

Problems of Chronology in Gandhāran Art

Edited by
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On Gandhāran sculptural production from Swat: recent archaeological and chronological data

Luca Maria Olivieri and Anna Filigenzi

Introduction

This paper is based on the results of the latest archaeological excavations carried out in Swat by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan (IAMP). It will illustrate the archaeological background of some significant cultic monuments, the stratigraphy-based chronology of their decorative assemblage, and the wider context of implications of the fresh information available, particularly in relation to the chronological and cultural stages of the ‘Gandhāran artistic idiom’ in Swat. For the sake of brevity, it will not deal with the stylistic, iconographic, and iconological aspects of the sculptural material, which are the object of ongoing study.

[L.M.O. and A.F.]

Recent advances in knowledge: fresh data from Barikot

As confirmed by both archaeological and radiocarbon data, the fortified urban settlement at Barikot (lower area and acropolis) was established around the mid-first millennium BC on the ruins of an Early Iron age proto-urban settlement dated to the eleventh-eighth centuries (Olivieri & Iori, forthcoming; Terrasi et al. forthcoming). A city (Figure 1) was clearly established at the site around the sixth century BC. The site was re-fortified in a mature phase of the Indo-Greek kingdoms, around the mid-second century BC, with a massive defensive wall, which remained in use until the beginning of the second century AD (Olivieri 2015a). At this time maintenance ceased and the disrupted wall, although still marking the limit of the urban area, was utilized simply as a retaining structure throughout the second half of the third century AD, the period which corresponds to the last phases of urban occupation of the site. The lower quarters of the ancient city were eventually abandoned at the end of the third century after massive destruction caused by the combined



Figure 1. A panoramic view of Barikot. (Photo: copyright IAMP.)



Figure 2. A partial view of the area of BKG 2. (Photo: copyright IAMP.)

effects of two earthquakes and other factors, which will be described later. With the area now nothing more than a field of ruins, it was briefly re-occupied by non-urban settlers (squatters), and definitively deserted by the mid-fourth century (Cupitò & Olivieri 2013). Meanwhile, a smaller fortified cluster of buildings was built at the foot of the ancient acropolis (BKG 2) and lasted – through a well-documented Shahi phase – until Ghaznavid times (Callieri et al. 2000; Figure 2).

Although Buddhist sacred areas began to be established in Swat as early as the third century BC (at Butkara I, see below), the earliest physical evidence of a Buddhist presence in the city is represented by a small Buddhist sacred area, consisting of a *stūpa* surrounded by minor chapels, dated to the early/mid-second century AD (Figure 3). Unfortunately, apart from a very few fragments, the decorative assemblage had already disappeared by the time of excavation, since the monument had already been plundered by illegal diggers (Callieri et al. 1992: 27-33, fig. 8, pls. XII-XIV).

However, a possible hint of an even earlier Buddhist presence in the city is afforded by the recent discovery of a fine black ware bowl from the Śaka-Parthian levels bearing a Kharoṣṭhī inscription which has been studied by Stefan Baums. We refer to his work for further details, limiting ourselves here just to mentioning the presence in the inscription of the genitive singular of the monastic title *ṣamaṇera* (Sanskrit *śrāmaṇera*) ‘novice’ (Baums, forthcoming).

Both palaeography and stratigraphy suggest an early first-century date for the bowl. This piece of information perfectly matches the data gathered in the survey of the Barikot countryside, where more than one hundred monastic settlements were documented in less than 100 square kilometres. The sites were not all contemporary, but the pottery assemblages clearly indicate that the majority of them were founded before the second century AD (Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006).



Figure 3. Barikot: the small Buddhist sacred area within the urban perimeter. (Photo: copyright IAMP.)

At Barikot, during the final urban phases (i.e. during the third century), the south-western quarter of the city was divided into several dwelling units of different sizes (ranging from 300 to 700 square metres), all arranged around a central courtyard, and in some cases provided with domestic worship areas (Figure 4). The blocks were served by a network of communicating streets, while the main street ran *intra muros* along the western section of the defensive wall. Two of these blocks or units are entirely dedicated to worship purposes (Olivieri et al. 2014; Olivieri 2011 [2015]; Olivieri 2013 [2017]).

Dwelling Unit B is characterized by a large cultic complex organized into two main buildings (Figure 5). One of them ('Sacred Building B') is a large rectangular shrine which opens onto a walled courtyard with niches and an altar. One of the niches yielded a set of small Buddhist stelae, three of which fixed to the walls by means of iron clamps (Figure 6). In front of the altar (with *ex-votos*) there was a large stone alms-bowl. Along two sides of the courtyard runs a bench, on top of which a large amount of intentionally broken shell bangles and Golden Slip and Fashion Ware pottery was deposited (on Fashion Ware, see Callieri & Olivieri, forthcoming). A few metres to the north, the 2016 excavation revealed a second building ('Temple B'), which was connected to the previous one through a raised corridor (Olivieri 2013 [2017]; Moscatelli et al. 2016). Temple B features a raised rectangular paved space closed on three sides and open to the east (and not to the north, a *lapsus calami* in Olivieri 2018: 191). The building had a tetrastyle façade. A rough altar was placed right in the lower space between the second and the third base. A flight of steps at the southern end of the platform gave access to a lower courtyard with a rectangular tank. Close to the tank, a condenser was found *in situ*, while two fire-places were documented a few steps from the central altar. A small stela representing *Hārītī* was found in the debris of the courtyard (Figure 7).

Of special interest is the central courtyard of Dwelling Unit D. Also used as a cooking area, it nevertheless housed a small Buddhist shrine in the collapse debris of which an assortment of reused sculptural



Figure 4. Barikot: dwelling units in the south-western quarter of the city. (Copyright IAMP.)

