1998 the Swiss explorer and scholar Christoph Baumer led a Sino-Swiss expedition, which resulted in additional discoveries (Zhang – Qu – Liu 2008: 157).

In 2002 and 2004 a joint Sino–Japanese expedition (Xinjiang Cultural Relics Bureau, Xinjiang Archaeological Research Institute, Niya Research Institute of Bukkyo University) reinvestigated the site and found fragments of wall paintings in Buddhist temples, which underwent a meticulous process of restoration until 2006 (Zhang – Qu – Liu 2008: 157). Since then, no further research has been conducted.

Most shrines in Dandan Oilik have the same planimetry: rectangular building, a squared cella, and a corridor for circumambulation around the cella. Usually inside the cella, towards the inner wall, a podium (squared, circular or octagonal) is set up for a sculpture or a sculptural group of unbaked clay – most of the times the lower part of the sculpture is all that is left, typically the feet on a lotiform support and parts of smaller figures (Lo Muzio 2017: 351)

3. The paintings

The content of Khotanese paintings is essentially Buddhist, and although the pictured deities seem to embody different traditions and are not clearly classifiable as either Buddhist, Brahmanic or even Zoroastrian, we still need to visualize and implement them in a totally Buddhist context. While the art of other sites that are categorized as caravan cities, as Turfan in the Tarim Basin, but also Dura Europos in Syria, reflects the different religions which existed simultaneously, this is not true for Khotan. Chinese sources reports that the people of Khotan worshiped the law of the Buddha and the spirit Xian (*Xiān* 祆), which is probably to be identified with Ahura Mazda. [12][13] On the other hand, in Saka texts the

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abandonment of the building, so the year of 789 CE is a *terminus ante quem* for the northern sector of Dandan Oilik (Williams 1973: 109).

[12] The same Chinese character is used sometimes for deities like Maheśvara in Chinese

latter is not considered a supreme god at all, and his name designates the sun. It is very common to preserve Avestan technical terms in the Saka Buddhist literature, so it is reasonable to infer that a similar approach has been applied in the arts: Iranian elements, such as costumes, tributary processions, and the symbols of the sun and the moon, are absorbed and employed inside a Buddhist framework.

Buddhism in Khotan included various branches, such as the early schools of Mahāsāṃghika, a precursor to the Mahāyāna, and Sarvāstivāda. Later the school of the Great Vehicle was predominant, but the scriptures betray an esoteric twist which can be defined as proto-tantra Buddhism (Williams 1973: 113–117). This movement reflects a variety of Hindu influences, and one of the most important aspect, and the topic further elaborated inside the arts, is the adoption of Brahmanical deities. The most obvious example of this phenomenon can be observed in the earliest formation of Buddhist legends, with the attendance of Brahmā and Indra at the birth of the Buddha. In Khotan this trend is presented with the first images of Śiva in a Buddhist context. These deities were powerful on their plane of existence, but they were still chained by the laws of karma, which only Enlightment could break.[14] In later phases of Mahāyāna, the various Hindu deities are conceived as *avatāra*s (incarnations) of the Buddha and they acquired the status of members of the Buddhist pantheon. In Vajrayāna, they are incorporated as agents of the faith (Williams 1973: 115). [15]Some researchers (Baumer, Mode, Rong) have hypothesized a

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translations of sacred texts. It is interesting to note that Khotanese texts did not refer to divine beings as *deva*s, controversial to their Zoroastrian eyes, but rather as *gyasta*s or 'worshipful beings', clearly linked to the Avestan *yazata*s (Scott 1999: 48)

[13] At the moment there isn't much relevant material on the presence of Ahura Mazda in Khotanese or Iranian Buddhism. One interesting depiction is to be found at Kara-tepe in Bactria. A painting of one of the cave temples shows a meditating Buddha surrounded by flames. More recently, a figure on his side has been discovered, also meditating and surrounded by flames, with his left hand raised in reverence. An accompagning Bactrian inscription mentions *buddha-mazda.* We could interpret it as a reference to the Buddha surrounded by flames, intended to represent a syncretic fusion of the Buddha and Ahura Mazda. However, the attendant deity could be also understood as Ahura Mazda himself, paying hommage to the Buddha (Scott 1999: 60-61).

[14] In the Saṃyutta Nikāya the moment of Enlightenment of the Śākyamuni is described as 'surpassing the divine majesty of the gods' (Scott 1999: 56).

[15] In the Śūraṅgamasūtra the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is said to appear in various forms depending on the background and understanding of the hearer, if needed he could appear even as Śiva, or Maheśvara. Likewise, in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra the Bodhisattva Gadgadasvara was one who ,appears in many kind of bodies, everywhere

Sogdian origin of these divinities, implying the importation to Khotan. The Sogdians were renowned merchants, and many migrated from Uzbekistan/Tajikistan to China and back along the Silk Road, especially between the 5th and the 8th century CE. Some of them moved to the Tarim Basin and China permanently and seem to have adapted local habits while retaining their original culture. In Khotan, the Sogdian presence is attested by primary sources, both in Khotanese and Sogdian languages (Compareti 2020: 92).

In Sogdiana, a clear Indian influence on the arts is visible since at least the 6th century CE. Despite the Indian iconography, the Sogdian divinities belonged to a local form of Zoroastrianism (*Xiān*). A remarkable example is that of the Avestan god Wešparkar (Penjikent room XXII/1) represented with the characteristics of Śiva (three heads, multiple arms, a *triśūla*), yet clearly identified by an inscription in Sogdian on his leg – *wšpr(kr)*. [16]

Other specialists, as Boris Marshak, consider the Khotanese paintings to be a genuine local product. Nonetheless, they present peculiarities not found in other Iranian Buddhist contexts (as in Bactria or Bamiyan), which are more in line with a Tantric interpretation. These elements are usually associated with later Himalayan Buddhism, but an influence of Khotanese art is not to be excluded, although the process of transmission is not yet clearly understood (Compareti 2020: 92).

Maheśvara and Umāmaheśvara

Maheśvara is one of the most important figures in the Buddhist auxiliary pantheon. His representations are fairly consistent in Khotan and one of the most famous, which is also quite faithful to the Indian prototype, is the one depicted on a wooden panel discovered in the temple D VII (Fig. 1). [17] He sits cross-legged on a checkered pillow, behind him a double halo. The

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preaching his sutra 'as Sukra (Indra), Iśvara (Viṣṇu) or Maheśvara (Scott 1990: 63).

[16] Sogdian form of the god Vayu, Iranian celestial/wind god connected also to the Kushan Oešo/Śiva.

[17] Maheśvara is the epithet of Śiva in Khotanese religious texts, he is also identified in *Sumukha-sūtra,* a lengthy Old Khotanese text*,* as *devaputra.* He appears as well in the Saka *Rāmāyaṇa.* In this version, a brahman, descent of Maheśvara, is gifted by the deity with a wonder-cow, which he lose to a king. His son, Paraśurama, later tries to avenge him, and he turns out to be a previous incarnation of Maitreya. The Buddhist twist we see in literature is also visible in the arts (Williams 1973: 143).

deity has three faces: one feminine on his right, masculine in the middle with a third eye on the forehead, and a terrific one on his left.[18] He also has four arms, each holding a different attribute: the sun, the moon, a thunderbolt (*vajra*) and an unknown white object (possibly some fruit).[19] His skin is blue (except for his lateral faces), his form is clearly ithyphallic, and his *dhotī* is made from a tiger skin. He is also accompanied by the traditional *vāhana* of Śiva – the bull Nandin, here duplicated (Lo Muzio 2017: 352). The *vajra*, which he holds in his left lower arm, is not part of the traditional iconography of Śiva.[20] The symbols of sun and moon are rarely used in connections with this god in the Indian context, they are though very common in Sogdian art and as ubiquitous divine emblems in Central Asia in general and in Chinese Buddhism, they are not useful for a specific interpretation.[21] The double *vāhana* could indicate a Sogdian influence, since it is customary for this type of iconography to depict deities on zoomorphic thrones, with two divergent animals (Lo Muzio 2017: 352).

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[18] This differentiation of the faces of Śiva appeared for the first time at Elephanta in the 6th century CE, but most relevant to Central Asia are the images from north-west India: on Kushan coinage for example, on the coins of Vima Kadphises and later, the god is called Oešo and the iconography corresponds to that of a group of bronze plaques found in Yotkan. A three-faced form of Śiva also appears on the coins of Huviṣka and persists in similar variants up to the 11th century in Kashmir (Williams 1973: 143).

[19] Probably a pomegranate, according to other iconographies of Śiva in Central Asia.

[20] The *vajra* is the symbol of the final and indestructible truth. In Saka, in the sense of 'adamantine' it is sometimes translated as *'ira* (jade). In Khotanese art it usually appears as an attribute of Indra and it is frequently painted on the arms of the cosmic Vairocana. In this depiction it has tips in the shape of *fleur-de-lys*, like versions made of stucco Rawak Vihara (Williams 1973: 116, 143).

[21] On a terracotta panel from Rang Mahal (3rd–6th century CE, Bikaner State) Śiva is depicted with a bust of a figure emerging above his three undifferentiated faces (Hooja, R. 2004: Plate 4). This figure holds a crescent and a disc in its raised arms. Williams (1973: 144) explains it as a depiction of the fifth head of Śiva, as described in the *agama*s, which represents the sky and therefore the crescent and the disk could be interpreted as celestial symbols. These have been identified also as *kapala* and *cakra* (Barret 1957: 59). Others suggest the torso could represent the Ganga (R.C.Agrawala 1956: 61–65) or a second *vidyādhara* (V.S.Agrawala 1960: 63–71).

Fig. 1 - Wooden panel with the figure of Maheśvara from temple D VII, 7th–8th century CE (?), Dandan Oilik (after Stein 1907: Plate LX).

Fig. 2 - Wooden tablet with a depiction of Umāmaheśvara from temple D X , 7th - 8th century CE (?), Dandan Oilik (after Stein 1907: Plate LXII).

Maheśvara can be found also on another wooden panel from the temple D X (Fig. 2), depicted together with the smaller figure of the goddess Umā/Pārvatī in an embrace.[22] Unfortunately, the painting is partially damaged, but still possible to distinguish one of the three faces of the god, the wrathful one with a third eye.

The northern wall of the temple D XIII (Fig. 3) has another version of Maheśvara alongside other two deities. He is four-armed, ithyphallic and wears a diadem with a round ornament, a necklace and armlets. In his upper hands, he holds the celestial symbols, in his lower left has he has, again, what seems to be a fruit. On his forehead the third eye is present. His long hair partly falling on the shoulder partly matted in a *jaṭā*. His *vāhana* this time is a black bull. The central figure is a female deity with a swaddled child in her lap. She could be connected to the Buddhist tutelary deity of children and childhood, Hārītī (Hārrva in Khotan), who before conversion to Buddhism a child devouring *yakṣiṇī* (Lo Muzio 2017: 73–74).[23] The third figure is a three-headed, four-armed ithyphallic god; he has two strings across his chest adorned with spiders and serpents wrapped around his arms. His central face is fearsome, eyes wide open in a terrific expression, whereas the faces on the sides are calm. In his upper hands he carries the sun and the moon, in the lower pair a trident held horizontally. It is possible to identify the figure with Mahākāla, one of Maheśvara's aspects, based on the similarity with the rear face of an addorsed sculpture from Fattegarh, Kashmir (Lo Muzio 2017: fig. 6). Even though several clear attributes are present, Baumer identifies the deity as Brahmā/Zurvān.[24] Further to the right a fourth figure was depicted, but only the right knee, part of the seat and the right arm are preserved (Lo Muzio 2017: 75).

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[22] This depiction refers to tantric practices and it is not clear if the female counterpart has the role of the Hindu *śakti* (activating force) or the Buddhist *prajñā* (absorbing wisdom, equivalent to the Void, or *śūnyatā*). Nonetheless, Śaktism is reported neither in the Tibetan annals or the Saka texts (Williams 1973: 145).

[23] She has usually more than one child, as documented in Gandhāran iconography. Another well-known example is the mural fragment from Farhad Beg Yailaki (Lo Muzio 2017: 73, Lo Muzio 2017: fig. 10.30).

[24] Zurvan is ancient Iranian god, a chief Persian deity before the advent of Zoroastrianism. A modified form of Zoroastrianism, Zurvanism, appeared in Persia during the Sasanian period (3rd–7th century CE) and influenced Mithraism as well as Manichaeism. Zurvan, or Infinite Time, was believed to be the original remote creator of both Ahura Mazda and his nemesis, Angra Mainyu. In Sogdian buddhist texts he is called *zrw'* and the accompanying iconography clearly links him to Brahma (Scott 1999: 60).

Fig. 3 - Painting on the northern wall othe temple D XIII, Dandan Oilik (after Lo Muzio 2017: fig.5).

Skanda and the Bālagrahas

The western wall of the temple D XIII shows another triad (a fourth figure is present on the far left, but now it is almost totally obliterated) (Fig. 4) which includes Skanda/Kartikeyya seated on his vehicle, the peacock, and furthermore recognizable by the little rooster he holds to his chest.[25] In his lower right hand he is grasping what seems to be a bunch of grapes. The following figure is that of a goddess with two children, a swaddled infant in her arms and the other, naked, who sits on her left leg. As the goddess in the previous triad, she is probably associated with Hārītī. The last figure represents a four-armed goddess with the head of a boar, on which a winged crown with a round central ornament is placed. She is further adorned with large earrings, a necklace and bracelets. She holds the celestial symbols in her upper hands, a lotus in her lower right and probably a fourth attribute in her lower left, now lost. The goddess may represent another Hindu deity, Vārāhī, the female counterpart of Viṣṇu's third *avatāra*, Varāha. Frequently she also appears among the Sapta/Aṣṭa-mātṛkās (Seven or Eight Divine Mothers) (Lo Muzio 2017: 73-74).[26] Some elements of this Khotanese version are the same as those of her Hindu equivalent: the lotus flower and a plump shape. On the other hand, the winged crown is unusual. It is considered to be a typical Sasanian

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[25] General of the army of the gods, son of Śiva (or Agni), he has many names (Mahasenā, Kumāra, Murugan) which belonged to distinctive deities, but during the Gupta epoch they merged into a single deity (Lo Muzio 2017: 72). The image of Skanda on peacock was prefered in the eastern part of the Gupta empire, while the western part kept the iconography inherited from the Kushans, standing frontally holding a spear. The cokerel is a typical Gandhāran attribute (Lo Muzio 2017: 72–73).

[26] The Mātṛkās are among the most significant group of goddesses, they are usually mentioned in groups of seven, eight, or sixteen. The earliest references date to the first century CE – some scholars identify similar being already in the Vedic tradition, while others claim an indigenous, non-Vedic origin. They are connected to the birth of Karttikeya/Skanda and other narratives concerning him. Their initial task was to kill the infant god but they eventually end up serving him as his adoptive mothers or as allies in battles. The worship of the Mātṛkās aims to keep their wrath away, which is primarily focused on children – this may be influenced by the belief that women who die childless or in childbirth linger on as jealous spirits. In the post epic period (400 CE) their number and names become increasingly standardized, and their nature is patterned after male deities from the brahmanic pantheon. However, they are not to be understood as mere divine consorts or *śaktis* of the male deities, but rather as extensions or forms of the Devi, the ultimate supreme mother-goddess (Kinsley 1988: 151-160).

emblem, which was later adopted in Buddhist iconography for Vaiśravaṇa (Dunhuang, Japan), but not in Khotan. According to Baumer, the male deity is not Skanda, but represents either the Iranian god of victory, Verethragna, or the Sogdian god Wešparkar depicted as Brahmā on his *vāhana*, the goose, instead of the peacock of Skanda (Lo Muzio 2017: 72).[27]

Fig. 4 - Painting on the western wall of the temple D XIII, Dandan Oilik (after Lo Muzio 2017: fig.1).

In the temple CD4, excavated by the Sino-Japanese expedition in 2002, in the oriental part of the corridor for the circumambulation, similar zoomorphic deities are depicted with Skanda (Fig. 5). The drawing appears as sketchy as those on the northern wall of D XIII (Lo Muzio 2017: 75). All the figures are cross-legged and are distributed on the left and lower part of a large image of a standing Buddha, framed by multiple smaller seated Buddhas. The group arranged vertically has a goddess with an elephant head on top, holding an elongated object, under whom an animal resembling a jackal, or wolf, is painted. The last figure is a female holding an infant, identical to the one on the western wall of D XIII.

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[27] Verethragna is considered one of the sons or emanations of Ahura Mazda, most often he is shown in his form of a charging boar. Such a representation is a well-established Iranian convention, and it is presumably attested in Buddhist art in the form of the boar's head motif (Bamiyan, Toyuk). The use of this motif may function as an affirmation of the victory of the Buddhist *dharma* to Iranian eyes (Scott 1990: 61-62).

Below her, in the corner between the two rows of deities, the contours of another figure are visible, but it has now faded beyond recognition. On the horizontal lineup, from left to right, a four-armed goddess with caprine head is followed by Skanda, both holding celestial symbols. The series is closed by a female deity, frowning, her breast sagging. She holds a scrawny naked child, grasping him by the wrists and ankles. Further right a male figure between two horses, which will be discussed separately (see subchapter 3.5. below). Lo Muzio proposes to identify the elephant-headed deity with the female counterpart of Gaṇeśa, Vināyakī, also known as Gaṇeśvarī, Gajānānī etc.[28] Her attribute could then be a radish *mulakakanda*, which is otherwise attested in the hand of Gaṇeśa in Khotanese art. She is expected to be accompanied by the *vāhana* of Gaṇeśa, a mouse, but instead, the animal portrayed below her is more like the *vāhana* of Vināyakī in the temple of the 64 *yogīnī*s at Hirapur, Orissa (Lo Muzio 2017: fig.9). The goat- or ram-headed deity could be linked to Naigameṣa, or to a female counterpart of this demon connected to children's health.[29] An interesting aspect about the Skanda depicted in this group are black dashes on his skin, maybe representing scars (Lo Muzio 2017: 76).

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[28] Textual evidence of her iconography is very unclear, also she appears quite late as a member of the Saptamātṛkās sets (8th–9th century). She is more common as one of the 64 *yogīnī*s.

[29] Lo Muzio suggests a comparison with a relief of Cave 21 at Ellora (8th century). There, Skanda is flanked by two ram-headed figures in *añjalimudrā* (Lo Muzio 2017: 76).

Fig 5 - Decoration of the eastern wall of the temple CD4, Dandan Oilik (after Lo Muzio 2017: fig. 7).

Another group of female deities (Fig. 6) headed by Skanda has been found in the temple CD10 by the Sino-Japanese excavations in 2004. On the middle register of the north-western wall of the shrine, seven female deities are lined up in a row, ended on the right by a three-headed four-armed Skanda on a peacock, holding celestial symbols and a rooster. The goddesses are portrayed in the same position, kneeling in three-quarter view, and they share the same outfit in different colors. Most of them are in *añjalimudrā*, although it is possible that they were holding some objects in their hands. The last female deity on the left holds a swaddled infant. To her left, a cuirassed god (for Vaiśravaṇa see 3.4. and 3.7. below) holding a spear is discernible, further left a last female (?) figure is only partially preserved (Lo Muzio 2017: 76).

   The presence of Skanda along with female deities reflects the cult dedicated to *grahas* "seizers, snatchers" or *bālagrahas* "children

snatchers".[30] This is also the context in which Skanda first appears in early Hinduism. Before becoming *senāpati (*lord of the army), he was worshipped as a disease-causing deity, who led the malevolent spirits *mātṛ* or *mātṛkā*, harmful to pregnant women and children.[31]

One of the reasons why these ambiguous tutelary deities traveled all the way to Khotan is the inherent strong tie between medicine and Buddhism. The monasteries provided medical education and the studied healing practices stemmed from Vedic and Brahmanic tradition. The monks spread not only religious, but also medical literature, from South Asia all the way to the Far East, translating the works from Pali and Sanskrit to Tibetan, Chinese and Khotanese as well. The spread of the *grahas* is attested by the popularity and diffusion of certain *dhāraṇī*s, mystic spells used to expel illnesses. One astonishing example supporting the case are three folios of a manuscript from the 9th century found by Aurel Stein in Dunhuang (now in the British Museum). Each of these extant leaves of the *Mahāsāhasrapramardanī,* which is one of the *dhāraṇī*s later grouped into the pentad of deified spells *Pañcarakṣa*, bears on both sides representations of demons described in Chinese and Khotanese (Lo Muzio 2017: fig. 13). The texts provide the names of the demons and the specific diseases connected to them. All the figures of the manuscript are portrayed with one or more children, and one of them, the owl-headed goddess Mukhamaṇḍikā, present also in the Khotanese pantheon as Mukhamaṃḍā, holds a child by his wrists and ankles, as the goddess in the temple CD4 of Dandan Oilik.

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[30] Written sources do not provide much information on these spirits, their appearence is sketchily described in few cases. The iconographic evidence in India consists of few reliefs from Mathurā (Kushan epoch, 2nd or 3rd centuries). To these we can add some terracotta figurines of single mothers, in some cases goat-headed and with an infant. Similar terracotta figurines have been found in northern India (Rajghat, Kumrahar, Jetavana) in association with Buddhist monasteries (Lo Muzio 2017: 77).

[31] The earliest description of Skanda and the demons is found in the *Mahābhārata* and in Ayurvedic sources. In the *Mahābhārata* the god is gradually emancipated from his wicked origins, until he becomes the general of the army of gods in the *Śalyaparvan* section*. In Ayurvedic literature he retains the characteristics of a harmful *bālagraha* and is also known as one of the most dangerous (Lo Muzio 2017: 77).

Fig. 6 - Decoration of the wall of the temple CD10, Dandan Oilik (after Lo Muzio 2017: fig.10).

Indra, Brahma, and Māyā-Śrī

On the panel from temple D X we are presented with an additional triad of deities whose identities have been debated and are still open to discussion (Fig. 7).

The central four-armed female figure has a crenellated crown, her upper arms hold the symbols of the sun and the moon. A parallel with the portrayal of goddess Nanā on Khwarezmian silver dishes and in the paintings of Penjikent (8th century) has been suggested based on these attributes. [32] The Mesopotamian deity was probably introduced in the Achaemenid period in Central Asia or even in a more remote past. The goddess is usually shown with her symbolic animal, the lion, which is missing on the tablet. She was frequently depicted on Kushan currency, seals and other objects of art. It is not farfetched to suppose that Kushan religious iconography had to be known in Khotan, in fact Bactria had a very strong influence in the Tarim Basin during and after the Kushan domination.[33] The presence of Nanā in this triad is still not completely

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[32] A goddess of Near Eastern origin, she first appears in the Ur III period in the end of the third millennium BCE and was associated with the Sumerian goddess Inanna/Ištar (even though they were different divinities). In Iran she was equated with Anāhitā. During the Hellenistic period, she was frequently assimilated to Artemis (Ghose 2006: 97–98). A deity of identical portrayal and description to the Sogdian Nana appears in Tibetan Buddhist circles at Gyantse and in their literature (Scott 1990: 56).

[33] Even after five centuries, the memory of some Kushan sovereigns was still very vivid, as proved by the *Kaṇiṣkāvadāna*, a book which describes some episodes from the life of the Kushan ruler Kaṇiṣka, a great supporter of Buddhism (Compareti 2020: 97–98,

accepted and Marshak prefers to associate to it a third male divinity, Zurvān. The crenellated crown, which is supposed to be an attribute of the goddess, is also found on one of the painted altars of Penjikent (see below the interpretation of Mode), but in Persia it is used as well as an element without any reference to Nanā (Compareti 2020: 96).

The accompanying deities seem to have strong Brahmanic connotations. On the right side of the goddess, a male deity with two arms, long hair and a mustache has a scalloped crown and a third eye. He holds a *vajra* in his right hand. Williams (1973: 141) suggests that, based on the combination of the vajra and the crown resembling the *kirīṭamukuṭa*, the figure depicted is Indra or Śakra, who in early Buddhist art is often accompanied by Brahmā, whose form we can also allegedly see in the other deity on the panel.[34] The god has three faces (as Brahmā, who has officially a fourth one on the back mostly invisible in art) and multiple eyes. The bow and the arrows are very uncommon. If we accept this interpretation, the central figure is especially difficult to incorporate in this group. The two male deities are normally seen as attendants of a standard Buddha (not in this case) or they appear in events from the Buddha's life, for instance they assist at the Birth. Such a consideration gives the possibility to explain the occurrence of the female deity as a combination of two subjects: the mother of Buddha, Māyā, who is related to Lakṣmī and Śrī in early Indian art. In the Saka version of *Suvarnaprabhāsottamasūtra*, the goddess Śrī is translated as *śśandrāmata* 'sacred/bounteous earth', which is also the name for the Spenta ārmaitiš, the Avestan "Lady of the Earth". In a culturally heterogeneous place as Khotan, various goddesses of abundance could easily merge to create a new local variation (Williams 1973: 141).[35]

According to the interpretation of Markus Mode, the divine triad could be correlated to a painting from Penjikent (room III/6, Mode 1991/2: fig. 3) dated to the 8th century CE. The Sogdian painting depicts three altars, one of which is decorated with the image of a god with multiple arms, thus dedicated to Wešparkar (modelled after the image of Śiva).[36]

Maggi 2009: 364).

[34]Indra and Brahmā are attested in Khotanese texts as Sakrra and Brrahma (Williams 1973: 141).

[35] Another goddess with similar attributes mentioned by Buddhist writers in Khotan is Sakhimi (Scott 1990: 56).

[36] Sogdian Buddhist literature found in western China also indicate a connection: textual

The other two altars would therefore be associated with Nanā and the other male deity, who should be identified as Adbagh – the Sogdian version of Ahura Mazda.[37] The model for his iconography was probably Indra, hence his symbolic animal became the elephant and his attribute the *vajra*, which is in fact depicted on the described wooden tablet (Compareti 2020: 95–96).

Fig. 7 - Wooden tablet with triad of deities from temple D X, 7th–8th century CE (?), Dandan Oilik (after Stein 1907: Plate LXIV).

The Silk Legend and The Silk God

Fig. 8 - Wooden tablet with a depiction of the Silk Legend from the temple D X, 7th–8th century CE (?), Dandan Oilik (after Stein 1907: Plate LXIII).

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analysis suggests that the iconographies of Wešparkar and Śiva should be interchangeable, although this reading has been challenged (Compareti 2020: 96).

[37] Sims-Williams (1983) suggests that the form *ad-bag* was a local rendering of the Sanskrit epithet *adhi-deva*, the 'supreme god', enjoyed by Indra. In the same fashion as Brahma was associated to Zurvan, Indra, as a supreme deity, could be merged with Ahura Mazda.

A very peculiar scene along with a mysterious figure is present in several wooden tablets found in Dandan Oilik. It seems to represent the legend about the introduction of sericulture in Khotan. According to Xuanzang, the king of Khotan sent an envoy to China to procure silkworms and mulberry trees, but the ruler of China wanted to maintain the exclusivity of silk production, so he prohibited the export of silkworms' eggs and mulberry seeds out of his country. The king of Khotan then asked for the hand of a Chinese princess and his wish was granted. An envoy was sent to escort the soon-to-be queen from China to Khotan, and through him, the king let the princess know that to ensure herself silk robes in her new home she had to smuggle some mulberry seeds and silkworms. She managed to conceal them in the lining of her headdress, thus bringing them safely to Khotan. Upon her arrival in the kingdom, she deposited the silkworms and the mulberry seeds at the site where subsequently the Mashe or Lushe convent was built, also known as Ma dza in Tibetan sources. There, the first mulberry trees grew and so the silkworms could be fed. The queen issued an edict, which prohibited the working up of the cocoons until the moths had escaped. Later she also founded a *sanghārāma* on the place where the first silkworms were bred (Hill 2003). The legend is also reported in the *Prophecy of the Li Country*, which places it in the reign of king Vijaya Jaya, the one who married the princess who brought the silkworms to Khotan. In this version, the princess, Puñeśvar, had the initiative to secretly bring the silkworms and the king, misinformed about the creatures, believed them to be venomous snakes and attempted to destroy them. The wife convinced the king about the benefit brought by the silkworms and so the sericulture was established in Khotan. Vijaya Jaya was then the one to build the monastery Ma dza, on the place the worms had been raised. Here an image of the Śakyamuni was installed, protected by the gods Ratnabala and Ratnaśūra (Williams 1973: 149).

The panel from D X (Fig. 8) corresponds to the principal event of the legend, the smuggling of the silkworms in the princess's headdress. We can observe a nimbate female figure at the center, probably the princess, with an elaborated crown and long hair, her arms stretched towards a bowl, presumably filled with cocoons. Another nimbate female figure with a circular headdress, an attendant, points emphatically her left arm towards the crown of the princess. Right behind the central figure a smaller seated

one, apparently a nimbate male deity with four arms, in which he holds a goblet (?), a "trowel" and an unidentified object.[38] On the far left of the central figure a last nimbate figure is present, with a circular headdress, holding a brush. She seems to be using a loom (Williams 1973: 147).

Fig. 9 - Wooden tablet with a depiction of the Silk Legend from the temple D II, 7th - 8th century CE (?), Dandan Oilik (after Stein 1907: Plate LXVII).

On the wooden panel of D II (Fig. 9) we see a different scene, which could show the persuasion of the king narrated in the Tibetan *Prophecy*. Unfortunately, the painted figures are considerably damaged, and it is not possible to identify all the participants. On the left, two figures are engrossed in the processing of silk: one manipulates a loom, the other has a large bowl heaped high with what may be cocoons.[39] The central figure is the same male deity described in the previous panel. Seated, with four arms and the same set of peculiar objects. Behind him, on the right, a couple of musicians, one playing a four-stringed lute, the other holds small cymbals (Williams 1973: 147–148).

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[38] The goblet with a long, conical base is also present in a Khotanese representation of Sañjaya (now lost, from Williams 1973: fig. 40) and the "trowel", which could be a kind of blade, is also held by Gaṇeśa (wooden panel from Endere, Williams 1973: fig. 56, Lo Muzio 2017: fig. 8)

[39] The bowl/basket is also the attribute of another female deity we know from other painted panels found elsewhere in Khotan. They may represent the introducer of silk, the princess herself, who became an object of veneration. She usually wears a very tall crown covered by a scarf; such a headdress is not seen in any other iconographic type (Williams 1973:149–150).

Fig. 10 - Wooden panel with the Silk God from temple D VII, 7th - 8th century CE
(?), Dandan Oilik (after Stein 1907: Plate LXI).

The male deity is thought to be identical to the one depicted on the reverse of the Maheśvara tablet from D VII (Fig. 10). The figure is seated on a red floral cushion, wears a green patterned tunic and black boots, on the head a tall crown. A dagger hangs from his belt made of small disks. He has four arms, one of which rests on his thigh, the other hold a thin rod (stem?), the 'trowel' and goblet seen in the depiction of the previous tablet. Named also the "Iranian Bodhisattva" (Bussagli 1979, 1953) for its Persian influence, this figure is clearly a divine being, due to his multiple arms, elongated earlobes, and overall representation, but no parallel has been found outside of Khotan. His identification is difficult; however, it is possible to outline characteristics common to all the available paintings. Usually, he supervises the scenes depicting episodes from the legend describing the introduction of silk in Khotan, that is the reason why the names "Silk God" and "Patron of Weaving" have been attributed to him. The objects he holds have been associated with the production of silk.

Williams identifies this deity with one of the local guardians, which are also mentioned in Saka, Chinese and Tibetan sources, although it is not certain which one. The most likely candidates are the guardians of the Ma dza monastery, Ratnabala and Ratnaśūra (Williams 1973: 149).[40] Another possible explanation is that the four-armed god represents the king Vijaya Jaya himself. An interesting interpretation has been advanced by Mode, who reconstructed the tool in his right upper arm as a spoon (Mode 1991/1992, Fig. 17.c). This would link the deity to some representation of Adbagh/Ahura Mazda on Sogdian ossuaries. Here the deity has a spoon inserted in his belt, which is used for Zoroastrian sacrifices (Compareti 2020: 99).[41] It has been also advanced by some scholars the possibility to link the deity to the hero Rustam, one of the protagonists of the *Shāh-Nāmeh* (Compareti 2020: 99).[42]

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[40] Ratnabala could be a mistranslation back into Sanskrit of Nor bu bzan po (frequently mentioned in Tibetan texts), who is originally Manibhadra. Manibhadra is the king of *yakṣas* in *Suvarnaprabhāsottamasūtra* and one of the Eight Bodhisattvas resident in Khotan (Williams 1973: 149)

[41] At least on one Sogdian ossuary, this deity holds a vessel with a stylized small elephant, which is the animal of Indra, who is the model for the iconography of Adbagh in Sogdiana. The elephant is totally absent from the Khotanese depictions of the Silk God (Compareti 2020: 100).

[42] According to Stein, the figure represented a version of Rustam, by analogy with a painting from Kūh-i Khwāja in the Iranian Sistān (See: Stein, M. A. 1931: 269–273).

The God Riding a Horse

Fig. 11 - Wooden tablet with horse and camel rider from temple D VII, 7th - 8th century CE (?), Dandan Oilik (after Stein 1907: Plate LIX).

This deity seems quite popular and has been found on a series of mural paintings and panels. Starting with the wooden tablet from D VII (Fig. 11), we see two riders, the one on the camel will be dealt with later (see subchapter 3.6. below). The rider on the dappled horse has a halo and is dressed in a red tunic, a white scarf flows behind his back (Sasanian input), he wears black boots, and a sword is hanging from his side. He has a diadem and a circular ornament on top of his head and his long hair are tied in a knot. He is holding a bowl in which a small black bird is nose-diving. The horse has elaborate trappings with a crescent and a circle on the head (Williams 1973: 150).

Fig. 12 - Wooden tablet with horse horse rider from D X, 7th - 8th century CE (?), Dandan Oilik (after Stein 1907: Plate LXII).

On another painted panel from D X a second rider (Fig. 12) is depicted on a dappled horse as well, with almost the same features as the first one. He has short hair and a tall hat and the black bird is   painted behind him, above the tail of his horse.

According to Mode, we should see here another aspect of Vaiśravaṇa adapted from Sogdian art. In Sogdian art, the iconography of Vaiśravaṇa is based on that of Skanda (Compareti 2020: 101). He is usually depicted in local costume, with boots and frequently dressed in an armor, and it is important to note that in Khotan, the warrior iconography is consistent (Williams 1973). The god riding the horse is not wearing an armor though. On another tablet (Skrine A, British Museum) he is depicted with an armored divinity who can be easily identified with Vaiśravaṇa – all the characteristics are present, the halo, the spear, the stupa model in his left hand. Therefore, the identification seems to be incorrect.

