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Jamālgarhī

The Buddhist monastery of Jamālgarhī is one of the major archaeological sites in the Peshawar valley. Situated on top of a hill, the site covers an area of approximately 190 m x 165 m, overlooking a village to its south (Fig. 1). Two other major Gandhāran sites, Takht-ī-Bahī and Sahrī Bahlol, are located in its vicinity to the south-west. Alexander Cunningham discovered Jamālgarhī in 1848 (Cunningham 1848), and four years later, two British officers, Lieutenant Stokes of the Horse Artillery and Lieutenant Lumsden of the Guide Corps, carried out a survey at the site (Bayley 1852). Major excavations took place in 1873 when Cunningham, then the Director of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), excavated the Main Stupa area (Cunningham 1875), and later in the same year when Lieutenant A. Crompton excavated associated courtyards, halls and monastic buildings for the Punjab Government, with the main objective to collect sculptures for the Lahore Museum (Crompton 1974a; 1974b). Further excavations and conservation were carried out by the ASI under the direction of Harold Hargreaves between 1920 and 1923 (Hargreaves 1921; 1922/23; 1924).

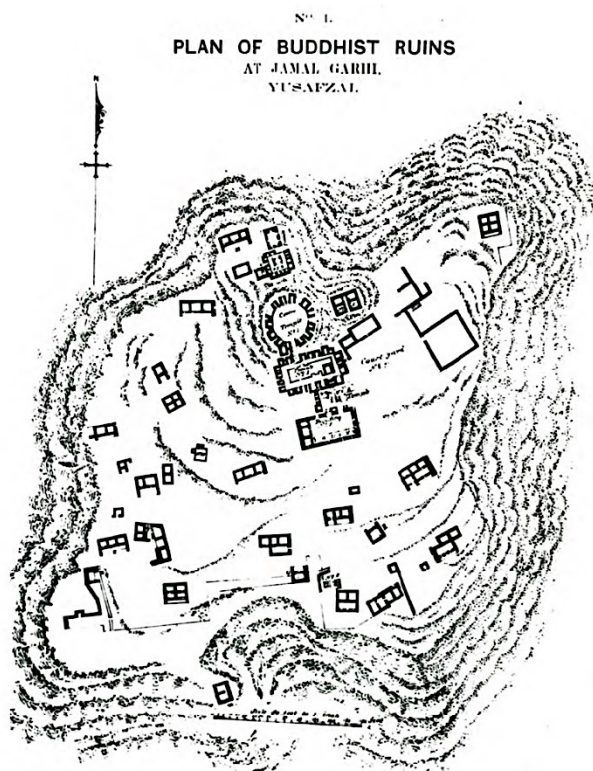


Fig. 1 Site plan of Jamālgarhī. (After Crompton 1874: plan 1 [reproduced in Errington 1987: plan 7a])