Figure 5. Barikot: the cultic complex of Dwelling Unit B. (Drawings by F. Martore; copyright IAMP.)

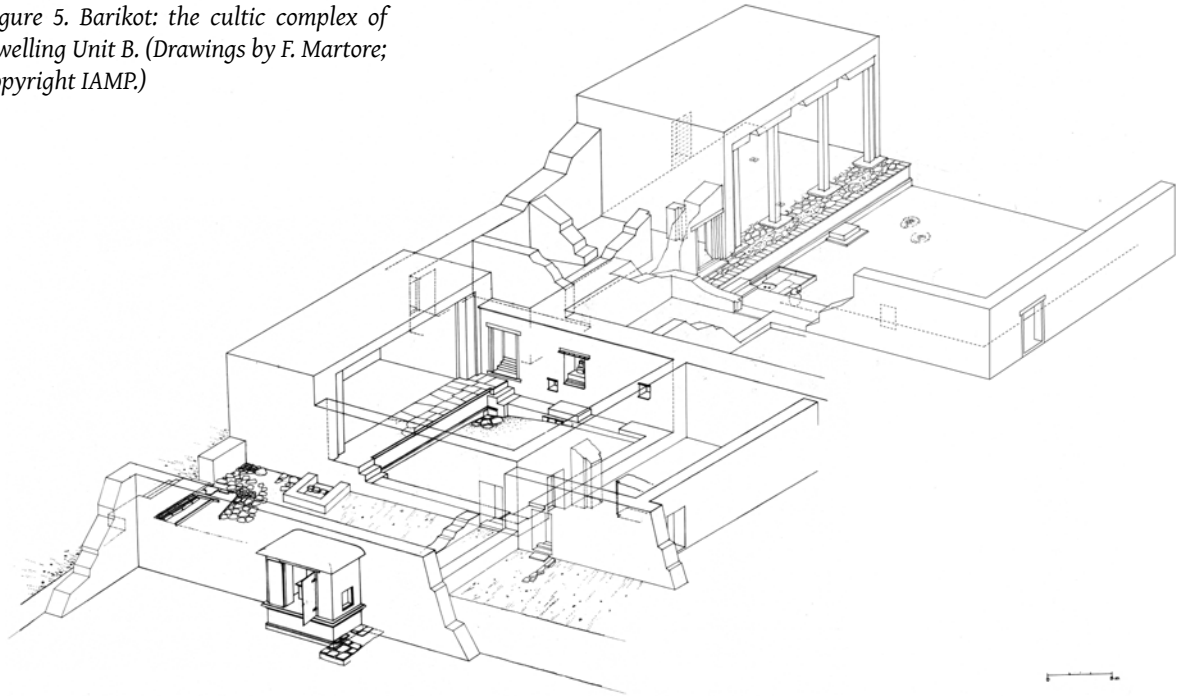


Figure 6. Barikot: the niche with small Buddhist stelae (BKG 2347, 2343, 2361 and 2364; Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Swat) in 'Sacred Building B'. (Photo: copyright IAMP.)

materials was found. In the corridor leading from the main street to the courtyard, inside a small stone cist beside a fireplace, a small stela was found. It depicts an unknown bearded male deity seated in European fashion and holding a chalice and a goat's head (Olivieri 2011 [2015]; Figure 8). This stela finds close comparison with a stratigraphically coeval icon brought to light at Barikot during a previous excavation campaign, whose subject is a goddess holding a bunch of flowers and the goat-headed finial of a lost object, possibly a cornucopia (Callieri et al. 1992: 35, pl. XIX.4; Figure 9). This discovery has however much wider implications, insofar as it provides a common frame of reference for a group of small Gandhāran stela lacking archaeological context.

One of these originally belonged to Major-General Henry Lawrence Haughton – a member of a military family active in British India – who probably visited Swat (see Olivieri 2015b: 210 [document 154]) and ‘acquired’ there part of his famous Gandhāran collection. The stela represents a male bearded god holding attributes which are no longer recognisable (Olivieri et al. 2014: fig. 74a; Buchtal 1945: fig. 45).



Figure 7. Barikot: a small stela representing Hārītī from the debris of the courtyard of ‘Temple B’ (BKG 3636; Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Swat). (Photo copyright IAMP)

Even more noteworthy are the similarities with a group of goddesses who, like the Barikot god, hold a beaker and the severed head of a goat (Taddei 1987). In one case, the strong connection between the *devī* and the goat is expressed by the anthro-po-theriomorphic aspect of the former (see Zwalf 1996: no. 105). All these dispersed pieces of evidence can now be regarded as belonging not only to one and the same ideological and chronological horizon but also to one and the same chain of sculptural production, which has found a unifying benchmark in the archaeological sequence of Barikot.

The second unit dedicated to cultic activities is Dwelling Unit K (Figure 10). It consists of a rectangular enclosure with a central courtyard and with a distyle building open to the north. In front of the latter, in the courtyard, stands a small shrine. As attested by several fragments found at the spot, the shrine was originally provided with stucco decorations and wooden hinged doors. Almost completely reconstructed after a collapse, in its first phase it housed a miniature *stūpa*, the remains of which were partly recovered during the excavation. Inside the shrine, a Buddhist stela was found (Figure 11). Both inside and in the immediate vicinity of the shrine numerous ex-votos were found, in particular, horse figurines originally with (now missing) riders and lion figurines.

The distyle building (‘Temple K’) has an open antecella, a cella, and a side corridor leading to a rear chamber (that can be accessed also via the cella), in which a deposit of valuable objects, no doubt donations, was discovered. The assemblage of votive gifts includes luxury goods such as Golden Slip and Fashion Ware pottery (Figure 12), a glass ampulla and an elephant’s tusk (see more details in Olivieri 2013 [2017]).



