The Geography of Gandhāran Art

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We should like to thank David Davison and his colleagues at Archaeopress, as always, for their consistent flexibility and efficiency in bring the volume to publication, both in print and online, on an extremely tight schedule. Our anonymous peer-reviewers made wise and helpful comments within an even more pressured timetable and the authors did not baulk at our ambitious demands for a very fast turnaround. We are grateful to them and to all who helped us to meet our aim of bringing the workshop papers to fruition within a year.

Finally, and fundamentally, we wish to express our sincere thanks to the Bagri Foundation and to Neil Kreitman, whose generous support has underpinned the Gandhāra Connections project from the outset.

Editors' note

Orthography

The editors have aimed for broad, but not dogmatic, consistency in orthography and use of diacritics, as well as some other conventions, throughout this book. We have endeavoured to apply a reasonable compromise between widely varying practices, embracing inconsistency where appropriate.

Provenance

The Classical Art Research Centre does not normally publish previously unpublished ancient artefacts which have no recorded provenance and have become known since 1970. We seek to avoid adding value and legitimacy to objects whose origins have not been properly documented. We have chosen to make an exception in the case of the heart-shaped lamp reported to have been found in Malakand District, which Stefan Baums interprets in his paper on the basis of a photograph and information provided to him. There are two reasons for this exception. Firstly, the challenges posed by the loss of provenance information are an explicit focus of the paper, which demonstrates how epigraphic evidence may be used to try and mitigate the problem and partially to re-contextualize unprovenanced objects. Secondly, the historical value of the inscription on this object makes it imperative that it should become available to scholarly discussion.

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Map of the Greater Gandhāra

region (copyright: Jessie Pons).

Fresh research on the Buddhist monastic complex of Takht-i-Bāhī

M.H. Khan Khattak

Introduction

Gandhāra has unique and diverse characteristics, distinctions, and peculiarities which cannot be encompassed or summarized easily. It has been identified as the second holy land of Buddhism and Buddhist religious practices. The historic Buddha never visited this land (Khan 1998: 53-64; Khan: 1994: 11), but many places have been identified with him during his previous births, thus making this land sacred for followers of the faith. Gandhāra has a unique and strategic location transforming it into the meeting place of divergent cultures as a result of interactions through trade, invasions, and religion. Several roads branched out from Gandhāra which provided access from Bactria in the west to Magadha (Bihar) in the east. Trade and commerce flourished owing to its remarkable geographical location that linked it with all the other important trade centers, east and west. It was connected with all the important towns of ancient India on the one hand and China, Central Asia, Western Asia, Persia, and Eastern Europe on the other. The large number of Buddhist centres of learning attracted students from the surrounding lands and far-off regions. It is famous for its unique artistic and architectural excellence, mainly relating to the Buddhist pantheon but simultaneously containing important elements of Greek, Roman, and Persian traditions, which were closely tuned, customized, and mingled with the local and indigenous artistic traditions. Gandhāra had the distinction, perhaps uniquely to begin with, of portraying the Buddha in human form and producing episodes from his life, from birth to his passing, in soft stone very well suited for sculpting (Siddiqui 2011: 65-73).

Chongfeng Li has given an interesting account of 'Jibin' or Gandhāra on the basis of accounts of the Chinese pilgrims (Li 2012: 13-54).

> From the 3rd to the 6th century CE, 'Jibin abounds with saints and wise men'. There were frequent exchanges between Jibin and China during this period... Those who went to Jibin from China during the 4th and 5th centuries CE, either in quest of Buddhist sutras and images or simply on pilgrimages, include Fayong, Zhimeng and Zhiyan among many others. Kumarajiva (344-413 CE), a great translator and eminent monk, is recorded as having travelled back and forth between Jibin and Kucha several times. Thus, a close relationship existed between Jibin and China as far as Buddhist cultural exchange was concerned... Jibin or the Greater Gandhāra is rich of the Buddhist sites and remains... Jibin in ancient Chinese literature basically corresponds to the Greater Gandhāra.

He also mentions the number of monks who accompanied the three prominent Chinese pilgrims: 'Fayong is said to have led a group of about 25 monks, Zhimeng led 15, and Zhiyan led 4 monks from China to Jibin respectively. There are also other lists of monks in Chinese documents. So the number was considerable' (Li 2012: 13-54, n. 25).

According to Ihsan Ali, 'In the 7th century A.D. Xuan Zang (Watters 1904: I, 198-224) provides an account of the religious geography of the Peshawar Plain, as he found it. In the Peshawar area he alluded to more than 1000 Buddhist monasteries, "but they were utterly dilapidated and untenanted". He also found many stūpas in ruins. On the other hand, there were more than 100 Hindu temples, "and the various sects lived pell-mell"' (Ali 2003: 35-42). He further states that, 'Among more than 800 known Kushan sites of the Vale of Peshawar, 520 are Buddhist sites' (Ali 1999:1-29).

Coming to the topic of our discussions here, I would say that Takht-i-Bāhī is one of the most imposing, gigantic and famous of Gandhāran sites in the greater Peshawar valley, which is at the heart of the ancient Gandhāra. The site was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1980 because of the unique attributes of this great complex. This paper will address four main issues:

1. the absence of any reference to this huge Buddhist monastic complex in the accounts of the renowned Chinese pilgrims who visited Gandhāra between the fifth and eighth centuries AD;
2. controversy about the very name of the important world heritage site;
3. the unscientific approach adopted for the chronology of the huge complex;
4. the residential status of the Takht-i-Bāhī monastery.

In addition, I shall briefly highlight the importance of discoveries made during 2002-2005 and some interesting objects retrieved during the cleaning and clearance process for conservation activities from August, 2017 to February, 2018. Let us take up these issues one by one and explore how they may be resolved.

The absence of any reference to Takht-i-Bāhī in the accounts of Chinese pilgrims

We know from different sources that a large number of Chinese pilgrims visited India and Gandhāra between the fifth and eighth centuries AD. However, the following are the most prominent who left highly valuable accounts of their visits (Grünwedel 1901: 81):

1. Faxian (Fa-hien/Fa Hian/Fa-hsien) (AD 399-414);
2. Songyun (Sung Yun/Huisheng) (AD 518-521);
3. Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang/Hsuan-tsang) (AD 629-645);
4. Yijing (AD 671-695); he does not seem to have visited Gandhāra as he had taken the sea route for his journey to India and return;
5. I-tsing (AD 671-695); no information about his visit to Gandhāra;
6. U-K'ong (AD 757-764).

As Professor Sehrai observes, 'Hiuen Tsang mentions that there were about one thousand monasteries in Gandhāra'. He also refers to the popular view that 'the barbaric Huns from Central Asia destroyed it. Their king Mihiragula the Hun is charged with the destruction of sixteen hundred stūpas and monasteries of Gandhāra and slaying two third of its inhabitants' (Sehrai 2001: 52). This statement reinforces the idea that at least before the alleged destruction of a large number of *stūpas* and monasteries and the killing of such a large number of Buddhists by Mihirakula (Mahiragula; AD 502-530) (Grousset 1970: 7) there must have been flourishing monasteries in the region.

According to Alia Jawad (Jawad 2010:85-98),

> The Chinese chronicles reveal that the Gandhāran monasteries possessed the unique architecture and art, the expensive fresco, paintings and inscriptions, the statues and relief. It must have had proclaimed the wealthy status of the monasteries, that was instrumental in maintaining their prestige and patronage in a highly competitive religious arena, created by different rival sects of Buddhism. Many monasteries relied on the reputation of the sacred objects to attract patrons and to build prestige among common masses. The possession and display of the religious artifacts had become a potent source of power and competition with the rival monasteries. This religious kit had attracted the pilgrims from faraway lands. The Royal patronage and crowds of pilgrims had reinforced the power flow.

This statement invites us to ponder upon two important aspects. Firstly, patronage from royalty or rich donors was essential for the building, maintenance, and survival of religious establishments, particularly monasteries. 'The scriptural legends reveal that right from its onset, the Buddhist Vihara was developed into a self sufficient colony, growing its own food and dairy farming, its own agricultural grounds, which came into its possession as gifts from its supporters' (Jawad 2010: 85-98; Swati 1996: 12; 1997: 29). Secondly, the pious Chinese pilgrims preferred to visit those places that contained important relics or were associated with events during previous births of the founder of the faith.