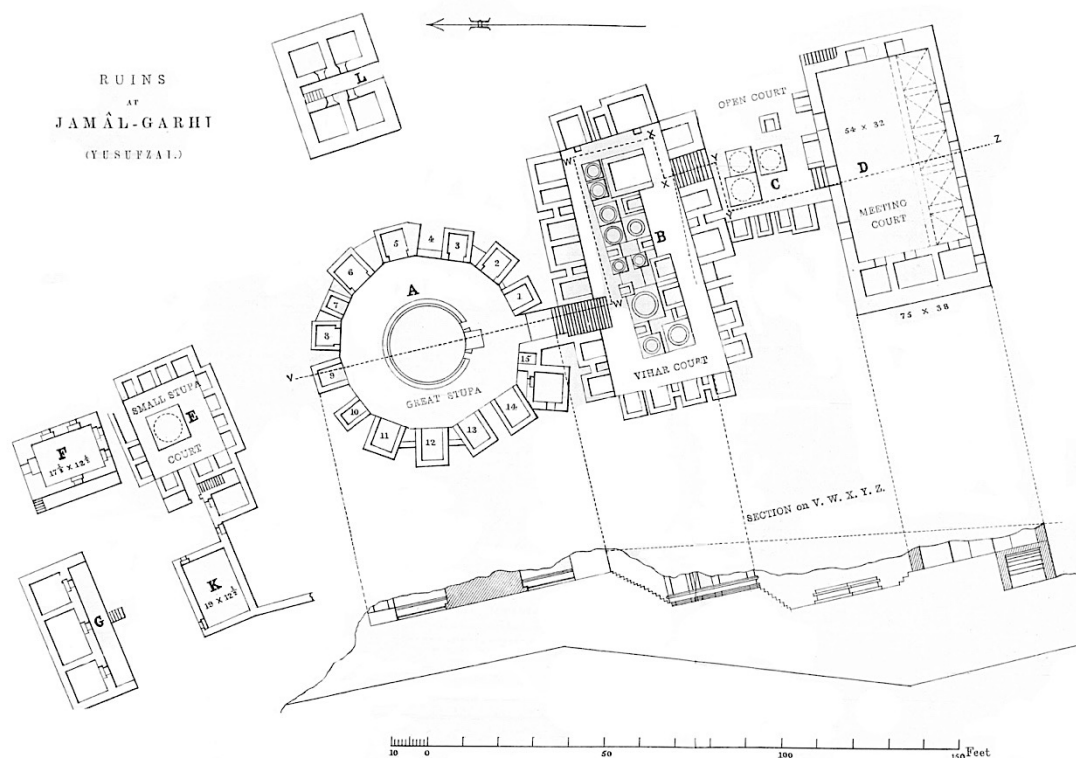


Fig. 2 Site plan of Jamālgarhī from the 1873 excavation by Cunningham (Cunningham 1875: pl. XIV)

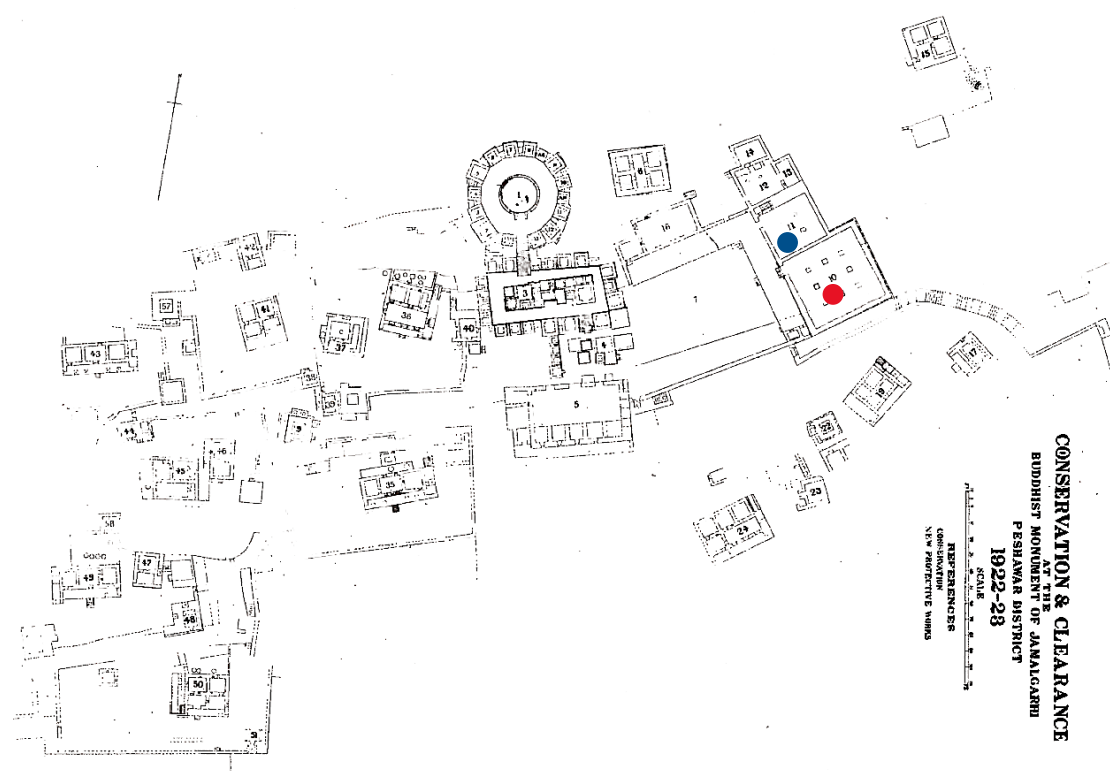


Fig. 3 Site plan of Jamālgarhī from the 1922-23 conservation & clearance by Hargreaves (Hargreaves 1922/23: pl. VIII)