Figure 8. Barikot: a bearded male deity holding a chalice and a severed goat's head from Dwelling Unit D (BKG 2304; Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Swat). (Photo: copyright IAMP.)



Figure 9. Barikot: goddess holding a flower and a cornucopia (BKG 1591; Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Swat). (Photo: copyright IAMP.)

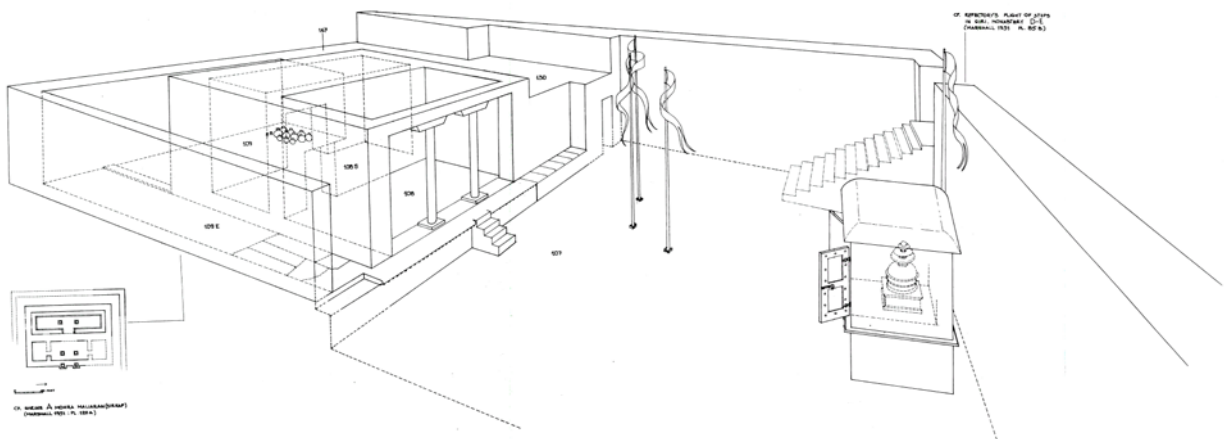


Figure 10. Barikot: Dwelling Unit K. (Drawings by F. Martore; copyright IAMP.)



Figure 11. Barikot, Dwelling Unit D: a Buddhist stela (BKG 2344) inside the shrine. (Photo: copyright IAMP.)



Figure 12. Barikot: Golden Slip, Fashion Ware, and Slip Ware pottery from 'Temple K' (Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Swat. (Photo: copyright IAMP.)

Figure 13. Barikot: a small stela depicting Maitreya from inside a jar in Unit E (BKG 2210; Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif. (Photo: copyright IAMP.)



Several more stelae were recovered *in situ* in various dwelling units or in collapse layers, all belonging to the same chronological phase, among which a Maitreya from inside a jar in Unit E (Figure 13) and an unusual miniature stele from Unit F (Olivieri et al. 2014: 42-46, figs. 15-17, 66, 119); two bodhisattvas from a deep masonry tank or bath in Unit G (in an area close to the small Buddhist sacred area) (Callieri et al. 1992: 35, pls. VIII.1, XVIII.1-2); and the female deity with a cornucopia already mentioned, from a niche in the same Unit. Other stelae were found in collapse layers in other loci of the same chronological context (see Olivieri et al. 2014).

Periods/Phases	Macrophases	earlier	Kushan	Late Kushan	Kushano-Sasanian	sub- Kushan	other	erratic
BKG 11, BKG 12								
Period X	6	1	3	11	1	10	-	1
Period IX		-	1	13	6	13	1	-
Period VIII	5	3	15	13	7	7	-	-
Period VII		1	7	7	-	-	-	-
BKG 4-5								
Period X	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Period IX	5	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
Period VIII		1	12	12	6	6	-	-
Periods VII		-	8	4	4	5	-	-
BKG 3								
Period IVB-Phase 2b	5	-	-	11	14	-	-	-
Phase 2A2		-	-	8	-	-	-	-
BKG 1								
Period VIII	5	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Period VII		1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		1	4	24	7	23	1	1
Total		6	42	58	31	19	-	-
		earlier	Kushan	Late Kushan	Kushano-Sasanian	sub- Kushan	other	later

Figure 14. Table of coins found in the late phases at Barikot.



Figure 15. Barikot: evidence relating to the first earthquake.
(Photo: copyright IAMP.)

only survived the crisis but underwent extensive renovation. Moreover, the archaeological sequence documented in both sites offers much food for thought with regard to the shift from schist to stucco in sculptural decoration, and to the related production chain.

The site of Gumbat (Figure 16) (five kilometres southwest of Barikot) comprises three monumental terraces, the first characterized by a large stepped substruction wall and three flanking monuments of the same size: two *stūpas*, of which only part of the first storey was preserved, and a central shrine (Figure 17). The latter was probably constructed as early as the late first century AD, as suggested by the radiocarbon dating of the wooden lintel of one of the upper loopholes of the cell (Figure 18). The dating obtained for three other beams found during the restoration work to prop up the inner dome have a later dating (second century AD) (Olivieri et al. 2014: 310-14; Meister et al. 2016). The terrace was enhanced with brightly coloured and heavily-stuccoed lesser monuments in the two later structural phases. The complex seems to have been abandoned at around the tenth century.

The Main *Stūpa* of the Buddhist sacred area of Amluk-dara (Figures 19 and 20) (five kilometres southeast of Barikot) is one of the most majestic and best conserved in Gandhāra. The monument evinces a complex sequence of renovation and reuse spanning a long period of time, from the second to the tenth century AD (Olivieri et al. 2014).