Fig. 13 - Mural painting from temple CD4, Dandan Oilik (after Compareti 2020: fig. 7.8)

Parades of male deities on horses have been discovered in several temples. Most recently in CD4 (Fig. 13), on its northern wall several riders are portrayed on horses of various colors, each one of them has a halo and seems to hold a vessel. If the depiction is the same as the one found at Domoko Temple 2, each of them should be also accompanied by a black bird. A very important discovery from this group of painting in the temple CD4 is an inscription in Khotanese next to one of the horse riders mentioning the "Eight Spirits", the mysterious protectors of Khotan (Fig. 14). [43, 44]
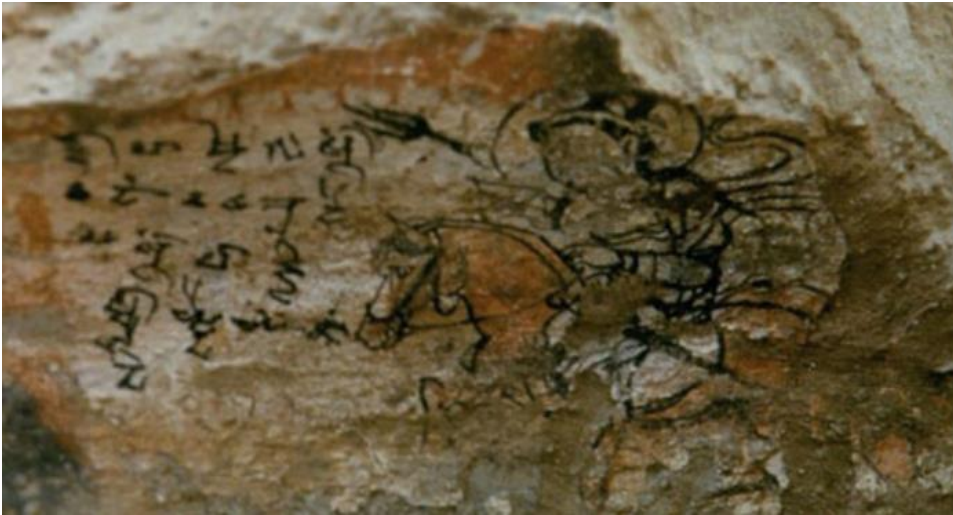

Fig. 14 - Khotanese inscription on the mural painting from temple CD4, Dandan Oilik (after Compareti 2020: fig. 7.10).

A parade of two male figures on horses is also seen on a mural painting in the temple D II (Fig. 18) under larger Buddhist images. The parade begins right after an enigmatic scene with a child and a naked woman bathing in a lotus pond, which will be discussed below (see subchapter 3.8.)

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[43] Text: "The donor Budai ordered to draw the eight spirits [gods] there. May they protect him" (Compareti 2020: fig. 7.10).
[44] The origin of the number of these spirits could be found in Chinese culture, where the number eight is very propitious even outside the Buddhist sphere. The number eight could be additionally associated with celestial bodies or their personifications (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Earth itself or the dragon from Vedic astrology causing moon eclipses, Ketu). It is still important to consider that the riders in some cases seem to be more than eight (Compareti 2020: 105–107).

(Compareti 2020: 104).

The iconography of these riders is not found in any other place in the Tarim Basin, there is no resemblance even for the bird flying directly into the rider's vessel, except a single painting on silk from the oasis of Turfan, even though the armor, the trappings and the vessel of this rider are distinct from the Khotanese examples (Williams 1973: 151). The black bird seems to be a local invention, maybe tied to an astronomical or astrological interpretation. A possible comparison with the textiles of Shanpula (beginning of CE) has been advanced. Some scenes show hunters shooting arrows towards a composite monster, while a bird is hovering above them. This could be a local pre-Buddhist hero, an echo of eastern Iranian myths, which were adapted later and used as foundation for the Khotanese iconographies. Nonetheless, these depictions of processions of riders seems to be a purely Khotanese phenomenon (Compareti 2020:107–108).

The God Behind Confronted Horses

This type of image can be observed on a fragmentary wooden panel from an unidentified site (possibly Dandan Oilik), and it was formerly part of the Trinkler collection (Fig. 15). The same deity has also been found on the eastern wall of the temple CD4 in a much-better condition, in a row with several other deities (Fig. 5 and 16).

Fig. 15: God with two confronted horses on fragmentary wooden tablet, 7th–8th century CE (?), possibly Dandan Oilik (Trinkler Collection, Overseas Museum in Bremen, after Compareti 2019: fig. 10).

Fig. 16 - God with two confronted horses from the mural painting of temple CD4, Dandan Oilik (after Compareti 2019: fig. 11).

A connection with astronomy/astrology could be possible also in this case. According to Compareti, one must investigate Islamic book illustrations, where we can find Indian borrowings for symbolic representations of planetary conjunctions in the form of fantastic creatures with various attributes and multiple heads, legs and arms. A picture particularly similar to that of our Khotanese deity has been found in one enigmatic astronomical text, made in Baghdad between 1388–1420 CE (Compareti 2020: fig. 7.14). The origin of the iconography used in this text is not certain, although a Central Asian pre-Islamic inspiration is possible.

Another clue to the identity of this deity is given out by the Khotanese language. In this Saka dialect, as well as in Khwarezmian and other Eastern Iranian languages still spoken in the Pamir, the Sun was called *urmaysde*, also a name for Ahura Mazda. This fact would significantly support the hypothesis of Mode, who indicated a connection with a god represented on Kushan coins named MOOZDOANO. The god in question in depicted riding a two-headed horse and has a trident in his hand.[45] If this god could be considered a solar deity connected to Ahura Mazda, it would be enough evidence to imply that the Khotanese pre-Buddhist beliefs had something to do with Zoroastrianism (Compareti 2020: 108–111).

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[45] The name MOOZDOANO has been accepted also as an epithet of Śiva, but this interpretation is still disputed.

The God Riding a Camel

This god appears in conjunction with the rider on the spotted horse on the tablet from D VII (Fig. 13). He has the same attributes as the rider from D II, he is holding a vessel as well, but no bird is present. An additional fragmentary depiction has been discovered in CD10, on a mural painting at least two gods appear to ride camels in proximity of Buddhist images (Fig. 17). According to Mode, it could be the Avestan Verethragna or the Sogdian Wašagn. He also associated it to the god sitting on a camel painted on an altar from Varakhsha's Eastern Hall (Mode 1991/1992: fig. 7/a).

Fig. 17 - Procession of camel riders from temple CD10, Dandan Oilik (after Compareti 2020: fig. 7.16).

Sañjaya/Vaiśravaṇa

On a wooden tablet from temple D X (Williams 1973: fig.41) we have something that almost looks like a sketch of a warrior deity, modelled after Kushan imperial portrayals (Scott 1999: 50). One is tempted to identify him as Vaiśravaṇa, since his images are attested elsewhere in Khotan, but it could represent another *yakṣa*-king, Sañjaya, whose

presence is usually hinted by the depiction of a stag and a child.[46] Sañjaya is one of the eight guardians of Khotan and appears frequently in literary sources. He is also described as a Bodhisattva, but most often as the generalissimo of the *yakṣa*s.

Sudhana Jātaka (?)

In the small shrine of D II a beautiful depiction that, unfortunately, did not survive to our days, adorned a mural section right of a clay sculpture of Vaiśravaṇa (Fig. 21). A large, naked female figure emerged from a lotus pond. As we may observe from the image reported by Stein (Stein 1907: II Phot), she wore elaborate jewels and a girdle, her reddish hair piled high and wrapped in a scarf. A small figure of what seems to be a child was clutched to her thigh. On their right, the procession of horse riders already described above, and on an upper register, two large seated male figures dressed in monastic garments. The head of a fish appeared under the left knee of one of the men, it seemed to hold something in its mouth and a string of pearls was placed around its head. It is still a mystery what could this last image possibly represent.[47]

A legend reported by Xuanzang could illuminate the scene. As the story tells a river to the east of the city once ceased to flow. The cause of such misfortune was the passing of the local Nāga and his wife, newly widowed, was unable to issue commands to the waters. In order to restore balance and fertility, a minister of the Khotanese king volunteered to marry the Nāginī, and he rode off into the waters on a white horse. Soon the horse returned alone carrying a large sandalwood drum, which bore the message from the minister that all would be well. Stein supported this interpretation, although he himself admitted that some major hints were lacking, like the drum mentioned in the narration. It is also hard to believe that the horse riders would belong to this scene.

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[46] According to Khotanese legends, king Vijaya Vīrya followed a gold and silver stag which turned into Sañjaya, who told the ruler to build a stupa. After it has been done, a child became lost on the same hill and on the place it was later found, the ruler built a monastery (Williams 1973: 136).

[47] A personal interpretation of the author is that, instead of a fish head, a mongoose could be depicted. Vaiśravaṇa is known to be accompanied by this animal, which is frequently portrayed ejecting jewels from its mouth as a gesture of generosity, but the suggested argument is very speculative. The motif may also be reminiscent of the Sasanian duck/bird holding a pearl necklace in its bill, which is fairly used in Sogdian art and also as a decorative element in other Buddhist contexts (Bamiyan, Kizil grottoes, Tuyuk).

A more plausible interpretation is based upon the *Sudhana Jātaka*, which tells the story of the marriage of Prince Sudhana and a beautiful *kinnarī*. In the Khotanese version, the Prince and his father, the old king, each has his own advisor, a *kalyānamitra*. The two advisors are enemies. The advisor of the king convinces him to sacrifice the *kinnarī* while the Prince is absent. She manages to escape and Sudhana, after a difficult journey, finds her by means of a ring she had left him. The scene in D II might be understood as the marriage, with the advisors in the background. The female figure is depicted wearing a ring and her strange girdle might be a sign of her being a *kinnarī*. The Prince Sudhana might be represented as a child because of the fusion with the *Gandavyūha Sūtra*, in which the protagonist bears the same name. The fact that the *kalyānamitra*s are present in the *jātaka* as in the sutra is a supporting factor as well (Williams 1973: 153–154).

Fig. 18 - Mural painting from temple D II, Dandan Oilik (after Stein 1907: Plate II).

The Rat King

This last image was found on a wooden tablet from temple D IV (Fig. 22). Between two figures, Buddha on the right and what is seems to be a *caurī*-bearer on the left, we are presented with a zoomorphic figure. The face is too damaged to identify the animal with absolute certainty. Stein suggested the identification of this figure as the leader of the divine rats of Khotan, which helped the king to defeat the Xiongnu. According to Xuanzang, the ruler of Khotan prayed to the desert rats and they agreed to help him. The rats destroyed the leather gear of the enemies rendering them helpless. Since then, rats were worshipped at a shrine west of Khotan (probably Pialma). Much more likely, the figure represents one of the *grahas* with a wolf head (Williams 1973: 152).

Fig. 19 - Wooden tablet with depiction of the Legend of the Rat King from D IV, 7th - 8th century CE (?), Dandan Oilik (after Stein 1907: Plate LXIII).

4. Concluding remarks

Buddhism has stimulated the circulation of people, commodities and ideas on a vast area comprising most of the Asian continent, bringing together different traditions and creating new means for religious expression through the visual arts.

The Khotanese iconography deals with a range of topics inside a purely Buddhist context, which is heavily inspired by Brahmanic tradition, but in some cases Central Asia and Iranian motifs are prevalent or at least give a specific twist. Even though it seems there is no limit to the imagination of the artists, we may observe how the iconographic schemes are persistent and certain deities appear frequently in combination to others.

In Dandan Oilik one group of paintings relates to Brahmanic cults, most

certainly of tantric nature, with Maheśvara and Skanda, most of the times perfectly recognizable, accompanied by enigmatic female deities. The cult related to Skanda and the *grahas* taps into the darker past of the god and his connection to demons and illnesses. This instance attests how the diffusion of beliefs is granted also through the transmission of medical knowledge and how religion and traditional medicine were intertwined.

The second group of deities hardly has any parallel in other cultural spheres, even though some attempts to connect them to a Sogdian/Iranian/Zoroastrian background were made. They are considered as local divinities tied to local legends, most notably the Silk God, or pre-Buddhist cults.

Nonetheless, a clear identification in most cases turns out to be exceptionally challenging. Iconographic studies prove to be essential to elucidate ambiguous interpretations and to uncover networks of ideological transfer. A definitive agreement on the identity of these deities may be never reached unless further archaeological, historical, and philological investigations do not bring up uncontestable proofs.

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The Hunnic Dilemma: Between Identity and Environmental-Economic Crises

Michael David Ethington

Abstract

The presence of the Huns between Central Asia and the North-Western sections of the Indian subcontinent between the late IV and the VI centuries AD has often been a point of discussion amongst scholars. This article aims to gather the research results of various academic authors, archaeological findings and some written primary sources to give the reader a summary of the information currently available on the subject, along with a few insights by the author. The identity, presence and impact of the Huns in the above-mentioned areas are the main focuses of this article.

The second half of the IV century AD was a period marked by significant migratory movements in the Eurasian steppes with an East-to-West axis. The Huns are an exemplary case of this phenomenon: understanding their identity and their movements is a difficult endeavour due to the scarcity (or complete absence) of archaeological findings, numismatic evidence, and written records ascribable to them. The issue of identification is a *topos* of studies concerning the Eurasian steppe peoples, especially ones from the I millennium BC and the I millennium AD. Indeed, they primarily used perishable materials which did not last to our current day, and their culture was mostly based on oral traditions; moreover, they were ethnically heterogeneous: "Dans la steppe, la langue et le sang importent peu" (La Vaissière 2005). A study of written records left by the peoples the Huns encountered and fought against is of fundamental importance, along with further developments of archaeological discoveries.

Many authors in a geographically broad field recount of a nomadic entity which seems to have appeared in the second half of the IV century AD. All these writers refer to this group in relatively similar phonetic forms: Οὔννοι or Χιονίται in Byzantine/Eastern Roman sources, *Xiyon* in Persian sources, *Xwn* amongst the Sogdians, *Huna* in India, and *Xiongnu*

in Chinese texts[1]. This last term had already been used in China in the III-II c. BC to refer to a confederation of nomadic peoples which had come into conflict with the Han dynasty in many instances. La Vaissière has proposed a plausible continuity between this entity and the Huns of the IV c.: through a thorough analysis of Chinese sources and a discussion on some of his colleagues' positions on the matter, he suggests that the Huns originated from a unitary migration which began approximately in 360 AD from the Altai mountains, where the remnants of the Xiongnu resided; consequently, the Volga Huns, as well as the so-called "Iranic Huns", would have been branches of this initial movement (La Vaissière 2003, 2005). Ammianus Marcellinus reports in his late IV c. account that a group called *Chionitae* were present among Shapur's forces at the siege of Amida in 359 AD (Hamilton 1986). It is not possible, though, to determine a clear ethnic identity of this people, partly due to the absence of relevant archaeological findings; an exception to this could be the discovery of xiongnu cauldrons and their imitations in Central Asia and Hungary, which represent a continuity of specific ritual practices (La Vaissière 2003). La Vaissière does not in any way take into consideration another important factor: the *elongated skulls* problem. Examples of such cranial deformations have been found in Hunnic burials in Hungary, and could be inferred from Ammianus Marcellinus' account[2]:

> "They have squat bodies, strong limbs, and thick necks, and arc so prodigiously ugly and bent that they might be two-legged animals, or the figures crudely carved from stumps which are seen on the parapets of

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[1] Written sources are also a possible point of confusion in the identification process. The *Weishu* and its treatment of the Kidarites is a fine example of this issue: "At the same time the *Weishu* presents them as "Yuezhi" and "Kushans" when referring to their activities in Northern India, and on their coins in Gandhāra (and already in Kāpiśā if the Tepe Maranjān specimens belong to them) they style themselves "Kušāhšāh," a title no other rulers assumed after them. In these scraps of historical information they appear as adversaries of the Xiongnu: "The state of the Little Yuezhi: the capital is Purusapura [Peshawar] . . . Kidara had been driven away by the Xiongnu and fled westwards, and later made his son assume the defensive" (transl. based on Kuwayama 2002, p. 128). This information is difficult to interpret: it might refer to hostilities in Gandhāra between the Kidarites and some Hunnish predecessors there, or to the Kidarites' eventual expulsion from Tukharistān by the Hephthalites; yet another possibility is that this passage may contain a reminiscence of the Xiongnu's expulsion of the ancient Great Yuezhi westwards out of China as recounted in the *Hanshu*." (Grenet 2005).

[2] It is important to note that Ammianus Marcellinus gives a biased depiction of the Volga Huns.

bridges. Still, their shape, however disagreeable, is human." (Hamilton 1986)

The rulers depicted on Alchon coinage all possess this same peculiar feature. This is not the same on Kidarite coins, and this brings forth the question of whether it was a tradition of certain clans or élites or whether the Kidarites were not displaying these features because, as it will be explained below, they were imitating previous coin models. The Hephthalites pose the same problem: Procopius describes them as "those who have white bodies and countenances which are not ugly" (Dewing 1914); this might suggest an intermingling between the Hephthalites and the local Bactrian population or could point to the Hephthalite's origin as a previously existing Iranic nomadic people integrated into the "Hunnic" category. These observations, though, remain only conjectures.

The Iranic Huns, having emerged from these movements, have brought a succession of dynasties between the lands north of the Hindu Kush and Northwestern India. Traditionally, the clans are placed in the following sequence: Kidarites[3], Alchons, Hephthalites and Nezaks. However, using this method can be misleading in certain cases, even when one looks at the internal successions of a single dynasty. The case of the Alchons[4] is emblematic if we take into consideration their monetary production and the Brahmi inscription on a copper scroll of Talakan/Talagana[5], published in 2006: Vondrovec points out the presence of the names of four Alchon kings in the inscription, kings who have already been identified on various coins. This discovery makes it plausible to assume that there was a contemporary lordship of Khingila, Toramana, Mehama and Javukha (Vondrovec 2008, Bakker 2020b): before this finding, scholars would usually place them in a chronological sequence. The location of the scroll in Talakan/Talagana has been questioned by La Vaissière and Hans Bakker (Bakker 2018): a more proper location of the scroll and the Buddhist foundation linked to it would be Talagang, in the Punjab. The earliest Alchon coinage further strengthens the hypothesis of a confederation: the first "kings" are without name, suggesting a series of contemporary leaders with a common political identity; thus, the individuals portrayed on these coins have been called "Anonymous Clan

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[3] The "Chionitae" reported by Ammianus Marcellinus, according to Bakker 2020b.
[4] Or Alkhan, according to the transliteration in Vondrovec 2010.
[5] A peripheral area of Bactria, according to Vondrovec and other scholars.

Rulers" (Vondrovec 2005). This political structure is not at all unusual in a nomadic context: for example, one could recall the case of the *Guishang*, the Kushans, who are mentioned in Chinese sources as one of the five tribes of the *Da Yuezhi*; in the end, the Kushans obtained supremacy over the other four. Another example is, again, Ammianus Marcellinus' account on the Volga Huns:

> "When they need to debate some important matter they conduct their conference in the same posture. They are not subject to the authority of any king, but break through any obstacle in their path under the improvised command of their chief men." (Hamilton 1986)

The Alchon-Nezak coins are another element which demonstrates the necessity to avoid a rigid and traditional approach to chronology: these coins show a mixing in monetary production between the two dynasties. The *terminus post quem* of the Nezaks' appearance[6] is 474 AD, with *šahanšah* Peroz' defeat by the Hephthalites, "although we do not know exactly how much later they [some features of Sasanian coins] appeared on the Nezak coinage" (Vondrovec 2010). Despite of the Hephthalite hegemony, new and pre-existing dynasties continued to exist as subjects of the new dominion or outside of it, such as the Alchons of Mihirakula[7], who were defeated in Gandhara by an Indian coalition in 528 or 532 AD. Their presence in India is attested in the Gwalior inscription and in the one in Malwa, the *Eran boar*, both placed in Brahmanic religious contexts: the first one is linked to Mihirakula, while the second one refers to Toramana as ruler of the local lands. Hans Bakker gives an extensive list of inscriptions in Sanskrit related to the Huna, and notices that in those such as the ones mentioned above the term "Huna" is absent: "it seems also to lend support to the view that the Sanskrit word *huna* had a pejorative

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[6] It is important to note that the origin of this dynasty is not exactly clear. See Grenet 2002: "The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, who in 629 stayed in their capital, Kāpisā (Begrām), mentions that the king belonged to a family of *chali*, i.e., *kṣatriyas*, which seems to indicate a local Hindu origin; but at the same time they claimed ancestry from the 5th-century Hephtalite ruler Khingila, hence the name "Khingal dynasty" by which they are sometimes designated by scholars. One cannot exclude the possibility that they were originally a branch of the Hephtalites who had escaped from regions to the north of the Hindu Kush.".

[7] The ruler famously described in the *Rājataraṃgiṇī*: "man of violent acts and resembling Kala […]. In him the northern region brought forth, as it were, another god of death […]." (Bakker 2020a)

connotation" (Bakker 2020a). This statement might not be correct: the absence of "Huna" could simply be due to it being obvious to the Huns themselves, who would not have needed an ethnic identifier in their inscriptions.

The Huns' presence in the Hindu Kush and Gandhara, despite the numismatic evidence, has left scarce archaeological traces, considering the current findings. A significant footprint of Hunnic presence is a makeshift structure belonging to the last phase of the Kushan royal sanctuary of Surkh Kotal, located in Baghlan, north of the Hindu Kush. This newer temple was built with wooden materials and stones from the previous phases. The most plausible authors of this structure are the Kidarites, due to the presence of a Kushan stele, which must have been moved from the remains of the old central temple (Olivieri and Sinisi 2021). This new sanctuary seems to be an attempt to recall the Kushan era, an important form of legitimisation employed by the Kidarites in their coinage and in their sealings (Bakker 2020b), where they adopted the title "Kušāhšāh"[8]. The Kidarites' activities in Sogdiana and Gandhara are attested exclusively through the findings of coins and through written sources, especially Chinese ones. According to Grenet, the travels of the monk Faxian are important to pinpoint a possible *terminus post quem* of the arrival of the Kidarites in Gandhara: 412 AD, the year of Faxian's return to China (Grenet 2005), because the monk describes Uddiyana as a rich Buddhist center:

> "Crossing the river we arrive at the country of Ou-Chang. This is the most northern part of India. […] The law of Buddha is universally honoured. The names given to places where the priests take up their fixed abodes is Sangharama. There are altogether about 500 of these (in this country), all of which are attached to the system called the Little Vehicle." (Beal 1869).

Grenet's hypothesis is not certain. The importance of Uddiyana as a Buddhist center could have lasted during the Kidarite dominion: the finding of Kidarite coins in the consecration deposits of Butkara, a short distance from the abandoned city of Barikot, is significant. This, along with the cases mentioned above, helps to explain the kind of authority and legitimacy the Kidarites were seeking to establish and/or make their own.

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[8] See note 1.

Furthermore, a depiction of a ruler belonging to the Kidarite dominion has been identified on a local stupa, even though it is not Hunnic art. Hans Bakker also points out that the appearance of coins with the writing "Kidara" in Gandhara, starting from 388 AD, demonstrates how the region was under Kidarite rule far earlier than what Grenet suggested. Grenet then proposed another Chinese source as the *terminus post quem* of the fall of the Kidarites: "A residual Kidarite kingdom in the Gandhāran region (possibly in Swat: Göbl 1967, II, p. 224, issue 15) continued to send embassies to China until 477." (Grenet 2005)[9]. The Alchons' descent from Kabulistan, where donations to Buddhist stupas are attested, to Gandhara is thus placeable after this date. It is for this reason that the Alchons are generally placed in a chronological phase between 450 and 560 AD. These identifications, though, are approximative at best, and the monetary evidence is not numerous: the excavations in Taxila, the beating heart between Gandhara and India, have brought to light only 60 coins[10], while other large deposits, such as the Shahji-ki-Dheri stupa, contained only 16 Alchon coins. The geographical origin of the coins is also often difficult to determine, such as in the case of the "coins of Kashmir Smast", which do not belong to that area; a further issue lies in the wide phenomenon of coins which have circulated in the black market. Coins are not the only victims of this illegal trafficking: the "Hephthalite silver bowl" needs to be taken into consideration. Both Alchons and Kidarites are depicted[11], engaged in the hunting of lions, boars, and rams. Its place of origin is not known, but its artistic style recalls Persian and Indian elements. There are some Brahmi inscriptions present on this bowl, which have been analysed by various scholars: Hans Bakker notes how the names "Kidara" and "Khingi(la)" can be read, the latter followed by a number, "206", which might refer to the Bactrian era[12] or to the weight of the bowl (Bakker 2020a). Bakker also refers to a similarly styled bowl found near Datong, "which reads according to Sims-Williams: χιγγιλο ι χοηο χοβο, … 'Property of Khingila the lord'.". Taking into consideration the tribal

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[9] The Kidarite presence is also attested in Taxila and Kashmir, but possible dates linked with the fall of these last holdings have not been proposed yet (DAF).

[10] Of which 29 Kidarite golden dinars, which imitate the local coinage, similarly to what happened during the phase north of the Hindu Kush (DAF).

[11] One can distinguish between Kidarites and Alchons due to their differences in head shape and headgear, in a similar way as with their coinage.

[12] "which started in AD 223, the year of the foundation of the Sasanian Empire by Ardashir I. If this is correct, it would date the bowl to AD 428/9." (Bakker 2020a)

structures of the Huns and the findings of Alchon-Kidarite bowls (of Alchon production), Hans Bakker suggests the presence of a confederacy formed by these two ethnic groups, which would explain the difficult to ascertain transition between the two peoples and, plausibly, the combined and simultaneous military efforts by the Sasanian Yazdagird II and the Gupta Samudragupta to defeat this imposing force (Bakker 2020b).

While the evidence pertaining the Kidarites and Alchons in these regions is somewhat present, the Hephthalites, despite their geopolitical importance, have left even less evidence. Not unlike the other Huna rulers, the Hephthalites moved frequently, mostly living in encampments rather than in cities. Song Yun reports in the early VI c. that the ruler of the "Ye-thas" (the Hephthalites) "continually abode with his troops on the frontier, and never returned to his kingdom […]. Song-Yun repaired to the royal camp to deliver his credentials." (Beal 1886). Ammianus Marcellinus, with some exaggeration, also reports that (concerning the Volga Huns, not the Hephthalites):

> "They have no buildings to shelter them, but avoid anything of the kind as carefully as we avoid living in the neighbourhood of tombs; not so much as a hut thatched with reeds is to be found among them. […] On foreign soil only extreme necessity can persuade them to come under a roof, since they believe that it is not safe for them to do so." (Hamilton 1986)

Procopius provides a different picture concerning the Hephthalites:

> The Ephthalitae are of the stock of the Huns in fact as well as in name; however they do not mingle with any of the Huns known to us, for they occupy a land neither adjoining nor even very near to them. […] For they are not nomads like the other Hunnic peoples, but for a long period have been established in a goodly land. As a result of this they have never made any incursion into the Roman territory except in company with the Median army. They are the only ones among the Huns who have white bodies and countenances which are not ugly. It is also true that their manner of living is unlike that of their kinsmen, nor do they live a savage life as they do; but they are ruled by one king, and since they possess a lawful constitution, they observe right and justice in their dealings both with one another and with their neighbours, in no degree less than the Romans and the Persians. (Dewing 1914)

Procopius' positive opinion on the Hephthalites is probably derived from their distance from Roman lands and their enmity with the Persians: indeed, this passage on the "White Huns" is placed in Procopius' account on *šahanšah* Peroz' war with them. Moreover, Song Yun, who was a contemporary of Procopius and, as we have seen, had visited their lands, does not give a very positive account of his encounter with the Hephthalite king; Song Yun's perspective could also be due to the Chinese bias towards the peoples of the steppe. As one can see, dealing with written sources means treading on a not so solid ground. Procopius' "Have been established in a goodly land" could be interpreted literally, as in "the Hephthalites have settled in Bactria", but there is no current archaeological evidence on the "city of Gorgo", their capital according to Procopius; this passage could also be interpreted simply as "they stopped their destructive migrations, establishing a stable dominion in Bactria". Procopius was also not aware of Hunnic operations in India. A 2003 finding from Xi'an could be of help in the understanding of Hephthalite life: a sarcophagus belonging (plausibly) to the *Sabao*[13] Wirtak (494-579). The reliefs decorating the stone sarcophagus reveal scenes pertaining to Wirtak's life, from his birth to his journeys in the "Western lands" and finally to his days in China and Gansu in particular (Grenet and Riboud 2007). The celebration of Nowruz, the presence of both nomadic and urban settings and of crowns modelled after the late crown of Peroz attest to a complex and diverse setting which goes beyond the simplifications of contemporary written sources such as the ones cited above.

Having taken these accounts and the findings of Huna coins - in particular in devotional deposits - into consideration, it seems clear how the presence of these nomadic dynasties had not brought significant economic investments in their dominions, be they in the market, in urban planning (let alone the construction or expansion of a central capital like Gorgo) or in the building of new places of worship[14]. Kuwayama's observations on the false myth of "Hephthalite destruction of Gandharan Buddhism" also need to be taken into consideration. Beyond showing the Hephthalites' lack of interest in Buddhism, as one can see in the absence

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[13] "an official Chinese title given to the administrators of foreign communities, inherited from the Sogdian word *s'rtp'w* [sartpāw], meaning <<caravan leader>>" (Grenet and Riboud 2007)

[14] It is important to remember the aforementioned Alchon and Kidarite donations to already existing sanctuaries, and the construction of the makeshift temple at Surkh Kotal.

of donations to stupas, Kuwayama cites further Chinese sources (chiefly Song Yun and the biography of Narendrayaśas) which clearly show the continuing prosperity of Uddiyana in the early VI c., when the area was under Huna control[15]: the main element of Kuwayama's thesis is the mention in those sources of numerous relics of the Buddha, which show "how important the relics can be as clues to proving the flourishing Buddhism in Gandhara in the first part of the sixth century". Furthermore, he argues that "Dissatisfaction from the general populace with the Hephthalite king was likely to be a reaction to an unpopular and costly war" (Kuwayama 2002). The collapse of the region can only be seen in Xuanzang's report from a century later:

On both sides of the river Su-po-fa-su-tu, there are some 1400 old *sangharamas*. They are now generally waste and desolate; formerly there were some 18,000 priests in them, but gradually they have become less, till now there are very few. They […] have pleasure in reciting texts relating to this subject but have no great understanding as to them. […] There are about ten temples of Devas, and a mixed number of unbelievers who dwell in them. (Beal 1884)

As Kuwayama states, "The decay of Buddhism therefore came in the Northwest in the latter half of the sixth century after the political withdrawal of the Hephthalites whose homelands in Tokharistan were mostly occupied by the Turks in the sixth and seventh decades of the sixth century." (Kuwayama 2002). The collapse of Uddiyana was thus mostly caused by economic and religious factors: the abandoning of the important city of Barikot between the III and IV c.[16] was the symptom of a larger decline of the second urbanisation in India. This resulted in Buddhist monasteries taking the role of administrators of the land, and of the irrigation systems especially; despite this, the Buddhist communities slowly lost their influence with the emergence of a reformed Brahmanism[17]. Behind all these processes, the LALIA (*Late Ancient Little Ice Age*, 536-660 CE; Olivieri 2021), a global climatic crisis, played a major role in triggering the collapse: the bounteous harvests of Uddiyana

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[15] Song Yun also mentions a war between the "Ye-thas" and the "country of Ki-pin (Cophene), disputing boundaries of their kingdom" (Beal 1886), which implies a conflict between the Hephthalites and the Huns ruling in the Swat and surrounding areas.

[16] The main reasons behind its downfall were two major earthquakes (Iori and Olivieri 2019).

[17] The "ten temples of Devas" mentioned by Xuanzang.

were severely hampered, since rice could not survive the drastic drop in temperature. Furthermore, the increase in snow and cold weather made the northern passages impassable, putting an end to Uddiyana as a point of interest of political and religious routes linking Central Asia and India, which would switch from the mountain passes of the Karakorum linking Yarkand and the Tarim Basin to India to the Balkh-Bamiyan-Kabulistan path (Kuwayama 2002). The Xi'an sarcophagus further demonstrates the intermingling of "proper" Hunnic traditions and local ones, such as the already mentioned celebration of Sogdian Nowruz, and the adoption of Chinese clothing styles for women.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the Huns were not the simple yet utterly destructive force described in Indian sources, but an actor - better, a series of actors - in a period of significant environmental, economic and civilizational shifts which encompassed the whole of Eurasia and beyond. One must take this into consideration in the study of the Huns. Beyond their conflicts with the Sasanians, the Guptas and the Indian princes, they were seeking to legitimise their power by recalling echoes of past powers, adopting local symbols and customs, and donating to Buddhist sanctuaries, while keeping some of their nomadic roots, such as in their political structure and in their lack of investments in the settled economy.

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Archaeological Survey
of Sarsinai (Sirsinai) and Galoch Villages in
Tehsil Kabal, Swat

Ikram Qayyum

Abstract

This paper deals with the survey and documentation of archaeological sites, carried out from 2013 to 2017, in the Sirsinai and Galoch villages of Nikpi Khel on the right bank of River Swat[1]. During the survey fifty six archaeological sites, not known previously, were documented. Some of the sites are in a bad state, while the others can yield sufficient material for the reconstruction of the archaeological profile of the Swat valley. However, all these sites are under serious threat of human vandalism because of their location in private property. An attempt has been made here to highlight the significance of some of the newly documented sites in the village of Sirsinai and Galoch of Tehsil Kabal.

Keywords: Swat, Archaeological Survey, Tehsil Kabal

1. Introduction

Nikpe-khel valley (hence after NK valley)[2] of Tehsil Kabal, is a mountainous, relatively open, sub-valley of the Swat District on the right bank of the River Swat. Geographically it is bounded by the River Swat from the south which also separate it from Tehsil Babuzai, on west and

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[1] The survey was carried out for the partial fulfillment of the MSc and MPhil research of the present author with the kind permission of the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan.

[2] In a personal communication, Abdul Qayyum Balala, a well-known scholar and researcher, suggested that the area included in the present Tehsil Kabal was formerly known as Nikpe-khel Valley owing to settlement of one of the Yousafzai branch Nikpe or Nikpe-khel. He further explained that in Swat State, which included modern-day Swat district, Buner district, Shangla district, and Kohistan district, there were eight Hakimai, an administrative unit under Hakim, or high official appointed by the state. These Hakimai were sub-divide into 32 Tehsils, among them, 7 tehsils, namely: Barikot Tehsil, Babozai Tehsil, Kabal Tehsil, Charbagh Tehsil, Khwazakhela Tehsil, Matta Tehsil and Behrain Tehsil are still situated in the Swat District.

northwest it is bordered by the mountainous watershed between Swat and Dir, and on the east its limits reaches to Ningolai village, whereas Tehsil Matta is situated to the southwest (see the map I[3]).