We might presume that the monastery of Takht-i-Bāhī had lost royal patronage by the time the Chinese pilgrims started arriving in Gandhāra and probably the local people had also forgotten much about this otherwise important place. Further, the other sources of sustenance of the monastic complex as referred to above might also have gradually dried up for different reasons, pushing it into oblivion. A second plausible assumption might be that this gigantic complex did not contain any major holy relic or remain associated with any event in the past lives of the Buddha. If so, it would have had little or no attraction for these pilgrims and thus they would not have considered making any reference to it, though this monastery must have been included in the number of religious establishments to which the pilgrims referred. We shall return presently to the possible reasons for the omission of Takht-i-Bāhī from the Chinese accounts.

Dr Abdur Rahman has commented on a very interesting historical phenomenon in these terms (Rahman 2010:17-27):

> A mere glance over the pages of history is enough to establish the fact that place-names had in the past enjoyed a longer span of life than that of the rapidly changing human characters on the stage of history. Cities may change their masters every now and then with every new turn of history, but their names, being stuck in human memory, often stay for centuries. The force of tradition in such matters is so persistent that even when rulers of the time, high handedly or otherwise, tried to change place-names in their own favour, they very often failed to do so.

This phenomenon must also apply to Takht-i-Bāhī, but what ultimately caused the break up of this centuries-old tradition is yet to be discovered. The name of Gandhāra was also lost for centuries. 'It was from the notes regarding the valley of Peshawar left behind by Chinese pilgrims and by some classical writers that scholars early in the 19th century came to know that the Peshawar valley in ancient times was known as Gandhāra' (Rahman 2010: 17-27).

Had there been systematic and scientific archaeological excavations here before large scale plunder of the site in the nineteenth century, there would have been greater possibilities of placing this important site in a proper historic context through its rich finds. And again the obliviousness of the excavators to the importance of accurate and authentic recording of the finds from all parts of the huge complex during the so-called scientific archaeological excavations of the first two decades of twentieth century facilitated loss of whatever evidence had survived the earlier plunderers. I am confident that the actual name of this important place must have been inscribed prominently at more than one place, but such vital evidence was lost before it could be retrieved and deciphered.

Takht-i-Bāhī is located in the heart of ancient Gandhāra in the Mardan district, where 415 archaeological sites (mostly Buddhist religious/secular buildings/complexes and settlements) have been identified by the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar (Ali 2001: 56-172). This fact speaks loudly and clearly about Takht-i-Bāhī's being the centre of very lively and hectic Buddhist activities during the peak period of Gandhāran civilization. As already indicated, scholars generally believe that this important Buddhist establishment was missed out by the Chinese pilgrims visiting Gandhāra, but have found no reason for the omission. Dr Taj Ali opines that (Ali 2001: 56-172),

> In the flourishing days of the Buddhist Civilisation, Mardan, the heartland of Gandhāra, thrived with numerous villages, fortified towns and Buddhist establishments. This is fully substantiated by the archaeological remains of Takht-i-Bāhī (enrolled on the World Heritage list), Jamal Garhi, Sahri-Bahlol, Chanaka Dheri, Tareli, Mekha-Sanda and the Kashmir Smast. The famous sculpture of fasting Siddharta (the Buddha) preserved in the Lahore Museum comes from the Shikrai village near Jamal Garhi.

The modern road to Malakand from Peshawar goes around Paja Hill. At its eastern end we have the rock edicts of Aśoka at Shāhbāzgarhi; in the middle are the remains of Jamālgarhī; and at the western end is the Takht-i-Bāhī monastic establishment (Dani 1964).

Though the Chinese pilgrims mentioned the number of Buddhist monasteries in different parts of Pakistan and India, they give few names. They had not come for collecting information about Buddhist monasteries but with the clear intention of 'learning more about Buddhism in India, and of bringing back those all-important Buddhist texts' (Weerawardane 2009: 14-18, at 14). More specific, hypothetical reasons for the absence of the name Takht-i-Bāhī could be as follows.

1. They did not render each and every account of their visit in writing;
2. They visited very few Buddhist monasteries and *stūpas* themselves and in most cases based their opinion on hearsay from the local people with whom they came in contact. Presumably the monastery of Takht-i-Bāhī was included anonymously in the number of such establishments given by them.
3. They recorded their observations some time after their return to China. Obviously they depended upon their memories for recording their observations, which may not be considered reliable for a variety of reasons. They thus might have missed much important information while recording their memory-based observations.
4. Language barriers might have played a very important role in restricting their intercourse with many Gandhāran Buddhists, who included both monks and the laity. As a result, their information could not be termed truly comprehensive.
5. Their stay in Gandhāra was not for an extended period of time. They had visited Gandhāra for a short period before going to India proper, where they stayed for years. Consequently, their minds were occupied by India instead of Gandhāra and they had better knowledge about the prevailing situation and religious establishments of the former.
6. It is also possible that the Chinese pilgrims may indeed have identified Takht-i-Bāhī by its real name, but that this has not been recognized yet by scholars. Many names mentioned by these pilgrims have not yet been fully or correctly identified, while scholars hold different opinions about particular names. It is also possible that they simply did not consider this place worthy of mentioning by name in light of information provided to them by the people with whom they came in contact.
7. They were more interested in the Buddhist scriptures and pilgrimage to shrines associated in some way with the Buddha (Li 2012: 13-54; Legge 1886: 28-29; Falk 2001: 445-452) and obviously showed little interest in shrines that had no connection with the events of the previous lives of the Buddha or his personal belongings, such as his alms bowl at Shāhjī-kī-ḍherī, Peshawar. Since there was no such attraction for them at Takht-i-Bāhī, they ignored it during their visit, hence the omission from their accounts.

As Harry Falk very pertinently comments (Falk 2001: 445-452);

> Chinese pilgrims started to tour Gandhāra in the middle of the first millennium. They were shown places the Buddha supposedly had visited and they went to see monasteries housing famous body parts of the Buddha – such as hair, teeth, eyeballs, bone – or items he had used – such as his robe or staff. The Chinese pilgrims never doubted the authenticity of the Buddha's visits and items, although to our eyes the stories as well as the relics are plain forgeries.

We shall turn now to the ancient name of Takht-i-Bāhī, attempting to identify possibilities from Chinese pilgrims' accounts, particularly Xuanzang, and epigraphic evidence from the site.

Controversy about the name of the site

General Court, a French officer of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, mentioned in 1836 the mountain of *Behhi* (Takht-i-Bāhī) and the ruins of an ancient castle close to it which is attributed to Raja *Vara* – an ancient sovereign of this country (Shakoor 1946: 8; Sehrai 2001: 52; quotation from 55-56).

'The name of *Bahi* or *Bahai,* which means a *reservoir* or *baori,* has been applied to the hill on account of its possession of two small artificial tanks'. Both these tanks were mentioned by Sir Alexander Cunningham and Dr Henry Walter Bellew in their reports more than a hundred years ago (Sehrai 2001: 55-56; quotation from Cunningham 1875: 35).

The name Takht-i-Bāhī appears to have been given to this site after the Muslims settled here. However, *Bahi* or *Behhi* is neither a Pashto nor Persian word. Today we find *Bahi* ('beautiful', 'brilliant') in Arabic, used as a Muslim personal name. I am not going to suggest that this elegant site might have been named *Bahi* after a beautiful or graceful girl, but this also does not mean that I am completely rejecting this idea. Similarly, *bahhi* is also the name of a fruit with medicinal properties and a lovely aroma when mature, in English the quince (*Cydonia oblonga*), which was originally grown on rocky slopes in Asia. It is called *safarjal* in Arabic. It is possible that *bahhi* might once have grown abundantly here and the place might have been named after this fruit. I have been informed that it is still grown in the hills of Kohat on a very limited scale and only sold to the *hakims* (herbalists) at high prices.