The numismatic assemblage of the last structural period of the city is clearly defined by three copper types: the *Vāsudeva*-type issues, the Kushano-Sasanian coins and the so-called sub-Kushan coins. The latter, probably minted locally as convertible metal values, were equivalent to 1/8 of the Late Kushan issues and to a quarter of the Kushano-Sasanian issues (McDowall and Callieri 2004; Olivieri et al. 2014; Figure 14). Two major earthquakes within the space of less than 50-70 years have been clearly documented in these last phases of the city (Figure 15). This fact, alongside the political earthquake represented by the contemporary collapse of the Kushan Empire, eventually led to the abandonment of the city (Olivieri 2012), whereas, in the country areas the Buddhist communities managed to cope with the general crisis.

Of special interest in this regard are two recently excavated sacred areas near Barikot – Gumbat and Amluk-dara – two major Buddhist sites, both founded between the first and the second century AD, which not



Figure 16. Panoramic view of Gumbat from the west. (Photo E. Loliva; copyright IAMP.)

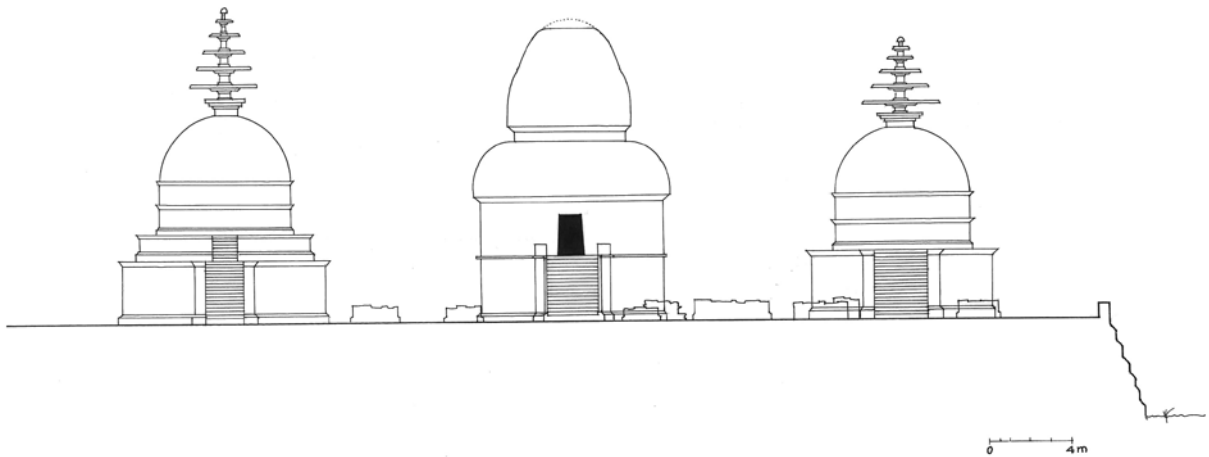


Figure 17. Gumbat: the monuments on the first terrace; view from east (drawing by F. Martore; copyright IAMP.)

Originally provided with a bluish schist decoration, the main monument was completely reshaped in the mid-third century, possibly after damage caused by the same seismic events responsible for the desertion of the nearby Barikot. The staircase with its monumental entrance (two well-sculpted step-side elements) (Figure 21), was further lengthened. Pilasters, modillions and most of the false brackets of the podium and upper storeys of the Main Stūpa were remade in kanjur (organogenic limestone) and copiously stuccoed and painted (Figure 22). Now we understand that stucco was certainly a by-product of kanjur stone workmanship.