Tehsil Kabal is bisected by a perennial *Khwar* known as Nikpekhel *Khwar* (hence after NK *Khwar*) or Manrai-khwar[4] which divides the whole valley into two main halves, i. e. western and the eastern half. The western half has been joined by several tributaries of which the Aspanay-khwar falls to the NK *Khwar* near Araf Serai area of the Galoch village; and Loe-khwar, at the Bela village.

The Aspanay-khwar is fed by several small streamlets issuing from Asbanr, Sarbala and Totano-bandai whereas the Loe-khwar is joined by small water channels coming from the hills slopes of Qalagay, Kulalai and Manja hamlets. There are also other small streamlets coming from Mian-bela and Jrendo-bela which empty into the main NK *Khwar* near Langanr and below Kemai respectively.

The eastern half is divided into extreme north and north-eastern tributaries. The extreme-north tributaries are emanating from relatively small glens from Kandao, Drad, Tarano, Shabeka, Shar-banr and Taghma while the north-eastern tributaries are coming from Tarkano, Muhammad beg, and Mahak. All these small streamlets open into Mahak-khwar which in turn opens into the main NK l*akhwar* below Kalakakaly near Galoch area. There are also other seasonal *khwars* in the south and east of Tehsil Kabal known as Dadahara-khwar (south), Kotlai-khwar (south), and Sigram-khwar (east), but these do not join the NK *khwar*, instead directly join the Swat River (see Map II).[5]

The Nikpi Khel area can be approached through the main metallic road from Mingora, after passing the Ayub Bridge northwards, enters into the NK valley, where it bifurcates at the Kanju junction to left and leads to Kabal Chowk where a branch goes to the north, and reaches to Sarsinai. At the Sarsinai Chowk, the road once again split into two branches, of which the one leads to Totano-bandai and proceeds further to Manja,

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[3] The map I and Map II are edited. For the source of the maps see Matteo De Chiara, Toponym of the Swat Valley: Linguistic Archaeology (Lahore: Sange-e-Meel, 2020), fig. 3, 32 respectively.

[4] Nikep-khel khwar is also known as Deolai-khwar, Shaderai-khwar, or Manrai-khwar, etc. But, according to my observation (and also referred to by Abdul Qayyum Balala) that in the olden days people mostly called it Manrai-khwar because its primary sources (small valleys, glens, and pastures) are from Manrai areas.

[5] Personal communication with Abdul Qayyum Balala

Qalagay until reaches to the top of Manja-kandao that also separate Swat from district Dir. From the Totano-bandai roade, another narrow road issues to Teghako and Ghakhe-bandai and the top of Asbanr or Hus-banr, the administrative border between Dir and Swat districts. The second main branch from the Sirsinai Chowk goes northward and reaches the Kalakalay *Bazar*. Here it gives a small substituent to Mahak (and also a route to Girbanr), and a little next to it, another substituent to Nasrat and Taghma[6] (then to Matta Tehsil through Biakan-kandao) while the main road from Kalakalay *Bazar* then proceeds northwards crossing Deoloai, Shah-dherai and reaches to Langanr where it is again bisected into two main branches. The western branch goes to Tal, Mian-bela and the eastern branch goes to Manrai and Goda. Both the eastern and western branches are connected through Dardiyal and Kamyarai bypass (see Map III[7]).

2. Previous Research

Though the archaeological activities by Pakistani and foreign institutions have been conducted in the Swat valley, their focus was mainly confined to the left side of the River Swat, whereas the right side drew less attention, despite that the rich archaeological heritage of small sub-valleys having.

In the post-independence of Pakistan, the first archaeological survey in Tehsil Kabal (NK valley) was carried by Giuseppe Tucci in 1956. He stated about the archaeological sites in Totano-banadi, Manjahei[8], and Pakkadherai located on the main Totano bandai road in the western half (right side area of NK *khwar*) of the NK valley while in the eastern half (left side areas of the NK khwar) he mentioned the archaeological remains of Girban (Manago sar), Arkot Qila and Nazabeai (Tucci 1958:318-320). Then in 1995 M. F. Swati, of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, made a cursory survey in the NK Valley and mentioned a Buddhist site in Bataka near Shah-Dherai(Swati 2008: 98). Similarly Muhammad Ashraf Khan of the Department of Archaeology and Museum, Government of Pakistan, conducted a survey in the south and southwestern part of Tehsil Kabal and explored the archaeological sites in Dadahara, Suigalai, Aligrama, and Totano-bandai

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[6] A branch from Taghma also leads to Drad, Tarano, and Kandao.
[7] https://www.visitswatvalley.com/swat-map/
[8] The Modern name of the village is Manja.

(Khan 1996: 82-84). But as the area is very rich in terms of archaeological sites, and most of which are located in remote villages and private ownership, therefore, the previous explorers could not cover it in a single exploration. In this regards, the present author directed his attention to explore and document new sites not yet enlisted. With these objectives, a detailed survey campaign was initiated in 2013 that continued until 2017, in which several proto-historic, and Buddhist period remains were discovered in the NK area (Qayum 2013 and 2017s)[9].

Many excavation campaigns have been carried out in NK Valley in the past few decades by the Italian Archaeological Mission to Pakistan, and the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar and as well as by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan. The first scientific excavation was conducted at the Proto-historic sites of Aligrama, Nazakae and Arkot by members of the Italian Archaeological Mission (see Stacul and Tusa 1975 & 1977, Tusa 1981: 102-105), for knowing the cultural sequence of the Swat valley. Similarly, the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar excavated the Buddhist period sites at Khimdara and Marjanai (Khan S. N. 1995: 1-74), whereas the sites of Sakha-China, Sisaka and Kandaro-Patay in Dadahara were excavated by the Federal Department of Archaeology and Museums, Pakistan (Khan 1996: 83- 90).

3. Serious Threats

Unfortunately all the archaeological sites either excavated or explored in the NK area are located in private property and no serious attempt has been carried out for its conservation and currently most of these were found deteriorated and in bad state of preservation. Some the previously known sites such as Pataka and Marjanai have been converted into agricultural fields and the other have been plundered by antique seekers. Moreover, the rapid increase in constructional activities has also washed away the remains of ancient sites and monuments. In the recent past, the most important archaeological sites of Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-II)

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[9] While the present author was surveying the NK area, he also came to know that another scholar, Mr. Sarfaraz Khan of the Taxila institute of Asian Civilizations; Quaid-i-Azam University Islamaba was also revisiting those archaeological sites which were previously documented by G. Tucci (see Khan. 2015).

Loi Gujar-Banr I (monastery) (fig. 22), Loi Gujar-banr II (fig. 26) in Galoch village were destroyed by the construction of new houses.

4. Current Survey and its Methodology

The previous explorations and excavations have been carried out in the southern part of the NK area, whereas a large part of the valley remained unexplored till the current survey was conducted from 2013 to 2017 (Qayum 2013 and 2017). It was a type of intrusive intensive survey, concentrated both on the plain areas in the close proximities of the NK *khwar* and also on the faraway deep mountainous glens located in the central and northern areas of the NK valley. For the convenience of documentation, the NK area was divided into three zones (or areas), A, B, and C.[10]

The main focus of the first season survey in the area A was the Union Councils of Bar Aba-Khel, Kalakalay, Totano-bandai and Hazara of Tehsil Kabal.[11] Later on the survey was further extended to Dardiyal of Kabal Tehsil, and some areas of Matta Tehsil.[12]

Information regarding the old traditions and legends associated to the sites were obtained from the local inhabitants and preliminary notes such as the nature of the site, location, GPS coordinates and photographs were taken on the spot. Potsherds, stone implements and other noteworthy objects scattered on the surface were collected for the future research.

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[10] This classification of Tehsil Kabal is made by the author for simplification purposes. Area A consists of union councils of Bar Abakhel, Koz Abakhel, Kalakalay, and Totano-bandai and is designated as units A1, A2, A3, and A4 respectively. Area B has the union council of Deowlai, Shah Dherai Qalagay, and Dardiyal and is designated as units B1, B2, B3 and B4 respectively. Similarly, area C has Hazara, Kanju, Bara-bandai and Kuza-bandai union councils and designated as units C1, C2, C3, and C4 respectively. The union council's name and corresponding designation will be used interchangeably.

[11] In the Union Council of Bar Abakhel two main villages, Kabal(Chinda-khwara) and Sirsinai, were surveyed and documented. In Kalakalay Union Council four main villages (Galoch, Kalakalay, Taghma, and Shalhand) were visited in which the sites in Galoch were almost completely documented with some sites in Shalhand. Although many sites were found in Totano-bandai and Hazara Union Councils, only a single site in Bela (Union Council Totano-bandai) and a single site in Maloch (Union Council Hazara) were documented respectively.

[12] . In Dardiyal Union Council, some parts of Mian-Bela village and the top of Chongialai Mountain were surveyed. And in Kalakalay Union Council the village of Mahak was surveyed. In the Matta Tehsil, a new Buddhist site was documented in Sarikop.
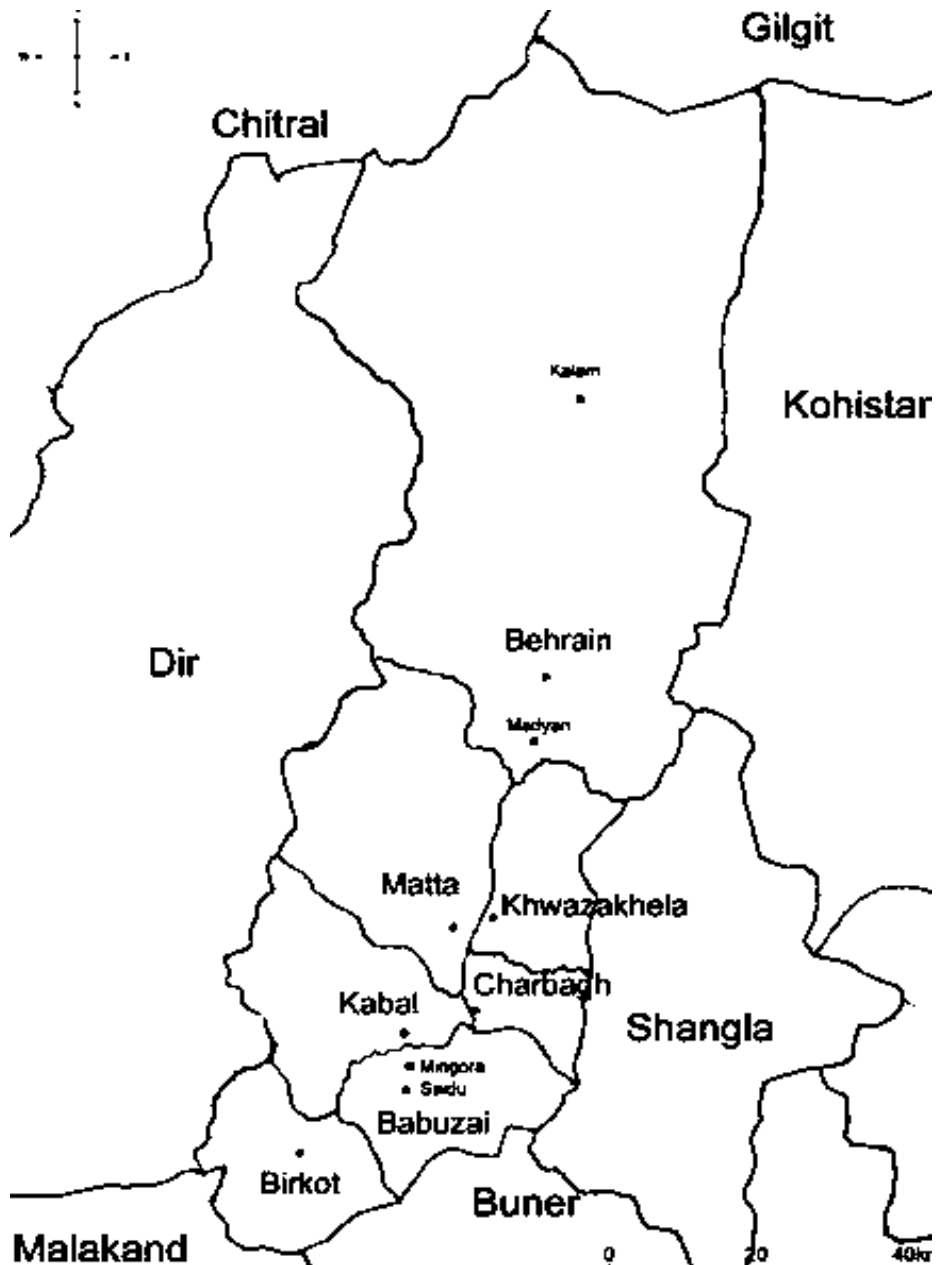
Map I - Tehsils in Swat.
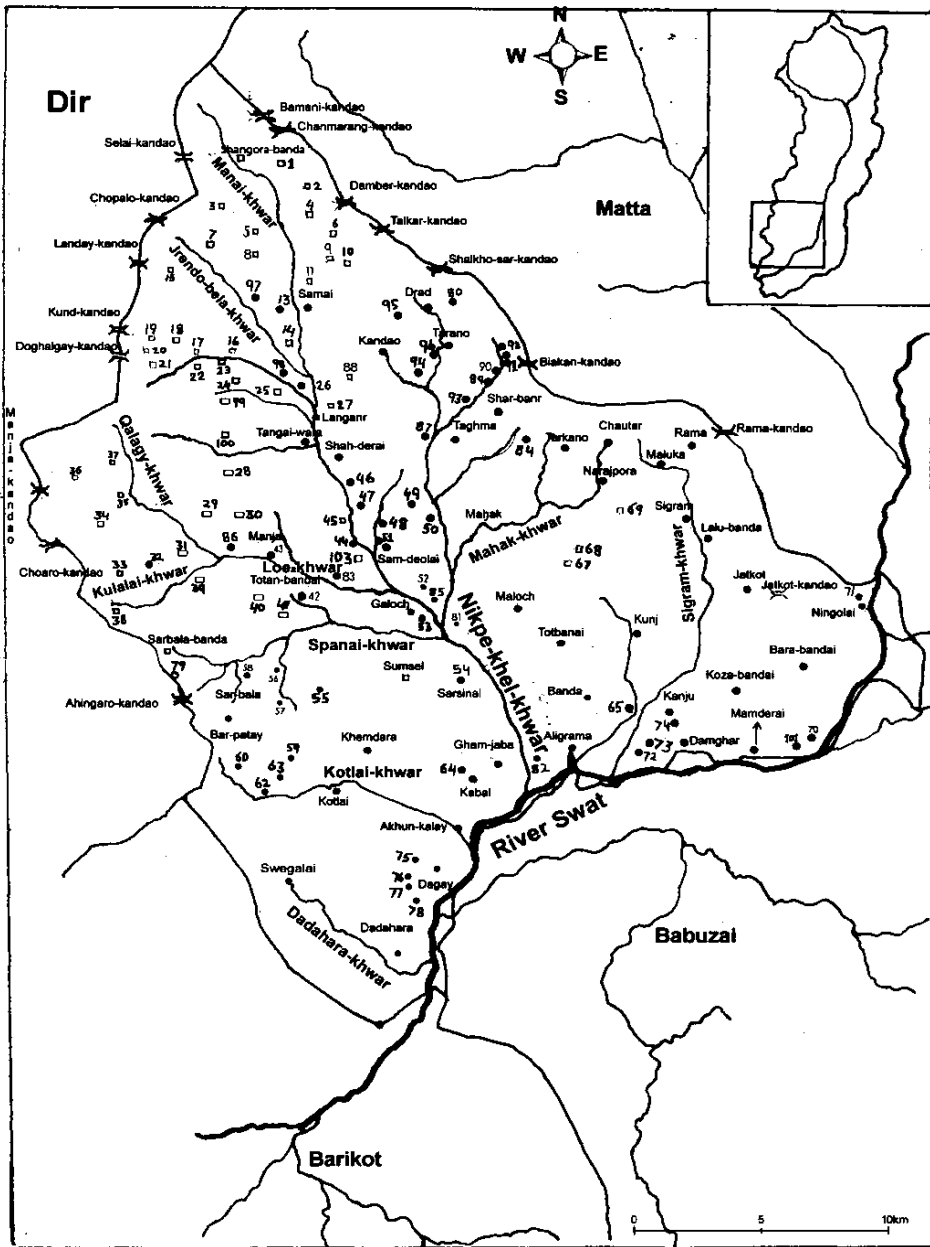
Map II - Nikpe-khel *khwar* and its Tributaries.
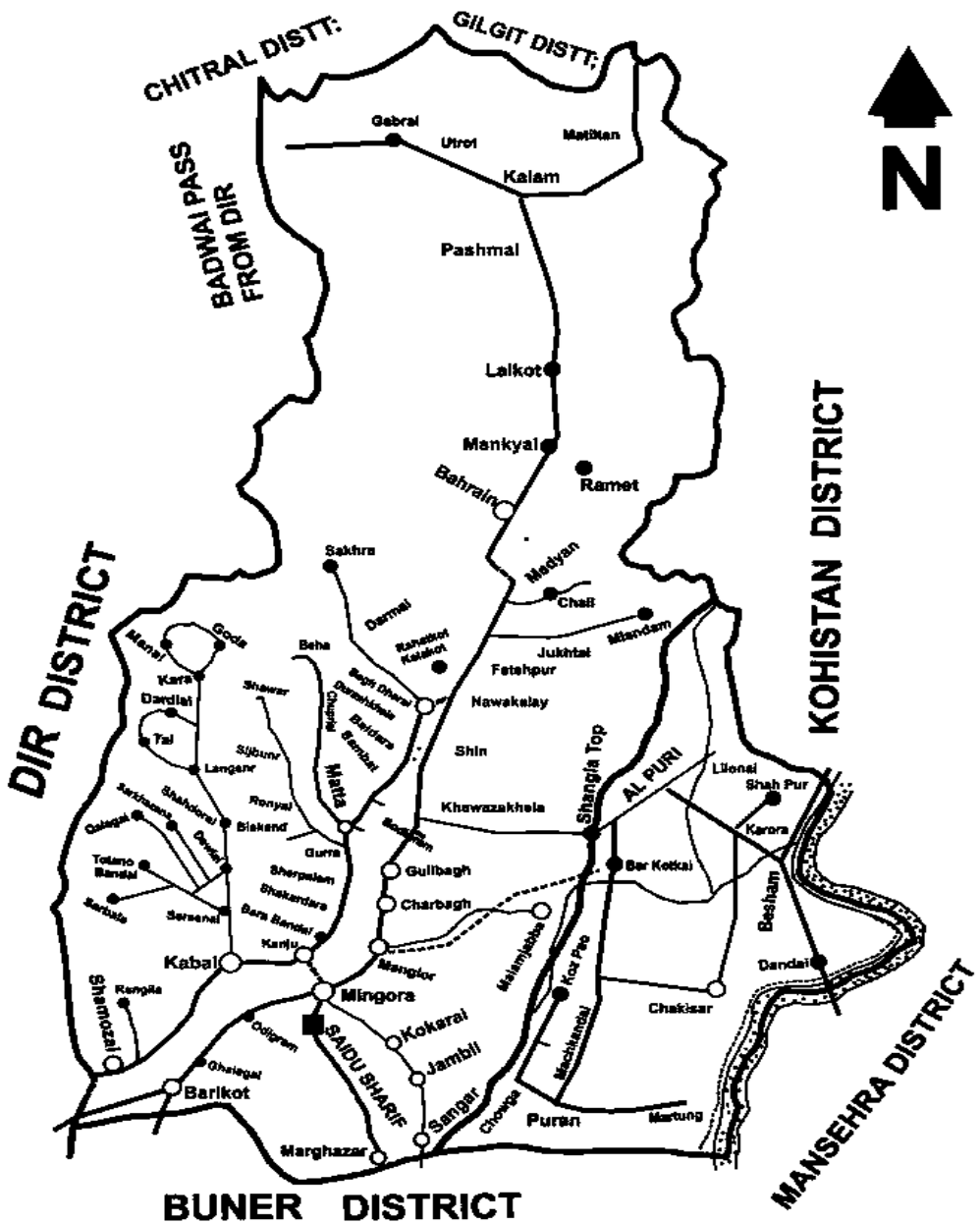
Map III - Roads Network in Tehsil Kabal (Nikpe-khel).
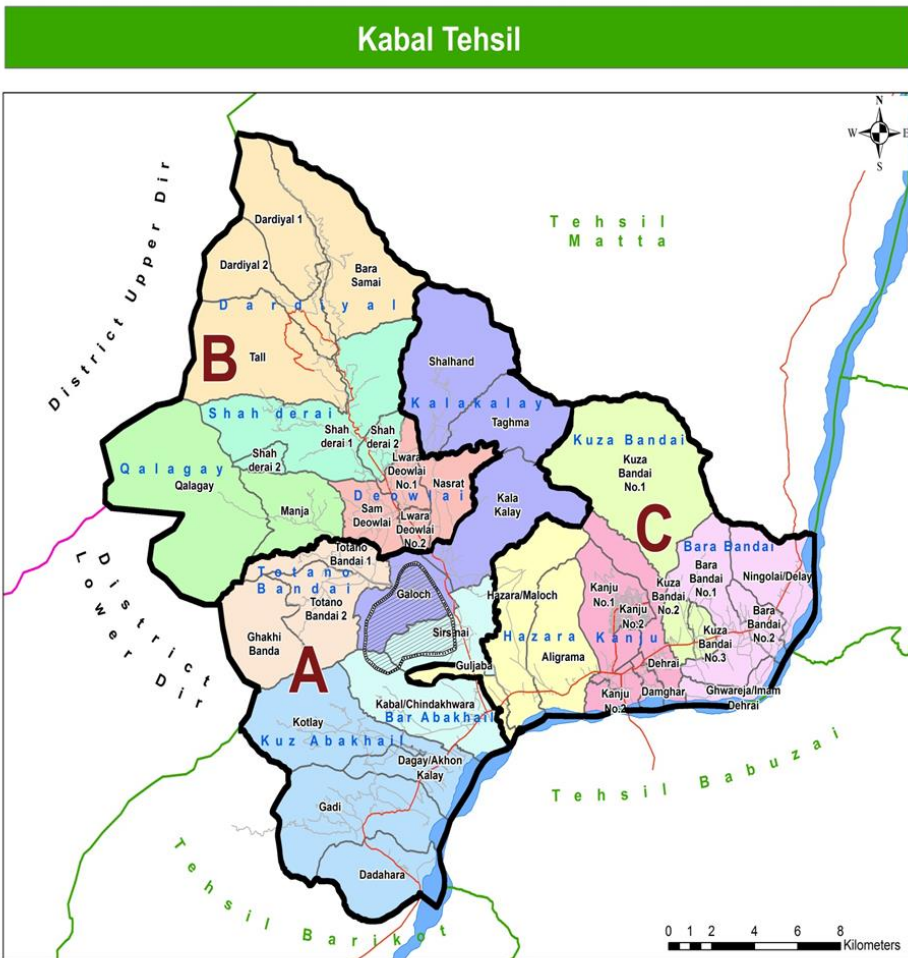
Map IV - Here A, B, C represents each area (zone) surrounded by bold lines and
the irregular circle with horizontal lines shows the surveyed area.

As a complete report of the documented sites could not be published in a single research paper, therefore it was decided to share the information in series publications. The present paper is, therefore, confined to the thirteen sites   documented in the western portion of Sirsinai and Galoch villages. Hence this paper is part one in the series of the upcoming reports dealing with the fresh survey and documentation carried out in the NK area of tehsil Kabal, district Swat.

Inventory list of the surveyed sites in the NK area

Sr. No	Site Name	Abbreviations	Area Name	Village Name
1	Warukay Gujar-banr (graveyard)	WGB (S-I),	Warukay Gujar-banr	Galoch
2	Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-I)	WGB (S-I)		
3	Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-II)	WGB (S-II)		
4	Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-III)	WGB (S-III)		
5	Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-IV)	WGB (S-IV)		
6	Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-V)	WGB (S-V)		
7	Loe Gujar-banr I	LGB-I	Loe Gujar-banr	
8	Loe Gujar-banr II	LGB-II		
9	Dukat	_	Dukat-tangay	
10	Dherai		Juga-tangay	Sarsinai
11	Shana-dherai			
12	Shana-dherai 2			
13	Asif khan-karin			

Tab. I - Inventory list.

5. Galoch Village

Galoach[13] is situated to the north of the Kabal Chowk at a distance of about 6km.[14] In Galoch village, the Gujar-banr area, located in the western

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[13] Abdul Qayyum Balala is of the view that the name Galoch is the combination of Gal", (means lump), and "och", (means dry), so Galoch means dry lumps, and It was named so because some people fought here with pelting dry lumps on one another. Another view is

part of the village in the foothill of the Dukat ranges, is very important. Locally the area of Gujar-banr is divided into Loi Gujar-banr (big Gujar-ban) and Warukay Gujar-banr (small Gujar-banr).

Warukay Gujar-banr

The Warukay Gujar-banr (hereafter WGB)[15] is bordered on the southern side by the Sumseel hilly spurs and on the northern side by the Loi Gujar-banr. The area has many archaeological sites ranging   from the Proto-historic graveyard to   small settlement sites. The graveyard is named here as Warukay Gujar-banr (graveyard) (hereafter WGB (g)) whereas the settlement sites are five in number and are discussed below.

Warukay Gujar-banr (graveyard)
Latitude 34º49'34.78" N Longitude 72º16'00.56" E
Elevation 3287ft
        It is a large Proto-historic graveyard that extends from the border of Sirsinai Village to Loi Gujar-banr and covering an area of about 300m. The sites can be approached through the Sumseel road. .
The graveyard is locally known as *Hinduanu Muqbara* (the graveyard of Hindus of infidels). However, during the bulldozing of the land for agricultural purpose,   large number of skeletons along with gray and red ware pottery came into light. On my request L. M. Oliveri and M. Vidale, of the Italian Archaeological Mission inspected the site and proclaimed that the site is approximately datable to the 1st millennium BC.
        General features of these graves and their (general) comparisons with other proto-historic graveyards in Swat (also with Timargara) are given below[16]: These graves have varied size and shapes, either 2 or 3 m deep (fig. 2) from the surface, with red, black and wheel turned potteries (fig. 3). The Architecture of the graves, in most cases, consists of two cavities like those of Katelai, Loe-banr, and Butkara II (Antonini 1973:

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that "Gal" is derived from "Galey" which means hailstone and "och" means dry (see De Chiara 2020: 112).

[14] (Personal Communication with Abdul Qayyum Balala)

[15] Translated as the forest of the Gujar tribe

[16] All this information was collected by the researcher at the time when the owners were preparing the land for cultivation. The comparison of WGB with the other sites is just cursory and not in detail. All the objects of which the photographs have been given here were shown by the local children and people except few pots which the author collected.

236). WGB graves lake the distinctive stone walls inside the lower cavity (S. Tusa 1981: 99), while, this feature is common in Gogdara, Udegram (Vidale, Micheli and Olivieri 2016: 59, 61), Timargarha (Dani 1967: 32) and grave 2 of Aligrama[17]. The distinguishing characteristics of the Timargarha graves of having a circle of stone over the graves (Dani 1967: 62) and that of Gogdara graves of having posts holes were not observed in WGB (graveyard) (Vidale, Micheli and Olivieri 2016: 63). In general, the burials system observed in WGB, including inhumations, cremation, and fractional burial, is similar to the graveyards of Katelai, Loe-banr and Butkara (Antonini 1973: 237), Aligrama (Stacul and Tusa 1975: 307), Gogdara and Udegram (Vidale, Micheli and Olivivieri 2016: 61,63) and Timargarha (Dani 1967: 31,33). The difference is that the skeletons in these graves were oriented in the west-east direction (with the head towards the west) and laid on the right side in a flexed position with face towards the south. Two boxes like graves, having a large single slab on four sides of the cavity wall were observed in WGB (g), similar to the children graveyard of Timargarha (Dani 1967: 63; Antonini 1973: 236). Like Udegram graves, the cluster of pottery in these graves mostly rest near the feet (Vidale, Micheli and Olivieri 2016: 69). Almost all graves have been roofed by 4 to 5 slabs (fig. 4).[18]

Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-I), Galoch
Latitude 34º49'32.7" N Longitude 72º15'57.85" E
Elevation 3464ft

The site of Warukay Gujar-banr (Settlement-I) (hereafter WGB (S-I)) is located to the west of Warukay Gujar-banr (graveyard), on the top of the adjacent mound at a distance of some 300ft. It seems to be a settlement site. Remains of walls can be seen on the top of the mound. The site is 300ft long and 200ft wide.

The site contains broken walls and foundations, like a fort, with diaper masonry (fig. 5). A number of potsherds and grinding stones were found scattered in adjacent fields. The pottery is red-ware, wheel-turned, and engraved. Hand-made and grey pottery is very rare on the surface of

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[17] But grave 2 of Aligrama had no upper cavity.
[18] In Udegram graves the roofs of the lower cavities were covered by huge schist stones, called "megalithic" (see footnote 4, Vidale, Micheli and Olivieri 2016: 59); in Warukay Gujar-banr graves huge elongated sandstone were used for roofing. Probably, these huge elongated stones were brought to the area by the collective effort of many individuals or through animals, etc.

the site (fig. 6). Painted pottery is not available at all. The grinding stones are round in shape (fig. 7). Recently the owner has constructed a house over the site and the ancient structures were used as **a** quarry.

Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-II), Galoch
Latitude 34º49'36.78" N Longitude 72º15'56.69" E
Elevation 3329ft

Warukay Gujar-banr (Settlement-II) (hereafter WGB (S-II)) lies in the north of Warukay Gujar-banr (Settlement-I). Both the sites are separated by a small natural deep cut which measures about 100 to 200ft. WGB(s-II) is a settlement site.

Exposed features of the site include large wide walls with rough masonry. Potteries collected are red, grey, and mostly engraved. Hand-made potsherds were also collected in small amounts (fig. 8-9). Grinding stones and pieces of irons were also observed over the surface (fig. 10).

Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-III), Galoch
Latitude 34º49'37.07" N Longitude 72º16'01.98" E
Elevation 3299ft

Warukay Gujar-banr (Settlement-III) (hereafter WGB (S-III)) occupies the northeastern portion of WGB (g). Evidences show that the site was built over the graveyard. A rough measurement of the exposed features reaches to about 300ft long and 240ft wide. The exposed part of the site has been destroyed for cultivation purposes but the underground portion is still intact.

The amount of potsherds and other features suggested that the site is settlement site, probably, belongs to the earliest Buddhist period.

Large portion of the site is under the thick deposit of cultivable soil but part of a wall of about 150ft long and four feet high (fig. 12) is visible on the eastern side. Other exposed features include potsherds (fig. 13), grinding stones (fig. 14), large elongated stones slabs[19], and ruins of walls. The majority of grinding stones found around the site (fig. 14) are similar in structure to those recovered from Kalako-deray (Stacul 1993: 90)[20].

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[19] As stated earlier the site has been built over the WGB (g) so it is clear that the slabs belong to the graveyard.
[20] The stone recovered from Kalako-deray are similar in structure to those recovered from WGB (S-III), (see Stacul 1993 fig. 25 and fig. 26).

Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-IV), Galoch

Latitude 34º49'43.60" N Longitude 72º15'49.58" E

Elevation 3372ft

Warukay Gujar-banr (Settlement-IV) (hereafter WGB (S-IV)) is located to the north of WGB (g) at a distance of about 300m. The amount of potsherds and three storage pit structures suggests that it is a settlement site belongs to the late historic period. The site measures in length as 400ft and width as 200ft.

Foundations and pit structures were exposed in 2012 when the owner was converting the land into cultivable fields (fig. 16). Each pit was about one meter deep and 2-3ft wide. All the pits were made in series which have been refilled by the owners.

The potsherds are handmade, wheel turned, engraved, and plain (fig. 17). Small pores bearing potsherds were also found (fig. 18). A total of six grinding stone pieces were observed. These include a broken piece of circular grinding stone having a central hole; an elongated broken stone; one small flat stone having a cavity in its center; one small cylindrical grinding stone; and an unknown stone piece.

Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-V), Galoch

Latitude 34º49'39.70" N Longitude 72º15'43.58" E

Elevation 3523ft

Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-V) (hereafter WGB (S-V))(fig. 19) is situated in the west of WGB (S-IV) on the top of the same mound which contains WGB (S-IV) and is separated from each other by a distance of about 250ft[21]. It is a settlement site that shows evidences of the latest Hindu period in Swat. The central part of the site has been destroyed by the illegal diggers while the remaining part is buried deep in the soil.

Ruined walls and foundations can be seen on the surface (fig. 20). On the east of the site, one pit structure was also noticed. The potsherds collected from the site were plain engraved, hand-made and the wheel turned (fig. 21). No painted potsherd has been found on the surface. Grinding stones in good conditions have also been observed. The majority of these grinding stones include saddle stone and circular stone with central hole.

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[21] The WGB (s-IV) lies below the top while WGB (S-V) lies on the top of that mound.

Loe Gujar-banr, Galoch

Loi Gujar-banr lies to the northwest of the Warukay Gujar-banr at a distance of about 5 km from Kabal Chowk. In the area of Loe Gujar-banr, two sites were identified which are named Loi Gujar-banr I (LGB I) and Loi Gujar-banr II (LGB II).

Loe Gujar-banr 1, Galoch
Latitude 34º49'40.57" N Longitude 72º15'26.44" E
Elevation 3459ft

Loe Gujar-banr I is an important Buddhist establishment in the area. It consists of a monastery and stupa. Topographically the area is suitable for the Buddhist sacred area as it comprises small valleys. There are glens and small mounds in a seriate. Such a panorama makes an ideal location for Buddhist establishment. The site is 400ft long and 150-200ft wide.

Prominent features of the complex comprise a main stupa (fig. 22), chapels (fig. 23), courtyard and grinding stones.
The square bath is surrounded on four sides by chapels. The chapels of the southern side have been destroyed while those of the other three sides are intact. On the four corners of the bath, there are four large room-like structures. There are structures in the west of the main stupa that seems like votive stupas. Further search, especially excavation, may bring other votive stupas to the fore (Map V).
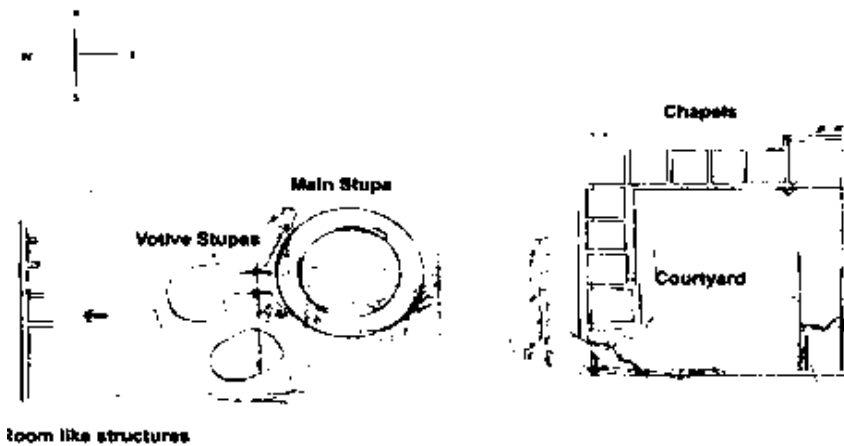
Map V - Plan of Loe Gujar-banr I (Monastery).