I also suppose that the name Takht-i-Bāhī was interpeted as a 'well on the flat surface of hills' after the discovery of the Kaladarra inscription, found on a stone in Kaladarra Nadi near Dargai, to the south of Malakand Pass, and deciphered by the Norwegian Indologist Professor Sten Konow (Konow 1929: 65). It reveals the donation of a water tank and water dam to the monasteries. As Jawad describes (Jawad 2010:85-98),

> The Ara inscription, the Marghuz inscription, the Peshawar Museum inscription, the Zeda inscription, Shakardarra inscription, all refer to the donation of wells possibly to the renowned monasteries. Such wells were dug in honour of the mother and father, or other relatives, or to get merit in this life and also hereafter (*cf.* Dani 1995: 41; Konow 1929: 79, 145, 157, 162 & 165). The donative formulae on such inscriptions were considered to be so important, that sometimes their forgeries were reported.

Probably this was the reason why scholars after Dr Henry Walter Bellew (1834 - 1892) and Sir Alexander Cunningham (1814 - 1893) attempted to justify the present name of Takht-i-Bāhī by identifying the two *stūpas* on the top with artificial water tanks or wells – though wells cannot be dug at such a height. Furthermore, building artificial water tanks on a peak close to each other and away from the main monastic complex housing the core Buddhist *sangha* and the huge population on the west, east, and south of the main complex would make hardly any sense. If we take a glance at the possible provision of such facilities close to the main complex and the core population around it, we see many convenient locations on the water channels on either side of the main complex, i.e. the east and west, where such facilities could have been easily and conveniently built at different spots and even at the catchment area below, where all runoff water could have been stored in huge quantities for both drinking and irrigation purposes. Keeping in view the strong building skills of the people of the time and the availability of building material on the spot, the creation of such facilities was not a difficult job.

In Dr. Abdul Azeem's preliminary report submitted after excavations during 2002-2005, concerning the structures on top of the hill identified as wells or artificial water tanks, he writes:[1]

> Before excavations this court was covered with wild growth, bushes and debris. This court in the shape of a level mound and no structural remains were visible except a few standing walls and a portion of a round structure in the east thought to be a water well or water reservoir. After removing the wild growth and bushes, the mound was properly surveyed and included in the main grid, divided into 5x5 meter squares... The excavation work was started from the eastern side, where the so-called round well / reservoir was located... The most important discovery in this area is the exposing of two round stupa on the top court i.e. Court 1. One stupa is located on the western side while the other is on eastern side. Both the stupas are round in shape and regular made from inner and outer side. Before the excavation a portion of the round drum of the eastern

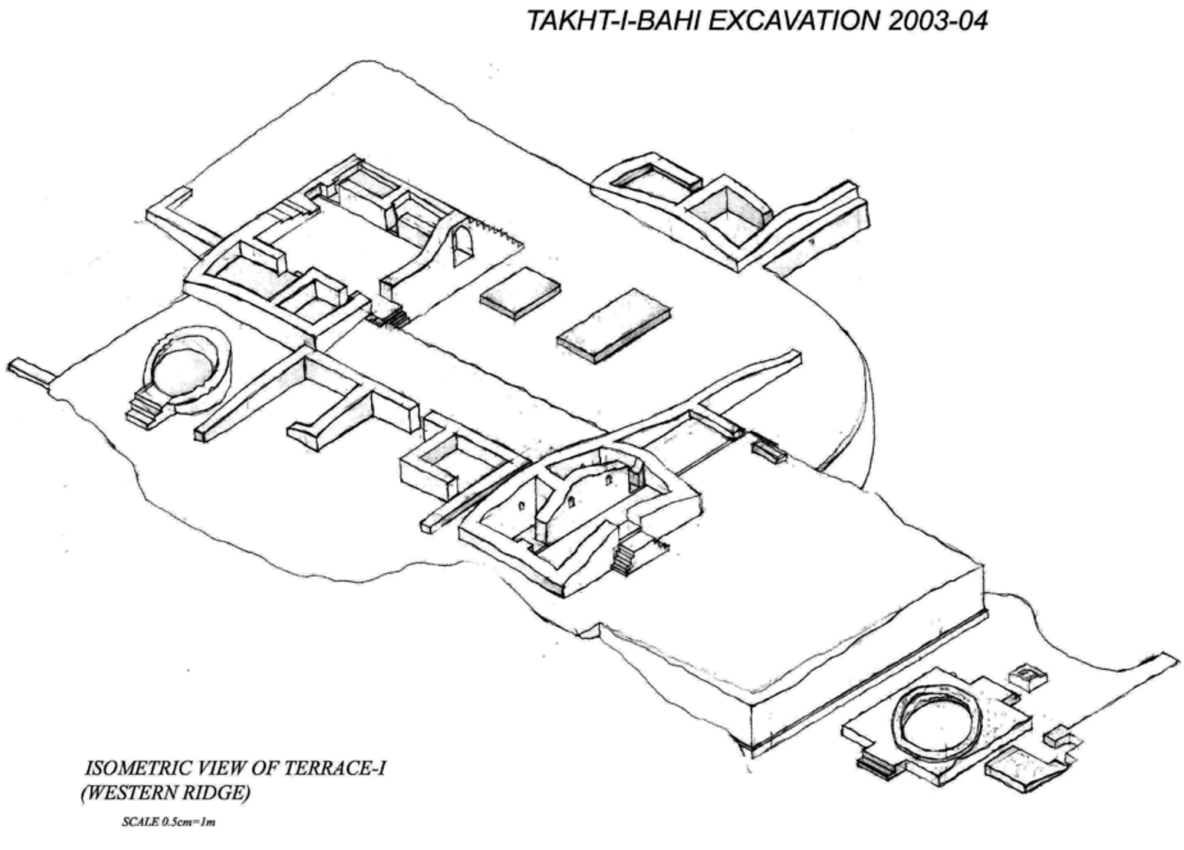

Figure 1. Isometric view of Terrace I (Western Ridge) showing the two stūpas one on the west, on an elevated part of the hill, and the other on the east, at a lower position and very close to the entrance of the ancient route to the site from Sahrī Bahlol. (Plan: courtesy of Dr Abdul Azeem.)

[1] Unpublished draft report. I am grateful to Dr Azeem for allowing me to consult this report and use it for my research for this paper.

> stupa was seen made regular from inner and outer side owing to which some scholars, visitors were in the opinion that this is either a round well or water reservoir. This kind of stupa is located near Jamal Garhi named Torabaz Banda stupa partially excavated during British time... After excavation now it is clear that the structure which was considered a well or reservoir is actually a stupa which has a unique type drum made in regular shape from both sides. In Gandhara it is a very rare type stupa, as few were recorded and the one which is located near Jamal Garhi known as Tora Baz Banda stupa.

The area where the excavations were conducted is located at the end of the old route from Sahrī Bahlol to Takht-i-Bāhī, immediately where one reaches the top, and can be better understood from the isometric view (Figure 1). The photographs of the area before and after excavations give a better idea of the actual position (Figure 2-4). Thus the theory on which an edifice was built to justify the existing name of Takht-i-Bāhī has already lost its very foundation.

According to Professor Fidaullah Sehrai, 'Not a complete historical inscription was found at the site which could throw light on the monastery except the Gondophares inscription from Shahbaz Garha village which is believed to have originally come from Takht-i-Bāhī' (Sehrai 2001: 52-53). The present name was obviously given by the Muslims, who came to this area after the Ghaznavid invasions at the dawn of the eleventh century AD. The original name appears to have been lost before the arrival of the

Figure 2. Photograph from the eastern side showing the area where the two so-called wells or water tanks were identified. In this picture the remains of the stūpa on the eastern side, which was earlier identified as a well or water tank, can also be seen. (Photo: courtesy of Dr Abdul Azeem.)

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Figure 3. Photograph showing the stūpa along with other buildings on the west after excavations. (Photo: courtesy of Dr Abdul Azeem.)

Figure 4. Photograph showing remains of the stūpa on the east below the top structures on the west. The remains of the stūpa on the west on the extreme south-western corner of the buildings on the top is not visible, being at a relatively low level. (Photo: courtesy of Dr Abdul Azeem.)