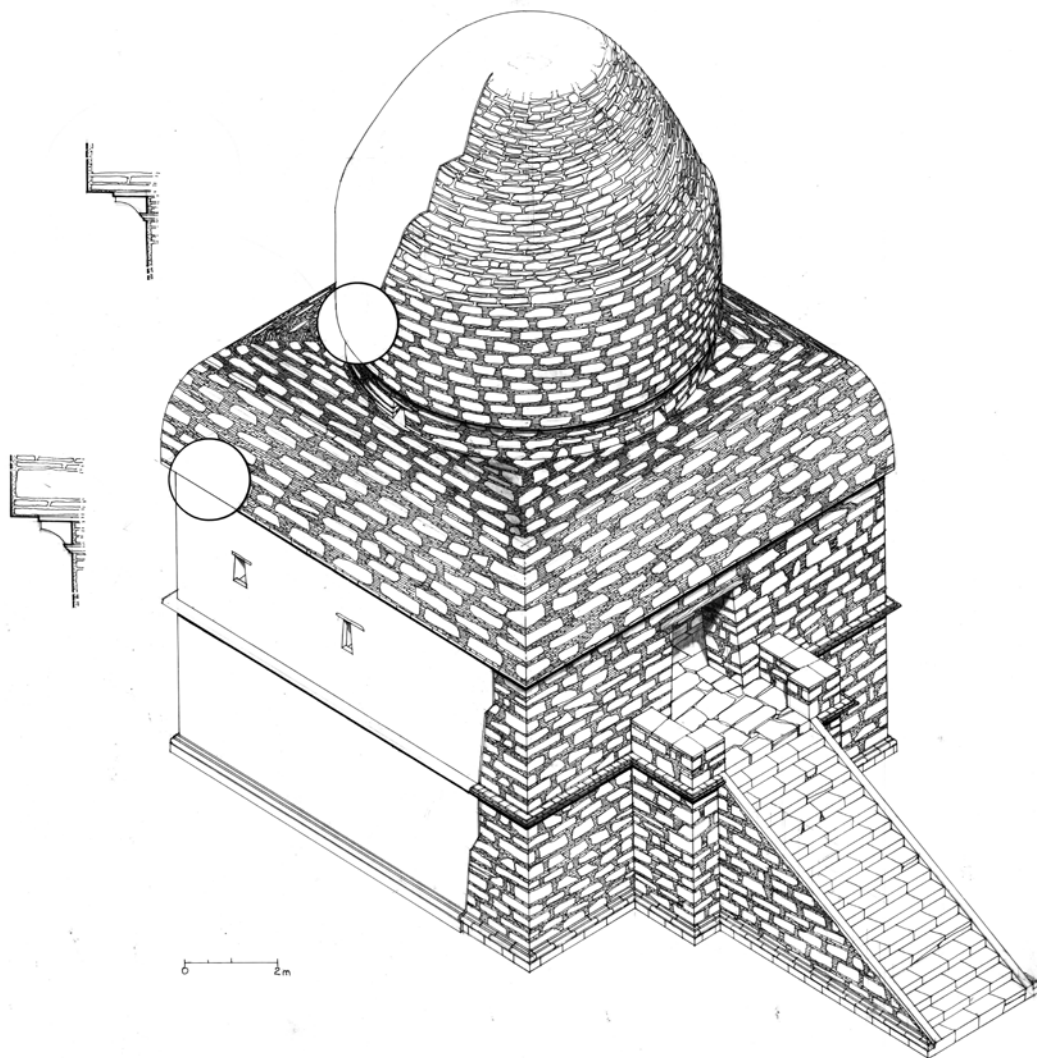


Figure 18. Gumbat, first terrace: axonometric view of the central shrine (drawing by F. Martore; copyright IAMP.)

As introduction to the following section, on the basis of the evidence yielded by both the urban site of Barikot, and the Buddhist complex of Amluk-dara, we may draw the following preliminary conclusions:

- 1 – schist is widely available and quarried in Swat;
- 2 – in the third century kanjur and stucco appear together in Swat;
- 3 – the massive appearance of stucco decoration during the course of the third century AD both at Barikot (e.g. in the shrines of Units B and K), and at Amluk-dara and Gumbat, finds a chronological comparison with recent data from coeval Kushano-Sasanian evidence yielded at Termez (Ferrerias et al. 2014);
- 4 – kanjur is not a local stone (it is instead extensively quarried in the rocky reliefs south and south-east of Swat, in Buner, Mardan, Swabi and Taxila);



Figures 19 and 20. Amluk-dara: the Main Stūpa before and after excavation and restoration (Photo E. Loliva; copyright IAMP.)



Figure 21. Amluk-dara: step-side elements from the monumental staircase of the Main Stūpa (AKD 97 and 98; Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Swat). (Photo: copyright IAMP.)



Figure 22. Amluk-dara: fragments of the architectural decoration in kanjur of the Main Stūpa and other monuments (Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Swat) (Photo: copyright IAMP.)

5 – the above may imply that the local schist quarry areas of Swat were closed or, most probably, that they were working at a very low pace, maybe just for the only surviving contemporary production, i.e. the stelae that we have found in plenty at Barikot;

6 – the shift to kanjur – which requires a completely different sculptural skill and, by its nature, implies a massive role for stucco modelling – tells us that the large sculptural ateliers in Swat also had to face a tremendous challenge.

[L.M.O.]

From stone to stucco: some observations on technical and cultural patterns

The information potential of the newly available data is multiplied by spatial triangulation with the archaeological sequence reconstructed in other sites. Particularly significant is their congruence with the key Buddhist site of Butkara I (Figure 23). Identified with the Tolo visited by Songyun and the Dhumat'ala of the Tibetan pilgrim O rgyan pa (Tucci 1978: 60-61; Faccenna 1980-81: [4] 756, n. 1.), Butkara I was excavated and painstakingly recorded by Domenico Faccenna from 1956 to 1962 (Faccenna 1980-81).

The long archaeological sequence, stretching from the third century BC to the tenth/eleventh century AD, was divided into five main building periods, corresponding to the construction and four successive reconstructions of the Great Stūpa (Figure 24), which reflect changes in sculptural and architectural patterns throughout an unbroken continuity of physical and cultural identity.

At Butkara I, a shift towards plastic materials and related techniques can be observed on a large scale during the Period of Great Stūpa 4, which covers a long time span (from the end of the second/early third century to the seventh century AD), and encompasses crucial moments of change, enrichment and embellishment (Faccenna 1980-81: [1] 77-127; [3] 632-664; Filigenzi 2010).

It seems that at the time of Great Stūpa 4, Butkara I – the most important and richest artistic centre of the region – was not able, or not inclined, to obtain newly-made stone sculptures. Side by side with the increasing use of calcareous stone as building material, stucco sculptures and decorations began to predominate, while stone sculptures became an ever rarer commodity. Stone from collapsed monuments was collected and re-used, often as filling material, sometimes re-cut and reworked; less frequently it was re-employed in the decoration of the monument, with the missing parts reintegrated by means of stucco additions.

Such is the case of Great Stūpa 4 in which sixteen earlier green schist panels depicting scenes of the Buddha's life were inserted into niches that interrupt the wall of the lower storey (Figure 25). The re-use evinces very little interest in the original setting and subject matter of the sculptures. However, their ornamental function, enhanced by the sharp contrast between their dark green colour and the white surface of the plaster, harmonised by painted decorations (Faccenna 1980-81: [1] 704 ff. and Figure 337; [5.1] pls. XIV, 70, 88e, 90-97, colour pls. F-Hb; Figure 26), cannot be dissociated from their being valued as precious, timeless sacred relics.

The religious implications of such a re-use are also highlighted by the unusual presence of a reliquary recess just behind each niche. As the archaeological evidence shows (Faccenna 1980-81: [1] 84 ff.; [3] 680 ff., pls. XIII-XIV, XVII; [5.1] pls. 75-78), the recesses are contemporary with the erection of Great Stūpa 4 and intentionally meant as a ritualistic device in connection with the niches and their reliefs. The coin deposits in the reliquaries give important chronological clues.