Illegal digging was carried out at the center of the main stupa, probably, for searching the relic casket. The upper part of the stupa is destroyed while the lower portion is intact.[22] Pottery includes red and rarely grey-ware, mostly wheel turned, plain and engraved, (fig. 24). Painted potsherds were found as rare.

Fragments of different kinds of grinding stones and stucco (see (b) in fig. 25) were also observed which the local children were collecting. Pieces of bones, schist stones and several corroded human teeth were also found (See (a) fig. 25).

Loe Gujar-banr II, Galoch

Latitude 34º49'51.62" N Longitude 72º15'27.29" E
Elevation 3468ft

Loe Gujar-banr II is situated on the top of a wide mound, standing to the northeast of Loe Gujar-banr I at a distance of about 600ft. A rough estimate of the size of the site gives the length of 400ft and width as 300ft. Observing the site, its material, and the surrounding features it is suggested that it is a large settlement site that probably belongs to the 3rd or 4th century AD.

There are no traces of walls or foundations on the surface of the site. Grinding stone pieces (Fig. 29) and potsherds scattered are all around the site. The potsherds are mostly plain and engraved, wheel-turned, both gray and red and rarely painted (fig. 27-28).

Dukat-tangay, Galoch

The western part of Galoch Village (modern Khair-abad) is called Dukat. It is a large area comprised of a series of small glens and one of these is known as Dukat-tangay. It is a long narrow glen the eastern end of which commences from Khair-abad village running westward to the top and is hammed on both the southern and northern side by the Loe Gujar-banr and Tangai-china spurs. It lies on the western side of the main Tutano-bandai road. In this area, the present author explored one site which measures 600ft long and 400ft as wide and given the name as Dukat site.

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[22] When recently (i. e in 2021) the author, for this article, revisited the site, it was completely wiped off by the owner and the site was completely absent.

Dukat site, Galoch

Latitude 34º49'15.54" N Longitude 72º14'47.08" E
Elevation 4621ft

The Dukat site is located on the top of Duckat-tangay. The site is to be approached by Dando Road. It is a small size settlement site and the potsherds are mostly belonging to the Hindu period (Hindu-shahi). A small size silver coin was found by the owner that bears Arabic words, probably the name of a Muslim ruler, on one side.[23] On the bases of the above characteristics the site can be dated to the Hindu Shahi period and the immediately following Islamic period in Swat. The site is about 250ft long and 200ft wide.

Parts of walls (fig. 33), foundations, pits structures (fig. 30)[24], and different kind of potsherds, including red-ware, engraved plain, and wheel turned, were observed (fig. 31, 32). No painted pottery was found.

6. Sirsinai Village

Sirsinai village[25] is located towards the north of the Kabal Chowk at a distance of 3km. To the north of Sirsinai are situated Kala-kalay and

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[23] The owner was feeling uncomfortable of taking pictures of the coin. The name of the site owner is Kaki Jan. His son Shaokat told this author about the site and he also showed the coin recovered from the site, (Interview with Shaokat, owner of the land, 05/12/2012, at the site)

[24] The site is now partially disturbed. According to the owner, the illegal diggers have recovered from the site terracotta oil lamp, pottery, grinding stones, a black schist slab with a hole at the center, and coins of the Islamic period. Two pit structures were also exposed during converting the site into cultivated land. One pit was refilled while the other is still present (fig. 31).

[25] According to Abdul Qayyum Balala (a resident of Sirsinai village and author of *The Charming Swat* and several other books on Swat); the name "Sirsinai" is comparatively a recent name. In the olden days, there was no Sirsinai village, and the south-eastern part of this area (which is now known as Sirsinai) was known as Tazagram (modern Tezogram), and the north-east area was known as Sumseel which are still present.
There are various views about the origin of Sirsinai's name. According to Abdul Qayyum Balala, the name Sirsinai or Sarsinai has been derived from its original form "Sarey-se-naye or nae", a compound of "Sarey" (means top or beginning) "Se" (means from) and "Nae or Naye" (means new) which collectively means a new village from the top or beginning or start. Matteo de Chiara gives explanation about the name of Sirsinai like; "Sar", means a god, "sena", means army, with the resulting meaning of 'place of the army of god. Other explanations of the name are lake, head of bed, pillow, etc. For

Galoch, to the west Dukat Mountain, to the south Kabal, to the east Maloch and Spalmai Mountain and, to the south-east Aligrama and Hazara villages.

G. Tucci had visited the area in 1958 but he has not mentioned anything about Sarsinai (Tucci 1958: 318-320.). Prof. M. Farooq Swati has mentioned the name of Sirsinai in his survey report (Swati 2008: 98) but he neither surveyed nor mentioned archaeological sites in the area.

The village of Sirsinai is divided into right and left halves by the NK *khwar*. The right side of Sarsinai village comprises of two important areas, namely Juga-tangay and Sumseel-tangay.

Juga-tangay, Sarsinai

Juga-tangay is located in the Juga area of Sirsinai village which, comprises of a narrow glen extending from the foothill to the top of the Dukat Mountain covering an area about 2 km. In this area the researcher has identified more than 10 sites including evidences of Pre-Buddhist[26], Buddhist and Islamic period. The names of these sites are:

1. Dherai, Juga, (Sarsinai)
2. Shana-dherai I, Juga (Sarsinai)
3. Shana-dherai II, Juga (Sarsinai)
4. Asif khan-karin, Juga (Sarsinai)

Dherai, Juga (Sirsinai)
Latitude 34º48'42.52" N Longitude 72°16'08.87" E
Elevation 3364ft

This site lies on the top of a mound on the right side of the Juga-tangay at a distance of about 400ft high from the bed of the Juga seasonal stream and to the south of Juga-baba graveyard (a Muslim graveyard). The site measures 300to 400ft long and 300ft as wide.

The amount of potsherds and structural features shows that the site of Dherai is a large settlement site covering not only the top of the mound but

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further detail see Matteo de Chaira, *Toponymy of the Swat Valley*: *Linguistic Archaeology*, p. 214.

[26] Evidence of proto-historic graves has been reported from this area and the author has also observed scanty proto-historic potsherds.

also extending down to its foot. A large portion of the site has been destroyed as it was transformed to cultivable land.

Parts of walls (fig. 35), foundations, pit structures (fig. 36), and a large number of potsherds were observed. Evidence of several pit structures was noticed at the foot of this mound and one pit structure (probably storage pit) is still present in good condition (fig. 36). It is one meter deep and a meter wide. It becomes narrow at its mouth and bottom and wide at the middle with the mouth covered by a circular stone which has recently been removed, as was reported to this researcher.

Shana-dherai I, Juga (Sirsinai)
Latitude 34º48'42.32" N Longitude 72º15'59.14" E
Elevation 3464ft

Shana-dherai I (hereafter SD I) occupies the western part of the same mound on which Dherai site is located. It is a small size settlement site probably an extension of the previously stated site which is now destroyed. Pottery from the site belongs to the Buddhist period.

Buried walls and potsherds were witnessed during the survey.

Shana-dherai II, Juga (Sirsinai)
Latitude 34º48'47.15" N Longitude 72º16'03.86" E
Elevation 3356ft

Shana-dherai II (hereafter SD II) is one of the largest archaeological sites in the Juga area of Sirsinai village. This site occupies the right bank of Juga-tangay seasonal stream and lies in due north of the Dherai site, separated from it by a short distance of about 400 to 600ft. The site extends from the middle of a mound down up to the adjacent plain area. The site approximately measures 500 to 600 feet long and 300 to 400 feet wide.

SD II is a large settlement site that has been badly destroyed both by local people and by illegal diggers. It seems that the site had been occupied successively since proto-historic times. This assumption is based on the evidence of animal bones, teeth, and potsherds found as more than 3m deep in an artificial cliff (fig. 38).

Exposed features of the site include buried walls foundations, stone implements in large numbers, potsherds, bones, heaps of stones of walls. At some points, the portions of walls are more than two meters deep in the soil (fig. 39), while at other places the walls and foundations now make heaps of stones as the result of illegal digging.

The potsherds are mostly large in size and thick (fig. 40). These include both red and gray, wheel turned and hand-made, plain simple, engraved, and some amount of painted pottery (fig. 41).

One of the most prominent features of the site is its stone implements. These are scattered in a quite large number in the surrounding area and can be found in many shapes and structures either broken or complete. The stone implements include grinding stones, a circular shape having a central hole, elongated flat with an irregular shape, triangular, cylindrical, oval, rectangular, round core like (fig. 42) with their size reaching from 3 inches up to 1m (fig. 43). Some of these implements (fig. 44-45) show close similarities with Kalako-dherai (see fig 24, 25, and 26 Stacul 1993: 90). Besides, many types of broken hones (see fig. 46) and bones of animals were observed about 2m deep in the soil cliff.

Asif khan-karin, Juga (Sirsinai)
Latitude 34º48'40.81" N Longitude 72º15'28.36" E
Elevation 3689ft

Asif khan-karin is located in the west of SD II, at a distance of about 1km, on the left side of the Juga-tangay. The site is to be approached by a non-metallic road that branched off from the Sirsinai road at Khonagay *Bazar*. The length of the site is approximately 300-400ft and its width is about 300-350ft.

Asif Khan-Karin site has received great dangers, a fact which presents us to know the exact nature of the site. However, two important findings from the site, a Kushan period coin and a small engraved fragment of the schist stone (see (a) in fig. 52)[27], help us to declare the site as a Buddhist sacred area belonging to the Kushan period. This author was also reported by the local people that a good number of sculptures have been recovered from the site by the illegal diggers.

Prominent features include walls (fig. 52), foundations and small room-like structures (probably chapels and a bath), potsherds, grinding stones, stucco, and a fragment of black schist.
The potteries include are, red (fig. 53) and gray (fig. 54), wheel turned and rarely hand-made, rarely painted and engraved (fig. 55), and mostly thin. One glazed potsherd was also found (fig. 56). Besides potteries few

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[27] This author showed this piece to Massimo Vidale which he recognized as part of the Buddhist Establishment (Interview with Olivieri and Vidale, Italian Archaeological Mission, 2011, Sirsinai, Swat)

grinding stones (fig.57), bones(fig. 50-51), two broken arrowheads (see (d) in fig. 58), a broken knife head (see (b) in fig. 58), small unknown pieces of copper (see (c) in fig. 58), stucco fragments (fig. 59) parts of figurines (fig. 60) and unidentified objects (fig. 61) were noticed.

A human leg bone (probably), having the head of an arrow inside (fig. 50-51), was also found which points to some battle and fighting in the area.

List of the surveyed sites

Sr.No	Site Name	Abbreviations	Area Name	Village Name
1	Warukay Gujar-banr (graveyard)	WGB (S-I),	Warukay Gujar-banr (WGB)	Galoch
2	Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-I)	WGB (S-I)		
3	Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-II)	WGB (S-II)		
4	Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-III)	WGB (S-III)		
5	Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-IV)	WGB (S-IV)		
6	Warukay Gujar-banr (settlement-V)	WGB (S-V)		
7	Loe Gujar-banr I	LGB-I	Loe Gujar-banr	
8	Loe Gujar-banr II	LGB-II		
9	Dukat	_	Dukat-tangay	
10	Dherai		Juga-tangay	Sarsinai
11	Shana-dherai			
12	Shana-dherai 2			
13	Asif khan-karin			

Tab. II - list of explored sites.

Key for Reading Map II

1. Dhob-banda	35. Qalagay-banda	71. Ningulai-ghundai
2. Manrai-banda	36. Qalagay-banda	72. Kuz-kanju
3. Torosata-banda	37. Qalagay-banda	73. Bar-kanju
4. Goda-banda	38. Chapray-banda	74. Dherai
5. Pachakalay-banda ----	39. Pirpatay-banda	75. Nasapai
	40. Manzghundai-banda	76. Suaray
6. Mianwara-banda	41. Tighak-banda	77. Manyar
7. Gachkor-banda	42. Totano-bandai	78. Garay
8. Pachakalay-banda- ----	43. Manja	79. Shagai-banda
	44. Arkot-qila	80. Manai
9. Archalai-banda	45. Malakana-banda	81. Khat-kotay
10. Bela-banda	46. Kitaya (Kityar)	82. Hazara
11. Batul-banda	47. Chinaklay	83. Bela -----------102
12. Dardyal	48. Dherai	84. Muhammad beg
13. Churpunarai	49. Gampora	85. Kalakalay
14. Maira-banda	50. Nasrat	86. Kodaro-dherai
15. Pinorai-banda	51. Lwar-deolai	87. Shalhand
16. Dakko-banda	52. Landi-choya	88. Faqiran-banda
17. Mianbela-banda	53. Lakai-kalay	89. War-patay (Awar patay)
18. Chotar-banda	54. Sarsinai	
19. Tangu-banda	55. Amluk-tangay	90. Mulla-pata (Mulla patay)
20. Makat-banda	56. Sharifay-banda	
21. Kabal-banda	57. Murdar-banda	91. Nimakay
22. Kolanda-banda	58. Sarbala	92. Shabeka
23. Manzarai-banda	59. Paindashah-patay	93. Biakor
24. Bandi-banda	60. Kasay	94. Baragat
25. Mian-baba-banda	61. Nnnnoo	95. Bhoka
26. Komyati	62. Mailaga	96. Serai
27. Amluktal-banda	63. Urwana-kotlai	97. Dardiyal
28. Binwar-banda	64. Chinda Khwara	98. Tal
29. Korai-banda	65. Gharib-abad	99. Shahjehan-banda
30. Khazanay-banda	66. Banda	100. Asharai-banda
31. Qalagay	67. Patbast	101. Sun-dherai
32. Kwend-banda	68. Spalmai-banda	102. Bela
33. Inzaro-banda	69. Chingai-banda	103. Ghodhano-banda
34. Qalagay-banda	70. Ghurejo	

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Fig. 1 - General View of Warokay Gujar-banr.

Fig. 2 - Graves in the vertical Cliff.

Fig. 3 - Pottery from WGB (g).

Fig. 4 - Roof covering slabs.

Fig. 3a - General view of WGB (S-I).

Fig. 5- wall remains in dilapidate condition.

Fig. 6 - potsherds, WGB (S-I).

Fig. 7 - pistols, WGB (S-I).

Fig. 6a - General view of WGB (s-II).

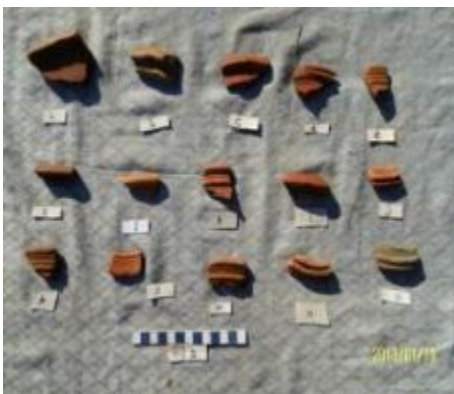Fig. 8 - Red-ware rims, WGB (S-II).

Fig. 9 - Types of rims, WGB (S-II).

Fig. 10 - Broken parts of stone artifact, WGB (S-II).

Fig. 11- closed view of WGB (s-III).

Fig. 12 - Portion of the wall, WGB (S-III).

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Fig. 15 - General view of WGB (s-IV) after bulldozing.

Fig. 16 - Exposed remains, WGB (S-IV).

Fig. 17 - Rims, WGB (S-IV).
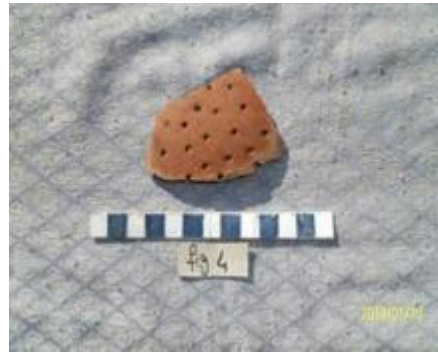
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Archaeological Investigations at Rewat Fort – A Muslim Period Monument in Potohar Region, Punjab (Pakistan)

Tahir Saeed | Arshad Ullah

Abstract

This paper presents details about the archaeological investigations carried out at Rewat Fort by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Islamabad during 2020. It was revealed after excavations that the history of Fort belongs prior to 16th century CE, when this area was under the control of Ghakkhars who were local rulers who controlled the region as they have friendly terms with Mughals. The discovered material from the different parts of the monumental complex provides concrete evidences that it remained under the occupations during the different phases of Muslim Medieval period. The present paper covers only the details of archaeological investigations carried out inside the Mausoleum and in the living cells on eastern side of the fortification wall of the Fort. A Catalogue of the objects discovered through the course of archaeological excavations is appended at the end of this paper (Annex-A).

Keywords: Potohar or Potwar, Ghakkhars, Mughals, Sher Shah Suri, Muslim period antiquities.

1. Introduction

The land presently comprising on Pakistan had served as a melting pot of ancient cultures and civilizations. It is a land of many splendors, each conqueror and traveler has left behind an imprint, adding a step to the cultural evolution of this region. Unconnected the established situation of Pakistan's area, the people of this country are acquainted to thousands of years old ethical political inheritance way back to the Old Stone Age. The areas of this earliest ancient period culture are found in the Potohar Highland, (Rawalpindi) which diagnosed to be the earliest abode of Homo erectus and Homo Habilis other than Africa, approximately ranging in the time of the 1st glacial and inter glacial phases of the Glacial epoch Age. The earliest rudimentary stone implements under their

used was found in great number from this area and on this base archaeologists designated them pres-soan tools fond in that part of Pakistan. These primate were here for thousands of years and at the point of the Ice Age they had made changes in their life style and started dwelling showing in settled communities and a culture called Middle stone age. Then with advents of agriculture the stone tools refined towards Neolithic or New Stone Age specimen. The organized examination of Paleolithic temporal order of the Potwar region had been conducted by De Terra and Peterson in 1933. Peterson was followed by Paolo Graziosi during 1964. He carried out detailed investigations in Potohar region. However, a comprehensive archaeological Paleolithic survey of entire Potohar region was carried out by Raymond Allchin and Bridget Allchin, University of Cambridge in close collaboration of the Federal Department of Archaeology and Museums during 1979-1990. They registered ancient sites and thousands of years old artifacts near Rewat and other nearby areas having fossils and other related evidences, to infer more about the environmental condition, flora and concomitant phenomenon's to speculate correctly on the fauna aspect of the investigated period.

A team of Federal Department of Archaeology & Museums conducted archaeological researches in the periphery of Taxila valley in 1973 with the objectives to document pre-historic sites. During this expedition the team reported some new Kot Dijian period sites such as Jhang Bahtar and Pind Nowsheri. A team from Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations (TIAC) Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad under the leadership of Muhammad Salim conducted researches at the prehistoric sites in Soan Valley, Potohar highlands and Attock area in 1997 and documented a great numbers of Paleolithic era sites in the area[1]. Another important archaeological survey was undertaken in Rawalpindi District and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) by a team of Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations (TIAC) Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad under the leadership of Muhammad Ashraf Khan during 2009-10. This team documented 130 archaeological sites and monuments belonging to different periods of history i.e Pre-historic Period (Ca. 1 million-7000 BCE), Proto-historic Period, Harappan (2500-1500 BCE), Gandhara

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[1]Muhammad Ashraf Khan et al. (2010) Archaeological Remains and Monuments of Islamabad Capital Territory and District Rawalpindi, Journal of Asian Civilizations, Vol.33, No.2, Islamabad, p.5.

Grave Culture (1500-600 BCE), Historic Period Buddhist/Hindu Shahi (6th Century BCE - 19th Century CE), Sultanate Period (12th - 15th Century CE), Mughal including Suri Period (16th – 19th Century, CE), Sikh and British Period (18th – 20th Century CE)[2].

2. Cultural and historical perspective of Potwar

According to Dani, the Persian form of the name *Marigala* or *Marikala* became popular in the time of the Ghaznavid Sultans (976-1186 C.E) which is an offshoot of the Murree hills.[3] It is further elaborated by the same writer that continuity of Taxila site (district Rawalpindi) in the time of the Ghaznavid Sultans can be observed in the form of new expansion enforced by novel chronological circumstances. The stress of dwelling inclined to the Margala spur. It was the navigable Margala, the *rabat the garrisoned out posts* , and with the passage of time the caravanserai , and the dwelling compound adjacent to Giri that sustained to flourish till the advent of era of Khilji dynasty of Delhi in the early fourteenth century. Dani further mentions that in the succeeding time when the marauders Mongols initiated ways of forays, even the Margala settlement washed out from memory; but the Gakkhars, who held strength in the Potohar region, sustained the rabat arrangement of dwelling , as earlier found in Taxila and established their own *rabats* east of the Margala knell. The Mughals (1526-1858) realized the importance of the Margala pass, re-laid the passage and erected a big caravanserai to the west of the Kala rivulet, and gave rise to the growth of the village called Saraikala[4].

There was an interruption in the Mughal rule from 1540 to 1555, when dynasty ruled over the sub-continent displacing the Mughal in 1540. Emperor Humayun was defeated by Sher Shah Suri at the battle of Chaunsa. Sher Shah Suri realized the importance of having fortified towns at most of the strategic places. Sher Shah Suri wanted to build a fort in every, Sarkar (or district) which in time of trouble, could serve as a shelter for the oppressed people and as out-post to check the rebels. With this in view, he ordered the construction of a fort at Rohtas that lies in present day Jhelum District. The construction of the Rohtas Fort was also

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[2] Ibid. p.7.
[3] A.H. Dani, The History of Taxila, UNESCO Publication, France, 1986, p.1
[4] Ibid. p.7

considered necessary, for some other reasons. First to block the possible re-entry of Emperor Hymayun and secondly to punish and defeat turbulent Gakkhars who controlled the valley and having friendly terms with the Mughals.

3. Physical overview of the area

The Potwar region, as evident from researches, had played a vibrant function in the evolution of human annals since quite faraway era. The aboriginal stone tools of Paleolithic (Old Stone Age) period which were prevalent in the normal human of this region since million of years ago from current era are found present along the bank of the River Soan near Rewat. The Bronze Age sites which are discovered at Jhang Bahtar and Sarai Khola, the Gandharan period settlements at Hathial and the prominent centre of Buddhist art and architecture of Gandhara in Taxila valley are some of the most important and significant discoveries made in this area. The historical period monuments are well known such as; caravan *serais* (Inn) and *baolis* (step well) along the ancient routes, forts, religious and secular buildings of different religions including Hindu, Muslims and Sikh periods, as well as rock shelters, historic mounds, ancient graveyards and sacred ponds in the region.

The ancient city of Rawalpindi went into forgetfulness as a result of the Hun invasion in the 5th century C.E. However, the first Muslim conqueror Mahmud of Ghazni gifted the ruined city of Rawalpindi to a Ghakhar Chief, namely as Kai Gohar Jhanda Khan, whereas another Ghakhar Chief restored it and gave it the present name after the village Rawal in 1493. Rawalpindi remained under the rule of Ghakhars till the rule of Muqarrab Khan. The last Ghakhar ruler was however, defeated by Sikhs in 1765 and later the Sikhs lost the city to the British Government Empire in 1849.

During the Sikh Rule many independent Sikh kingdoms had been established in the region which was later amalgamated into a single but powerful kingdom, founded by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This kingdom expanded beyond the previously known frontiers of Punjab and included Kashmir and eastern Afghanistan. After Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the kingdom began to disintegrate and the British annexed it to their Indian empire after the Anglo-Sikh wars in 1845-1846 and 1848-1849.

4. Rewat fort (fortress-cum-caravan serai)

Geographically, Rewat Fort is 17 kilometers east of district Rawalpindi of Punjab Province on main Grand Trunk Road (Fig. 1). In this fort a three domes mosque and a tomb is noteworthy[5]. The strategic position of this fort is considered as very important from military defense point of view and its construction is attributed to Sultan Sarang Khan, a descendant of Ghakkhar tribe, who was the local ruler of Potwar region. It was constructed keeping in view the military and administrative requirements. Sultan Sarang Khan after defeated by Islam Shah was killed and buried inside the complex of Fort in 1545. The Serai (Inn) was constructed by Sultan Sarang Khan himself for performing the administrative and official functionary matters.
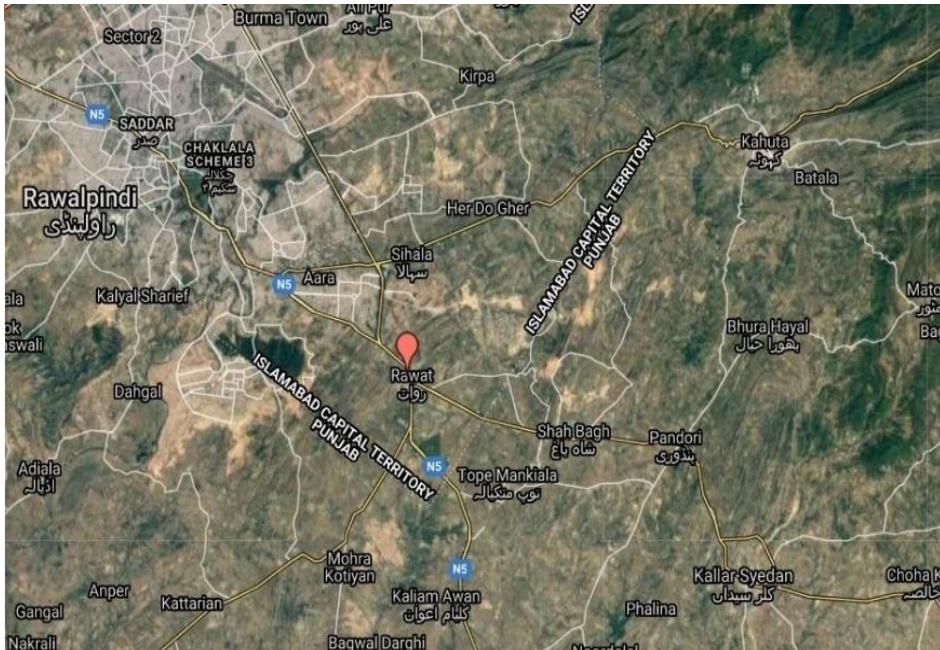

Fig. 1 - Location Map of Rewat Fort.
(source: www.googlemaps.com)

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[5]The geographical location of Rewat Fort is 33.4981° N, 73.1942 °E.

5. Early history, architecture and significance of Rewat Fort

According to the Gazetteer of the Rawalpindi District for the year 1893-94, Rewat[6] in District Rawalpindi[7] is the first camping ground from Rawalpindi on the Grand Trunk[8] (G.T) Road towards Jhelum, owes its interest to the tomb of Sultan Sarang, the renowned Ghakhar chief, which is situated there. About the early history of the District Rawalpindi, it is mentioned that the names of Alexander the Great, Mahmud of Ghazni, Babur and "Tamurlane" (Timur) are all closely connected with the Rawalpindi district[9].

The present small fortress Sarai was built during the Sultanate Period in early 15th century C.E. This fort is however also associated with the name of Masud son of famous Mahmud of Ghazna (1039) where he is said to have been arrested by his rebellious soldiers and eventually murdered in the famous fort of Giri[10].

It is also mentioned with the name of Ghakhar Chief Sarang Khan who valiantly lost his life along with his sixteen sons gallantly countering son of Sher Shah Suri and was buried here[11]. The Rewet fort constitute two gateways[12] on north and east, a three domed Mosque, single domed Mausoleum on the North-Western corner, and several scattered graves inside the Fort.

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[6] The word "Rewat" is derived from Arabic word "Rebat" meaning "*Sarai*" (resting place). The fort is situated about 17 kilometers east of Rawalpindi city towards Jhelum on the main G.T road. It is a small Fortress-cum-Caravan Serai, constructed by Ghakkhars, who were local rulers of this area.

[7] District Rawalpindi in Punjab Province of Pakistan lies between 33. 4981⁰ N, 73.1942⁰ E.

[8] Sher Shah Suri, the founder of Suri dynasty constructed the Grand Trunk Road from Chittagong to Kabul in Afghanistan.

[9] Op.cit. Gazetteer of the Rawalpindi District 1893-94, p.43

[10] Muhammad Qasim Farishta, *Tarekh-e-Farishta*,(2008) Vol.1, (Trans. Abdul Hai Khawaja), Almezan Publishers, Lahore, p. 107.

[11] A classified list of Immovable Archaeological sites/monuments protected under Antiquities Act, 1975, compiled by Rana Muhammad Khan, Federal Department of Archaeology and Museums, (DOAM), Karachi, 1987. p.273

[12] Originally it had four gates, on the eastern and northern sides provide access to the interior of monument while the southern one has been blocked in later period. The western gateway was demolished during the construction of the mosque in the Fort.

There are rows of identical living cells along the four sides of the quadrangular inner face of the defense walls. It is however, mentioned that the graves and Mausoleum of Sultan Sarang Khan in the Rewat Fort was built by Sultan Adam Khan, who became ruler of this area, when Ghakkhars under the command of Sultan Sarang Khan were defeated in the battle with Islam Shah.

6. Description of the Rewat Fort

The Rewat fort is rectangle measuring 306' feet, 9" inches east-west and 348' feet, 9" inches North-South. It has got hemispherical bastion on its all corners and on each side of the two gates located on the eastern and northern flanks. The main gate being on the eastern side, is in the center of the Fort, on the western flank is a big mosque.

Fig 2 - Façade of Rewat Fort.

Contiguous to gates, the mosque and all along the fortification wall are living cells each measuring 6' feet, 3" inches by 7' feet, 9" inches. In early period there were 76 cells. The enclosure wall is topped by merlons

constructed in the shape of pointed arches. The Fort has been constructed with the stone with a pinch of burnt bricks. The vast area within the fortification is occupied by stray buildings of a mosque and a tomb. The tomb is without any cenotaph which is generally ascribed to Sultan Sarang Khan, the Gakhar Chief, who was killed while fighting against Sher Shah Suri's forces in 1546[13] (Fig. 2).

7. Mausoleum

The mausoleum is built on a typical architectural plan. Externally it is octagonal in shape each side measuring 22 ½' feet. From inside, it is square in shape. The platform on which it is raised is octagonal in shape measuring 39' feet from each side with a height of 2 ½' feet. The dome is squat and has been raised on squinches, which are identical in shape and design to those used in the mosque. The arches, domes and cornices are in brick while the rest of the structure is of stone. The structure is quite massive and robust.

There is also a graveyard within the fortification. It contains mostly the graves of those who had laid down their lives while fighting with the forces of Sher Shah Suri[14] (Fig. 3).

8. The Mosque

It is a three domed mosque and measures 96' feet, 9" inches by 39' feet, 9" inches. The domes have been erected by mains of roughly constructed squinches of local variety. The façade and the interior have recessed decorative panels with pointed arches (Fig. 4).

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[13] The results of archaeological excavations carried out during 2020 by Department of Archaeology and Museums, Islamabad, inside the tomb have revealed the existence of a main grave in the centre of the tomb area. The details of the excavations are mentioned in the present report. At Rewat, an ancient well (approximately 500 meter from the Fort) and a water pond (approximately 800 meter from the Fort) is existed which are presumed as an integral part of Rewat Fort during the heydays. These both ancient constructions are however, still in use by the local people of this area.

[14] Shaikh Khurshid Hassan, (2005) Historical Forts in Pakistan, National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Islamabad. pp. 63-65

Fig 3 - Tomb of Sarang Khan, Rewat Fort.

Fig 4 - Three domes Mosque, Rewat Fort.

9. Living Cells

There are cells for abode, all along the four sides of quadrangular inner face of the defensive walls. Originally there were 76 cells which were built for the benefit of travelers for the purpose of stay or resting place (Caravan Serai) while travelling on the adjacent G.T road. These living cells are square in plan provided with arched entrance and a domical ceiling in front by a rectangular vestibule connecting it with the central courtyard. There are also living cells inside the bastions located in main gate at east-south side, as well as in the north-east side Bastion and north-west side Bastion of the Fort which were used for the same purposes.

In the present day, civilized world is fully conscience and well aware about the preservation of their cultural heritage and equally consider that all heritage icons   are the combine legacy of the whole world. Further the culturally rich countries are just trustees of their respective flabbergasting heritage. As such, all people are responsible for the proper preservation of these relics of the past, and take initiation to conserve, preserve and upkeep their rich heritage to enhance heritage icons life and make it available in perfect condition for future generation.

Therefore, keeping in view this fact, Federal Department of Archaeology and Museums, started a project entitled "Master Plan for Preservation, Restoration, Presentation and Development of Rewat Fort, Islamabad" (2017-20) in order to improve the present state of conservation of this very important (Category-I), monument of Islamic (Sultanate) period (Fig. 5-6)

In order to work with utmost care and to meet the requirements for execution of work effectively, Grid Plan of Rewat Fort was prepared. The western axis of the grid plan was marked by the numerical numbers from 1 to 24, and the northern axis were designated alphabetically from A to Z, in the following order as A1, A2----, B1, B2---, etc. Similarly, the graveyard of Rewat Fort possesses 86 graves (excluding the grave (s) in Mausoleum) which have been marked in the Plan (Fig. 7).
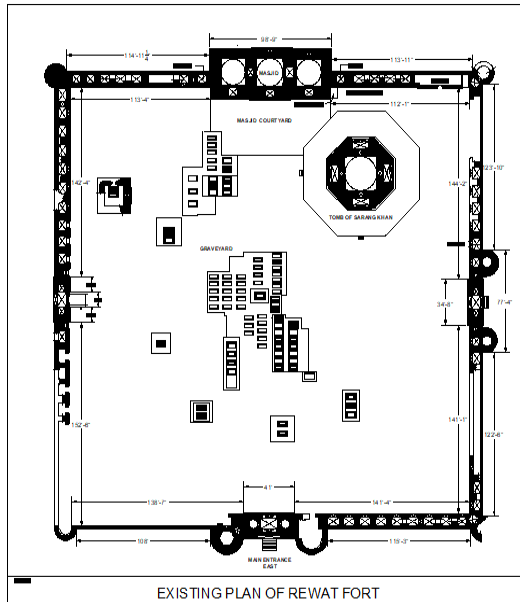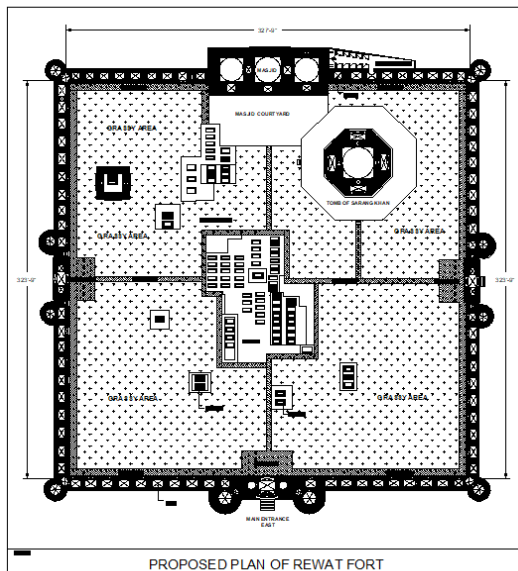
Fig 5 - Existing Plan of Rewat Fort.