Figure 5. Photograph showing the very clear position of the stūpa on the east, with stairs from south and north to the square platform for circumambulation. (Photo: courtesy of Dr Abdul Azeem.)

Figure 6. Recent photograph of the stūpa on the east taken by the author's son, Muhammad Yousuf Habib on March 3, 2018. The original entrance for visitors from Sahrī Bahlol to Takht-i-Bāhī can also be seen behind the stūpa. This stūpa was the first to be encountered by visitors before proceeding to the main monastic complex.

Muslims who occupied the heartland of Gandhāra. As we have seen, this has also posed a difficulty in trying to identify the monastery in the chronicles of the Chinese pilgrims.

However, we find one interesting name Tan-to-lo-ka (Dantaloka) mountain in the accounts of Xuanzang a distance of above twenty *li* (10 km) north-east from Palusha (Palo Dheri) – 'a monastery with above 50 Brethren all Mahayanists' (Watters 1904: 219). Watters has designated it as the 'Mountain of punishment' and assumes that the distance is 2000 *li* (1000 km) instead of 20 *li* (10 km). He therefore looks for it somewhere in Uḍḍiyāna or in Magadha (Watters 1904: 219-20).

An identification based on a re-reading of the distance in the Chinese pilgrim's text must be in serious doubt. Furthermore, the identification of *Palusha* with *Palo Dheri* by Cunningham and Watters (Watters 1904: 217) merely on the basis of a correspondence in distances is also unreliable.

Elizabeth Errington proposes the following alternative interpretation (Errington 1993: 63):

> a note should perhaps be added regarding the *Tan-to-lo-ka* mountain visited by Xuanzang 'above twenty li' (4 miles/6.4 km) to the northeast of *Pa-lu-sha*..., for if the latter is identified as Sahri Bahlol, it seems that the former must be equated with the Takht-i-Bāhi hill. The slight discrepancies in distance and direction may possibly be explained by the fact that after travelling 2½ miles/3.4 km to the foot of the ridge, the pilgrim then would have had to turn east to reach the Buddhist site on its northern slopes. The foundation of the monastery here appears to predate the reign of Agathocles ca. 190-180 B.C., for a corroded copper coin of this ruler was excavated from the subterranean vaulted chambers on the east side of the site. It is thus feasible that the stūpa may be associated with Aśoka, as intimated by Hsüan-tsang. Perhaps, with a little imagination, the subterranean cells can even be identified as the cave associated with the Viśvantara Jātaka? The site suffered extensively from the depredations of nineteenth-century diggings, and the only tenuous evidence for occupation later than the Gandhāra period comes from Bellew. He records in the early 1860s that 'Hindu relics in abundance are met with in the ruins, such as small copper coins, with a rampant lion on one side and an elephant, superscribed with Sanskrit letters on the other,' and that, according to a local tradition, the site was said to have been abandoned after it had been sacked and burned by Mahmud of Ghazni.

Though still far from certain, Errington's proposals are logical, but I tend to disagree with her tentative identification of the subterranean vaulted chambers as 'the cave associated with the Viśvantara Jātaka'. If we have to look for this so-called cave, it can be seen not very far away from the sacred area of the Takht-i-Bāhī Buddhist complex, to the west across two peaks of the mountain at a distance of about two km or so (Figure 7). This cave might have been originally a little smaller and appears to have been expanded by chiselling the rock to provide more accommodation inside. There are remains just below this cave and extensive Buddhist structures on top of the ridge.

Without getting immersed in controversy about the distances and the stories associated with the area, I would like to mention the definition of *danta* in Sanskrit.[2] *Dánta* (दन्त) means 'peak or ridge of a mountain', while *dāntá* (दान्त) is a spiritual name and can mean *mild, peaceful.* It has been used as a religious epithet. 'Loká (लोक) means 'world' in Hindu cosmography – the universe or any particular division of it.[3] *Lokas* are often associated with particular divinities, a linkage that is also found in Buddhism, with the deities replaced by buddhas or bodhisattvas'. If we take the holistic meaning of the name, it could signify the

[2] Monier Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 2008 revision accessed online: <https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier> (last accessed 13th February 2019).
[3] Explanation from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/loka> (last accessed 13th February 2019).

Figure 7. A cave at Takht-i-Bāhī that could have been the potential place associated with the Viśvantara Jātaka. (Photo: courtesy of Dr Abdul Azeem.)

'peaceful world or calm world', or alternatively it may have some connection with the name of certain divinity. I do not exclude either Buddhism or Hinduism as a possibility, as we know from the accounts of the Chinese Pilgrim that Hinduism had already gained hold against Buddhism in the seventh century AD. The name could have been given to this place in view of its very peaceful environment at an isolated place location away from populated areas.

Coming to the epigraphical evidence, Konow has identified three Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions from Takht-i-Bāhī (Konow 1929: 62-66). He refers to the so-called Takht-i-Bāhī inscription of the year 103, which is in Lahore Museum. He has translated this inscription as follows (Konow 1929: 62):

(During the reign) of the maharaja Guduvhara in the 26 year, in the one-hundred-and-three, 103, year, on the first, I, day of the month Vaisakha, at this auspicious Paksha (this) chapel (is) the religious gift of Balasami (Balasvamin?) the Saviour, together with his son and daughter, in house of Mira the Saviour (and) of Prince Kapa, in honour of mother and father.

Obviously, this inscription does not include any name that can be given to the site and the other inscriptions are similarly unhelpful in this regard. One found by Vogel on a damaged Buddha figure and presently in Peshawar Museum reads as *Harashadasa* ('Gift of Harashada'; Konow, 1929: 63). The other, found on a piece of black pottery and preserved in Peshawar Museum, has been translated as 'In the Samgha of the four quarters of...' (Konow 1929: 63).

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Ihsan H. Nadiem also retrieved a piece of green schist which was found by some clandestine diggers in 1977 and is currently in Taxila Museum (Nadiem 1989: 209-216). This piece of stone measuring 6.8 cm in height and from 4.6 to 5.9 cm in width, contained an entire line of Kharoṣṭhi inscription. The whole reading is given below (Nadiem 1989: 209-216):

> Udakabhadre Dharma Vadha havi (viha) re bha (bhi?) khuna Sibena
> Iphano-putrena iha.
>
> Here in Udakabhadra at the Dharma-Vadha monastery (was established)
> by the bhikhu Siva, son of Iphano.

Stefan Baums has re-read this inscription as follows:[4]

> Udayabhadreṇa [ca ṭha va vi re] Bhadraśileṇa Iphaṇ[o]putreṇa saha.

He has translated this as:

> By Udayabhadra ... together with Bhadraśila, son of Iphaṇa.

Figure 8. Stone bowl found in four pieces on back side (south) of the Main Stūpa Court in an area containing some important buildings that might have remained the abodes of some very important personality (a local lord?). It was in four pieces and was restored as shown. (Photo: courtesy of Dr Abdul Azeem.)

[4] Baums 2018: 33-46 and online Catalog of Gāndhāri Texts <https://gandhari.org/a_catalog.php> CKI 0596 (last accessed 17th February 2019). The author is grateful to Dr Peter Stewart for drawing attention to the fresh reading of the inscription from Takht-i-Bāhī by Dr Stefan Baums. The author is also greatly indebted to Dr Baums for providing a published copy of his paper and the Gāndhārī Dictionary being maintained and updated on a regular basis by Dr Andrew Glass and himself.

Nadiem has tentatively identified the *Udakabhadra* of his reading with Takht-i-Bāhī and has tried to relate this somehow with the current name: 'Our present inscription should also in all probability be in commemoration of establishing some tank, well, a religious building or even a wall as a noble act. According to M. Barth, these pious works were aimed at a certain amount of publicity, but a publicity intended specially for the next world.' (Barth 1908: 246; Nadiem 1989: 209-216.)

Udaka carries different meanings including water in Sanskrit and Brahmi (Levman 2014: 145-180; Monier-Williams 1888: 183) and *bhadra* means 'auspicious' (Scherman 1945: 133-144); thus the meaning of Udakabhadra could be the 'auspicious water'.