We refer to Faccenna's detailed report on the coin finds, where their relative archaeological sequence and stratigraphic cross-validation is most accurately illustrated and made available for numismatic



Figure 23. Panoramic view of the Buddhist sacred area of Butkara I (Photo: copyright IAMP.)

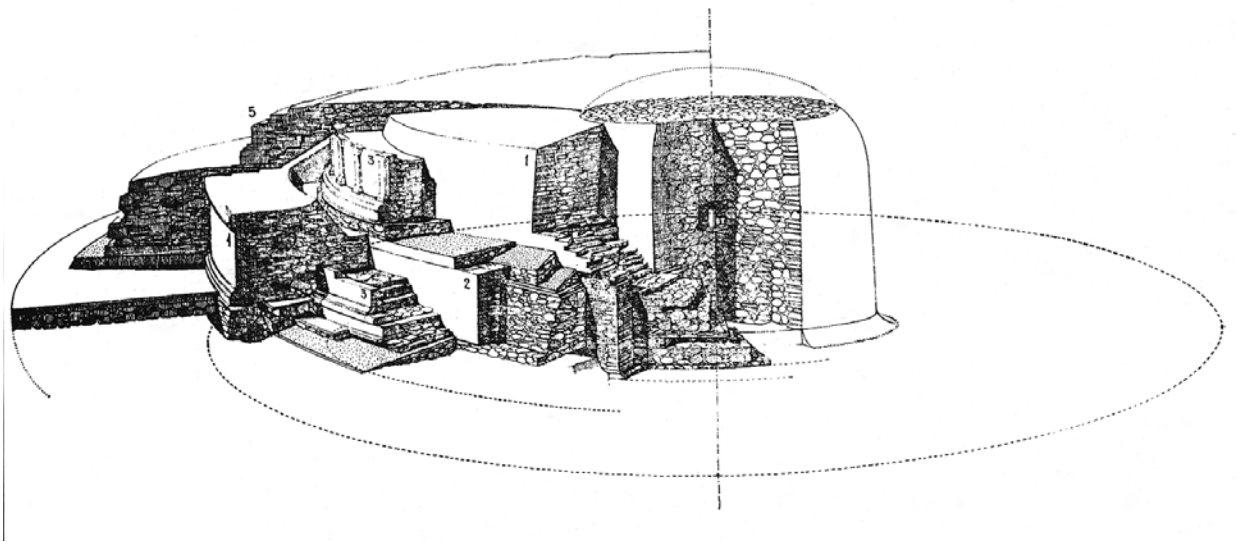


Figure 24. Butkara I: isometrical view showing the five periods of Great Stūpa (after Faccenna 1980-1981: [1] pl. V).

debate (Faccenna 1962: 78 ff. [nos. 1-26], 158 ff. [nos. 27-50]; Göbl 1976). On this occasion, we will limit ourselves to pointing out the significance of Huviška and Huviška type coins in the erection of Great Stūpa 4, and of the coins of Kavād I, a governor under Shapur II (dated by Göbl to about AD 356/360) for

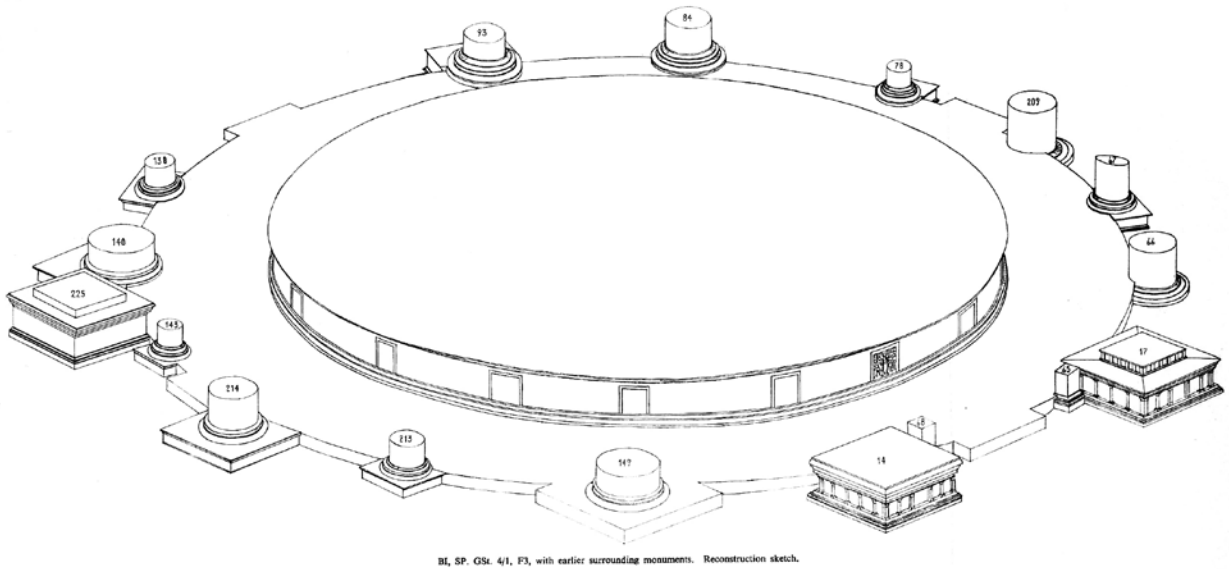


Figure 25. Butkara I: reconstruction sketch of Great Stūpa 4 with earlier surroundings monuments (after Faccenna 1980-1981: [3] pl. XII).