Structural remains

The principal structure at Jamālgarhī monastery is the Main Stupa, which has a circular base encircled by fifteen chapels (marked A in Fig. 2). Occupying high ground at the site, the Main Stupa is connected by a staircase to a lower rectangular courtyard (marked B in Fig. 2), which contains chapels and remains of small *stūpas*. This courtyard is further connected by another staircase to a lower open courtyard (marked C in Fig. 2), which likewise contained chapels and remains of *stūpas*. To the south of this open courtyard is another small staircase leading to another courtyard (marked D in Fig. 2), which contains rooms and niches and a large empty space surrounded by high walls. To the right of the above three courtyards is a large, empty courtyard which leads to the so-called Conference Hall (No. 10 in Fig. 3, marked by a red dot) and Refectory Hall (No. 11 in Fig. 3, marked by a blue dot). The remaining structures scattered around the site comprise several individual small buildings with two to four rooms each, some with their own courtyards and small *stūpas*. The function of these individual buildings is unclear but they could have served as dwelling places for monks as well as attendants. Except for the Conference Hall, all buildings were built with diaper masonry. Some walls were built with rubble masonry. The circular base, as opposed to the usual Gandhāran square base, of the Main Stupa and the lack of a unified large monastery are two peculiarities of the Jamālgarhī Buddhist site.

Finds

Apart from inscriptions, coins and minor antiquities such as stone lamps, beads and finger rings, artefacts collected from the surveys and excavations are mainly sculptures. Of the two inscriptions recovered from the site, one, found in courtyard No. 7, is a stone slab dated in the year 359 of an unspecified era (Hargreaves 1921: 4-6). Coin finds include those of the Kushan kings ranging from Kaniṣka I to later Kushans, the majority of which belong to issues of Vasudeva I (Hargreaves 1921: 5). Silver issues of Kidara (c. AD 350-400) appear to be the latest from the site (Errington 1987: 304; 2003). These coin finds suggest that the chronology of the Buddhist site of Jamālgarhī spans from c. AD 100 to c. 400.

Upon the discovery of the site in 1848, Cunningham (1848: 104) reported that he ‘secured some very perfect specimens of Buddhist sculptures’. It is not clear from his report however to which structures these sculptures belonged. When Stokes and Lumsden surveyed the site in 1852, according to Cunningham (1848: 46) they opened the *stūpa* but apparently did not find anything inside. However, they collected an unspecified number of sculptures, mostly made of schist (Bayley 1852). These sculptures were sent to E.C. Bayley for drawing and publication, and later on to London for exhibition, where they were said to have been destroyed by fire at the Crystal Palace in 1866 (Smith 1889: 113, cited in Errington 1987: 90). The drawings and brief description of thirteen sculptures published in Bayley show that sculptures collected by Stokes and Lumsden include two stelae of standing Buddhas, one stela of a standing bodhisattva, fragments of two stelae, fragments of six relief panels, one of which was probably a scene from a *jātaka* (a past-life story; Fig. 4), a fragment of cornice, and a seated atlas (Bayley 1852).



Fig. 4 Drawing of a relief fragment collected by Stokes and Lumsden during the 1852 survey (Bayley 1852: pl. XXXI, fig. 6)

The majority of sculptures recovered from the site, however, appears to have come from the two excavations conducted in 1873 by Cunningham and Crompton (Cunningham 1875; Crompton 1874a; 1874b). Most of the sculptures were obtained from the two courtyards immediately to the south of the Main Stupa (marked B & C in Fig. 2). Many of them are made of schist and bear traces of gilding. The best amongst these, according to Crompton (1874a), came from the corner of courtyard B near the staircase that leads to the open courtyard C. None of the schist sculptures recovered by Cunningham in the Main Stupa area were found *in situ* but lying immediately in front of chapels. Likewise, many of the sculptures recovered by Crompton in the remaining areas were not found in their original places. Some relief panels, however, were found *in situ* on the risers of the staircase that connected the Main Stupa with the courtyard B (Crompton 1874a). There are also several pilasters with Corinthian capitals, also with traces of gilding.