During excavations from 2002 to 2005 at Takht-i-Bāhī by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, the excavators found a stone bowl in fragmentary condition comprising four pieces, which were restored (Figure 8). The ornamented bowl contains Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions on the inner and outer sides. Harry Falk has published it (Falk 2009: 68-72). According to Falk (2009: 69):

on the inside we read without spaces:

> bhavai raevasami nigadaka kha///.

And on the exterior:

> [?][?] *nigadaka kha rarakṣidasa vavamukhe*.

The closing *vavamukhe* must have been copied from a very carelessly written *danamukhe*, a standard term occasionally experiencing strange graphical realisations.

The combined text should have read:

> *bhavai raevasami nigadaka khararakṣidasa *danamukhe*
>
> 'At Bhava, at the residence of the king, (this) nigadaka is the pious donation of Khararakṣita.'

The term behind the spelling *bhava* could have led to the present name of Takht-i Bāhī.

Falk incorrectly mentions that this bowl was found to the north-east of the monastery on the adjoining spur. It was in fact found to the south of the monastery – an area studded with secular buildings on terraces, suggested to be abodes of some important people. According to Falk (2009: 71):

> The crucial term *nigadaka* is unknown in Sanskrit or Prakrit dictionaries. There can be little doubt that the term is to be split into the prefix *ni* and *gadaka*. Given the licenses of the Gāndhārī language, ni- can also stand for *nir-*. A plain *nigada*, together with the constant variant reading *nirgada*, is found in the medical literature, and there it almost always occurs to qualify inebriating beverages. One case is different: Ānandakanda in his *Rasavādagrantha* tells us in 1.15,120 that after drinking a certain concoction the patient will be healthy after three months. The term for 'healthy' is *nirgada*, composed of *gada*, 'sickness,' preceded by the privative *nir-*. An identical formation produces *nīroga* (*nir + roga*) with the same meaning.

Problematic approaches to the chronology of the site

According to Dr Saifur Rahman Dar, who was the first Officer-in-charge of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Circle of Archaeology in the early 1970s and then served as Director, Lahore Museum for a considerable period of time, 'the beginning of the archaeological research was made by non-professionals and in nonprofessional ways with least regard for scientific information. In most cases the sites were disturbed much to the detriment for future scientific digging.' (Dar 1998: 71-118.) Pierfrancesco Callieri, the Italian professor who worked for decades in Swat, states that, 'The archaeological activities carried out in the sanctuaries located in the plain of Gandhara and the piedmont surroundings – Sahri-Bahlol, Takht-i-Bāhī, Jamalgarhi, etc. had indeed produced ample architectural and structural evidence, but did not offer scholars firm data on their historical and cultural frame' (Callieri: 2008: 58-63).

As Professor Sehrai describes, D.B. Spooner, the Curator of the Peshawar Museum, was the first to excavate the monastery scientifically in January 1907 and continued this work during 1908-10. Later his successor, H. Hargreaves, resumed excavations during 1910-11 and 1912-13' (Sehrai 2001: 56-57). However, the excavators were not able to construct a chronological for the site. Professor Sehrai himself attempted the following chronology on the basis of the structures and their inter-relationship (Sehrai 2001: 58-59):

a. The first period extends from the first century BC to the second century AD. The earliest phase of the first period belongs to the time of Gondophares, the Parthian ruler whose inscription was supposed to have come from Takht-i-Bāhī. The second phase of this first period includes the Kushan era including the reign of Kaniṣka. In this period are included the structures of the Court of Many Stūpas, the monastery and its kitchen and refectory.
b. The second period lasts from the third century to fourth century AD, which covers the reign of the Later Kushan rulers including Kaniṣka III and Vāsudeva II. The Main Stūpa and the assembly hall are built in this period.
c. The third period lasts from the fourth century to fifth century AD and covers the reign of the Kidar Kushan. The Court of Three Stūpas has been included in this period.
d. The fourth period starts from the sixth century and covers the post-Hun period. The low level chambers and its open courtyard in the west are included in this period.

Professor Sehrai's dates are highly faulty and hypothetical. For instance, he assigns three centuries (first century BC to second century AD) to the first period and at the same time assigns the earliest phase of the first period of structures to the rule of Gondophares. Professor Sehrai himself considers the rule of the Parthian King Gondophares to be precisely AD 21-46 (Sehrai 2001: 8). If his first phase of the first period begins with the rule of Gondophares then a question arises as to how this period began in the first century BC as he claims. He also does not assign any building to the period of Gondophares or the first century BC. Indeed he does not clearly assign any of the buildings to the second phase of the first period and uses vague terms such as 'includes the Kushan era including the reign of Kanishka'. Consequently his notion does not have a firm foundation. The remaining periods, the second to fourth periods, have also been assigned hypothetically to different eras without any supporting evidence.

Ahmad Hasan Dani writing about Takht-i-Bāhī states (Dani 1995: 246):

> Unfortunately the excavators have not given us a definite clue to the proper dating of the constructions. One inscription of the time of the Parthian ruler, Gondophares is said to have been found here. It is dated in the year 103, probably equivalent to A.D. 45. If this date could be taken as a near proximity to the beginning of the monastic settlement, here, the main development phase must be placed in the peak period of the Great Kushanas, 1st-2nd centuries A.D. The third stage must be placed in the later Kushana period, 3rd -4th centuries A.D. Finally the underground monastic cell complex should probably belong to 5th-6th centuries A.D.

The periods given by Dani are thus also purely hypothetical.

The period of the Parthian King Gondophares has been assigned by scholars in the past to the first century of the current era and specifically between AD 21 and 46 (Sehrai 2001: 8), while more recently it had been placed between AD 32 and *c.* 57 (Cribb 2018: 15). Professor Dani used the earlier dating and equated the year 103 in the inscription with AD 45. He took Gondophares to have died in AD 46. However, he has ignored the remaining part of the text, which states, 'this auspicious Paksha (this) chapel (is) the religious gift of Balasami [Balasvamin?]'. It is very clear from the text of the inscription that the chapel had already been built when the plaque was fixed to it and it was dedicated. Thus an important building was already constructed at Takhti-i-Bāhī by AD 45, in the reign of Gondophares; it could have been a chapel or group of chapels. This tends to undermine Dani's hypothesis that the settlement only started then. Beside this, Professor Dani does not associate any of the surviving buildings with a specific king or dynasty i.e. Parthian, Early Kushan, etc. He only places the 'underground monastic cell complex' in the fifth to sixth centuries AD. Thus no scientific or other evidence has been given by Dani in support of his dating the site.

I personally believe that there are very good reasons to differ from both these scholars and look for alternative periods of construction for different buildings of Takht-i-Bāhī. Saeed-ur-Rehman, former Director General of Archaeology, Pakistan, who also remained the Head of the Regional Office of the Archaeology Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province from 1982 to 1996 (he was thus also in charge of the Takht-i-Bāhī Monastery and held practically all the records pertaining to the site), states that proper records and inventories are lacking for the large number of sculptures unearthed from the site and presently stored in Peshawar or museums abroad, as no scientific records were kept during excavation (Rehman 1997: 10). Similarly, he observes (Rehman 1997: 11),

> The pottery received even lesser attention than sculptures. It has been stored unceremoniously, without taking pain to label or record it properly. The pottery, if recorded decorously, would have proved to be significant vinculum in abridging the missing cultural links of the site, and to place it in a scientific chronological framework.

Rehman proceeds to describe why the history of the site is still shrouded in darkness:

> There is no proper record of the excavations, nor any reference or inventory available to the excavated material. The excavators did not place the site in a safe chronological framework. The site has been dated by Dr. A. H. Dani from 2nd to 5th century A.D., on basis of constructional phases. The remains are scattered all over the surrounding hills at Takht-i-Bāhī, right up to the famous site of Sahri Bahlol, but the boundary of the World Heritage site encloses less than half of the hill, because the excavations in Colonial Period (as no excavation was conducted after partition) were concentrated on one cluster of courtyard monasteries found on lower elevation of the hill. This cluster was labelled 'Main Monastery'. Outside of this cluster area (which represents less than one percent of the entire hill), there has been no documentation of additional and scattered sites. The only reference material available today is a small top plan of votive stupa court together with monastic stupa court (i.e. clusters of stupas exposed along with monastic cells), perhaps prepared by Mr. Hargreaves. The plan covers less than one percent of the total size of the site, and moreover, it was prepared on 1:2000 scale. A scientific report of the 'Main Monastery' excavation was never published. Excavation and mapping activities were subsequently abandoned until a repair and restoration scheme was developed and implemented over the year 1920-27 by the ASI. This work consisted of the partial restoration of the 'Main Monastery' and was supervised out of the then ASI headquarters at Peshawar.