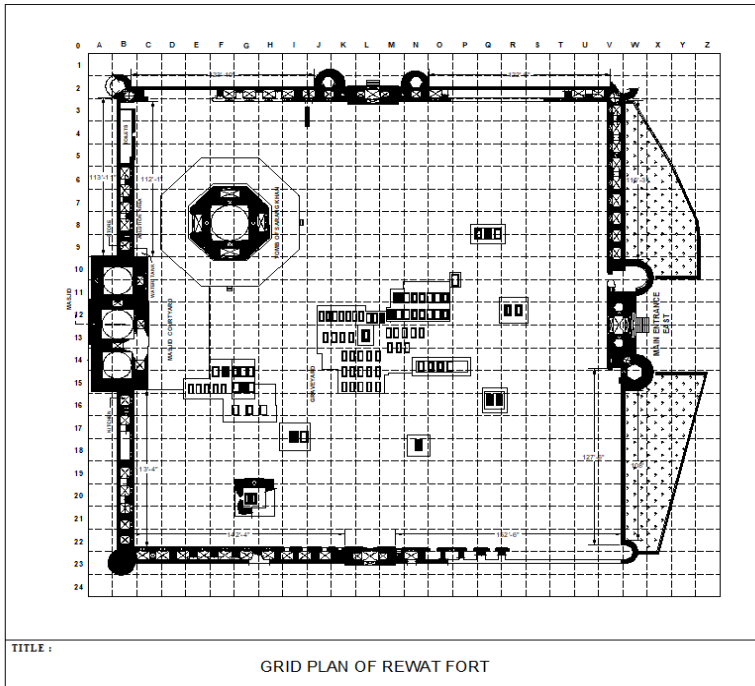Fig 6 - Proposed Plan of Rewat Fort.

Fig 7 - Grid Plan of Rewat Fort.
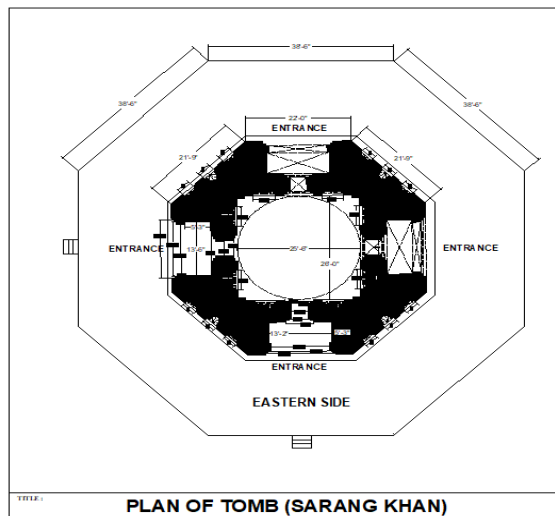
Fig 8 - Plan of Mausoleum Sarang Khan (Before Excavations).
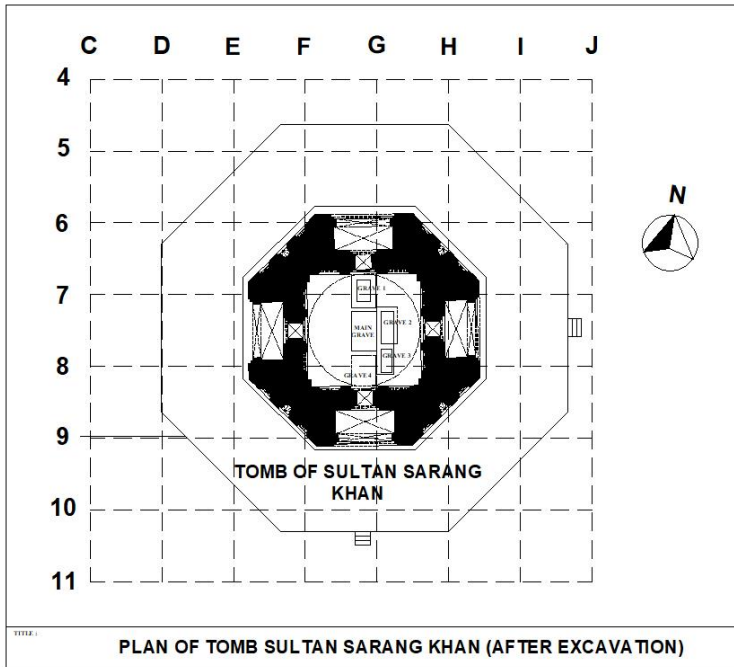
Fig. 9 - Plan of Mausoleum Sultan Sarang Khan (After Excavations).

10. Archaeological investigations at Rewat Fort

To close the gaps in the history of the evolution of human society and to provide meaning and substance to the dry bones of history, archaeological explorations and excavations constitute an essential source of knowledge. By piercing together, the evidence from scientific excavation the archaeologists write the blank chapters of nation's history.[15] Archaeology is a science as well as a discipline to study the humanity of past cultures. It is concerned with the full range of past human experiences and to answer the questions such as; how the people organized their way of life into the social groups and exploited their environments, their food, religious

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[15] Ahmed Nabi Khan, *Archaeology in Pakistan, Administration, Legislation and Control*, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Karachi, 1990, p. 46.

beliefs how they communicate and why their societies changed. [16] The artefacts which are discovered through the course of excavations are manmade or tailored transportable objects such as; earliest tools, earthenware, and weapons of different materials. These artefacts provide evidences to help us to prove answers all the key questions about the past[17].

Therefore, keeping in view the cultural and historical significance of the Rewat Fort, it was essential to conduct archaeological excavations. The team of Federal Department of Archaeology and Museums carried out archaeological excavations mainly in the living cells and inside of the Mausoleum at Rewat Fort for the purpose of investigations (Fig. 8). All the antiquities discovered during the process of archaeological excavations carried out in the living cells, Mausoleum and other areas of Rewat Fort which pertains to Mughal and Sikh including the British Period were properly documented and recorded. The digital photographs and drawings of cultural material were prepared for analysis and further research studies/investigations.

11. Archaeological Excavations in the Mausoleum

There exists a majestic tomb inside the Rewat Fort complex which presents an excellent example of Muslim period monument of Sher Shah Suri period in this region. The tomb is generally and rightly attributed with the name of Sultan Sarang Khan, who was a brave ruler of this region. He along with his sixteen sons was defeated and killed by the forces of Islam Shah and were buried in Rewat Fort. The architecture of this splendid memorial is simple in design but it is very impressive and imposing. The similar architectural design was followed in later period during the Muslim Era.

The tomb is basically built on a typical architectural plan, which is externally octagonal in shape, but internally it is square in shape. The structure of the tomb is however, very colossal. The platform of the tomb is octagonal in shape which measures 38'-6" from each side with a height of 2 ½' feet. The dome measures 25'- 6" is just squat and has been raised

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[16] Colin Renfrew, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice,* Thames and Hudson Limited, London, 1991 (Reprint 1993), p.16.
[17] Ibid. p.41.

on squinches, which are identical in shape and design to those used in the mosque close to the mausoleum. The arches, domes and cornices are in brick while the rest of the structure is of stonework. There are four elegant entrances to the tomb, each one entrance side of octagon measures 22' feet while the other four octagons each side measures 21'- 9"decorated with 12 blind arch panels of 3' feet each along the four corner sides of the massive walls of the mausoleum.

The floor of mausoleum was found plain without any traces of grave or cenotaph. No traces of the structural remains were visible on the surface. As the tomb is generally attributed with the name of Sultan Sarang Khan, therefore it was considered essential to trace the evidence by carrying out archaeological excavations. It is generally believed that during the Sikh Period in Punjab, the cenotaph of the grave in the Mausoleum may have been removed and the floor was left open to use it for government official purposes as it is evidenced in the Tomb of Noor Jehan and the Tomb of Jehangir at Lahore. During the process of cleaning of area around the eastern side gate of the mausoleum, we found two horseshoes along with other cultural material which provides material evidence that this area was used as a stable in the Sikh or later period during 19th- 20th Century.

In order to expose the buried structural remains inside the mausoleum an archaeological excavation was started by a team comprising on Dr. Tahir Saeed, Dr. Abdul Ghafoor, Mr.Arshad Ullah, from the Department of Archaeology and Museums in the month of June 2020. The area from inside of the Mausoleum measures 26' 11" from east to west direction and 27' 3"from north to south direction. The floor of the Mausoleum at the top was laid down with 10 cm solid cement concrete. This existing floor was laid down on the earlier floor during the conservation work carried out at the monument during 2004-05. The concrete floor was removed and after deep digging of 6 cm first layer of compact soil was found which comprises on deposits of some cultural material in the shape of potsherds, fragment of pottery etc.

The second layer of compact soil was observed at further deep digging of 20 cm with deposits of material such as; potsherds, arrow head, bridles used for horse, horseshoes of iron material, bones etc. belonging to the Islamic period. During archaeological excavations, the main grave was exposed in the middle of the tomb area at the depth of 0.5 meter. The main grave in the centre of the mausoleum measures 10' – 4" x 5' – 7". The distance of the main grave from centre measures 10' 3" from eastern and

western entrance gate wall, and 8' 7" from northern and southern entrance gate wall of the mausoleum. The four sides of the grave walls of main grave were constructed with limestone blocks laid in lime mortar. Between the walls a considerable amount of loose soil was found along with debris mixed with rough material, pebbles and hearth deposits.

The results of the limited archaeological excavations testify the evidence of a main grave inside the tomb which can now be safely considered as the grave of Sultan Sarang Khan. Beside this main grave, located in the centre of the Mausoleum, the evidences of four more graves were also recognized as; one on northern side entrance gate, two on eastern side entrance gate, and one on southern side entrance gate of the mausoleum. All these graves after excavations have been mentioned with numbers as; main grave, grave 1 to 4 as indicated in Plan of Mausoleum (Fig. 9). The walls of the graves were laid down with limestone and the lime mortar was used as binding material.

The four graves were covered with massive stone slabs of different sizes at the top of each grave. The present scope of the archaeological excavations was however, limited but a complete archaeological excavations plan in future on the remaining part of the western side entrance gate of the mausoleum will help to discover more concrete evidences to record stratigraphy of the monument. Further, it will help to learn more about the actual history of the Rewat Fort from Islamic Period to British Colonial Rule including the episode of Sikh Period in this part of Punjab province of Pakistan (Plate 1-7).

12. Archaeological Finds

During the process of archaeological excavations carried out inside the Mausoleum a reasonable quantity of artefacts found which comprises on; terracotta wheel made pottery (potsherds) of thick as well as thin texture, red ware, some painted fragments decorated with black colour motive lines, iron objects, bones and some glass fragments, terracotta decorative tiles etc. The result of limited archaeological excavations and antiquities which mainly comprises on pottery and other cultural material provides substantial evidences about the history of the monument from 16th to 20th Century CE.

13. Archaeological Excavations in the living cells

There are regular rows of identical living cells along the four sides of the quadrangular inner face of the defense walls overlooking the inner courtyard of the Rewat Fort. Fortification wall and living cells on southern wing of the Rewat fort had been collapsed due to the passage of time and human vandalism. No traces of the structural remains were visible on the surface to follow for ongoing conservation work. As such complete layout of the structures to be restored was found essential to meet the conservation ethics and standards. Therefore, in order to expose the buried remains of the destroyed structures an archaeological excavation was started by a team comprising on Dr. Mehmood-ul-Hassan, and Mr. Arshad Ullah, Assistant Director from the Department of Archaeology and Museums in the month of June 2018. The students of TIAC, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad were also included in the team. During archaeological excavations, foundations of the fortification wall and small cells were exposed at the depth of 0.5 meter. The remains of the walls were constructed with limestone blocks laid in lime mortar. The preserved height of the walls was recorded only 50 centimetres. Based on the archaeological excavations and investigations further work to complete the living cell was carried out with the same limestone material and lime mortar as binding material for restoration of the living cells of the Fort.

14. Archaeological Finds

During the process of archaeological excavations in the living cells of the Fort, a reasonable quantity of artefacts found comprises on; pottery (terracotta, potsherds) of thick as well as thin texture, red ware, pale red ware and plain and rough surface potsherds or fragments of pottery. All the antiquities found were documented, recorded and digital photographs were prepared for analysis and further research studies/investigations (Plate 8-23).

15. Description of antiquities discovered

A brief account of the discovered material from archaeological excavations in different areas of the Fort is given as below.

Pottery

The study of pottery discovered at the archaeological site is considered of a great help to make certain the chronology of the site as it provides significant information about the inhabitants of area or site. Besides, it also reflects the everyday life of the people of that period. During archaeological excavations, a reasonable number of potsherds were found which includes; different types of pots, bowls, miniature pots, saucers and lids with knobs. The fragment of wheel made pottery which includes; small fragments of pots, dishes with folded and dull rims, with smoothed base and rims of different shapes and sizes. The red ware pottery is wheel made and represents thick and medium texture. The potsherds show normally red or dull red wash, almost on the external surface sometimes interior sides.

Most of the potsherds are however, plain, red, dull red and pale red ware (Plate 9 – 16, 18, 20, & 22). There are found six significant pottery rims which are red ware and treated with traditional wheel made (Plate 9, Fig.1-4, Plate 18, Fig. 1 &2) in addition to a prominent knob of a pot lid (Plate 18, Fig. 3).A few pieces of pottery depict decorations like parallel lines in black-blue colour and one potsherd with decorative flower leaf design (Plate 17, Fig. 3 & 4). Following periods are observed at Rewat Fort: -

i) Early Muslim Period: 8th-11th Century CE
ii) Sultanate/Pre Mughal Period: 12th-15th Century CE
iii) Mughal including Suri Period: 16th-18th Century CE
iv) Late 18th-20th Century CE

Iron Objects

The iron objects include; one Bridle used as headgear for horse (Plate 19, Fig. 1), one Hinges (Plate 19, Fig, 2), two horseshoes(Plate 19, Fig.3 & 4) and one arrow head (Plate19, Fig. 5) which were discovered during the archaeological excavation of Mausoleum area, are very significant and worth mentioning.

Glass fragments

A few small pieces / fragments of glass were found during excavations in the area of Mausoleum which seems pieces of glass jars, or other objects (Plate 17, Fig. 1, 2 & 6).

Bones

Some bone pieces of human skull were found during the excavation from the Mausoleum area (Plate 8 & 21). Besides, some pieces of human bones of child (?) were also found during the excavation from the Mausoleum area (Plate 23).

Coin

Only one coin minted and issued during 1970's by Government of Pakistan (5 Paisa) was found from the Mausoleum area during the excavation (Plate 17, Fig. 7).

Miscellaneous objects

Some miscellaneous objects like pebble, fragments of different types of pottery, small pieces of iron and other cultural material were found during the archaeological excavations mainly from the Mausoleum area of Rewat Fort (Plate 17). A terracotta tile (partially broken from one side) decorated with carved with geometrical designs/patterns on the front surface was found during excavations from the Mausoleum area which is however, very significant.

A descriptive catalogue of the discovered antiquities (Plate-wise) from Rewat Fort is appended (Annexure-A).

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A Persian manuscript of Durr-i-Maqāl: A versified account of the British Military Expeditions in the former North-West Frontier Province (1858 to 1863)

Zarawar Khan | Molvi Nematullah Numani

Abstract

A Persian manuscript entitled Durr-i-Maqāl, a poetical work of Mirza Abdul Haq Arvi has recently surfaced in the Swat valley. It is a voluminous and versified account of the military expeditions of the British Indian Empire carried out against the Hindustan Mujahidin *(the so-called Hindustani fanatics) stationed at Panjtar, Sitana, Mangal Thana, and Malka between 1858 and 1863. The manuscript is substantially devoted to the Ambela war of 1863, in which various tribes of Buner, Swat, Dir, Bajur, Chitral and upper Indus valley participated against the British forces. Unlike the British military and Intelligence reports, wherein the bravery of Colonial officers is exaggerated, Durr-i-* Maqāl, *on the contrary, impartially records the casualties of the English army and Mujahidin. Moreover, this is perhaps the only recorded document of the bribery of thirteen thousand rupees received by the local chiefs of Buner from the British government in lieu of the destruction of Malka. An attempt is made here to present a summary of this important MS and to find out the facts so for shrouded in mystery.*

Keywords: Durr-i-Maqāl, versified account, British expeditions, Ambela war.

1. Introduction

The Mujahidin Movement of the former North West Frontier Province[1] owes its origin from Sayyid Ahmad, a native of Rayi Baraili, who left his ancestral land for wagging religious wars (*Jihad*) against the Sikh Empire of Panjab in the 19th century of the Common Era. He migrated to the Yousafzai country in 1824, and with the cooperation of the native chiefs, fought a bloody battle against the Sikhs near Nowshera. The war that

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[1] Now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan

ensued in 1827, ended with the defeat of Sayyid Ahmad and the massacre of his followers (Wylly 1912: 68 & 69, Hunter 1876: 15& 16). In another engagement, the Sayyid defeated the Barakzai Chiefs of Peshawar and took control of the city in 1829 (Paget 1874: 51). To consolidate his position in the Yousafzai country, as well as to appoint fresh recruits, Sayyid Ahmad with the consent of Fateh Khan, the chief of Khudu Khel (now in district Buner) chose the village of Panjtar as a base for the future operations. However, in 1831, the Sayyid and his faithful disciple Shah Ismail, got martyrdom in the decisive battle of Balakot (Hunter 1876: 18). For some times, his cohort was active against the Sikhs in Hazara, but the increasing pressure of the British Empire pushed them to their former colony at Panjtar. With the passage of time, they shifted to Sitana and Mangal Thana on the right bank of River Indus, where Sayyid Akbar Shah, the former treasurer of Sayyid Ahmad, warmly received them (Paget 1874: 52, Scott 1906: 105).

The Sayyid family of Sitana proved to be the loyal companions of Mujahidin and stood with them in every occasion. However, soon this colony incurred the displeasure of the British Indian Empire, and some punitive expeditions directed against the Mujahidin, between 1857 and 1862, which resulted in the destruction and burning of the villages of Panjtar, Mangal Thana and Sitana (Nevill 1912: 41). The Sayyid family once again accommodated the Mujahidin in their ancestral village of Malka in the Mahaban Mountains of Chamla valley. In the autumn of 1863, the British government decided to destroy Malka and terminate the war like activities of Mujahidin forever (Neville 1912: 50, Paget 1874:84). With this motive, the Yousafzai field force was formed at Peshawar, which proceeded through the Rustam and Surkawai route and reached to the Ambela pass in October 1863. However, the movement of the force was checked by a confederacy of the tribes of Buner, Swat, Dir and Bajaur for three months and a sever battle that ensued at the Kotal or mountain pass of Surkawai is known as the Ambela campaign to the British and *Ghaza-i-Buner*[2] to the natives.

The Ambela campaign is one of the memorable events in the British Military history. The incidents of the war have been recorded in

[2] Correctly Ghazwa-i-Buner. However, in our MS it is always written as Ghaza-i-Buner.

many official documents, personal diaries of the military officers who participated in the expedition, or published in military reports. Such reports are hitherto considered as the primary source of information regarding that decisive battle. However, the recently surfaced MS of *Durr-i- Maqāl,* adds new data to our knowledge about the confederacy of the native force against their common foe, and the sacrifices they offered for the cause of Hindustani Mujahidin.

2. Historical importance of the manuscript (MS)

The manuscript (hence after: MS) records the details of various skirmishes and conflicts occurred between the Hindustani Mujahidin and British forces on different occasions, until the culmination of Ambela expedition of 1863. The author of the MS, being an eyewitness of the Ambela war, has listed the names of the leading chiefs of different areas of the Yousafzai and elsewhere who participated in the *Ghaza-i-Buner*. Aside that, one of the chief features of the MS is that it does not only praise the courage and sacrifices of the Mujahidin and their native allies, but also admires the good administration of the British military camp of Ambela, and the discipline, obedience and devotion of the *Firangi* forces. Moreover, it also mentions the names of many officers of the *Firangi* force such as Reynell Taylor, the then Commissioner of Peshawar, Major Hugh James, the Civil Commissioner, Lieutenant R. Sandeman, the assistant Commissioner, Neville Chamberlain, the Military Commander, and Major Wilde, Lieutenant Anderson, and Jamadar Hari Chand etc.

Similarly, it also reveals that the Mujahidin had rallied around Sayyid Mubarak Shah, the son of the late Sayyid Akbar Shah of Sitana, and Molvi Abdullah, the Bengali Commander of Hindustani Mujahidin, whereas the tribes of Swat, and upper Indus valley participated under the banner of the Sahib of Saidu Sharif, commonly known as the Akhund of Swat. The other tribes came under the command of their respective chiefs such as Ghazan Khan of Dir, Faiz Talab Khan of Bajaur, Sher Dil Khan and Suhbat Khan of Thana and Aladand, while the forces from Afghanistan were leading by Sahibzada Fazl Mehdi and Sayyid Kamal Bacha, alias the Haji Sahib of Kunar. Although, some of these personalities have been reported by the British authorities yet there were other tribal warriors whose bravery, sacrifices and martyrdom are only narrated in this MS.

In addition to the daily incidents of Ambela war, the MS also preserve the names of several chiefs of Buner, Rustam, Swabi and Mardan, who sided the British forces by receiving a bribe of thirteen thousand rupees and paved the way for the burning of Malka, the base camp of Mujahidin in the Amazai territory of Buner. On the contrary, the role played by the Akhund of Swat and the great sacrifices offered by the Sayyid family of Sitana and Malka, is highly appreciated.

3. Author of the MS

The MS is deprived of its title page and other preliminary notes but fortunately it still retains the last chapter with very important information about its name as "Durr-i- Maqāl", compiled in 1280 A.H (AD 1863) by Mirza Abdul Haq, with the benevolence and kindness of the "*Sahib Ghaus-us-Zaman, Qutab-ud-Dawran, Sahib Saidu Sharif*", (the Akhund of Swat)[3]. The author has not added the details of his birthplace and nationality, however, the work of some of the near cotemporary Muslim historians incorporate useful information about him. In this connection, Ghulam Rasool Mehr, a prominent authority on the life and movement of Sayyid Ahmad Barailvi, is of the view that Molvi Abdul Haq Arvi, the author of "Durr-i- Maqāl", was an emigrant from Bihar (eastern India) to the North-West Frontier. For some time, he remained the chief scribe of Sayyid Akbar Shah, the first elected king of Swat. He also took part in the Ambela war of 1863 and composed his book on the *Ghaza-i- Buner*[4] in versified form, like the Shahnama[5] (Mehr 1956: 306). Mehr further says

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[3] His original name was Abdul Ghafoor and was also known by the title of Akhund Sahib of Swat, Sahib of Swat and Saidu Baba (see Asif Khan 1962: xli), while Sahib Ghaus-us-Zaman, Qutab-ud-Dauran and Sahib Saidu Sharif, were his other titles used by the author of the MS. The Akhund of Swat had established himself at Saidu Sharif, about 1845 and died there in 1877 (see *Who's Who in the Dir, Swat and Chitral Agency*, Confidential Report of the British Military and Secret Department, 1939: 1).

[4] The Actual title of the MS is Durr-i- Maqāl as recorded on its folio No. 142. However, Ghaza-i- Buner is also mentioned on Folio. No.7a. the latter title is frequently used by Ghulam Rasool Mehr in his *Sarguzasht-i-*Mujahidin. Besides these, the term "*Jangnama*" is also used on Folios 141a & 142a, of the MS.

[5] The Shahnama of Firdusi in which the life and conquests of Mahmud of Ghazni has been recorded.

that the original MS has owned by Sayyid Abdul Jabbar Shah Sitanavi[6], from whom a fair copy kindly obtained. The last years of Molvi Abdul Haq Arvi's life spent at Aladand Dherai[7] (Swat), where he breathed his last (Mehr 1981: 30)

4. Discovery and conservation of the MS

The present MS was perhaps added to the personal library of the Akhund of Swat at Saidu Sharif, however, for nearly a century and half, it remained out of the sight of scholars and historians. Even the court historians of Swat State have not cited it as a primary source of information in their books.[8] Fortunately, in the last decade of the 20th century, this MS was resurfaced in the house of the late Mr. Attaullah, the first secretary of the Swat state.[9] His son, Mr. Ziaullah advocate presented it to the Head Quarter of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Pakistan at Saidu Sharif Swat, for conservation.[10] The credit of the restoration of this

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[6] He was a descendant of the Sayyid Akbar Shah of Sitana and remained the ruler of Swat for some time before the accession of Miangul Gul Abdul Wadood in 1917. (We visited to his relatives of Malka village in search of the MS once laying in his possession, but Sayyid Muhammad Shamshir Bacha of his family could not find it). One MS of Sayyid Abdul Jabbar Shah was known as *Kitab-ul-Ibra*, of which the first part is now published in Urdu version.

[7] On folio No. 7a, of our MS, there is some end notes of Movli Abdul Haq about the composing or reciting of the Ghazwa-i-Buner in the hujra or guestroom of Sher Dil Khan, the former Khan of Than, while Suhbat Khan of Aladand is praised for his hospitality and heroism. This shows that the author of the MS had great attachment with these influential Khans.

[8] Muhammad Asif Khan's *The Story of Swat* (1962), doesn't mention the name of Abdul Haq Arvi and his MS, though most of the information he has given on pp. xlvii-liii, of his book, seems to have been copied from folios nos. 38a-42a of Durr-i- Maqāl.

[9] Mr. Attaullah belonged to Hafiz Abad, Gujranwala District of Panjab, Pakistan. He was B.A. L.L.B, and had been the secretary of Swat State since 1926 (see *Who's Who in the Dir, Swat and Chitral Agency*, Confidential Report of the British Military and Secret Department, 1939: 6). He was the first person to make correspondence in English with the British Political Agents of Malakand on behalf of the Swat State. Some of his letters have recently surfaced in the Malakand archives (see Olivieri 2015: documents no. 186).

[10] Information based on verbal communication with Prof. Dr Sultan-i-Rome, Chairman Department of History, Government Jahanzeb P.G. College, Saidu Sharif Swat.

historical document goes to the late Dr. Domenico Faccenna, the then Director of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Swat, who not only preserved it from further deterioration, rather prepared a set of photographs for the future academic research.

However, his untimely demise prevented him to fulfil the desired task (see Olivieri 2015: 5, fn. 25), and the set of photographs arranged and numbered, remained unstudied for many years in the library of the Italian Mission at Saidu Sharif. Presently we have no idea of the whereabouts of the MS as it was returned to its deceased owner, while the photographic record left in the library, is the only source on which the present study is based on.[11] Although some of the folios of the MS were torn out and a discontinuity in the historic events exists, as we will see, yet the surviving portion provides sufficient information about the Hindustani Mujahidin and their struggle against the British government.

5. Contents of the MS

The preserved portion of the MS incorporates about 142 folios, marked by several Persian poems with black ink on both sides of the plain paper. There is no page numbers or perhaps the original pagination is obliterated, however, the last word of the preceding folio is copied in the start of the next in some cases. During the process of conservation a new arrangement of page numbering was made from serial no. 01, followed by 01a, until the last folio of 142a.[12] Each poem is titled as *dastan* or story, and incorporates various events, its causes, the incidents occurred and the conclusion. In the culmination of each poem, the author sometime demands for wine or simply grapes water from an imaginary barmaid to refresh him for the narration of the next incident yet to be composed. The poems are precise, meaningful and encasing a lengthy event in few couplets. Apart from mentioning the names of persons and places, the author has also added sufficient detail of the geography of the Mujahidin

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[11] We are grateful to Prof. Dr Luca Maria Olivieri, the present director of the Italian Archeological Mission, for the permission to study and publish a summary of this important MS.

[12] Ghulam Rassol Mehr on the contrary, has quoted the folios of his own copy of this MS, in the *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin.*

camps at Panjtar and Sitana and the strategic positions occupied by the British force at the Kotal of Ambela. Sometime the genealogy of races and tribes (Khel) of the Muslim fighters of Ambela war is also discussed in detail.

The existing folio No. 01 to 02 of the MS (of Faccenna documentation) is the continuation of a poem narrating the story of prophet Joseph, who was saved by Allah Almighty from the conspiracies of his brothers and bestowed with a distinguished position in the kingdom of Egypt[13]. This is followed by the story of Prophet Jonah (Yunis), who was nourished in the belly of Whale fish by Allah[14]. By reminding these events, the author stresses on the strong belief in one God because his supreme power can decide the good and bad fortune of his creations.

The succeeding poem deals with the praise of Almighty Allah, and his blessings and bestowing upon the humanity. Some historical events mentioned in the holy Quran are also quoted here, for instance the story of Pharaoh[15] and Nimrod[16] who stood against the will of Allah, and thus vanished forever. It is followed by a poem in the praise of the holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), and by another *dastan* of the formula for becoming a strong believer in Allah. Here Abdul Haq, the scribe of the MS prays to Allah for the forgiveness of his sins[17].

6. The story of Sayyid Ahmad Barilvi [folios 04-7a]

The actual story, on which the MS is based on, starts from the poem of folio No. 04, and highlights the then prevailing circumstances in India due to which Sayyid Ahmad of Baraili, decided to migrate elsewhere. Besides mentioning other events, the MS says that there were differences in the social and moral customs and traditions between the two nations (Hindus and Muslims),[18] therefore it was difficult for the Muslims of Hindustan to

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[13] This is the translation of the 12th chapter (Surah) of the holy Quran.

[14] The translation of the 10th chapter of the holy Quran is given here.

[15] Emperor of Egypt in the time of Prophet Moses

[16] King of Nineveh, in the time of Prophet Abraham

[17] Folio. 3a of our MS

[18] This statement shows that the two nation's theory existed before Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan promulgated it.

live together with the infidels. Moreover, the accessioning of Ranjit Singh on the throne of Lahore, and the capturing of India by the *Firangi Sipah* (British forces), was another important reason for the migration of Sayyid Ahmad and his followers. In this critical situation, he went to the performance of *Hajj*, and then came back via Khurasan. Soon he arrived to Panjtar[19], where Fateh Khan the chief of Khudu Khel received him with great honour.

With the support of Fateh Khan the Sayyid constructed the caravan inn, a school, a mosque and other buildings, and made Panjtar as the base for warlike activities. People from every class gathered around him, and a *Lashkar* (armed force) thus formed for meeting the onslaughts of the infidels in this area, as well as to stand against the followers of Jesus (British) and usurper of India. Meanwhile, fresh waves of emigrants also arrived and settled at Sitana[20] for receiving training against the expected campaigns[21].

The next poem records the events of AH 1274/1857 AD, when the Mujahidin were stationed at Sitana, under the patronage of Shahzada Sayyid Mubarak Shah.[22] However, a war ensued between Sayyid Mubarak Shah and the Hutmanzai (Utmazai) tribes of the neighbouring villages of Kaya and Khabal, in which Sayyid Umar, the uncle of Shahzada was shot dead.

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[19] A village in the Khudu Khel area of district Buner

[20] A large village of the Sayyid family on the right bank of River Indus, destroyed in 1858 by the British force (see Adye 1867), and drowned in the Tarbela water reservoir in 1974.

[21] The detail of the battle of Sayyid Ahmad with the Sikh forces and the Barakzai chiefs of Peshawar, the killing of Khadi Khan of Hund, the attempt for the assassination of Sayyid Ahmad by the Yousafzai and the Balakot incidents are not found in the MS because some of its pagers are either missing or perhaps removed in later period. For further detail on these issues, see Scott 1906: 103-113, Hugh 1865:43-4, & Hunter 1875.

[22] Since he was the son of Sayyid Akbar Shah, the former king of Swat state and crown prince, therefore he was known as Shahzada to the author of the MS.

7. The destruction of Panjtar, Mangal Thana and Sitana by the British Forces [folios 09-12]

The MS then goes on to record that the Hutmanzai nation was not so strong to oppose the Sayyid family of Sitana, therefore, they secretly dispatched letters to the *Firangi* officers so to chastise their rivals[23]. The British force soon responded to their call and advanced to Chinglai for the destruction of Muqarab Khan[24] of Panjatar and the Mujahidin centres of Mangal Thana and Sitana.[25] Some of the local Khans, such as Qadar Khan of Toru, Sarbiland Khan of Huti, Khuidad Khan of Ismaila, Shahdad Khan of Hund, Ibrahim Khan of Zeda, Amir Khan of Khadarzai and Ajab Khan and Aziz Khan (of Suddam)[26], also joined with the British Commissioner of Peshawar in this expedition. The destruction of Panjtar was followed by the annihilation of Mangal Thana, a stronghold of Sayyid Abbas Mian, and a safe shelter of the Hindustani Mujahidin. Although, Sayyid Abbas and his companions had already escaped, yet the *Firangi* did not spare the fort and raised it to the ground. The army remained busy in the destruction until evening and spent the night there[27], while in the morning, there were only smoke and fallen houses[28].

At the dawn of the succeeding day, the Commissioner, while staying at Mainai[29], casted his eyes on the destruction of Sitana. When Shahzada Mubarak Shah got this news, he soon convened a meeting of his companions and it was unanimously declared that Sitana should be evacuated and all the men will move to Shahnoorlari[30], while the families

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[23] Such statement is also given by Wylly 1912:79-80.

[24] The son of Fateh Khan, and chief of Pajtar. For the defeat and escape of Muqarb Khan see (Wylly 1912: 77-78).

[25] For further detail see Paget 1874: 64-80

[26] Ajab Khan and Aziz Khan were brothers and influential chiefs of Rustam and Suddam. They also accompanied the British army in Ambela Campaign of 1863.

[27] The detail of this event is also given in *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,* Vol. I, pp. 223-224, as if copied from the MS of Durr-i- Maqāl. See also Wylly 1912: 79.

[28] This detail is also given by Paget 1874: 75

[29] A village near Topai in the district of Swabi. A contingent of British force was stationing there on that occasion (see Nevill 1912: 43).