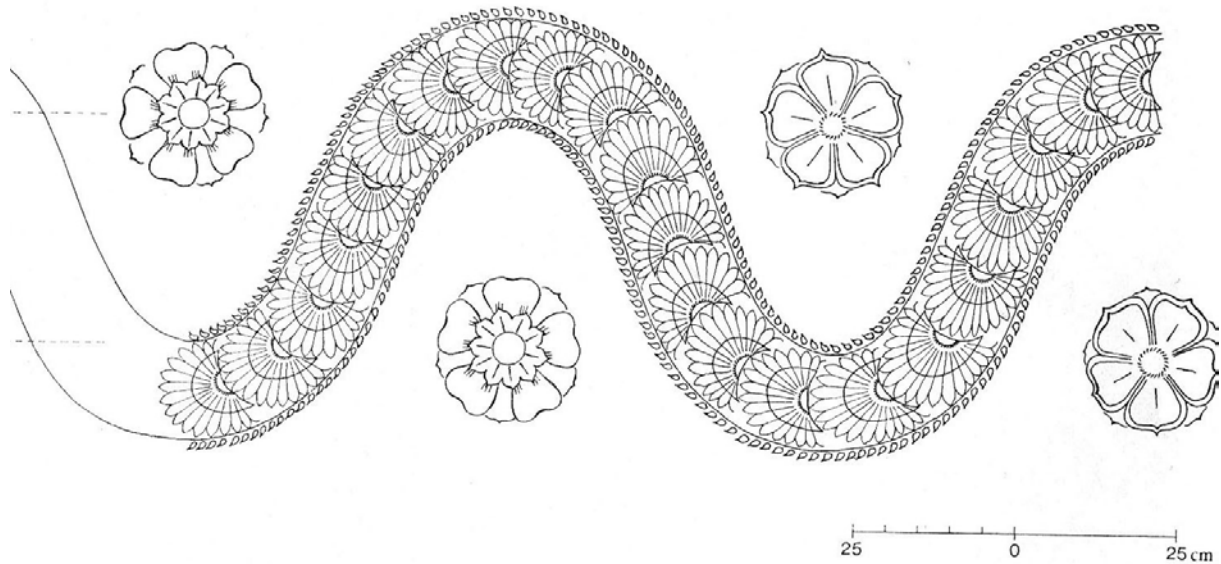


Figure 26. Butkara I: a painted decoration of the Great Stūpa 4 showing a curvilinear festoon (after Faccenna 1980-1981: [1] fig. 337).

its Phase 4, when a secondary deposit of coins accompanied the re-positioning and restoration of the relief panel sealing one of the niches, in the framework of extensive building and restoration activity after widespread collapse and damage, most probably caused by an earthquake (Faccenna et al. 1993).

On the whole, the period of Great Stūpa 4 sheds full light on a dramatic change of taste, techniques and materials, which is most clearly traceable in Phases 4 and 5, when vigorous building activity and striking sculptural and pictorial embellishment is documented by the scanty – and yet most telling – surviving evidence. This magnificent vision of the sacred space, where the tendency towards verticality, colour and gilding must have played a prominent role, is nonetheless embedded in the initial project of Great Stūpa 4 itself, whose decoration included, most probably since the very beginning, stucco sculptures – now lost – that rested against it, as shown by sockets in the wall (some of them certainly earlier than the second coat

of plaster of Phase 4), and by some still-preserved bases (Faccenna 1980-81: [1] 709; [5.1] pls. 70, 92a, 101, colour pl. Hc; Figure 27).

The surface of the *stūpa*, the enclosure wall and, over time, also floors, were coated with plaster, which has been found to exist in numerous layers. Although only scant traces of paint survive, we may safely assume that the extensive use of both plaster coats and stucco sculptural decorations was inseparable from a lively polychromy and, ultimately, from the pursuit of an overall electric effect (Faccenna 1980-81: [3] 678-679).

As for the figurative apparatus, the Period of Great Stūpa 4 yielded extremely fragmentary evidence of stucco sculpture, which nonetheless bespeak the richness and variety of artistic forms. With very few exceptions, such as the rare sculptural remains *in situ* (Faccenna 1980-81: [1] 689; [5.1] pl. 87a; Figure 28), the surviving fragments cannot be precisely correlated to the various phases. Nevertheless, comparative analysis suggests a distribution throughout the whole period (Figures 29-32).

One extremely important integration with this cultural-chronological sequence is now offered by the small Buddhist architecture of Barikot. Despite their scarcity and fragmentary state of preservation, the remains of stucco sculpture recovered from these areas are of utmost importance for the chronological patterning of Gandhāran art. The clear and datable stratigraphic context in which they were found is a reliable clue to an early introduction of stucco decorations, since at Barikot this predates the natural calamities that determined the crisis of the city. Thus we may say that the *increasing* use of media such as local soapstone, kanjur, and stucco has significant correlations with periods of economic distress, which may have favoured the adoption of cheaper building options based on low-cost materials and processing techniques.

Nevertheless, the stratigraphic history of events also warns us that other triggering factors of cultural significance may have stimulated the change; first of all, we may assume, a new aesthetics, possibly radiating from Afghanistan, Southern Central Asia, and Xinjiang, where strong and captivating artistic forms, characterised by smoothness of volumes, pathos, polychromy and gilding were developed precisely because of the large-scale use of malleable materials (Figure 33).



Figure 27. *Butkara I*; a painted base resting against Great Stūpa 4 (B37; after Faccenna 1980-81: [5.1] pl. Hc).