This explanation by Saeed-ur-Rehman tells much about the current state of affairs and creates doubts even about the so-called 'scientific excavations' of Spooner and Hargreaves, as they neither published scientific reports of their excavations at the site nor properly documented the sculptures retrieved by them from different spots within the huge complex. Pottery was never given any attention and it was dumped at one place with no indication as to the area(s) from where they were found. Further, the important restoration works carried out during 1920-1927 were executed by the then Public Works Department practically without on-site supervision by a professional archaeologist and thus vital evidence that might have helped in proper dating of the different portions of the main complex was probably lost. Moreover, after independence in August 1947, the successor department of the ASI – i.e. the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan – failed to undertake any scientific archaeological excavations at the site, of which only less than one percent had been excavated during the colonial period. Archaeological excavations were, however, carried out from 2002 to 2005 by the Federal Department of Archaeology and again in 2012 by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but no scientific reports of these excavations have been published to this day.

A further problem is that no distinction has been made between the structures of the Gondophares era and those of the Kushan period. Attributing the monastery and the Court of Many Stūpas to the first period is also doubtful. Chongfeng Li and Domenico Faccenna on the basis of research at Saidu Sharif I, have established beyond doubt that there the monastery court and the *stūpa* court are contemporary. They further established that the monastery was founded together with the *stūpa* court as part of a unified scheme. According to Domenico Faccenna 'the earliest construction stage of the sacred building probably dates to the 1st century CE' (Faccenna 1995: 143-163). He further states that, 'This kind of layout, however, not only was very prevalent in Gandhāra proper and Uddiyana, but also in Taksasila, such as the monastic complex at Jaulian, Taxila' (Faccenna 1995: 143-163). As Li comments (Li 2012: 24): 'In other words, the scheme of the free-standing monastery like this had been in vogue in Jibin/the Greater Gandhara from the second century C.E. onwards.' On the basis of the notes of the Chinese pilgrims and particular reference to Song Yun and Huisheng, Li states that 'The *futu* [... stūpa] is high and large, and *sengfang* [... vihāra] is crowded off to the side' and this 'indicates clearly that the stūpa was the centre of a saṃghārāma' (Li 2012: 25). Li further states that, 'On the basis of *Fayuan zhulin* [... *Forest of Gems in the Garden of the Law*] by Daoshi [... ?-668 CE], "when a Buddhist monastery begins to be designed, *foyuan* [... the Buddha's court] and *sengyuan* [... vihāra court] have to be built separately; each has its own courtyard"' (Li 2012: 25). On the basis of the study of different Buddhist sutras and accounts of the pious Chinese pilgrims, Li confirms the traditional idea, that 'to worship a stupa is to worship the Buddha' and further states that 'Because the stūpa and the vihāra were so important components in a scheme of the Indian saṃghārāma, such a monastic complex was also translated or commonly called *tasi* [... stūpa-cum-vihāra / stupa and vihara] in Chinese' (Li 2012: 26, 28). He further states that, from the accounts of Song Yun and Huisheng, it can be easily gleaned that wherever they visited Buddhist monasteries, they found stūpas as an integral part of the same (Li 2012: 28). Consequently, the notion that the monastery and the so-called 'Court of Many Stupas' belong to the earliest period of construction does not seem to accord with established Buddhist traditions.

This analysis produces important answers to many questions relating to the chronology of Takht-i-Bāhī that result from the analysis of the structures by Dani and Sehrai. Firstly, a close relationship exists between a monastery court and a *stūpa* court (Hassan 1998: 165-177). Secondly, both were founded together as part of a unified scheme, connected with each other, and the *stūpa* was the centre of a monastery (Li 2012: 13-54). Thirdly, the earliest construction stage of the sacred buildings dates to the first century AD. Finally, to worship a *stūpa* is to worship the Buddha (Kuwayama 2008: 170-178; Bautze-Picron 2008: 164-169). It had been a firm tradition that all important and sacred monasteries contained a *stūpa* as an integral part, as confirmed by the Chinese pilgrims when they found the *tasi* (*stūpa*-cum-vihara) at all sacred Buddhist places. This also confirms beyond doubt that construction of a *stūpa* was an integral part of any monastery without which the concept of a monastery would be meaningless. *Stūpas* always remained a priority for the Buddhists and no monastery can be constructed without it – the *stūpa* is venerated as a representation of the Buddha himself.

Furthermore, it does not make any sense that the devout Buddhist waited for a century or more to think about construction of the main *stūpa* and its complex, when the *stūpa* was more important and revered than the rest of the monastery. It was more probable that the main *stūpa* was erected before constructing the monastery. It is also possible that construction of both the main *stūpa* and the monastery started side by side. Thus the monastery and the main *stūpa* courts might have been constructed simultaneously in the first period and certainly in the first century AD. The so-called 'Court of Many Stūpas' does not appear to have been constructed with the monastery proper, as the southern walls of the monastery are neither shared nor common with the northern walls of the 'Court of Many Stūpas', but both walls had been separately and independently constructed. It seems very likely that the so-called Court of Many Stūpas was originally an open space between the monastery and the main *stūpa* courts, used by the Buddhist fraternity for meeting and other important occasions before the Assembly Hall was built and the court had to be used for housing votive *stūpas* and the chapels on the north, south and east for housing images of the Buddha for worship of the devotees at a later stage. The Assembly Hall was obviously a later development after the monastery and the *stūpa* courts were completed. It was independently built as the walls of the monastery running east-west or the wall of the monastery adjacent to the Assembly Hall running north-south are not connected with its walls.

Dates cannot be assigned on the basis of the masonry of these buildings, which is diaper and does not enable chronological distinctions. Sir John Marshall maintained on the basis of his extensive research at Taxila that diaper masonry was introduced by the Parthians in the first century AD (Marshall 1960; Jansen 2008: 282-293). Thus if we accept the criteria laid down by Marshall, then most of the buildings go back to the Parthian period, which is obviously not the case at Takht-i-Bāhī. The origin of diaper masonry during the Parthian period does not at all mean that it was not in vogue in the subsequent periods. The dating techniques of both Marshall and Behrendt (Jansen 2008: 282-293; Behrendt 2004: 7) are mainly based on their study of Taxilan monuments and cannot be conclusively applied to Takht-i-Bāhī. Much care has to be taken while comparing the material and building techniques in the two places. The building material was abundantly available in the hills of Takht-i-Bāhī and the builders had not to bring different kinds of stone from other places. Further, the periods have been fixed on the basis of only one percent of the total area studded with buildings associated with this monastic complex, which can hardly be reliable, especially when based on visual observations. It is also noteworthy that Pia Brancaccio and Kurt Behrendt have opened yet another debate on the basis of epigraphic evidence from Takht-i-Bāhī that needs to be taken seriously (Brancaccio & Behrendt 2006: 175, 180).

According to Michael Jansen, 'the traditional dating of architecture is still achieved by observing masonry techniques established by Marshall' (Jansen 2008: 282-293):

1. *c.* first century BC: rubble dressed with kanjur;
2. *c.* first century AD: diaper masonry is introduced by the Parthians;
3. late second century AD: Kushan, traditional masonry with kanjur;
4. fourth to fifth century AD: semi-ashlar masonry.

The chronology or periods fixed by Marshall were based on his observations during his long stay and excavations of a large number of sites in Taxila valley. This chronology based purely on technology and visual appearance was opposed by Behrendt, who presented a new typology (2004: 7; Jansen 2008: 282-293):

1. Phase I: *c.* 200 BC. The end of the first century AD.
2. Early sacred areas in and around Sirkap, Taxila, earliest sections at the Dharmarajika complex, earliest buildings at Butkara I.