[30] Name of a mountain in the Mahaban series.

and children should go to Malka.[31]The Commissioner quickly proceeded to Khabal and entered Sitana. The village and its settlement were destroyed with cannons and gunpowder. The scene was observable from the Shahnoorlari, situated above Sitana, therefore some of the Mujahidin attacked on the British force and fought so bravely that even the British Commanders praised them[32], though many of them got martyrdom.

8. Settlement of the Mujahidin in Malka [folios 12a-19a]

After the destruction of Sitana, the Mujahidin shifted to Malka, and settled there with Shahzada Mubarak Shah and a new camp thus established. The local people also supported the Mujahidin with food and money. With the assistance of the natives of Malka the construction of some buildings took place, such as gunpowder factory, a grain store, horse stables[33], quarters for the Mujahidin and a place for the king etc.[34] The foundation of purely Islamic community were laid and recitation of the name of Allah became the daily routine. Abdullah[35] was selected as the Amir of war, since his ancestors formerly held the same position, while weapons of war such as guns and cannons and gunpowder, arrows and bows, and swords were acquired for the expected attack on their camp. Shahzada Mubarak then decided to punish some of the Hutmanzai for their conspiracy, however, the guilty persons made good their escaped to the British administered area across the River Indus, while the other chiefs of Kaya and Khabal, namely Abdul Hameed, Abdul Aziz, Maazullah Khan and Muhib Ullah Khan welcomed him. They also supported the Shahzada in the reconstruction of the devastated fort of Sitana.

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[31] This event is also recorded by Bellew 1864: 98 & Paget 1874: 95

[32] See also Paget 1874: 77.

[33] See figs. 06 & 06a

[34] The same description of Malka is also given by R. Taylor the Commissioner of Peshawar on the occasion of its destruction on the 22 December 1863 (see Paget 1874: 131 & Parry 1888:290)

[35] He is also known to the English writers as the commander of the Hindustani fanatics (see Paget 1874: 92).

The success of the Shahzada at Kaya and Khabal alarmed Akram Khan of Tanawal.[36] He fled away from his Qila Baloch[37] to Darband[38], and sought the help of British authority against the Shahzada. The British Officer of Hazara quickly moved his forces to Darband and Tarbela, and laid siege on the bank of River Indus. On the other hand, the Commissioner of Peshawar by the name of Tailar[39] was strengthening his force by inviting contingents from every districts including Kohat. The combined force equipped with heavy war weapons, ration, and beast of burden such as horses, Camels, Mules, and Elephants reached Menai, and secured both the banks of River Indus. The local Khans of the area also made their presence to the Commissioner for cooperation.

Looking to his week position, the Shahzada requested to his uncle Syyad Umran and Molvi Abdullah for writing letters of invitation to every chiefs of the area for joining the holy war[40]. One letter was also sent to Abdul Ghafoor, the Sahib of Saidu Sharif, with the request to pray for these people since the *Firangi* has come to Amb, Darband and Tarbela with the mission of the destruction of this land. The chiefs of this land are also supporting the *Firangi*, and the Khans of Amazai, especially Muza Khan is a paid servant of the Commissioner. Moreover, the chiefs of Menai and Topai have also paid allegiance to the infidel force. Now it is the duty of every Muslim to rise for the holy war in this critical situation. When the Sahib read the letter, he proclaimed that today is the holy war and Shahzada is the real leader of the Muslims and worthy of this position since his family is holding this prestigious seat from very long ago.

9. The plan for the destruction of Malka [folios 19a-30a]

The Commissioner was planning for a raid on Malka, and for this purpose, he was inspecting the arrangements of the force and local Khans. When

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[36] The son of the late Jahandad Khan and reigning king of the Amb state
[37] The Baloch Ghar fort of the former Amb State.
[38] The Capital of the then Amb State
[39] Correctly Reynell Taylor
[40] Sayyid Umran had also written a letter to Ahmad Khan of Bagra, but the British forces captured it before it could reach to the Khan (see Paget 1874: 92).

his contingent reached to Gyara Bara[41], they saw the Mujahidin above the mountains and ready for an attack. The Commissioner stepped back, but the horse of Khuidad Khan of Ismaila frightened and slipped down in the water. Although the Mujahidin did not harass the Khan, yet the Commissioner pressed him for this negligence. On the next morning, the infidel force was on the bank of river, and the Commissioner desired to send a reliable person to the Jadun tribes, for keeping them aloof from the Shahzada. A good amount of money was also promised for giving access to the British force to Malka in lieu of a complete safety to their land and property. However, the Jadun rejected the offer by saying that if the *Firangi* ever tried to penetrate; they will rise for the cause of their religion[42].

The response from Jaduns disappointed the Commissioner and he issued order for the formation of the force. All the forces gathered in a vast plain and formed their ranks and files with the sound of drums. The force was consisted of cavalry and infantry, and all the recruits including the black and white skinned officers, obeyed the order. With weapons like cannons, rifles and spears, they paraded, and the mounted guards were roaming around for safety. The Commissioner then left his camp at Topi and reached Swabi hurriedly because he had to lead the forces to Malka through the Darahind.[43] The Shahzada was stationing at Sitana and receiving the message about the advance of the *Firangi.* He reached to Malka and advised the Amir of Mujahidin for the preparation and defence of the area through the blockade of the routes. The British force reached to Khudu Khel with proclamation for bringing food items to the stores of the troops. However, a group of devoted Mujahidin attacked on the grain store, looted and burnt it at the night.[44]

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[41] Name of a place

[42] This poem is also included in Mehr 1956: 338.

[43] The Daran Pass of the British writers. See Paget 1874: 87. There is a very close relation between the writing of Paget 1874: 87, and the MS. For the Daran Pass see Bellew 1864: 13

[44] This was certainly the commiserate store established at Naokilla (see Paget 1874: 87). Naokilla is the modern Nawekaly situating near Parmoli and Shiva bus stop. Presently this village is commonly known as Sher Khan Shaheed village because of the grave of Sher Khan, an officer of the Pakistan army who got martyrdom in the Kargil war of 1998.

The Commissioner became very much astonished and worried about this action of the Mujahidin. He changed the plan of crossing the Darahind, and ordered that the force should move through the Surkawai route. Meanwhile Ajab Khan[45]also arrived and convinced the Commissioner for the invitation of Zaidullah Khan of Daggar, Habib Khan and Aasim Khan of Aishazai tribe[46] and Ahmad Khan of Bagra, to Surkawai for negotiation. Then these leading chiefs accepted the offer and started via Barkali and joined Ajab Khan at Nawakali[47]. The Commissioner then assured the chiefs of Buner about a high reward they will receive for allowing the force to cross Surkawai. A deal of thirteen thousand rupees was also discussed for their additional services[48]. The Commissioner also declared to them that the British force has no concern with the Bunerwals except the destruction of Malka, and after the accomplishment of this task, the *Firangi* force will return without any delay.

10. The start from Nawakali to Surkawae and Chamla [folios 30a-38a]

The Commissioner and the force moved from the base of Darahind towards the east in the direction of Surkawae for the first time[49]. Ajab Khan and the chiefs of Buner were leading the *Firangi* force to Ambela[50], while his brother Aziz Khan[51] of Sudam had a soft corner for his relatives of Buner. They reached to the Kotal of Ambela in evening time in the

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Although the British writers never recorded the plundering of the grain store by Mujahidin, yet it seems that this event certainly took place on the night of the 19th October 1863, and on the next morning, the plan of crossing the Daran pass was postponed for the Rustam to Surkawai route

[45] The Khan of Rustam and supporter of the British force.

[46] See also Mehr 1956: 341.

[47] It was here that the base camp of operation was established by the British force (see Paget 1874:18).

[48] This fact has never disclosed in the writings of the British authors such as Paget 1874, and others.

[49] Because the British force never used this route for any expedition or penetrating to the Buner valley.

[50] Ambela is always written as Hamela in the MS.

[51] Aziz Khan and Ajab Khan were the two brothers and they had received awards from the Commissioner. See. Paget 1874: 134).

moonlight. Meanwhile some of the Mujahidin raided the *Firangi* with guns and the battle thus ensued. The Commissioner was viewing the increasing number of Mujahidin with great surprise from the top of Kotal. He was interrogating Ajab Khan, about this unexpected disaster. On the next day, the *Firangi* force selected its positions at the Kotal[52] and some of the contingents started for going to Koga under the command of Sanman.[53]

However, the Barkazai and Noorazai opposed them from mount Ghuru and a hot contest started from both sides with slogans[54]. The three brothers of the Barakzai clan jumped into the battlefield with swords, and got martyrdom. When their father came to know about their fate, he took the arms, fought gallantly and died. Three persons of the *Firangi* artillery were also killed and they were Major Katar[55], Kaptan (Captain) Kailak and Chein.[56] The Mujahidin also captured some horses of the enemy while nine men of the Norazai tribe lost their life in the encounter. The night passed without comfort and the English force gave the dead bodies of the Bunerwals at the morning[57]. Most of the dead were belonging to Ghadezai, Salarzai, Norozai, Ashezai and Dawalzai tribes, and some persons from the village of Panjpao and Malandarai.

The Commissioner then called the chiefs of Chamla for negotiation, and within few moments, Feroz, Maazullah Khan and his son Abdullah Khan came to him with different kinds of gifts, including

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[52] These positions were the Crag Piquet and Eagle's Nest Piquet, the two peaks opposite to each other on the Ambela pass (see figs 03- 03e). The Eagle's Nest is mentioned in the MS as *Ashyana Uqab*, *Ashyana Murgh*, and *Shaheen Nasheen* with the same meaning of Eagle's Nest or home of Eagle, located in the Guru Mountain. The Crag Piquet was known to the author of the MS as *Sangar* and *Qatal garh* or place of slaughter. It is located opposite to the Eagle's Nest, and below the conical peak of mount Lalu (see figs 02 & 02a).

[53] Correctly Lieutenant R. Sandeman, the then assistant Commissioner of Peshawar (see Paget 1874: 91).

[54] This was certainly the battle of the Eagle's Nest Piquet (see Paget 1874: 96-98).

[55] The Lieutenant Carter of Parry 1888: 289, or could be T.T. Carter of the Royal Engineer (see Paget 1874: 119).

[56] Perhaps Clifford and Lieutenant Richmond who killed in the war of the Guru Mountain on the 26th October of 1863 (see Adye 1867: 48).

[57] This statement of the MS is also recorded by Adye 1867: 50.

chickens, ghee and eggs etc. They also showed a short passage to Malka through the top of the mount Lalu[58]. The Commissioner gave the task of taming the Chamlawal to Mazullah Khan, while Abdullah remained in the camp as hostage. Moreover, Rahmat Khattak, the son of Tawas Khan and Muhammad Zaman Popalzai were sent to Surkawai, Khuidad Khan and Amir Khan, Ibrahim Khan and Muhabat Khan of Turo to Sherdara. Shahdad Khan of Hund was send to Lundkhwar, Sarbiland Khan to Parmuli, and the others to Khanpur[59] for knowing the situation there, while Ajab Khan and Aziz Khan remained in the British camp.

Shahzada Mubarak entrusted the security of Malka to his uncle Sayyid Umran and nominated guards on Sarpaty[60], while the task of securing the peaks of Chamla, Nawagai, Jadun, Amazai and Khudu Khel were given to his other uncle Shah Mehmood and Sayyid Azam. He started for Ambela with the Molvi and a contingent of the Mujahidin. On reaching to Katgala, the force spread in three directions of the valley. The Isazai, Aishazai, Panjpao, and Gadezai laid siege on Mount Lalu, while the fighters of Noorazai, Salarzai, Dawlatzai, and Chagharzai, occupied the mount Guru. The food was supplying from Malka but some time they got insufficient meal or remained without food. Meanwhile, the Aishazai attacked on the *Firangi* with full force, but the enemy succeed in climbing to the opposite summit of mount Lalu[61]. In this fierce battle, Sayyid Azam lost his life, and Mujahidin were repulsed by the *Firangi*.

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[58] Bellew 1864: 12, has recorded that from Rustam one can pass to Parmuli by Machi, Naranji, Mirshahi and Shpol-Banda to Lalu Banda and then down to Koga.
[59] Khanpur is a village between Sherdara and mount Lalu. See figs. No.01 &01a
[60] A mountain near Malaka.
[61] This was probably the battle on the Crag Picquet on 30th October 1863 (see Paget 1874: 103).

11. Request to the Sahib of Saidu Sharif for joining the holy war [folios 38a-39a]

At the same day, a brave man of Buner came with a letter to Abdul Ghafoor, the Sahib of Saidu Sharif[62] for seeking his support against the *Firangi*. The letter stated that the *Firangi* have occupied Chamla and intends to capture Buner and Swat valley. The Sahib is therefore requested to come with a large force, sufficient food, arms and ammunition, good quality of horses and trained youth to the battlefield. The religious class of the Sayyid and Miangan, may be persuaded for coming against the *Firing* force, and letters should be send with your signature to the chiefs of Bajaur, and upper Swat. Moreover, Mirji[63] should be sent to the people of Thana, Aladand Dheria and Ranezai, for making their presence in Ambela.

The Sahib proclaimed *Jihad*, while his disciple Abdur Rahman Kabuli, persuaded the people for going to Ambela against the *Firangi*. The inhabitants of Babozai were invited to Mingora, and it was decided that on Friday the procession would start for Ambela. The tribes of Aka Khel and Maruf Khel assembled on Friday, while another letter also came to the Sahib from Buner on the same moment. The Sahib requested Molvi Ahmad Ji, the Qazi of the mosque for offering the prayer of the day, and then the procession of volunteers started through the bank of River, and reached to Barikot[64] where they waited for Mirji and the Khan Khel of Thana and Aladand until Monday.

Mirji Khan of Nikpi Khel was roaming at Thana and Bar Khan Khel and convincing Mihrullah Khan**,** Shah Nazar, and Zardad, Massam, Shah Nawaz, Abbas Khan and Hasham Khan and Shahbaz Khan of the Khan Khel and Ali Khel clans, and Samat and Feroz of Sonyari, Noor Ali, Muhammad Nakhastin of the Bazid Khel. Moreover, Noor Muhammad Khan and Mehmud Khan of Samel Khel and Bazid Khell were also persuaded and they all went to Barikot and joined the Sahib. Mirji then

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[62] on Folio. 39a, of our MS the name of the Sahib of Saidu Sharif is mentioned as Abdul Ghafoor. He is also praised for the sanctity, simplicity and spiritual influence.
[63] Mirji was the disciple and minister of the Akhund of Swat. See Paget 1874: 145).
[64] For the location of Barikot and the route followed by the Sahib, see Map on fig. 11.

went to the chiefs of Jandul[65], while the Sahib and the procession moved through the Karakar pass to Buner. On that day, the third letter from the people of Buner came and the Sahib said to the messenger that his force is reaching to Ambela very soon. The two Khans of Ranezai, namely Sher Dil Khan and Suhbat Khan of Thana and Aladand also started for Ambela and reached to Bar Qala[66] after one day. They spent the night at Karakar, and on the following day reached to Torwarsak and met the Sahib. From there the Khans went to Ambela with some of their troops and joined the war at the same moment when the *Firigi* force was making fresh raids on the mount Lalu and mount Guru.

This was a real bloody battle in which Painda Khan and Ismail of the Daulatzai, Diwan Shah of Mandazai, and Qubat Shah of the Barkazai clan got martyrdom during the hand to hand fighting with the enemy. This incident was followed by the beginning of the Great War[67] in which Suhbat Khan and Sher Dil Khan actively participated. The boldness of the Akka Khel and Maruf Khel also won great appreciation because Tajjali Noor and his few companions attacked on the British force without any hesitation. Similarly, Haleem shah of the Dulatzai also crushed many constables of the enemy, but due to his white skin and *Firangi* like appearance, his own fellow attacked him with sword. However, he pardoned the attacker, and henceforth, Haleem Shah is known as Mujahid Haleem. Many warriors of the Akozai, Shamozai, Adenzai, Musa Khel, Babozai, Aba Khel, Khan Khel of Ranezai, Nikpi Khel and Maturzai and Ismaizai tribes perished or wounded on that occasion.

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[65] The British force was also aware about the summoning of different tribes of Swat, Bajaur, Dir, and the force of Ghazan Khan, since this was reported to the British Government by General Chamberlain through his letter of the 25th Octber, 1863 (see Adye 1867: 50).

[66] A modern Police check post is now built on the site of Bar Qala, on the summit of Mount Karakar.

[67] The *Jang-e-Azeem* of the MS.

12. The arrival of the Sahib of Saidu Sharif to Ambela [folios 39a-76]

The Sahib finally arrived in a procession of fighters and stayed at the roofless mosque of the Kotal[68]. He sent his troops against the *Firangi,* and engaged himself in prayers from morning to evening. Meanwhile the Molvi and Shahzada came to him and negotiated about their religious beliefs and doctrines. The Sahib listen to them and said that there is no room left to discard the Molvi, because he is the leader of all the Muslims and knows the art of warfare very well. The Sahib also considered the Molvi as his own son and prayed for his success (see fig 07).

The arrival of the people residing on the banks of River Indus delighted the Sahib because he had a plan for a secret attack at the night of Friday. Then the Mujahidin confined the enemy from three sides and with one cry of Tahsneen, the sudden midnight attack took place.[69] However, his proclamation also alarmed the enemy and they at once fired their *gharabin* [Sharpnels]. The men of the Akozai tribe attacked the enemy, and brought silence to their camps. The three persons of Bacha Khel, namely Ilyas, Ammara, and Yousaf had rushed to the enemy camp, while the Khan Khel of Ranezai was showing heroism in the open battlefield.

During this hot contest, Jamadar Najaf and Jamadar Qayam received the bullets and breathed their last. Kaaji of Bami Khel and Noor Ali, the *Muazzin* (*azan* speaker) of the mosque of Saidu Sharif also died, while Salab Din of the Mian Khel of Thana, Said Azam of Chamla Nawagai, and some persons of the Akozai received serious wounds. The rest of the Bunerwal deceived the Mujahidin and took no part in this holy war; rather paved the way for the failure of the midnight attack.

Another secret attack was planned on the next night, however, all the efforts dashed to the ground by a mysterious call of an unseen force alarming the Mujahidin about the sever attack of British force with heavy weapons on their camps. The strange voice frightened many Mujahidin and most of them fled from the battlefield. The chiefs of Thana and

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[68] This was a temporary mosque located on the Gharu mountain pass which was also formerly a border line between the Chamla valley and Buner and known as Buner Kandao (see Bellew 1864: 12).

[69] The event of midnight attack is recorded by the English writers (see Adye 1867: 53).

Ranezai shifted the Sahib to a safe place due to the expected attack of the enemy. The British force did not advance but the panic they created in the darkness deprived the Mujahidin from a good number of fighters. The Bunerwals also escaped and proclaimed that the Sahib has deserted and the *Firangi* are victorious. In fact, the Sahib was standing on the northern hill, but the propaganda spread everywhere. Meanwhile, fresh troops of people arrived to Ambela from distant lands. One of these new comers was Mian Jahan alias Ghulm Mahiuddin of the village of Dherai Jolagram, a descendant of the Sahib of Banur,[70] and another was Fazal Mehdi, the Sahib Zada of Kunar, who came with a large number of his devotees.

A delegation of the Bunerwal chiefs, consisting of Zaidullah Khan of Daggar, Ahmad Khan of Bagra, and others came to the Sahib on behalf of the Commissioner Peshawar for the termination of the war on the condition of the destruction of Malka and expulsion of Mujahidin. The Commissioner also dispatched a letter to the Sahib for the conditional reconciliation; however, the Sahib and Shahzada did not accept the terms because the complete destruction of Malka could devastate the Mujahidin and their allies. After the termination of this fruitless meeting, the Sahib declared that for further attacks, there should be a strategy. It was decided that letters should be dispatched to all the Sayyid, Afghanans and Molvi living on the banks of rivers and hilly area, for the provision of reinforcement. On the other hand, Sher Dil Khan, took the responsibility of collecting the the people of Swat and surrounding areas.

When the news of this critical situation reached to Swat, every Khel of people such as the Shamezai, the two Khel of Sibujin[71] (Sabat Khel and Khuba Khel), Mula Khel and Hassan Khel, reached to the Kotal. The people residing the banks of Indus River followed them, while more troops also came from Puran and Chakesar through the Kana and Gharando route.[72] The Chief of Chakesar was Suhbat Khan while the people from Kohistan were coming with the music of flutes. Moreover,

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[70] Sahib Banaur or Hazrat Adam Banauri was a great sufi saint of the 16th century in India. He was born at the Banaur town of Chandigargh district, India.
[71] Of the Sehboochnia valley of James Abbot. See Abbot 1854: 330
[72] The Barando river that issues from the hills between Shangla and Buner and passing through Chagharzai, Daggar and Tor Ghar and joins the River Indus at the village of Dadam in Tor Ghar

the *Lashkar* of Adenzai, Shamuzai, Hutmanzai, Shaya Khel, and Noora Khel also made their presence at Ambela.

The other Khel, which participated in the war, are the Umarzai, Dauri Khel, Ismail Khel, the whole of Nikpi Khel, Bushri Khel, Janki Khel, Barat Khel and Khudu Khel, Aba Khel, Asha Khel and Isa Khel of the Mandan branch. Among the Matuzai there were Musa Khel, Babuzai and Aba Khel, Bahlol Khel, Bami Khel, Barat Khel and Aka and Maruf Khel. Of the other Khel, there were Qazi Khel and Ashkhani Khel of Shingardar, Samail Khel of Manyar, Amir Khel of Barikot, Abazai and Khadakzai, Fateh Khel and Kamel Khel of Badwan[73]Ali Khel of Aladand Dherai. The Hutmanzai and Barma Khel of Batkhaila, Usman Khel of Dherai Julagram and Sultan Khel of Matkanai, Totakan and Hisar, came for fighting against the *Firangi* force.

13. The Attack on the grains store of the British force [folios 76-87]

The Mujahidin of the Salarzai and Hutman Khel, made a night attack on the grain store of the British force at Surkawai, and took away wheat, maze, ghee, honey, salt, eggs, chickens, dough, candy, onion, sugar, cheese and boxes.[74] It was a sufficient damage to the English force and humiliation for the local chiefs stationed at Sherdara on behalf of the British force. This incident greatly displeased the British force, and they were now bending upon the destruction of Koga. The Commissioner directed his subaltern to clear the rear path[75] from enemies and for the smooth communication of the heavy cannons. This was the noontime when the Mujahidin reached to that mountain and faced the enemy, and the another battle took place. The Mujahidin shot one Major of the *Firangi* force, while Mehdi, Fazal Hadi and Mir Hamza of Palai**,** fought hand to hand with the enemy and died bravely. Sayyid Jaffar, of Sarsarin and Maasam of Thana also died during this battle. At the dawn of the next day, the *Firangi* hired some of the Hutman Khel of the British administered area, for the transportation of their dead to the camp.

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[73] Badwan is now in Lower Dir, near Chakdara.
[74] See also Adye 1867: 67.
[75] The path behind the conical mount of Lalu leading from Surkawai (see Fig. 03).

The arrival of Mirji from Jandul and Tahasneen from Nawagai pleased the Sahib because they were accompanying by many chiefs including Nawab Khan from the house of Mehtaran,[76] and Sayyid Sanaullah Khan and Khudadad Khan of Bajaur with a huge crowed of volunteers. Almost one thousand men from Shamozai were seen on the mountain passes with singing in the company of Abbas Khan of Munda, Aman Khan of Toor, and a group of the Sayyids and Akhund Khel, coming to the battlefield. They were following by Saadat Ali Khel, and Zainullah Khan, Qasam and Mirbaz, and Abdul Ghaffar of Sunyarai. The people from Patan, Palas, Chilas, Dantour and Tibbet also came for the destruction of the *Firangi*, while the contingents from Hazara, Chach, Pakli, and troops of the Wazir and Bangash tribes also came to Ambela

This combined procession reached to the Kotal of the Sahib and he dispatched some of them to Ambela and the other above the mountain. The two Khans of Ranezai and Muhammad, Sayyid Hahib, Ghulam, Aslam, Mir Muhammad and Sayyid Abbas also found their way to Ambela, and joined Asaf, Khursand Khan, Shah Nazar Khan, Khan Shah Nawaz and Saadat of the Ali Khel tribe and the men of Samat Khel and Khan Khel of Sunyari. The security of the base camp of mount Lalu was taken by Mihrullah, Qudrat Ali Badshah, and Mulla Ghulam of Thana. They were also assisting by Mir Ahmad, Mir Alam, Sikander and Noor Ali of Aba Khel and Khasi Khel, Saddiq of Sultan Khel, Shah Afzal, Muhammad Wali and Habibullah Khan of Haqdad Khel, Bahram Khan of Mir Khel from Barikot, and Mabol, Yaqut, Hazrat Jamal and Sayyid Jalal. There were also Muhammad Shah, Kashmir Khaki and Painda Shah of the Ismail Khel of Manyar, and Namawar, Mir Khan, Naseem, Mir Ahmad Jawan, Noor Muhammad, Saifullah, Mirdad and Nawab from the Abazai clan. From the Shaya Khel clan, there was Iraqi, and Muazzam, and from the Musa Khel were Zaidullah Khan, Azizullah, Mir Alam, Shamar, Saadat, Nasri, Banaras, Barakat, Mir Ahmad Marwat, Ghulam, Sadeeq Khan and Mazrub Khan and Sayyid Awal Baba. The people of Shamozai were consisting of Hussain, Dawran, Maazul, Rahim Ullah, Mir Alam, Qadar, Sayyid Alam, Noor Alam, Baaz Khan and Shah Wadan. Moreover, Zardad Khan, Umar Zarin, Azad Khan were belonging from the Adenzai,

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[76] Perhaps the royal family of Chitral

while Amir, Hikmat, Sardar and Hussain Ali, Aziz, Mir Hamza, Abdul Akbar, Noor Wali, Yaqoob and Shaikh Maqbool had come from Ismail Khel.

Asafi and Azad were coming from Hutmanzyan and Amir Rajab, Pacha, Gul, Najam and Haya Noor from Khadsh Khel, while two hundred persons of the Ali Khel and three hundred more had come with Suhbat Khan and Sher Dil Khan Kacho Khel from Ranezai. Murad, Saadullah Khan, Amanat Khan, Aslat Khan, Shah Nawaz and Feroz were from the Mali Khel, and Ismail, Aziz of the Fateh Khel and Abdul Khalil, Asim Khan and Manawar, Shamar, Ayub and Muhammad Hassan of Mir Khan Khel made their presence in the war. Aleem Khan, Saadat, Toti and Astam belonged to Spin Khel, and Hasham, Muhammad Gul and Ghazan from the Ibrahim Khel. Sayyid Rasool, Arjumand, Abdul Aziz and Biland were coming from the Madi Khel, and Arsala Khan, Ubaid, Khan, Sadeeq, Mehboob Khan, Azim, Shahbaz, Khan Zaman, Maroof and Mir Alam were representing Ghaifi Khel. Yaqoot and Madaar belonged to Mulla Khel and Dilwar, Naz Muhammad and Baghi were the men of Marcha Khel. Suhbat, Bahram Khan, Nawab, Mir Khan and Mir Afzal were coming from Baba Khel. Jamal, Amir Aman, Sayyid Ghulam, Aziz, and Habibullah belonged to Landa Khel, Ghulam Nabi and Ghulam Rasool of Mubara Khel, Maruf Shah, Hakim, Mehmud, Muhammad, Maasam and Muasam, and Gul Muhammad of Marwan Khel. From the Dadu Khel, there were Memun, Sarbali, Akhtary and Munjra, and from the Kari Khel were Zarif, Azad Khan and Nawab. From Samail Khel were Yusuf and Aziz, Mruf Shah, Mehboob Shah and Yaseen Khan.

Besides these, there was Nasar and Mir Afzal of Abazai, Noor Shah Ali of Khadakzai, Hammat, Muhabbat, Abbas Khan and Maazullah Khan of Nikpi Khel, Mubaras Khan of the Jura Khel had come with Ahmad Ji, Hamza Khan, Hussain, Mir Alam, Arsala, Mabul, Sayedullah, Zaidullah, of the Nikpi Khel. The chiefs of the Asha Khel were Ahmad, Sayyid Khan, Manars, Ajab Khan, Fateh Khan, Gujar and Shamar. Whereas, the Sebujni clan was represented by Bahram, Gujar, Baidullah Khan, Gul, Mir Alam, Rushdullah Khan, Mir Abbas, Zalam Khan, Ghaus Alam, and Said Muhammad Marwat. From the Shamezai came Muhammadi, Allah Yar Khan, Hussain, Muhammad Gul, Jamal, Qadar, Mir Alam and Anwar Shah, and from the Ibrahim Khel there was Ajab Khan and Jalil with many others. From the Jinki Khel were Feroz and Ghazan, Qaisar, Shah Zol and Faiz Talab.

From the Bashari Khel came Zaman, Munawar, Abdul Akbar, Mira Khan, Zaray, Mujaddid and Bazdaa. The men who came from Babozai were Mujahid, Mulla Abbas Khan, Toray, and Shah Afzal, and from the Aka Khel and Maruf Khel were Abdullah Khan Namdar, Mir Alam, Hamid and ali Noor, Ayaz and Ibrahimay. Arsala, Haji Qutail, Mir Abdullah and his son, Zardad, Gujar, Baghi, Ghulab, Ashraf, Mir and Mullah Khitab, Muhib, Jallat, Khangi, Rajjab and Bahram have come from Bami Khel. From the Aba Khel there was Hikmat and Bahram Khan, Zardad and, Gujar, Rajjab, Mir Alam Shamar and Maqsood Khan, Umara, Malak Aman, Bahram Khan, Aqad Khan, Hayat, Sher Zaman and Noor Zaman. From the Bahlol Khel and Ali Khel, were Gujar and Shah Muzat, Bahadar Khan, Gul, Shamar, Abudllah Khan and Mastan.

14. The plan for another attack of the Mujahidin [folios 87-93a]

It was discussed in a night meeting that the Akozai would harass the enemy at every step and for this purpose; they divided the people of every Khel into two halves for taking positions against the infidels. Suhbat Khan of Ranezai and the warriors of Bajaur along with Sayyid and Mihrullah Khan faced the *Firangi* at the mount Lalu and made their names memorable. The rock where they fought is henceforth, known as the Mihrullah Khan rock. Suhbat Khan also fought bravely in the middle of the flames of guns and cannons. The war had started at the midday and continued the whole night without any break. Sher Dil Khan was riding on horse with sword in hand and fought like a lion. Abbas Khan of Munda and the men of Tarkani also bravely used their swords against the *Firangi* on that Sangar.[77]

The *Firangi* was besieging Mujahidin at the cost of men and resources, while Katur of the Khan Khel received serious wounds from the attack of Major Feat.[78] However, the Mujahidin occupied the Sangar and pushed the enemy back. This attack was so sudden that the British artillery

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[77] Sangar means breastworks. See Roberts 1901:288.
[78] Perhaps Subedar Pyat of Paget 1874: 104.

forgot the operating of the cannons and run away[79]. Mujahidin took possession of the cannons but they were not familiar of its use. The fighters from Shamozai were taking lead during that war despite the heavy wounds they received at body. The *Firangi* were wise and cunning and had the discipline and spirit of hard work for the reward of money and positions. This was the reason that platoons soon harassed the Shamozai youths and created great panic. A fierce battle ensued once again on the Sangar in which the British force defeated the Shamozai[80]and retook their breastwork.

It was the sever cold season and Mujhaidin constructed a sheltered place for the Sahib on the same spot of the Kotal where he was staying. It was also declared that the same shelter will be using as a *Khanqah* or place of learning and teachings. The Sahib then entered there with recitations and enlightened the place. This house soon became a sanctuary for both the upper class and common people alike. Meanwhile Miangul Abdul Hanan, the young son of the Sahib started from Saidu Sharif for Ambela to see his beloved father. When he reached to Kat Gala and appeared at the limits of Salarzai, he sent his messenger to the Sahib for seeking his permission. However, the Sahib did not permit rather warned him to go back and hence the Mian Gul returned to Saidu Sharif with broken heart.

15. The Occupation of Sangar and the retreat of the English force

[folios 93a-99]

The defeat of the Mujahidin at the Sangar was not the final victory of the *Firangi.* The Muslims once again proceeded to Sangar with *Nara-i-Haidari*[81], and so frightened the English force that they stepped back from their position in terror. The Mujahidin pursued the *Firangi* for some distance and occupied that place[82]. The slogans of the Mujahidin filled the whole valley of those mountains and there was the sounds of drums and

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[79] This was perhaps the occupation of the Crag Picquet for the first time.
[80] Perhaps the retaking of the Crag Picquet by the British force is narrating here.
[81] Slogan of war
[82] This was certainly the occupation of the Crag Piquet for the 2nd time.

music of joy. The Khan Khel was also among the invading force of the Mujahidin. Six persons of the enemy's position, also run away, but they were pursued and killed by Ghulam Mahiuddin of Derai Julagram. A good number of weapons and other goods fell into the hands of the Muslims.

However, due to the internal dissention of Bunerwal, the platoons of enemy again united so to repulse the Muslims and to regain what they had lost. Now the war spread to every tree and rock of the hill and the bullets of the enemy were responding with stones by the Mujahidin. There was also hand to hand fighting in which Abbas Khan of the Tarkanyans, showed extraordinary courage and reminded to the *Firangi* that Chamla was not like London[83]. An English officer by the name of Hu James[84], who was serving in the city of Calcutta as advisor and expert of war tactics, came hurriedly to Surkawai and joined the war. The exchange of firing with guns and zumboorukh was the routine of the war, and during the hot contest, the English Generals by the name of Chamer Lain[85] and Adin Bachcha[86] received severe wounds. Instead of injury, Chamer Lain was addressing his troops to encourage them against the Muslims.[87]

The Mujahidin had besieged the Sangar like the snake coils around the treasure. Sarbali of the Ali Khel, Mir Alam of Musa Khel and Bazmir and Noor Ali of the the Khan Khel of Thana embraced martyrdom during the war. Ghulam Mahiuddin took the revenge of Noor Ali by killing some of the infidels through stones and wooden sticks. The occupation of Sangar by Mujahidin lasted until the second night, due to the devotion of the Akozai, Baizai Khan Khel, Sebujin, Shamezai, and Ranezai, especially of its two chiefs Suhbat Khan and Sher Dil Khan Kachu Khel. However, the Bunerwal chiefs were making intrigues and paving the way for the defeat of the Muslims.

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[83] It is written as Landan in the MS.

[84] Certainly, Hugh James who returned from furlough on 19th November and took over the Political Charge of Civil Commissioner from Colonel R. Taylor at Ambela (see Paget 1874: 116, and Adye 1867: 50.).

[85] Correctly Neville Chamberlain, the commanding officer of the British force

[86] Adin Bachcha is perhaps the Persian equivalent of Anderson, a Lieutenant of the 3rd Panjab Cavalry (Paget 1874: 111).