Cunningham also described the circular base of the Main Stupa where painted stucco sculptures were still *in situ* at the time of his excavation in 1873. According to him (Cunningham 1875: 47), the circular base of the Main Stupa is 'divided into twenty sides or faces, separated by pilasters, with a seated figure of Buddha in each compartment; the whole being executed in coarse stucco, which bears many traces of having once been coloured red'. The drawings of these sculptures were provided in Bayley's publication (Bayley 1852: pl. XXV; Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 Drawing of remains of the Main Stupa at Jamālgarhī during the 1852 survey (Bayley 1852: pl. XXV)

Although a number of sculptures were recovered at Jamālgarhī by Cunningham, Stokes and Lumsden as well as Crompton, no comprehensive and systematic record of these sculptural finds were made. This makes it difficult to trace the whereabouts of individual sculptures, especially when they underwent transfer between India, Pakistan and Britain. This complication does not only apply to the finds from Jamālgarhī but also to those recovered from other Gandhāran sites during the nineteenth century. The history of the collection of Gandhāran sculptures recovered during the nineteenth century is therefore a complex matter. Sculptures collected during this early period constitute a large corpus of Gandhāran works, today scattered amongst different museums. Thanks to the work done by Elizabeth Errington (1987), however, documentation related to these sculptures was compiled and examined, and several sculptural finds, including those from Jamālgarhī, have been painstakingly traced. From her work, it is possible to locate a large number of sculptures from Jamālgarhī, which are now divided between museums in Pakistan, India and England. These include the Peshawar Museum and the Lahore Museum in Pakistan; the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, the Indian Museum, Kolkata, and the State Museum in Lucknow in India; and the British Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum in the United Kingdom.

The first group of sculptures from Jamālgarhī, collected by Cunningham in 1848, were sent to the Lahore presidency. One of them is a figure of a female guard, now in the Chandigarh Museum (Bhattacharyya 2002: 89, S. No. 54, fig. 54; Fig. 6). As mentioned, sculptures collected by Lumsden and Stokes in 1852 were first sent to Bayley for drawing and publication, and later on to London for exhibition, but were destroyed by fire at the Crystal Palace (Bayley 1852; Errington 1987). It appears that Bailey also possessed Gandhāran sculptures in his own collection, for there are seventeen Gandhāran sculptures now in the British Museum that are said to have been collected by ‘Sir Edward Clive Bayley’. Errington (1987: 89) suggests that at least two of these sculptures may have come from Jamālgarhī. The two sculptures are an atlas (Fig. 7) and an Indo-Corinthian capital from a relief (Fig. 8).

The sculptures collected by Cunningham in 1873 were first kept at the ASI in Calcutta, and later on sent to the Indian Museum in Calcutta (Kolkata) in 1876. The sculptures from Crompton’s excavation, also in 1873, were meant to be sent to the Lahore Museum, but it appears that selected fine pieces, which form the large proportion of these sculptures, were instead sent to Cunningham at the ASI in Calcutta. According to Crompton (1874a: 9A):

The sculptures discovered at Jamalgarhi weighed roughly about 100 maunds. Of these nearly 70 maunds in weight have been sent to General Cunningham. Those remaining chiefly consist of large imperfect figures of Bud or kings, and some duplicates of capitals and of bases of statues.

The remaining ‘30 maunds’ of Jamālgarhī sculptures were first retained at Peshawar and later on they were apparently transferred to the Lahore Museum (Errington 1987: 311).



Fig. 6 Female guard, collected by Cunningham in 1848, now in Chandigarh Museum (Bhattacharyya 2002: 89, S. No. 54, fig. 54)



Fig. 7 Atlas in the British Museum, recorded as collected by 'Sir Edward Clive Bayley' (© Trustees of the British Museum)



Fig. 8 Indo-Corinthian capital in the British Museum, recorded as collected by 'Sir Edward Clive Bayley' (© Trustees of the British Museum)

The '70 maunds' of sculptures, collected by Crompton, that were sent to Cunningham at the ASI were included in Cunningham's Appendix B 'List of sculptures from Yusufzai', published in the Archaeological Report on the Yusufzai for 1872-3 (Cunningham 1875). The Appendix lists sculptures that Cunningham obtained from his excavations at Jamālgarhī, Sahrī Bahlol, Takht-i-Bahī, and Kharkai between 1872 and 1873. The list contains 165 sculptural and architectural finds. Unfortunately, Cunningham did not provide the provenance of each item on his list. The sculptures from Jamālgarhī, however, appear to make the largest proportion in the list, as according to Cunningham (1875: 197), about 'nine-tenth of the whole' came from this site.¹ The sculptures from the above four sites listed on Cunningham's Appendix B were subsequently sent to the Indian Museum Calcutta. 76 (Gandhāran) fragments (or 35 listed items in ASI Appendix B) in the Indian Museum and some unspecified number in the Lahore Museum were later on sent to the India Office Museum in South Kensington, London (Errington 1987: 314). These sculptures were given to the British

¹ This should be equivalent to approximately 149 items. See Errington (1987: 311) where she argues, however, that there should be more than 149 items that came from Jamālgarhī.