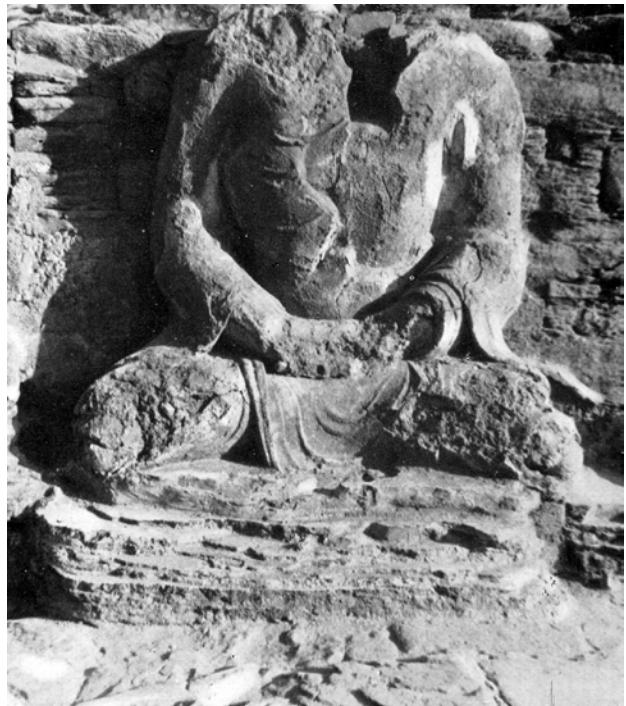


Figure 28. *Butkara I*, period of Great Stūpa 4: a stucco image of Buddha *in situ* (B 4492; after Faccenna 1980-81: [5.1] pl. 87a).



Figure 29. Butkara I: a Buddha head in stucco (B 59; Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Swat). (Photo: copyright IAMP.)

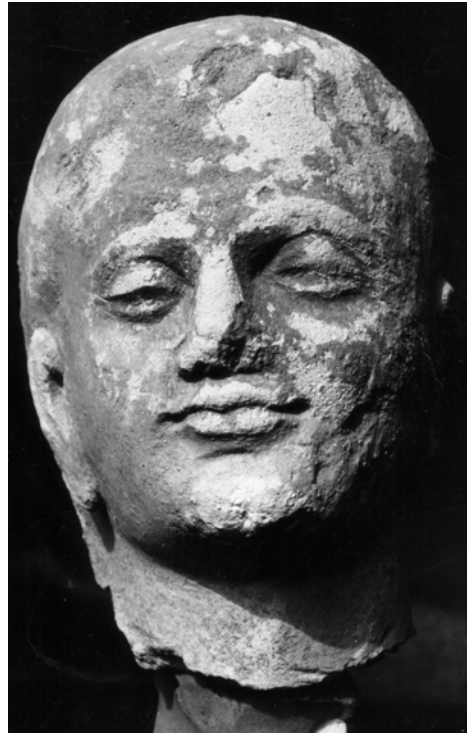


Figure 30. Butkara I: a monk's head in stucco (B 7641; Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Swat). (Photo: copyright IAMP.)



Figure 31. Butkara I: a female head in stucco (B 4533; Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Swat). (Photo: copyright IAMP.)

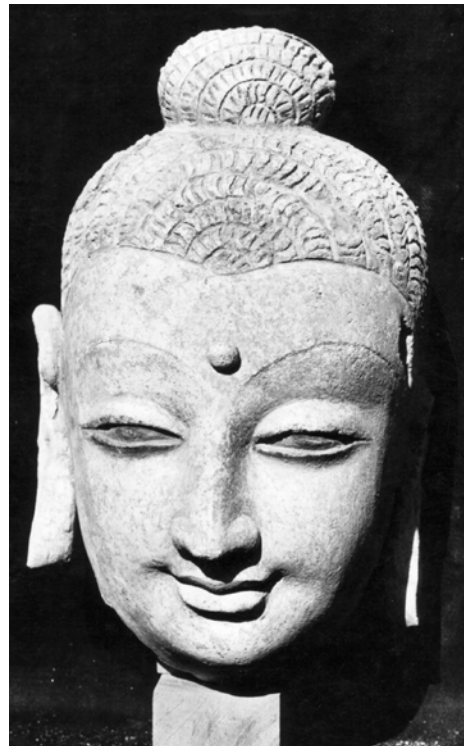


Figure 32. Butkara I: a Buddha head in stucco (B 4598; Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Swat). (Photo: copyright IAMP.)

The new trends in sculpture and architecture pose challenges to archaeological interpretation, since their real magnitude and impact are extremely difficult to verify. In most cases, changes are only insufficiently documented by partial additions that overlap existing layouts. Moreover – as old installations in stone have often survived where later additions made of more short-lived materials have almost disappeared – our reconstructions of the Gandhāran phenomenon risk being flawed by insufficient recognition of relevant evidence (Filigenzi 2015: 43-47). It is clear that even the most careful investigation will not be able to fill all the gaps completely. Hasty excavations, often carried out in the framework of rescue archaeology, further aggravate this problem.

The period of Great Stūpa 4 at Butkara I is a precious reference model for the ephemeral and yet stunning dimension of what we may call a ‘non-stone aesthetics’. Besides, the data from the last urban phases at Barikot, which rely on the cross-validation of stratigraphy, numismatic evidence and radiocarbon analyses, confirm that important changes start taking place in Swat in a quite early period. They prove that during the third century AD, side by side with the introduction of stucco, figurative art in the urban cultic complex is represented only by small stelae (Figures 7-9, 13), and by re-used Gandhāran materials. Moreover, on the whole, the stelae display features that would have probably been assigned to a later date if judged on the grounds of style only. However, this matter deserves a separate treatment, which is beyond our present scope.

For the time being, let us conclude saying that, as archaeological research progresses and further tasks take shape, we see more and more clearly the need for a *modus operandi* capable of efficiently and consciously tackling objective difficulties. However, a change of cultural mentality is also advisable, which can induce us, archaeologists and art historians, not to overemphasise and somehow freeze the ‘classical’ Gandhāran art and architecture in stone at the expense of their still little-known, and perhaps under-evaluated, cultural, aesthetic and technical dynamism.

[A.F.]

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Figure 32. An image of a bodhisattva in polychrome clay, from Tapa Sardar, Afghanistan (TS 1500; Kabul National Museum; Dep. CS, MNAOR 3734).

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