[87] The address of N. Chamberlain is recorded in Paget 1874: 118-119.

15. The story of 3rd war and the defeat of Mujahidin [folios 99-122a]

On the succeeding day, the British forces advanced to the Sangar early in the morning for liberating it from Mujahidin. There were red and black skinned constables, collected from different areas, and each of the contingents had their own style of formation. The cannons of the enemy were shooting the Mujahidin because they had only *Chaqmaq* or matchlocks to rely on. Soon a hot fight ensued with slogans. The Muslims were on the top position and the enemy below those rocks[88] but the sword holders could not stand against the gunpowder and drunken soldiers of the *Firangi* force. In this contest, Buland of the Ashezai, Qadar of the Shamezai tribe and several other persons from Jandul died due to severe injury, and the Mujahidin once again received defeat and descended below, while the Sangar was re-occupied by the British troops.

Despite the crushing defeat, the number of Mujahidin was increasing by new contingents coming from distant land, especially Sayyid Kamal Bacha of Kunar with a force of four hundred people and Aziz Khan of Nawagai came with a force of three hundred men of the Tarkanyan clan. Syyad Kamal Haji Sahib[89] was famous for his sanctity and his force was consisting of the people of Asizai, Hassan Khel and Madah Khel. Two or four persons were always carrying him in palanquin because of his old age.

Ghazan Khan of Dir also came with a large force of Malezai, Painda Khel, Sultan Khel and Nasruddin Khel tribes. The Khan of Nasruddin Khel is Munawar Khan of the village of Rabat, while the men of Tarkanyan were Muhammad, Ghulam Rasool and Hamidullah Khan and they came under the command of Faiz Talab Khan and Feroz Khan of Jan Batai. The Sulatn Khel people came with Mehmud, Abdul Azim, Muhammad Hussain, Muhammad Qadeem, Nizamuddin, Nafiullah, Ghulam Ahmad, Abudur Rahman Shamar, Abdul Kamal, Bahramand, Abdullah, Atta Muhammad, Samiullah, Abdur Rauf, Abdul Qadeem, and Abdul Hamid. There were also persons of the Ilyas Khel and Abbas Khel

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[88] See also Adye 1867: 85-

[89] Sayyid Kamal Bacha of Kunar was commonly known as the Haji Sahib of Kunar (see Paget 1874: 112).

and the crown prince of Kashghar. Every Khan came with his own force and their arrival enlightened the Kotal.

Ghazan Khan of Dir was bending upon the destruction of the *Firangi*. Then the Akozai and the Khan of Dir isolated and consulted something. A man by the name of Khany approached to them, perhaps for creating a dissention between the Khans and the rest of the people, but the Akozai did not like his proposal and rejected him with laughing and jokes[90]. The Khan of Dir proclaimed that he has come only for war and along with the Akozai they prepared for a raid on the *Firangi* without any delay. The Sahib prayed for their success and then retired to his Kotal for worship. At the noontime of the next day, the Khan of Dir entrusted some tasks to Ghulam Rasool and Rahmat Ullah Khan. The Akozai secured its position in that valley, while Suhbat Khan assured Ghazan Khan of every assistance. The Bunerwals did not actively participate and considered themselves inferior against the might of the enemy. The Muslims also felt the expected defeat because they knew that the residents of this country (Buner) have already paved the way for the failure of Muslims.

The Commissioner also prepared his force and attacked the Muslims in the morning, and took the life of three persons. The Mujahidin were leading by Jamadar Juma Khan, who took his matchlock (Chaqmaq) and run away against the enemy. Molvi Ibrahim also moved forward but struck by a bullet of the Cannon. Soon a series of the exchange of firing started from both sides of the mount Lalu. The officers of the British artillery were Wail[91], Ajiseen, Hariseen, and Jamadar Hari Chand, and they were firing cannon against the Mujahidin. The Bunerwal showed cowardice and escaped from the battlefield because they saw the real day of judgement[92]. They easily fled away since they knew every short cut route in the mountain with which they were familiar[93]. This act of the

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[90] The proposal of the conditional reconciliation from the British force was perhaps brought by this Khany of the Musa Khel

[91] Most probably Lieutenants-Colonel A. Wilde, C.B.(see Paget 1874: 87).

[92] This was perhaps a pre-planned scheme since a jirgah of the Bunerwal had already assured the Commissioner that the Bunerwal would take no prominent part in the action (see Paget 1874: 123).

[93] See Also Adye 1867: 86.

Bunerwals greatly enraged the Mujahidin. However, praise is upon the two cannons[94] of the Mujahidin, which gave good response to enemy.

The *Lashkar* of Ghazan Khan of Dir and Akozai tribe assembled on mount Lalu for facing the *Firangi*. A hot contest then started from the two sides and the Akozai again showed bravery by fighting like the lions. The war had started from the morning and continued until late noon. The quick movement of Mujahidin astonished the English forces, and many of their military men killed and wounded. However, Ghazan Khan became notorious at the evening because he noticed that the Bunerwals have deceived the Mujahidin and run away while he (Ghazan Khan) and his men are fighting for their land. Thus, he consulted with other Khans and they all deserted from the war. They reached to the village of Ambela at the night and from there secretly went towards their homes[95].

When the Sahib came to know about this, he proclaimed that now the hypocrites are separated from the true believer. However, the dissention in Bunerwals was the real cause for the unity of the enemy and suffering of the Muslims. The Khan Khel came to the Sahib and asked for the next plan. Sayyid Mir[96], the King of Kunar, and his force of the people of Gameer and Katar were always present in the middle of the valley and above the mount Lalu, and some of the Mujahidin were doing the duty of taking meals to their companions. The food was chiefly obtained from the donation made by the residents of Buner and surrounding area to the Kotal of the Sahib in the shape of chickens, goats, cows, wood, grass, wheat, maize, and barley and cash amount, and utensils for cooking.

At the time of *Chasht* (the time between morning and noon), the Akozai assembled for a *Jirga*, because the chiefs of Buner, like Nawab, Bahdur, Zaidullah Khan, Asim and Habib[97], and other faithful supporters

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[94] One of these cannons is believed to have owned by the descendants of the Hindustani Mujahidin of Asmas in the Torghar district. We also visited that village and found that the cannon and some bombshells, which were previously laying in the Asmas rock shelter, are now shifted to an old house of the village (see figs 10 & 10a)

[95] The English writers have also stated that Ghazan Khan and his companions had deserted from the Ambela war on the night of the 16th December 1863 (see Paget 1874: 129 & Adye 1867: 88).

[96] Sayyid Amir was also mentioned as the great rival of the British (see Paget 1874: 214).

[97] These names are also recorded by Paget 1874: 101

of the *Firangi* had approached them for vacating Ambela. They were also carrying the double barrel English guns to the *Jirga* and frightening the people from the might of the *Firangi* forces. On the other side, the Commissioner was leading his force and someone at Ambela cried that the *Firangi* is coming. The elders of the council became discomfited, while the Bunerwals went away from the place of fighting. The British forces came without any opposition to Ambela, put fire to the village and burnt it all.[98]

Now only the Amir of Mujahidin and his devoted companions were in the valley for opposing the *Firangi,* and the rest of the people had retreated from the occasion. The Amir nominated Nasir Muhammad and Kaleem ud Din, as commanders, and gave a detailed speech for attacking the enemy without the support of the native people. The Mujahidin and the British troops came face to face and with a fire of the cannon, they gave the signal for the start of war.[99] The Mujahidin were suffering and the native Bunerwal were not coming to their help despite the advice and persuasion of Qazi Maqbool. Even Jahandad Khan of Khanpur Dir**,** also left the battlefield by making some excuses.

The English force secured the mountain and descended below. The Mujahidin faced them with swords in hands.[100]. Mirji Khan hurriedly went to Swat and roamed from village to village to secure reinforcement but in vain. On one occasion, the Mujahedeen defeated the enemy and drove them back to their camps. However, several of them died and their heads turned to the direction of the Qibla by the order of Allah, while their corpses found its way to *Ganj-i- Shahidan*[101].Beside the Muslims, two distinguished officers[102] and two hundred constables of the British

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[98] This was certainty the event of the 16th December 1863 (Paget 1874: 128).

[99] This was perhaps the event of the 16th December 1863, when the Mujahidin fired on the British force through matchlocks and zumburuks (Paget 1874: 128 & Adye 1867: 88).

[100] Paget 1874: 128, also states that the Mujahidin were holding swords in hands and attacking the English troops.

[101] Ganj-i-Shahidan is the name of the graveyard of the martyrs of the Ambela war. It is located near the Government girls school of Ambela on the right side of the road coming from the Ambela junction to Swat (figs. 04 & 04 a).

[102] Of these officers, one was Lieutenant Alexander of the 23rd Regiment of Pioneer (Paget 1874: 128).

platoons also killed. The enemy had firmly occupied Ambela and its surroundings. Someone said that the Shahzada is also martyred but when the enemy evacuated the valley at the evening time, then he appeared safely. At the evening, all the Mujahidin who came from far away were found dead.[103]

16. The Request of the Commissioner for reconciliation [folios 123-130]

Soon after this bloody contest, the Commissioner Hu James[104] sent a Molvi to the Sahib with a message that Mujahidin are defeated several times and instead of more wars, the English officers want to destroy Malka and terminate the war. For this purpose, two platoons of the British force would go to Malka with some of their cavalry and few elders of the Bunerwal. The Sahib first refused, but on the instigation of the Akozai and other Bunerwals, he consented for the reconciliation, and sent Bahadur of the Ismailzai to Hu James for discussion. Meanwhile, the burial of some of the martyrs took place in the *Ganj Shahidan*, and the others on the top of the Sangar.

Bahadur came back from the English camp and informed the Sahib about the delegation of the Bunerwal met with Hu James last night for ending the war. The Shahzada and the people of Buner then started negotiation on this sensitive situation, while some of the Mujahidin were patrolling on the Sangar and casting their eyes on the movement of the enemy. From one of their positions, they loudly reciting *Subhanallah* (prays be to Allah) and form the other as *Alahmadullilah* (Thanks Allah), while in response to that, the other group used to recite loudly *bayarhamakumullah* (with the mercy of Allah) and from another place by saying *beyadikumullah* (everything is in the hands of Allah).

When the terms of reconciliation unanimously agreed, then the Shahzada dispatched a letter to the chiefs of the Utmanzai for the

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[103] They were certainly the Hindustani Mujahidin since the statement of Paget 1874: 128, reveals that among the two hundred dead, 40 were the Hindustanis.
[104] Major Hugh James, the civil Commissioner of Peshawar who weekend the alliance of Mujahidin through intrigues (see Paget 1874: 121).

appreciation of their services, and another to his closed relative Sayyid Najeeb for the dispersing the tribes from Malka, and ensuring the security of his uncle Sayyid Umran. It was also stated that the goods, which are housed in the cave of the mountain should be protected[105], because the English force will proceed to Malka very soon. The Sahib facilitated the Mujahidin by giving the hand of their Amir to Hashim Ali of Chagharzai, with the instruction to take care of them in the village of Budhal[106]. The Amir of Mujahidin was pleased with this decision and secretly informed Molvi Fayaz Ali of Asmast about the situation.[107] The Sayyid family and the Mujahidin of Malka then shifted to Budhal before the advance of the *Firangi* force.

17. The fate of Malka [folios 130-142]

The British force spent two nights in Ambela and then started for the destruction of Malka with the assistance of the chiefs of Bunerwals. The force was consisting of two platoons and carrying their cannons on two elephants. They reached to Malka and secured the area. The houses of the village were oiled and burned, from which smoke was rising in the air. The night was also spent there in strict security. The people of Amazai were present at the occasion, and saw the valley in blue flames. Alas, the Muslim subdued and the infidels won the battle because of the treachery of the people of Buner who sold their faith to the aliens, and flamed Malka[108]. On the next day, the British force reached to Surkawai. The Commissioner sent a message to the Sahib that his forces are leaving the area today, but no more turbulence should be reported on this frontier otherwise, the forces would again interrupt in the maters. However, it was mere exaggeration of the Commissioner and in fact the war of Ambela has broken the backbone of the British forces. Most of the *Firangi* officers and

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[105] No detail of such concealed goods of the cave is available.

[106] Budhal is the village in the Chagharzai valley of Buner.

[107] Perhaps the Asmas or Asmast camp of the Hindustani Mujahidin was already established in the Black mountains, the present Tor Ghar district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. See 9a & 09a

[108] See Also Adye 1867: 90.

constables have slaughtered on that Sangar, which has now earned the name of *Qatal Ghar*[109].

The Sahib was staying at Ambela in the company of Subbat Khan and Sher Dil Khan Kacho Khel, and the Molvi and Shahzada. The retreat of the the British forces was soon sighted by the Akozai from *Ashyana-i-Murgh.*[110] With a proclamation, every Khel rushed to the Kotal of the Sahib with salutation. They were consisting of the people from Badakhshan, Qandahar, Khurasan and Samarqand, Balkh, Bukhara and Iran, Rome, Turkey and Tajikistan[111], and Khybari from Khyber, and people from Kashghar.

Now the time had come for the leaving of the Sahib via Karakar to his own area. On his advice, the place of his stay at the Kotal was converted into a *Khanqa* (learning institution) and a *Hujra* (resting place) for the benefits of the people. Soon this *hujra* became a bright treasure of knowledge and learning[112]. The Sahib and his companions decided to go to the shrine of Pir Baba via Daggar and to stay there for a night. A saddled Mare was presented to the Sahib for this journey. He descended from the Kotal and left the place in the grief of separation. From here, the party proceeded to the shrine of Pir Baba, with the recitation of *darood* and prayers, and then moved to Juwar for onwards journey to Saidu Sharif. When he stepped at Saidu Sharif, the darkness converted into bright day and the people called *azan* due to pleasure. The path was enlightening with torches while he was proceeding in the company of the Molvi and Shahzada.

The Shahzada appreciated the services of the Sahib and the hardship he bore in the war. The Molvi said that he is an emigrant from Hindustan with few friends, yet he assured the Sahib of every possible assistance in the time of need. He also stated that as there is no place for him in Malaka, therefore he and his companions are going to Budhal with

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[109] The name of Qatal Garh or place of slaughter, is still fresh in the memory of the people of Buner and Swat

[110] The Eagle's Nest Piquet of the British force

[111] These people are recorded as Badakhshanan, Qandharyan, Khurasanyan, Samarqandyan, Balkh wa Bukhara, az Iran wa Rome, az Turk wa az Tajak in our MS

[112] A concrete mosque was constructed on this place during the tenure of the Swat state, which is still known as the mosque of Babaji Kandao (see figs. 05 & 05a)

the kindness of the worthy Sahib. With this statement, the discussion ended from both sides with a salutation. And it is now *Hazar wa do sad wa hashtad sal (*1280A.H/ AD 1863) when this *Durr-i- Maq*āl, was versified by Mirza Abdul Haq, due to the bestowing and prayers of the Sahib, who is the respected saint and bright star of this period and resides in Saidu Shahrif[113](figs. 08 & 08a)

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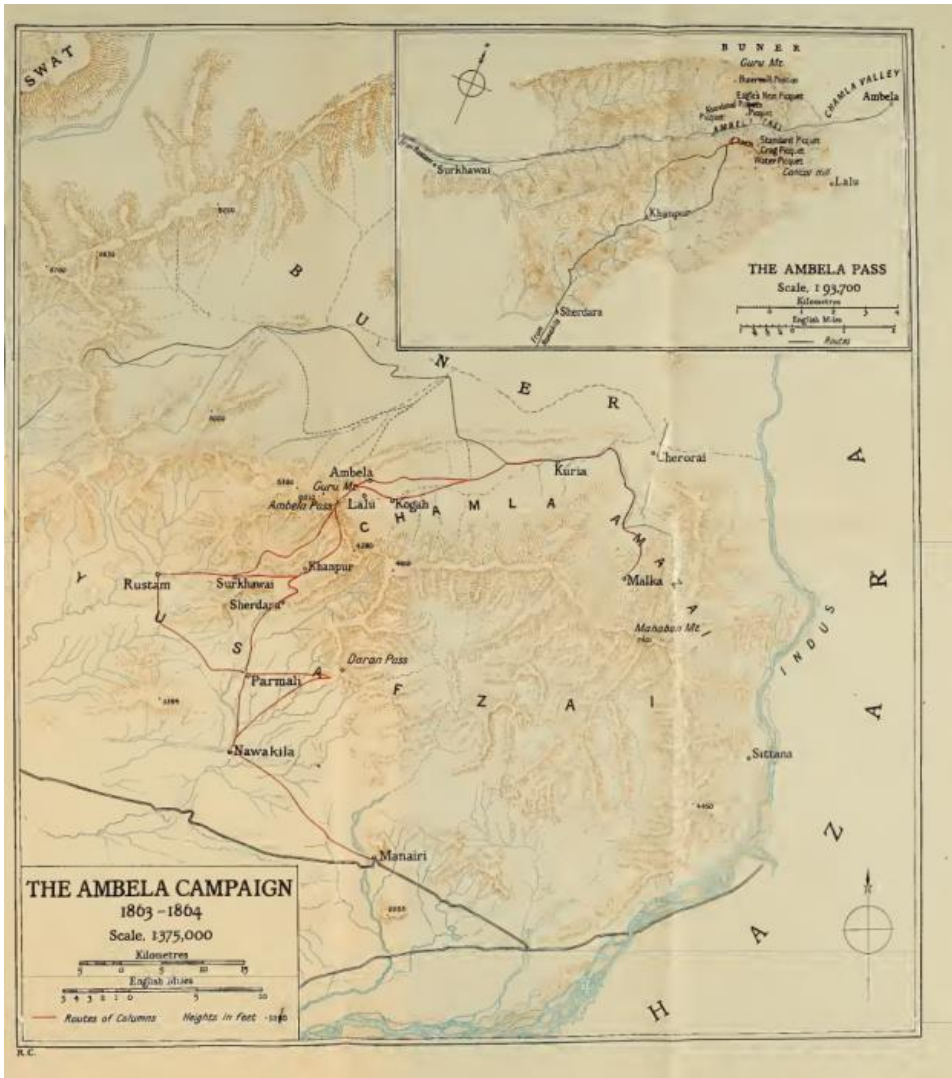
Fig. 01 - Map of the route followed by the British force from Nawekaly to Ambela: (Taken from "Maps and Plans illustrating Fortiscue's History of the British Army, Vol. XIII").
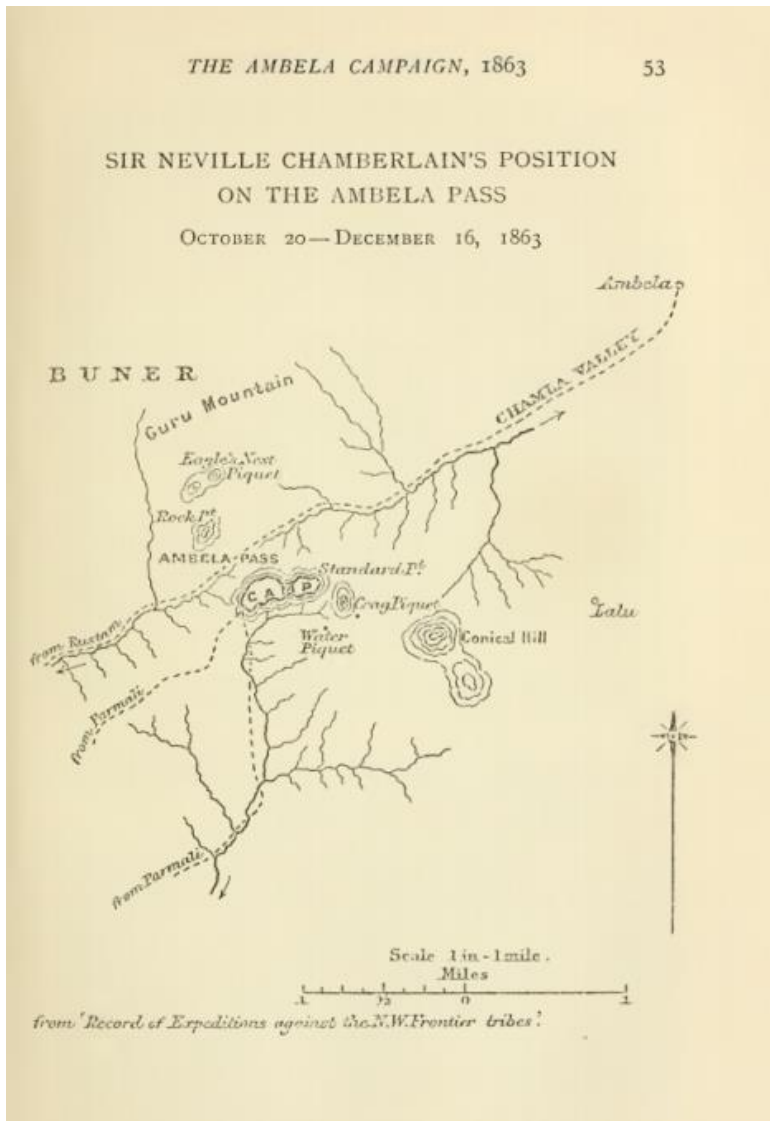
Fig. 01a - Skitch showing the Surkawi Route from Rustam to Ambela, and the location of Eagle's Nest and Crag Piquet of the British force (Taken from Neville 1912: 53).

Fig. 02 - Pencil sketch by John Adye, showing the Crag Piquet of the British camp [*the Sangar and Qatal ghar of our MS*] and the scene of battle at the conical hill of Lalu (Taken from Robert 1901).

Fig. 02a - Sketch showing the Crag Piquet, the conical hill of Lalu and the plain of Ambela below (Taken from Adye 1895).

Fig. 03 - Ambela: The Crag Piquet/ *Qatal Garh,* the conical hill of Lalu, and traces of the old road.

Fig.03a - Ambela pass: The Crag Piquet (opposite the Eagle's Nest) and the conical hill of Lalu at the background.

Fig. 03b - Surkawai: View of the Kotal of Ambela separating the mount Lalu from mount Ghuru at the left.

Fig. 03c - Surkawai: The Kotal of Ambela, and mount Ghuru to the left.

Fig. 03d - Surkawai: A view of the Eagle's Nest Piquet on Mount Ghuru.

Fig. 03e - Surkawai: A view of the Eagle's Nest piquet from the Crag Piquet.

Fig. 04 - Chamla, the *Ganj-e-Shahidan* or the graveyard of the Martyres of Ambela war. A view from the Southern side.

Fig.04a - *Ganj-e-Shahidan*: A view from the Northern side.

Fig. 05 - Buner: The Mosque of Babaji Kandao constructed on the Kotal of the Sahib Saidu Sharif. A view from the West.

Fig. 05a - Babaji Kandao Mosque and the Police post. A view from the Chamla side

Fig. 06 - Malka: The renovated houses of Hindustani Mujahidin.

Fig. 06a - Malka: Remains of the horse stable of Hindustani Mujahidin.
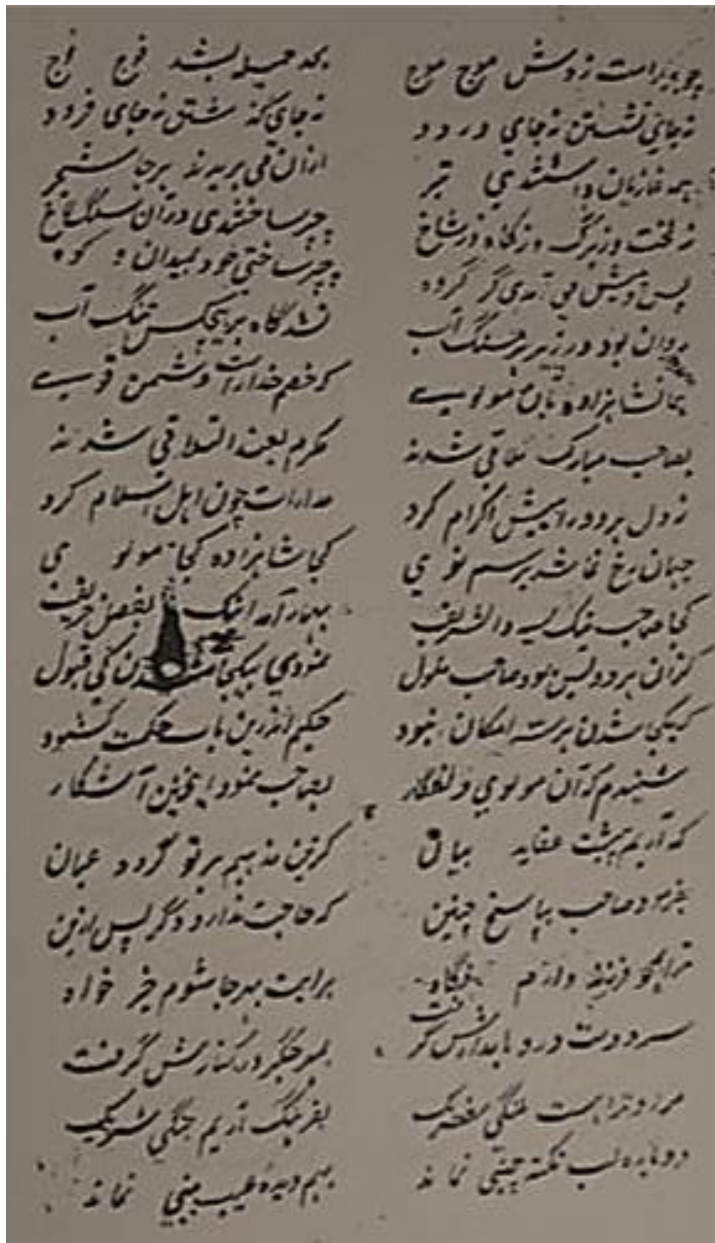
Fig. 07 - Folio No.52 of the MS mentioning the meeting of the Sahib of Saidu Sharif with Shazada Mubark Shah and Molvi Abdullah for discussing the religious doctrines.

Fig. 07a. - Folio No. 52a of the MS showing the continuation of the meeting of Sahib Saidu Sharif with the Shahzada and Molvi.
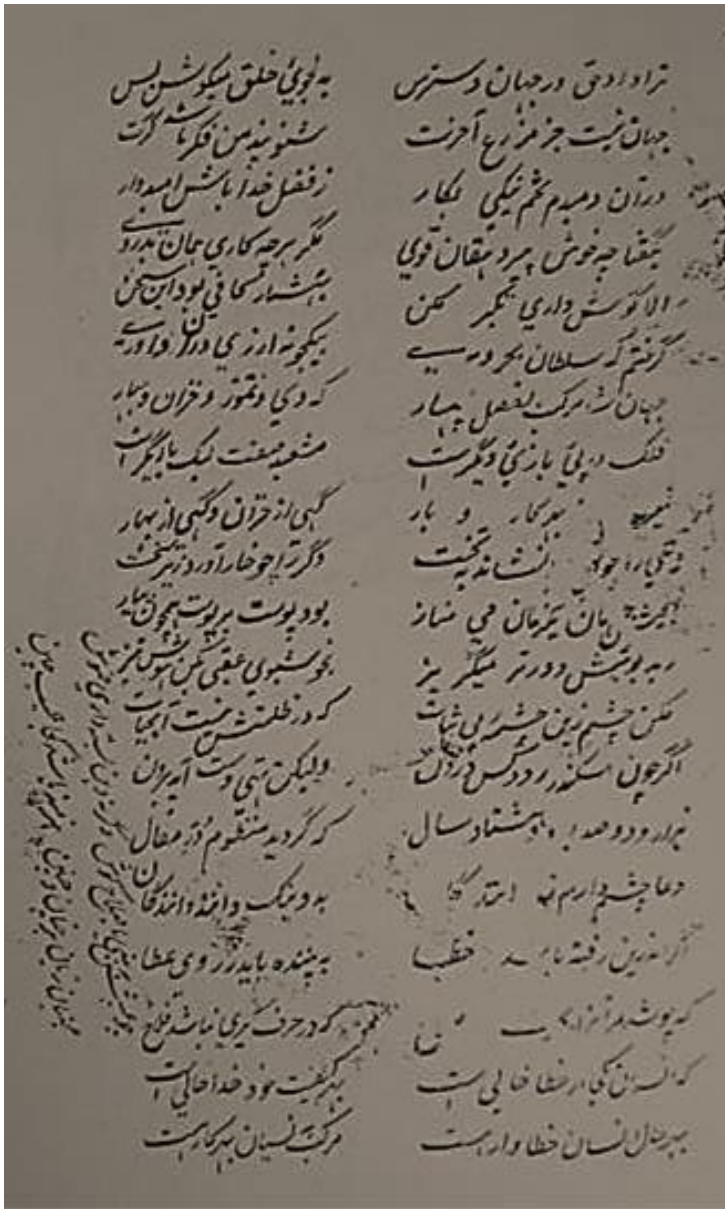
Fig. 08 - Folio No. 142 showing the name of the MS and date of compilation in couplet No. 15.
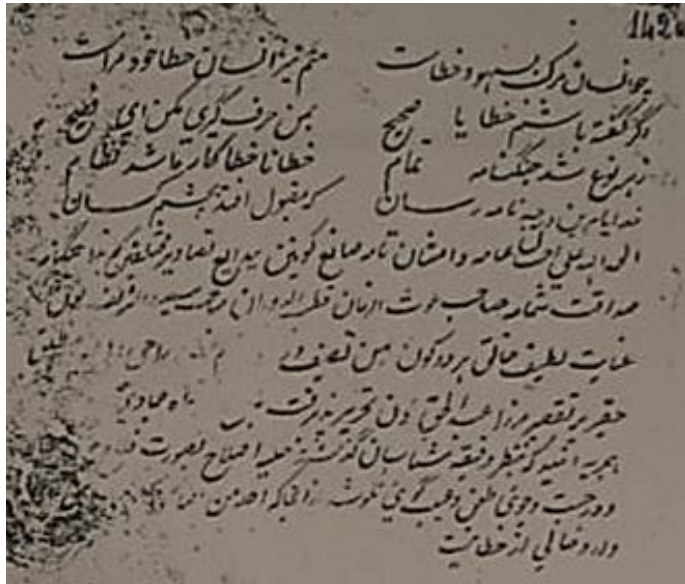
Fig. 08a - The last folio of the MS showing the name of the scribe and titles of the Sahib Saidu Sharif.

Fig. 09 - View of the Asmast/rock shelter of Mujahidin village in district Tor Ghar.

Fig. 09a - Interior view of the Asmast of Mujahidin village.

Fig. 10 - Small cannon supposedly used in the Ambela War.

Fig. 10a - Cannon ball and bombshells from Asmast.

Fig11 - Map showing the location of different area mention in the MS.

Cultural Commodification and Tourism in Kalash Valley: A Case Study of Bumburet Village, District Chitral

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Abstract

Cultural commodification is a process in which cultural items and artifacts such as cultural dresses, customs, rituals, and expressions are brought to the market and sold to the tourists for money. Cultural tourism is one of the key players in the commodification of tangible and intangible cultural artifacts in the market. Through a qualitative research strategy, this paper examines cultural commodification and cultural tourism in Kalash Valley. The data were collected through in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions for this study, and the respondents were sampled using convenient sampling, purposive sampling, and simple random sampling techniques. Thematic analysis was used for generating themes using framework analysis. Through thematic analysis of data with a descriptive case study, this paper shows us the impact of cultural tourism and cultural commodification in Kalash valley in district Chitral Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. The study shows that cultural commodification and cultural tourism have uneven benefits for the stakeholders involved in it by benefiting the privileged ones while exploiting the underprivileged and the poor section of the society.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, Commodification, Kalash valley.

1. Introduction

The high mass consumption capitalist society has commodified every aspect of the human way of life whether it is the tangible aspect such as clothes and intangible aspect such as expressions. Marx some 150 years ago predicted that this capitalist society will commodify every aspect of human life. Marx (1867 Ed. 1951) also observed that raw materials, labor, and manufactured products were commercialized and commodified in the market which helped the traders and merchants to make a fetish out of commodities. Wright (2000) states that in the 1950s, lifestyle and art were commodified and commercialized and sold in the market for price due to

mass consumer culture. Cultural commodification helps in the marketing and selling of cultural items and artifacts of indigenous people in society. According to Greenwood (1979) when the behaviors, practices, customs, rituals, and expressions of indigenous local people are marketed and sold to the tourists it is called cultural commodification. When these rituals, expressions, practices, and behaviors are sold in the market for the price they lose their authenticity and become meaningless to their local people. Cultural tourism helps the commodification process and has its impacts on the economy and social life of the society. According to Tillotson (1988), cultural tourism in Britain contributes positively helping in the conservation of traditional heritage sites and boosting the economy. Whereas in India tourism has more negative effects on the heritage sites due to short term profits rather than long term planning and investments. Rahman (2012) Cultural tourism impacts the social life of the country and also it boosts and develops the economy of the country. Stebbins (1996) cultural tourism takes place due to the interests of tourists to explore and participate in new and deep cultural artifacts which may be tangible and intangible such as emotional, intellectual, psychological, or maybe aesthetic. Pigliasco (2010) states that the commodification helped the Fijian people to portray their fire walking traditional ceremony across their country which strengthened their social capital and they gained more respect for their culture. Whereas on the other hand according to Ziolkowski (2004) the process of cultural commodification created pathologies and rigidities among the subsystems of the country. According to Srisontisuk (2002), cultural commodification and tourism helped the Chiang Khan district in Thailand to sell their cultural artifacts to other parts of the world which helped to boost their economy.

According to Hussain (2010) in the mountains of the beautiful district of Chitral about 3000 or more Kalash people live who are different from the majority of Muslims of the district. These Kalash people have blue-eyed and are blond-haired and are completely anomaly in the country. Their ethnic origins are unknown but according to the Kalash people they belong to the family of Alexandre the Greats army. They follow multiple gods, are polytheists, and follow completely different folklore as compared to the neighboring Muslim majority. Hussain (2010) further states that the Kalash people are the indigenous people of the area and are one of the first people who came to this part of the country. In the past, these people were in majority in this area and according to them, they have remained in power for many years. According to Snoy (2008)36),

today those Kalash who have not become Muslims live in three remote valleys of southwestern Chitral i.e. Birir, Bumburet, and Rumbur. Moreover, he states that to the south of Urtsun valley, there is another group of Kalash, who still live in the closed settlement, speak their language, but are completely Islamicized. On their language, Snoy (2008:36) argues that they have their language, known as Kalashamun, a part of broader family of Dardic languages, which is spoken in each of the four valleys in different dialects.