3. Phase II: *c.* end of the first century AD to the early third century AD.
4. Phase III: *c*. early third century AD to late fifth century AD.[5]
5. Phase IV: *c*. fifth century AD to *c*. eight century AD.

Michael Jansen emphasizes the importance of developing a new chronology for Gandhāran buildings such as Behrendt has attempted, but at the same time he disagrees with Behrendt's technique when he states that, 'Even most recent attempts at chronological dating (Behrendt 2004) of monastic installations relating to their temporal and spatial distribution not only in the region but also just for individual monastic complexes still remain, largely speculative' (Jansen 2008: 282-293). The monastery (*vihāra*) was usually rectangular and surrounded by high walls. It developed much later than the *stūpa* and seems to originate in the canonical form of the North-West Indian tradition in Gandhāra around the beginning of the Common Era, from where this tradition spread to the Indian subcontinent (Marshall 1960; Jansen 2008: 282-293). While the early monasteries of the Indian subcontinent were rather exposed and open to the public, the monasteries belonging to Gandhāra civilization used strong walls for protection (Fergusson 1910: 211).

According to Behrendt (2004: 158; 2018: 149-164):

> Consistently the micro-chronologies of Gandharan sites indicate that the earliest shrines are relatively small, as can be observed at Takht-i-Bāhī, Jamal Garhi, Mekhasanda, and Thareli. In contrast, shrines large enough to house monumental images are the latest additions to a given sacred area, as is the case at Jaulian with shrines C14 – C16 that were done in double course semi-ashlar masonry.

He further states (Behrendt 2004: 155, 159, 160):

> Jauliāñ is crucially important because the form of its sacred area can be linked to complex architectural developments in Peshawar Basin. The Jaulian phase III semi-ashlar image shrines can be directly compared to those found at the Peshawar Basin sites of Mekhasanda, Takht-i-Bāhī, Jamāl Garhī, Thareli, Ranigat, and Sikri. This is important because at Taxila the masonry development from rubble, to diaper to semi-ashlar and ultimately to double semi-ashlar provides a relative chronology... Let us start with the Dharmarājikā complex, as the changing masonry allows for early and late structures to be readily distinguished... The rubble and diaper masonry structures of phase I and II immediately give us a sense for the organization of this site from the time of its foundation through that of the great Kushans... The Peshawar Basin site of Takht-i-Bāhī... would appear to be somewhat later than the Dharmarājikā complex and Butkara I. The earliest part of the sacred area in the lower court is defined by the P1 main *stūpa* and a tight cluster of small *stūpas*, which in turn are enclosed by banks of image shrines built during phase III. There are also late phase III monumental image shrines in this area. The lower court at Takht-i-Bāhī is most comparable to the late sacred areaa of Mekhasanda... or Jauliāñ.

Behrendt's critical analysis of Marshall's dating and proposal of new dates for the Buddhist monastic buildings in Taxila valley seems interesting and logical. However, his notion about dating different components of the sacred area of Takht-i-Bāhī complex does not appear so compelling. His conclusion that the earliest shrines of the Gandhāran sites, with particular reference to Takht-i-Bāhī, are small conflicts with the physical evidence. Whether in the so-called 'Court of Many Stūpas' or in the main *stūpa* complex, the earliest shrines were visibly large and meant to accommodate big statues. The construction of small shrines particularly in the main *stūpa* court clearly appears to be a later idea to use the voids between the large shrines for accommodating small statues and to cater to the demands

[5] In technical terms Behrendt also uses the semi-ashlar masonry for dating in architecture (Behrendt 2004: 8)

of small donors. Even if this were not so, it appears illogical that small shrines were constructed earlier and the large shrines built later. If we accept this notion even for the sake of argument, it assumes that the early small chapels had to be dismantled first to construct large ones (ultimately with more small ones between them) which leaves no extant evidence to support Behrendt's chronology. Furthermore, Behrendt has named the Court of Many Stūpas the lower court and considered the big *stūpa* therein as the main *stūpa* (P1). While Behrendt is silent about Phase I at Takht-i-Bāhī, he has assigned the lower *stūpa* court (the so-called Court of Many Stūpas including P1 – the main *stūpa* – surrounded by many small votive *stūpas* on the eastern half of this court) to Phase II or earlier. Similarly, he has included the main monastery, including the refectory and kitchen (which he called Grid Monastery) and the south court X with small niches (what I treat as the main *stūpa* court) in Phase III-Early. Behrendt's Phase II-Middle includes shrines (chapels on north and south of the Court of Many Stūpas), some votive *stūpas,* and the entrance to the court and adjoining buildings. Finally, he assigns the Assembly Hall, underground chambers, the Three Stūpa Court, the wall of colossi, the covered passage on the south-west near Court of Three Stūpas, and the chapels on the east and south-west of the Court of Many Stūpas, to Late Phase III and Phase IV.

Let us have a cursory look at this chronology. Behrendt has assigned no part of the complex to Phase I, a period from *c.* 200 BC until the end of the first century AD, based on rubble masonry (corresponding to Marshall's first century BC). According to Shakoor (Shakoor 1946: 11-12), 'The coins of the rulers of these dynasties (Indo-Parthians, Kushans and the Little Kushans) are however rarely found in the ruins at Takht-i-Bāhī, for a religious establishment of this type is the least prolific of such finds. Yet the surrounding country has yielded a large number of these.' He further states, 'A few corroded copper coins, among which one of the Indo-Greek king Apollodotus is of particular interest; a few fragments of sculptures and some pieces of black and red pottery inscribed in Kharoshti… and with a human figure… respectively, were found in this area (so-called underground cells) in the course of excavations' (Shakoor 1946: 26).

We find reference to two kings of the Indo-Greek dynasty by the name Apollodotus, i.e. Apollodotus I Soter who ruled between 180 and 160 BC or between 174 and 165 BC (Bopearachchi 1998; 1991: 453) in the western and southern parts of the Indo-Greek kingdom, from Taxila in Punjab to the areas of Sindh and possibly Gujarat, and Apollodotus II, another Indo-Greek king who ruled in the western and eastern parts of Punjab. Bopearachchi dates him to *c.* 80–60 BC, and R.C. Senior to *c.* 85–65 BC (Bopearachchi 1998; Senior 2004). Shakoor does not mention the king to whom these eroded copper coins belonged, except in one case. However, it seems probable that they belonged to Apollodotus II (80-65 BC). The coins were found in the lowest portion of the main complex (underground cells) under more than 9 feet of debris. The extant structures of this area have already been assigned by Dani and Behrendt to the fifth-sixth centuries AD onward (Dani 1995: 246; Behrendt 2004: 7-9). This discovery opens yet another debate. How did these coins reach the site of Takht-i-Bāhī? Did some kind of buildings already exist during the second or the first centuries BC? The presence of these coins may suggest that there was some kind of human activity at this place during the Indo-Greek period (second to first centuries BC) and there must have been some buildings here. It does not seem likely that the coins came here after a gap of seven or eight centuries, when the rule of the Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians, Kushans, Sassanians, Kushano-Sassanians, and Huns had passed.

We also need to pay attention to Huu Phuoc Le's notion about dating at Takht-i-Bāhī. He writes (Le 2010: 57-58):

> There are two main approaches to the site from the southwest (A) and southeast (M)… The pointed arch in the vaulted passages in area (B) and (D) as already stated… was among the earliest instances of its structural employment in Gandhāra architecture after pointed arch in the vault…

> The earliest constructions (First century CE) were likely around entrances or (A), (B), (G), and (M)[6] where isolated vihara cells, a caityagriha chapel, and various protimagrihas are located. The remaining structures in the upper areas were constructed from the second century CE on from their well organized plans.

We shall also examine this aspect, keeping in view the discovery of coins of the Indo-Greeks and some epigraphic evidence near the entrance on the south-west, close to the so-called underground meditation cells.