Museum in 1880.² Two years later, in 1882, the Punjab Government gave 24 sculptures to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Four of them appears to have a Jamālgarhī provenance (Errington 1987: 314, 348-9).³ One of these is a fragment of cornice showing a seated Buddha under tree and three devotees (Fig. 9). In 1918, a sculpture from the 1873 excavation at Jamālgarhī was donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum by Lieutenant-Colonel R. de Villamil (see Errington 1987; appendix 8a). Hargreaves' excavation between 1920 and 1921 produced 270 artefacts, approximately 250 of which are sculptural finds. Some of these artefacts were sent to the Peshawar Museum, while the remaining items were left at the site (Hargreaves 1921b: 20-28). Other individual sculptures from the site seem to have circulated in private hands, sometimes ultimately entering museum collections such as the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.



Fig. 9 Fragment of cornice from the 1873 excavation at Jamālgarhī, given by the Punjab Government to the V&A
© Victoria and Albert Museum



Fig. 10 – Atlas from the 1873 excavation at Jamālgarhī, donated by Lieut. Colonel R. de Villamil to the V&A
© Victoria and Albert Museum

During her examination of reports, relevant documents, photographs and sculptures, Errington discovered that Cunningham implemented a system of marking Gandhāran sculptures according to their provenance (Errington 1987: 324-5). This system involves incising an initial of the site origin on each sculpture. Consequently, sculptures collected at Jamālgarhī during the 1873 excavations bear chisel mark 'J'. According to Cunningham (1885: 92-3):

All the sculpture worth preserving should be marked at once by mason's chisel with the initial letter of the place where they were found....At my suggestion the Jamalgarhi sculptures were all marked with the letter 'J' by Lieutenant Crompton; and these are now almost the only Indo-Scythian sculptures of which the findspot is absolutely known

Upon her thorough examination of sculptures and related documents, in combination with the above discovery, Errington was able to locate most of the sculptures listed in

² No comprehensive record was made. See Errington (1987: appendix 8), which resulted from her work in tracing these objects in relation to Cunningham's Appendix B.

³ Accession numbers of these four sculptures are IS.3294-1883, 3298-1883, 3292-1883, and 3290.1883.

Cunningham's Appendix B that are now scattered amongst museums in India, Pakistan and Britain. She was able to trace at least more than 70 in the BM, 5 in the V&A, approximately 50 in the State Museum of Lucknow, more than 30 in the Indian Museum Kolkata, and 27 in Chandigarh. As mentioned above, sculptures from Crompton's excavation sent to Cunningham at the ASI in Calcutta are the selected good pieces, many of which found their destination in the British Museum. These fine specimens from Jamālgarhī in the British Museum include stelae of the Buddha and bodhisattvas (e.g. Fig. 11), scenes of the Buddha, a number of stair-risers such as the ones showing scenes of *Viśvaṃtara jātaka* (Fig. 12) and *Śyāma jātaka* (Fig. 13), and a number of atlantes. These stair-risers would probably have adorned the staircase that connected the Main Stupa with courtyard B, as stated in the reports that many stair-risers were found at this spot (Crompton 1874a), and that many of them are in the British Museum (Hargreaves 1921: 3). The British Museum also possesses a panel, with an incised 'J' on its back, said to have been donated by Cunningham himself in 1887 (Fig. 14). There is also one very fine sculpture that the BM acquired in 1932. This is a panel showing the dream of the queen Māya (1932,0709.1). On its back is a faint white paint 'J 17/22', posing the question whether this fine piece may also have a Jamālgarhī provenance.

[Wannaporn Rienjang. Version 1: 17th September 2020]



Fig. 11 Standing bodhisattva from the 1873 excavation at Jamālgarhī (© Trustees of the British Museum)



Fig. 12 Viśvaṃtara jātaka from the 1873 excavation at Jamālgarhī (© Trustees of the British Museum)



Fig. 13 Śyāma jātaka from the 1873 excavation at Jamālgarhī (© Trustees of the British Museum)



Fig. 14 Miracle of Śrāvastī, donated by Cunningham in 1887 (© Trustees of the British Museum)



Fig. 15 The Dream of Queen Māyā, probably from the 1873 excavation at Jamālgarhī (© Trustees of the British Museum)

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