Every year thousands of foreign and local tourists visit the Kalash valley to explore the unique culture of the Kalash people in the district Chitral in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This study studies the consumption of the tangible and intangible Kalash cultural items by the tourists and the impact of cultural tourism on the indigenous people of the Kalash valley, particularly the people of Bumburet village. There is a debate among scholars regarding cultural commodification and cultural tourism and their impacts on the indigenous local communities. According to some scholars, cultural commodification and cultural tourism help to improve the quality of life of the local individuals by enabling them to sell their cultural and traditional products to the tourists to earn their income whereas some scholar argues that cultural commodification and cultural tourism negatively impacts local indigenous people through exposing those parts of the culture which are considered to be sacred and religious to the indigenous people. There is a shortage of literature regarding cultural commodification and cultural tourism in Pakistan particularly regarding Kalash people and their indigenous culture. So in this paper, we focused our study to examine the process of cultural commodification and cultural tourism in Kalash valley. In the light of the above discussion we have narrowed down our research topic to Cultural Commodification and Cultural Tourism in Kalash Valley: A Case Study of Bumburet Village, District Chitral and operationalized our research topic into the following research questions: What are the impacts of cultural tourism and cultural commodification? What are the risks and opportunities in instrumentalizing culture as economic good or resource?

2. Power, culture, and inequality: a review of literature

According to Marx (Ed. 1951), people use culture to legitimize the class formation within a society due to economic conditions and inequalities.

Through false consciousness, culture acts as an instrument to inculcate social divisions and class formation in the minds of the people in the society as natural. Culture also facilitates the dominant class to keep the marginalized people away from resistance against them through the concept of ideology. Culture helps in naturalizing the nature of exploitative systems in the minds of the people by considering it as a natural thing so that protest may not occur against this inequality system of social class. Marx and Engles pointed out by analyzing the factors of production, the relationship between the labor and the product, and the surplus that culture helps to facilitate this exploitative system to move forward. This socially divided system helps to form such a culture in which the dominant people become able to justify that this inequality is natural. In this way, the structure of society is influenced by the dominant class. This structure further creates the working class and the capitalist classes and the marginalized class then considers this exploitation as natural and doesn't think they are exploited. According to the Marxist school of thought ideology and false consciousness are facilitated by culture and culture further is determined by the social structure of the people in the society.

3. Cultural industries

According to Adorno (2001), cultural industries help to promote culture through mass media upon the masses. This imposition functions in such a way that masses don't recognize its imposition upon them through centralized governments in the capitalist society. Individuals don't determine culture for themselves rather cultural industries determine culture for the individual through capitalist mode of production and consumption by building consumer culture in the society. The modern capitalist society inculcates false needs in peoples' minds and shapes their preferences and tastes. The goods produced in capitalist societies are manufactured according to a plan through technology and also economic and administrative interventions.

4. Cultural commodification

The local community participation in cultural industry facilitates them to commodify their cultural products and benefits them in sustaining these cultural items or products (Bunten, 2008). While doing so there is always

a risk to lose those cultural items or traditions which the local communities previously protected from the process of commodification. The tourism industry workers have to keep a balance between the requirements of the tourists and the local knowledge about these products as of the local people which plays a key role in the sale of these cultural products. In Poland, the process of commodification resulted in creating tensions and pathologies between the subsystems of the society which further caused market imbalance and inefficient democracy (Ziolkowski,2004). The cultural commodification of the local customs of the indigenous people has hurt their feelings which resulted in conflicts and the tourist spot was closed. Market forces have increased cultural commodification but these forces faced resistance from the local people in sharing their cultural items with them. Cultural commodification has resulted in the objectification of the local cultural heritage (Tabani, 2017). Cultural commodification pollutes and results in losing the authenticity of the previously untouched ethnic cultures. Local people try to develop a phony folk culture [1]to attract tourists which negatively affects the authenticity of the indigenous local culture (Yang, 2009). Cultural commodification impacts the stakeholders unevenly by benefiting the privileged ones more whereas adversely affecting the poor or marginalized section of the society. These uneven results make the capitalist class penetrate more the local culture through the consumption of various cultural items according to their taste and terms. In this way the local people device their cultural items according to the tourists in the market (Jackson, 1999).

5. Cultural Tourism

Over a few decades, the production of cultural tourism in European countries increased dramatically due to more heritage sites in these countries. The increase in education level and income level has fostered the growth of cultural tourism in these countries (Richards, 1996). Through cultural industry by promoting tangible cultural artifacts such as clothes and intangible cultural artifacts such as rituals, customs, etc. the local people can be benefited (Mousavi, 2016). Cultural tourism comprises every aspect of human life therefore every aspect of tourism is called

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[1] Phony folk culture means artificially constructed cultural behaviors to attract tourists for financial gains

cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is the temporary and brief movement of people to new places, performing their activities, and staying there for a short period. According to Tiwari (2014) tourism impacts the local people both positively as well as negatively. In a positive sense, the local people earn by selling their cultural products, lands, building but on the other hand, it impacts the local people negatively by pushing them to work in those buildings and lands which were once their possessions.

6. Methodology

A qualitative research strategy was adopted for this study as this study deals with the interpretation and understanding of cultural commodification and cultural tourism. A descriptive case study research design was used for the study keeping in view the research questions of the study. A descriptive case study was used as it facilitates the researchers to acquire accurately a particular characteristic of the group or process which is under study. It also determines the frequency of events or features that occur within a population. The techniques which are used to collect data are called research methods. Unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, rapport building, and participant observations were used to collect data from the respondents. Convenient sampling, purposive sampling, and stratified random sampling were used to collect data from various units of data collection UDCs. A total of 50 interviews were taken from the respondents of which 20 in-depth interviews were taken from UDC 1 (Kalash people), 25 semi-structured interviews were taken from UDC 3 (Tourists and shopkeepers), 5 in-depth interviews were taken from UDC 5 (Owner and personals of cultural institutions) whereas 2 focus group discussions were taken from the UDC 1 (Kalash people). The data collected through these UDCs were analyzed using thematic analysis and the tool used for the analysis was framework analysis. All the six steps involved in the thematic analysis were followed in generating themes.

7. Privacy breaching, disturbance, and pollution: impacts of cultural tourism

According to the Kalash people they face the problem of privacy breaching, disturbances, and pollution when huge no of tourists come to the area. The design of the houses of the Kalash people is different from

the design of Muslim houses in the Chitral district and their house doesn't have a boundary wall around them. Due to the lack of boundary wall, anyone can go inside of their houses which causes the problem of secrecy. A respondent said that;

> *"We face some problems as some people come directly to our houses without asking ourselves. We have very small houses where we live collectively and we face secrecy problems. They take pictures whenever they see us take selfies and disturb us. we didn't wear dupatta but due to the tourists, we wear them to avoid photographs by them. In this way to avoid these things, we are compelled to cover our face and upper part of our body."*

The Kalash people are very much disturbed by the irresponsible behavior of the tourists which causes the problem of disturbance, pollution, and secrecy issues for the local community not respecting local norms and traditions. Another respondent said that;

> *"We are very much disturbed by these tourists and their behaviors. Our houses don't have any boundary walls due to which they come directly insight our houses without any permission. We have freedom in our religion but it doesn't mean that we are free for everyone, some of us get benefits by promoting these religious activities for money but a majority of us are disturbed."*

As the Kalash people rely on subsistence farming and women usually work in the field performing agricultural works the tourists also disturb their everyday field works in the field by going there to meet them and for the sake of taking photographs of them. One of the respondents said that;

> *"Our females cannot go to the fields due to these tourists because the tourists follow them whenever they see women and try to take pictures and try to talk to them. With all these things our daily work is disturbed in the fields we heavily rely on these subsistence crops for our survival."*

So the Kalash people instead of gaining benefits from the tourists face the problems of secrecy, disturbance, and pollution. According to them some

tourists also try to flirt with women and girls. Another respondent said that;

> *"They try to talk to our daughters and try to flirt with them. If they come and sit at any place and see our culture like good people we don't have any problem with them but if they come and try to flirt with us then this is not acceptable to us."*

8. Violation of sacred places and unlawfulness

Kalash culture and religion are based on the concept of purity and impurity. In Kalash culture, women are associated with impurity and there are certain religious places where women cannot go and vice versa there are places where men cannot such as the Bashaleni [2]where men are not allowed to go. According to them when these principles are violated then there come disasters in the village in the form of floods, earthquakes, etc. Due to a high number of tourists in the area then these sacred places are violated which is a great concern for the local people. A respondent said that;

> *"They should know about our culture before they come because our culture is based on the concept of purity and impurity and when these are violated then there is a cultural and religious loss for us. There is Bashaleni where men are not allowed and when men go there will be a violation and similarly, there are alters where women are strictly prohibited but the tourist women go there which causes issues for us."*

The tourists also visit their religious places such as altars, temples, and graveyards violate their norms and customs and don't respect their rituals. Another respondent showed his concern and said that;

> *"Our tangible cultural artifacts such as graveyards, alters and temples are treated as an ordinary thing and people don't respect them. For example, a medical student came here and he lived inside the graveyard alongside the skeleton of someone in an open coffin. People mix our tangible items and disturb them they should not touch them."*

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[2] A house where Kalasha people keep their women during the last stages of pregnancy and menstruation.

The concept of purity and impurity is not only for the local Kalash people but for all the women whether they are a tourist or local people. But the tourist women visit their sacred places which hurts the sentiments of the local people. One of the respondents said that;

> *"Besides that, we have such religious sacred places where women are not allowed to go but the tourist women go to these places due to which the secrecy is not maintained and it causes impurity to the places and we get difficulties. We also go to other places in the country but don't hurt any local people similarly people should not harm us."*

9. Perceived as Kafir[3] or exotic

According to the Kalash people, most of the tourists come there with a perception that these people are non-believers, and there will be more freedom in the valley for them. A respondent said that;

> *"When people come here they come here with their concept of perceiving us Kafir or non-believers and they believe that there are no rules and regulations here and they can do anything they want and they consider us ignorant and they believe that there is no concept of good or bad in the community. By considering us non-believer or Kafir who ever come here they preaching us and they try to become God for us.*" means

According to them most of the people come to the valley not for traveling but they go there with a negative concept. They consider it as a place where they can get women and wine and they can enjoy. Because of this perception, they treat the women as free and vulgar which is wrong. One of the respondents said that;

> *"During Eid days I was sitting here in front of my guest house with my colleagues one old man with a bear came in without any*

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[3] Literally "Kafir" is a person who refuses to agree, or from Islamic prespective this term refers to as a non-believer, meaning a person who does not believe in the oneness of God.

> *permission and said to me to talk to him. I said to him uncle I call you uncle because you are my father's age and I am amazed how are you talking to me in front of my colleagues. These are my colleagues and I know them who are you I don't know you and then you are trying to flirt shame on you. We are very much disturbed by these tourists and their behaviors."*

According to them, there are good and bad people in every culture. Similarly, there are also bad people in Kalash culture as well who are involved in alcohol production and other immoral activities. One cannot judge the entire culture based on these people. A respondent said that;

> *"Due to some people who are engaged in alcohol producing and taking people to their houses the rest of the community is disgraced and faces problems. They use alcohol as a means of income for them and the outsiders go to these houses. The tourists who come here consider that all the Kalash people are like them and they believe that they can go to every Kalash house. Due to all these things the whole Kalash community faces problems."*

People are misguided that there are free wines and women in Kalash valley and they come in the valley having this concept in their mind about them. Most of the guides are available to the local tourists are non-Kalash guides who don't or have little knowledge about the Kalash people and they miss guiding the local tourists coming from different parts of the country. Another respondent said that;

> *"Tourists are misguided and they come with negative thoughts. These are done by no other than our neighbors but when the tourists come here and see the reality then they come to us say sorry to us".*

10. Social pressure and change in cultural activities

Kalash culture and religion are based on oral traditions and customs, and they don't have any religious book. These people are only living in three small valleys surrounded by a non-Kalash community. They are the endangered tribes and their number is decreasing with time. These people

due to social pressure have amended their culture and religion to cope with it. One of the respondents said;

> *"Many cultural rituals have been cut off in the past and many cultural rituals are also being cut off nowadays. This is risky for the concept of our culture as Kalash culture is a whole way of life. If the half code of conduct is lost, then the remaining code of conduct will seem weird and you will try to leave the remaining part quickly. If the whole way of life is not present and half of the ingredients of the way of life are missing then it will become difficult to understand it and in this way, the remaining way of life will make you nervous you will ultimately say quit it yaar(friend). This is the present situation of our culture. If in future steps are not taken, then the situation will be worse for our culture."*

The Kalash people have been in political power in the region in the past and according to them they had their culture and religion in documented form but after their rule ended they lost their documented material because they remained a slave for 800 years. According to Kalash people, their number is decreasing whereas the surrounding community is increasing day by day. One of the respondents said that;

> *"Due to some social pressures, there are minor changes made to our culture. Our surrounding community is growing day by day whereas we are decreasing and they exert pressure on us such as in school there is pressure, in the market, there is a pressure whenever you go you have to undergo social pressure. It is a big challenge for us to maintain our culture under this social pressure and if we have maintained it which we have then it is a big deal."*

11. Religious rituals "Not for Sale"

Kalash culture and religion are full of cultural and religious rituals which take place throughout the year based on four seasons. According to them these rituals which they perform during their festivals are basically for them. As these are religious and are for the specific people of the valley therefore they cannot be performed at other places than their sacred places. One of the respondents said that;

> *"Our rituals and cultural dances are not for stage performance there should not be stage performance here and also in some other place. If you want to see our dance, then come here at the festival time and see it. These dances are not for you these are for us we don't like to use us and perform these at other places. When these less educated or uneducated people perform dances somewhere else then they are exposed to other threats. This will cause damage to our religion or culture."*

Similarly, another respondent said that;

> *"We don't celebrate our festivals for the tourists we don't invite them. They come their own we have our religious festivals we are not happy from the tourists they can come and go but they should respect our religion and culture. Our festivals are decreasing due to tourism and security reason. We are not in favor of advertising our religious rituals."*

According to the Kalash people, the stage performance of their culture poses a great threat to their culture and they feel difficulty and uneasy when there are many people during their cultural and religious festivals. Another respondent said that;

> *"The cultural dances performed in front of outsiders or other people pose a great threat to our culture and religion. Because people don't like to see their families dancing in front of other people in such great numbers with everyone trying to get a picture with them, trying to flirt with them. Due to this thing, people are not allowing their females to participate in our cultural and religious festivals which is a great threat for our culture to survive."*

Tabani (2017) revealed that the commodification of the customs of the local people has hurt their sentiments. As a result, the tourist spot of the volcano was closed for the tourists which resulted in several conflicts for almost nine months. The locals concluded that their customs do not need money. Similar nature of tensions was also evident in the Kalash Valley

among the local people regarding the impacts of cultural commodification and cultural tourism in the area.

12. Lack of communal economic benefits

The benefits of the tourists and tourism are mostly obtained by the outsiders in the form of having hotels and transport vehicles. The Kalash community has only four hotels here whereas the other 90% of hotels are owned by the outside community similar position is in transport. Benefits are obtained by outsiders mainly whereas the locals are left with the negative consequences only. Those drivers who take the tourist to the village negatively brief them about the Kalash people. One of the respondents said that;

> "*We Kalash people don't have benefits from them the benefits are to the Kho people [4]or the Muslim people.*"

Economic benefits are obtained by the people engaged in business activities like hoteling and restaurants and also the local shopkeepers. But maximum benefits are obtained by the outsiders and the government. Only 20% of people get benefits while the rest of the 80% of people remain disadvantaged rather they get difficulties and problems. A respondent said that;

> "*There are benefits when some big people come in the valley. Nowadays there is money involved in Chelim Josht, Chitermas and Uchal [5]and have separate funds for all these. Those people who are involved and are in front get benefits and get money whereas the poor people are not considered. Actually, this money is for the whole community but who cares for the poor people nobody cares. The leaders who are in front take benefits whereas the majority of the benefits go for the Muslims because a majority of the hotels are of Muslims, they have motors. Benefits are obtained by them what benefits we obtain nothing. But our neighbors are jealous with us due to these tourists we are not asking them to come here for us*

[4] Kho people are the Muslim majority people living in district Chitral, Pakistan
[5] Chilem Josht, Chittermas, and Uchal are the cultural and religious festivals of the Kalash community.

they come on their own and if they come then you people obtain the benefits.”

The economic benefits are obtained by those who are engaged in business or who are involved in the management of these festivals which take place in the valley while a majority of the Kalash community remain less benefited.

Jackson (1999) argued that the process of cultural commodification does not take place evenly in society. Those people who are advantaged and possess capital can afford the process of commodification while for the disadvantaged or the poor people this process has negative effects. This process of cultural commodification enables the capitalists and outsiders to penetrate the local cultures on their own terms by consuming different cultural products. In this way, the tourists assert their power over the locals by consuming their culture. Similarly, the capitalist class in the Kalash valley exploits the local Kalash people by penetrating deep into their culture and getting maximum benefits through the sale of the tangible and intangible cultural products of the Kalash community.

13. Lack of performativity of religious rituals as a result of religio-cultural tourism

Kalash culture is full of religious and cultural rituals which take place throughout a calendar year but according to the Kalash people, the performing of their cultural rituals has decreased over the last three decades due to various reasons. These reasons include security situations, cross-border threats, increase in non-community members, converting of Kalash people, modernization, poverty, etc. A resident said that;

> *“People can come in huge number we don't have any problem if they follow the roles and be responsible but if they show irresponsibility as they do these days our people don't send their families to perform our cultural festivals. Along with our religious rituals, they start to dance or follow us they don't understand that we are performing a religious ritual.”*

A huge number of tourists in the valley compels the local population to abandon their females to participate in their festivals which hurt their

religious sentiments and also cause loss to their culture. Another respondent said that;

> *"In the past, there were fewer people in our valleys and there were also fewer outsiders due to which we were relaxed to perform our cultural and religious rituals and there was full participation but now there are thousands of individuals who come here and in their presence, it becomes difficult to participate in our festivals and we limit our self."*

Similarly, another respondent said that;

> *"People come here in huge no and they come to talk to us directly for which our husbands and brothers and fathers instead of telling them they became angry upon us and limit our participation in these festivals."*

14. Objectification of culture

The presence of a significant number of tourists and their irresponsible behavior makes the Kalash people feel like objects when they are performing rituals in their festival. People treat them as objects gazing at them as if they were not from this planet. This behavior of the tourists has compelled the Kalash to participate less in their cultural and religious rituals. A respondent said that;

> *"We don't feel easy to carry our religious rituals in the presence of other people looking at you and sometimes they try to mix with us. You are encircled in a ring and are gazed at by many people like an object we condemn this before and we will condemn this in the future as well. The irresponsible behavior of tourists and people discourages us to perform our cultural rituals which ultimately damage our religion and culture."*

Similarly, another respondent said that;

> *"In Chelim Joshi festival we make noises and sing and dance which is a religious ritual it is not done for entertainment purpose*

> *whereas it is believed by the outsiders that everyone can go there and take the hand of women and marry her it is not like that and journalists also show this in the print and electronic media which ultimately build a narrative about us in the minds of the people that there can be everyone and we can marry them and they come here with that frame of mind. Print media especially those who write in Urdu are propagating negatively about our community.*"

It is also evident from the study of Tillotson (1988) that cultural tourism benefits economies by conserving traditional tourist sites and making them museums and hotels to attract tourists in the United Kingdom whereas the negative aspects of tourism were more prominent in India where there were known no conservation of the old traditional building sites and the tourists involved in the commodification were looking for short-term profits. It is also evident from the field that tourism in Kalash valley is based on the short-term profits motto and the stakeholders are not paying attention to long-term investment. Thus it also confirms the local people face the negative impacts of cultural tourism than its positive impacts.

15. Security reasons and decrease in cultural rituals

Kalash culture is full of cultural and religious rituals which take place continuously during a calendar year. But in the last few decades, the Kalash religious and cultural rituals have been shortened or decreased due to worse security situations in the nearby areas of Nuristan[6] Afghanistan. In the past, our cultural or religious rituals used to occur starting from July and they used to continue at the end of August but when the terrorist activities spread the adjacent region to us then these rituals were reduced and in this way, certain rituals were abolished or limited. A respondent said that;

> *"Due to security conditions, there is an adverse effect on our culture, for example, we had a festival called ragnet[7] which means dancing at night which was used to be performed in July and August. But now we don't perform this festival due to the fear that the situation may not become difficult for us because we have received threats from the terrorists across the borders. We are not*

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[6] Nuristan is the adjacent province of Afghanistan to the Kalash valley.
[7] Ragnet was a festival which was used to be performed in the past by Kalash people.

performing it anymore so when you do not perform it the future generations will not be able to know about it but we hope for the best. But if you don't let your offspring about your religion and culture then they will not know about it."

The Kalash community is surrounded by non-Kalash communities which are growing day by day whereas the Kalash people are decreasing due to various reasons. This increase in outsiders in the valley increases intolerance among the non- Kalash community regarding the various religious and cultural activities and their performance during the calendar year. The Kalash people have cut off their various rituals and now they are not performing them in the festivals. Another respondent said that;

> *"Our main festivals are the same as our ancestors performed them but some of our rituals are limited I remember when I was in fifth class our parents performed the ragnet festival as that time there was no terrorism here in the valley. There were no such issues of Taliban and also there were fewer outside people in the valley. But nowadays there are issues of security they say that there is this threat that threat etc. and also there are many tourists in our festivals due to which it becomes difficult to go there and perform."*

The Kalash people have been threatened in the past by the Taliban[8] from the cross border area of the Nuristan region which is part of Afghan province. They have taken the cattle and animals of the Kalash people and they have killed shepherds in the past. According to Kalash people in 2016, they have killed two shepherds from the Kalash community and took cattle with them.

16. Nostalgia and ritual performance

As compared to the past people are reluctant to allow their family members particularly women to participate in their cultural and religious festivals. According to them in the past, their cultural or religious rituals were being celebrated in a more relaxed way, and the whole community used to be part of the festivals but nowadays people are not allowing their

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[8] An extremist religious group of the Afghanistan region.

family members to participate in the festivals due to the huge no of outsiders. A respondent said that;

> *"In the past, all of our females used to take part in our religious rituals due to fewer tourists and were relaxed to perform our rituals. In the past, fewer people or no people were coming to our place and festivals and we had no issues of performing our festivals but nowadays due to fixing these festival days' huge no of visitors come due to which we come across difficulties in performing our rituals."*

Modernization has also impacted the Kalash cultural and religious rituals. People in this fast life are unable to take time for these festivals which takes place during a whole year. Young members of the community try to introduce new moves by watching television stars. Another respondent said;

> *"In the past, our dances were performed with great zeal but now women watch TV and less participate, and if they participate they perform like these Panjabi women in the television and try to introduce new things or moves. Our original dance is by rising our hands which we call bazum[9] but the young ones try to move their hands in a low direction. We used t avoid other people and dancing in front of them but now people dance for money. We were forced to perform in the past by the police personnel."*

Similarly, another respondent said that in the past we used to have our religious and cultural dances for the whole year but now we face fear because we are becoming less and less and also our culture is deteriorating and our festivals are vanishing (It may also be due to modern world where people have less time and people have other things to do).

Due to the commodification of cultural and religious rituals many Kalash men have limited the participation of their women in performing their rituals in front of many tourists. It is also evident from the study of Chhabra (2010) which showed that cultural commodification jeopardizes cultural traditions and social relationships. The host community uses cultural rituals and commodifies them to earn economic benefits.

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[9] The musical program of Kalash people.

17. Economic gains for some and losses for others

According to the local people the maximum benefits of tourism and development are obtained by the neighboring communities. Very small no of the local people get benefit and are those people who have some business or are involved in the management of their mega festivals which involve money. A respondent said that;

> *"Hotels are theirs, transport is theirs, fruits and vegetables are theirs, chickens are provided by them what benefits we are getting. They come here on our names but benefits are to the other people. "when huge no of tourists come here there will be change inside our community our women and young ones try to copy them try to be like them they sit like them move like them and this will change our behavior and change may occur. People buy all these dresses in the market. I don't sell rather I just make these things for our use only. People sell them for thousands of rupees whoever made them they get money but we are engaged with our own field works and don't have any time."*

For the Kalash people benefits are in the form of money earned by selling their cultural items whereas for the neighboring communities benefits are in the form of hotels, transport, and guide. So most of the benefits are obtained by the outside communities instead of the local community. A respondent said that;

> *"They come here and buy our items and we get the benefit not only us get the benefit rather it is good for the whole country Pakistan. We Kalash acts as an asset for the country as these people come here to see us. But not all of us get benefits some of us get benefits and they obtain money from the funds for the festivals whereas most of us are not involved and don't know about that money involved in the festivals. Few people here and some in the Chitral district take the money while giving little to some of our people as well. But overall you can say that something giving to us in some form."*

The majority of benefits are obtained by the hotel owners and the shopkeepers and also to the whole valley in the form of transport and guiding. It was evident from the field that the majority of economic benefits were obtained by a small number of both local and outside communities whereas the majority of the local Kalash people were obtaining nothing except negative benefits from the tourists. Jackson (1999) also argued that the process of cultural commodification does not take place evenly in society. Those people who are advantaged and possess capital can afford the process of commodification while for the disadvantaged or the poor people this process has negative effects. This process of cultural commodification enables the capitalists and outsiders to penetrate the local cultures on their terms by consuming different cultural products. In this way, the tourists assert their power over the locals by consuming their culture.

18. Economic benefits for capitalists

There are many benefits of tourists for the community and for the people who are engaged in shops, hotels, transport, and guidance. People get monetary benefits by engaging themselves in some activities. According to some of the Kalash, people tourism brings development for the whole community as there is no other source of livelihood opportunities in the valley. People sell their cultural items such as cultural dresses and other items and earn their living. A respondent said that;

> *"People get many benefits from tourists as you know our people are very weak financially and through these tourists, they manage to earn some financial benefits. People get many financial benefits by selling their handy crafts and other cultural products and then spending them for the education of their children in the past there used to be only one simple cap in our cultural dress but now due to modern world and availability of materials there are differently colored and designed and matching caps now available. I think it is good for us because to update our but should focus on our core values as well."*

The Kalash people perceive them as an asset for the whole county due to which national and international tourists are attracted to come to Pakistan

and leave here for months. Tourism also helps to generate economic activities in the valley during their main festivals which continue almost during the whole year. One of the locals said that;

> *"There are a lot of benefits not only for us but for the whole country. When people come here from different countries from Europe and other places then the whole country is benefited because didn't come directly to here they come in Islamabad and other cities and stays there in hotels and use transport to come here and in this way the whole country is benefited."*

Similarly, another respondent said that;

> *"There are many benefits of these tourists for us. When they come here every one of us gets benefits for example shopkeepers like me sell their things, people who have vehicles they get benefits for them, local guides earn some money and the whole Chitral gets benefits instead the whole country is benefited from the tourists."*

Things are sold and shopkeepers earn profit in this way there are benefits for them. People don't have enough land for the cultivations of crops and people earn their living by selling these products. Those who have vehicles, who are guided, and also those who have hotels make profits and earn their living. Whereas the majority of the locals remain marginalized and remain exploitative. A respondent said that;

> *"People come to here in huge no due to which they have to stay in hotels and consume different things including cultural items and tara[10] for enjoyment which gives benefits to the people. Many people produce cultural dresses, cupusi, shoshot[11], pati[12], peran[13], purses and shemano [14]which are purchased by the tourists. Similarly, many people produce Tara which they sell and earn*

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[10] Tara is a Locally made alcohol used to serve guests by the Kalash people.
[11] Cupesi and Shoshot are locally made cultural headdresses of the Kalash people.
[12] Pati is a traditional belt made by the Kalash people.
[13] Peran is a traditional hand-made dress of the Kalash people.
[14] Shemano is a handmade raw string worn by Kalash people.

> *huge money. Some have hotels and they also earn money in this way. I earn 22000 rupees during only two days in my shop. So there is a lot of benefit for us.*"

Another respondent said that;

> *"There are many benefits because many foreigners come here, many officers come here due to which there benefits for the shops for the hotels and the people having vehicles. We people also get benefit by selling our cupesi, shoshot, and other cultural items and earn money and we all get benefits. We should feel good for others.*"

The extract above shows the voices of those individuals of the Kalash people who are engaged in business activities through the production and selling of Kalash cultural goods in the market. They are getting the economic benefits through cultural commodification but they are less in number and the majority of the community remains unbenefited. Middlemen from the surrounding non Kalash communities also obtain the benefits of commodification. Wallace (2009) explains that many communities in the world try to make economic benefits and increase their income through cultural commodification. It is also evident that such business can only be sustainable and beneficial for the local communities only if the local communities are involved in the process and control of the production of these cultural products.

19. Conclusions

Cultural commodification impacts local communities both positively and negatively. In positive terms, it helps the local communities to sell their cultural items such as cultural dresses (*shoshot*, *peran*, *shemano*, *shawai*, *khapol*[15] etc.) to tourists and earn their incomes whereas in negative terms it results in generating conflicts between the subsystems of the communities by reaching those parts of the culture which were not previously commodified and have some sacred values for the local people. The impact of cultural commodification and cultural tourism in Kalash Valley shows that the local people experience the negative impacts of

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[15] Khapol is a cultural cap worn by Kalash and the local Chitrali people.

cultural commodification and cultural tourism. The local people face the problems of 'privacy breaching, disturbance and pollution, violation of sacred places and unlawfulness, perceived as *kafir* (non-believers), social pressure and change in cultural activities, lack of communal economic benefits, and objectification of culture' whereas a minority of capitalist people get positive benefits by selling the cultural items of the Kalash people to the tourists.

Editorial Note

It is unique to the people of Kalash that after accepting Islam they do not participate in their traditional rituals, not continuing the dress as they do before, even prefer to speak Khowar. This is different than other Muslim Cultures of South Asia. However, several communities in this mountainous area still continue their customs beside Islamic traditions.

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Antonio Invernizzi
Turin, 1 January 1941 – 2 December 2021

Clay sculpture; Square House, Old Nysa, Turkmenistan.

Antonio Invernizzi
(Turin, 1 January 1941 – 2 December 2021)

Luca M. Olivieri

On the second day of December 2021, as our fieldwork in Barikot was drawing to a close, we learned from Italy of the sudden death of Antonio Invernizzi.

Despite a generation separating Invernizzi and us, I and my colleagues in Barikot were deeply grieved by the loss of an archaeologist who was perhaps not well known in Pakistan but was a leading archaeologist working between Iraq and Turkmenistan, between the Euphrates and the Caspian, especially for those complex phases related to the Parthian history (the Arsacids, 2nd century BCE-3rd century CE).

President of the Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino until 2010, Antonio Invernizzi was professor emeritus at the University of Turin and a member of that city's Academy of Sciences.

The Centro Scavi was founded in Turin in 1963, on the initiative of the great archaeologists Giorgio Gullini, as an autonomous development of the previous Centro Studi e Scavi Archeologici in Asia of IsMEO and of Turin. Unitil 1963 Giorgio Gullini was in fact part of IsMEO, under which he directed the excavations in Swat at Udegram. Although the fortunes of the two institutes were separated, the relationship between them remained scientifically solid, the friendship between Giorgio Gullini and Domenico Faccena (the two Directors of the now separated Centres of Turin and IsMEO) remained intact, and the same can be said of the esteem between their disciples, first of all Antonio Invernizzi (who was also member of IsMEO/IsIAO), and then Carlo Lippolis, Pierfrancesco Callieri, Vito Messina, Anna Filigenzi. Although we worked on opposite sides of Alexander's oeucumene, we were always united by a common understanding of things. One of the main points of contact is the understanding that the interpretation of artistic phenomena should only be attempted on the basis of solid and reliable archaeological foundations. Hence the importance we all attach to excavations and large-scale fieldwork, especially in settlements and urban centres: our long-lasting project at Barikot, his work at Seleucia and Nysa. Our common field of interest was and is associated with the contamination of Hellenism in the East, of its transformation beyond geographical limits and cultural frontiers (i.e. beyond the commonplace), between East and West, India and the Mediterranean. It is always worth rereading that brief masterpiece by Antonio Invernizzi, the "Réflexions sur les rencontres interculturelles dans l'orient hellénisé" published in 2014. Antonio Invernizzi began his career as a classical archaeologist. In 1964 he started participating in one of the most important archaeological works of the Centro Scavi, the dig at Seleucia on the

Tigris, Iraq. Seleucia was the ancient capital of the Seleucids, the most powerful of Alexander the Great's political successors in the East.

In 1968 Invernizzi became field director in Seleucia while teaching Archaeology and History of Greek and Roman Art at the University of Cagliari, then from 1970, full professor of Oriental Archaeology in Turin, where he remained all his life. Always very interested in the Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian phases – he was a disciple of Giorgio Gullini – he moved in 1975 to Iran (Khorasan) and then in 1977 back to Iraq at Tell Yelkhi. Here he explored a site whose stratigraphy dated back to the third and second millennium BCE. In 1980 he excavated the Roman fortress of Kifrin on the Euphrates, while in 1990 he moved to Turkmenistan, where his Centro Scavi of Turin Mission began working at the Old Nysa ("Parthian Nysa"), the ancient capital of the Parthian dynasty of the Arsacids. This was the beginning of a fortunate season of excavations that would last for decades and that produced extraordinary results published in excellent monographs and studies by Invernizzi and his students.

After 2000, Invernizzi, who had become Director of the Centro Scavi di Torino in 1990, resumed fieldwork in Iraq, making a significant contribution to the rescue of the country's immense archaeological heritage undermined by the conflict and the political turmoil that followed.

Further reading

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A. Invernizzi, "Réflexions sur les rencontres interculturelles dans l'orient hellénisé". P. Leriche (ed.) *Art et civilisations de l'orient hellénisé. Rencontres et éxchanges culturels d'Alexandre aux Sassanides* [*Hommage à Daniel Schlumberger*]. Èditions Picard: Paris 2014, p. 257-267.

Notes

The biographical notes were taken from A. De Martino, "Il percorso di uno studioso: Antonio Invernizzi", C. Lippolis, A. De Martino (eds) *Un impaziente desiderio di scorrere il mondo. Studi in onore di Antonio Invernizzi*. Monografie di Mesopotamia 14. Le Lettere: Firenze 2011, p. 13-15.

It was also Henri Colburn's idea to publish Nysa's clay sculpture as an ideal icon of Antonio Invernizzi (see https://henrycolburn.hcommons.org/2021/12/03/in-memoriam-antonio-invernizzi-1941-2021/: "Since I don't have a picture of Prof. Invernizzi, I instead share an image of a clay sculpture from the Square House at Old Nisa, an object which he published and helped to publicize, to all our benefit".

On the history of the relationship between the Centro Scavi of IsMEO and the Centro Scavi of Turin, see Luca M. Olivieri, "Outline History of the IsIAO Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan (1956-2006)". *East and West*, 56, 2006, 1-3, p. 23–41 (in particular p. 31).

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[*] The order follows the contents.

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Pl. 4 - Gumbat (Swat): the Main Stupa, E side (Drawings by the Author).

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