During the course of recent research at Takht-i-Bāhī we came across surviving underground structures in rubble masonry in the north-western corner of Block 1 (Figure 9) on the west of the sacred area across the dry stream, while some structures in rubble, dressed masonry, and diaper masonry were also identified. Since the conservation and clearance activities are still continuing, we are looking for some concrete evidence to support our hypothesis that the history of construction at Takht-i-Bāhī may go back to the second to first centuries BC or even to the third century BC, during the reign of Aśoka.[7] The final results relating to this issue will be published soon after completion of the ongoing work.

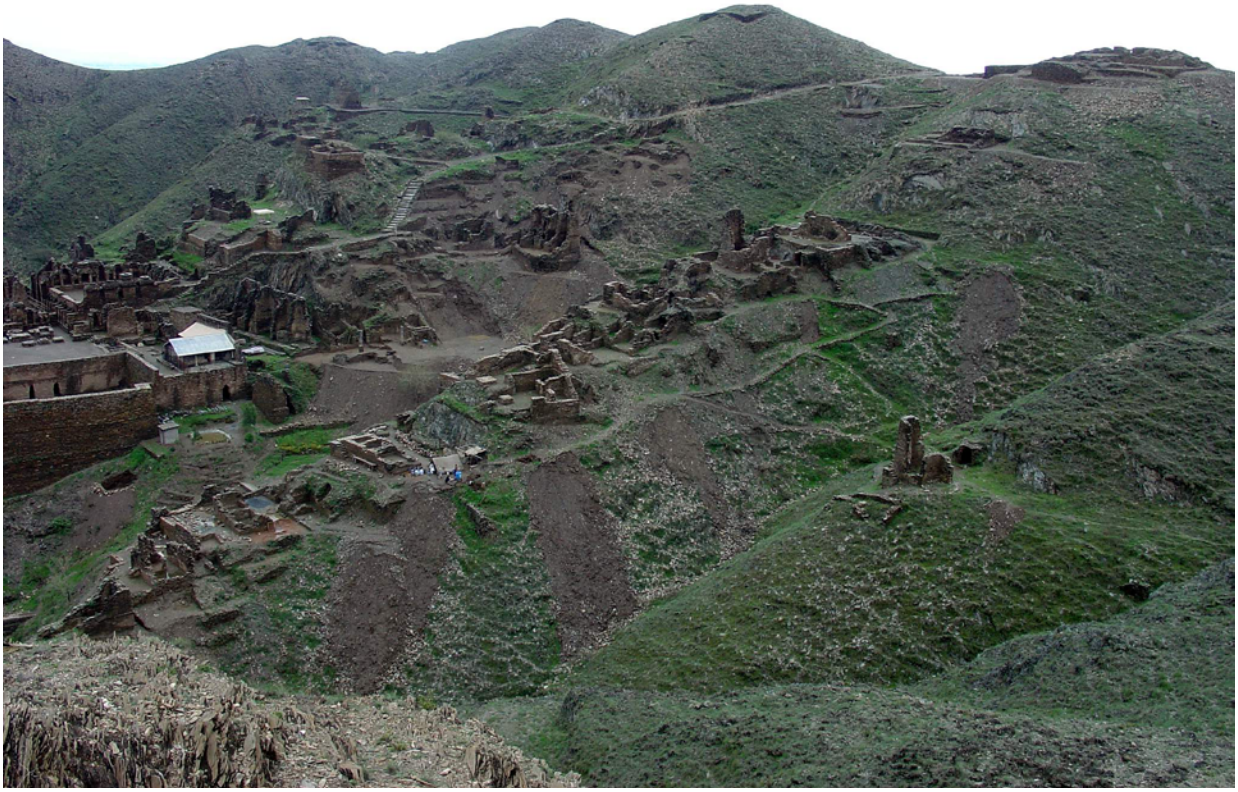

Figure 9. The buildings on the right from top down have been named Block B for the present conservation activities under the US-Funded Project titled 'To support the Preservation and Conservation of Buddhist Ruins of Takht-i-Bāhī'. The first block from the bottom has been named B-1, where the roughly built rubble masonry wall was exposed during investigation for the reconstruction of the retaining wall on the north-western corner of the block. (Photo: author.)

[6] In Le's terms (A) is the entrance on the south-west, (B) is the area of the three *stūpa* court, and (G) and (M) are the areas on the south and south-east of the main *stūpa* court.

[7] See also the most recent article on Mauryan chronology by Joe Cribb (2017).

Figure 10. Rubble masonry wall at the north-western corner of Block B1. Due to the threat of potential collapse of the entire retaining wall on the north and west of the corner, it was not possible to go deep to expose clearly the whole wall for proper photography. (Photo: author.)

The residential status of Takht-i-Bāhī monastery

As Jonathan Silk has observed, we are relatively badly informed about the mundane details of ancient Buddhist monasticism, not to mention the lives of non-monastic Buddhists (Silk 2008: esp. 11-13). From the sources we can safely deduce that the monks opting to reside in the monastery purely for meditation strictly avoided matrimonial relationships while there and were not supposed to have their families and children with them in the monastic areas during this period. However, this strict criterion cannot be applied to others staying at the monastery for the provision of services and facilities, for teaching and learning, and in the course of travelling. The extensive secular structures on tops and peaks of different ridges and terraces of the mountain range suggest the presence of a large population around the main monastic complex at Takht-i-Bāhī. We have found concrete evidence that apart from meeting the spiritual needs of the people, this religious establishment had a huge built-up area on the west, east, and south of the main monastic complex, where students receiving education presumably resided. We can infer that there were residences for the teachers imparting education to the students and monks, and officials responsible for management of the huge complex. The secular buildings (mostly two storeyed) stand scattered on the hill on the east, south, and west of the monastic complex proper, where the monks, students, visitors and pilgrims also lived. The teachers and the administrators lived on the site along with their families and there were proper arrangements for cooking and serving food to the monks, resident students, travellers and so on. An effort is made here to share the fresh knowledge gained through the recent archaeological excavations and study of the surviving buildings.

During the process of removal of debris from the earlier excavations for conservation activities, between August 2017 and February 2018, from the ten blocks of secular buildings on the west and south-west of the main monastic complex of Takht-i-Bāhī (Figure 9) across the dry water channel built

Figure 11. Terracotta markers for games found in the new excavations. (Photo: author.)

on a relatively narrow ridge extending from the southern top of the hill down towards north, we found amongst other objects, some terracotta markers made from broken pieces of potsherds (Figures 11). The labourers working with us informed us that a significant number of the same kinds of markers were also found during excavations from 2002 to 2005. Since the pottery from that excavation has not been preserved, it was not possible to trace them. We can hypothesize that the markers were used at Takht-i-Bāhī for a form of hopscotch or the game known in Urdu and Hindi respectively as *pittu* or *pittu garam* and *lagori*. But counters like this have been used for many games in different cultures and periods so caution is necessary. Gaming counters need not be associated exclusively with children, but the evidence for such games reinforces the idea that families used to reside in these secular buildings.

Figure 12. Iron knitting needles found in the new excavations. (Photo: author.)

Figure 13. Fragments of toy animal figurines found in the new excavations. (Photo: author.)

There is other evidence as well for the presence of families within this area, including women, young boys and girls, and small children. We have found what appear to be two iron knitting needles of the kind used by women today in the area (Figure 12).

Furthermore, we have found a significant number of terracotta animal figurines from the site during the clearing and cleaning process (Figure 13), which were presumably used as toys. These were found from the debris of the previous excavations left at the site and tons of debris thrown down into the water channels on the west and east and washed away by flood waters over the period of 10 to 12 years might have contained more such figurines. In this context no other possible usage of these figures could be visualized or suggested. Obviously, small boys and girls could not have stayed at this huge monastic facility without their parents. These buildings, while serving as residences of the teachers, administrators, and other functionaries related to the huge complex along with their families also might have sheltered a large number of students receiving religious education. The research in this very area is still continuing and we may be able to add more to the existing knowledge once clearance work resumes. The reappraisal of Takht-i-Bāhī given in this paper offers a fuller account of the origins, development, and social life of this centrally important site. In doing so it presents a glimpse of the complexity of individual Buddhist sites as contexts for the production of Gandhāran art within the wider ancient geography of the region.

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