

## 2 The Stupa

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**Summary** 2.1 The Stupa and Its Times. – 2.2 Indirect Epigraphical Data. – 2.3 Synchronisms Between Taxila (Dharmarajika), Butkara I and Saidu. – 2.4 The Stupa and Its Decoration.

In the following pages we will be considering solely the first phase in the life of the site of Saidu (Period I, phase a), and in particular of the Stupa, as well as some of the associated monuments, with particular focus on (column) bases 75 and 69, base 80, and the bases of columns 24 and 29 (see Faccenna 1995a, fig. 32).<sup>1</sup> These are monuments related to the symmetrical plan for the very first Stupa, to which stupas 21, 31, 32 as well, possibly, as 57 [pls VII-VIII] were added immediately after to the design of the facade. Finally, we will give some consideration to the phases of abandonment and deconsecration of the site and the Stupa.

### 2.1 The Stupa and Its Times

At this point we need to define the period under consideration, before going into further detail. The chronology of Saidu is defined by a series of factors, numismatic and otherwise, concerning the late phase of the ‘Saka’ or ‘Saka-Parthian’ period. This is a particularly important historical phase, characterised by great activity and looming large in the archaeological stratigraphy, with religious foundations, extension of the fortification walls (as at Barikot) and cities, as at Sirkap (Taxila). This phase is marked by use of the Azes Era in inscriptions and the copper alloy coins of the Saka and Parthian sovereigns. Absolute radiocarbon dating of the stratigraphies in association with both these coins and the typical material culture at Barikot (‘Saka-Parthian’ phases) bring us to a period between the mid-first century BCE and the second half of the first century CE (Olivieri et al. 2019, tab. 1).

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1 See my note 18 in Haynes, Peverett, Rienjang 2020, 257.

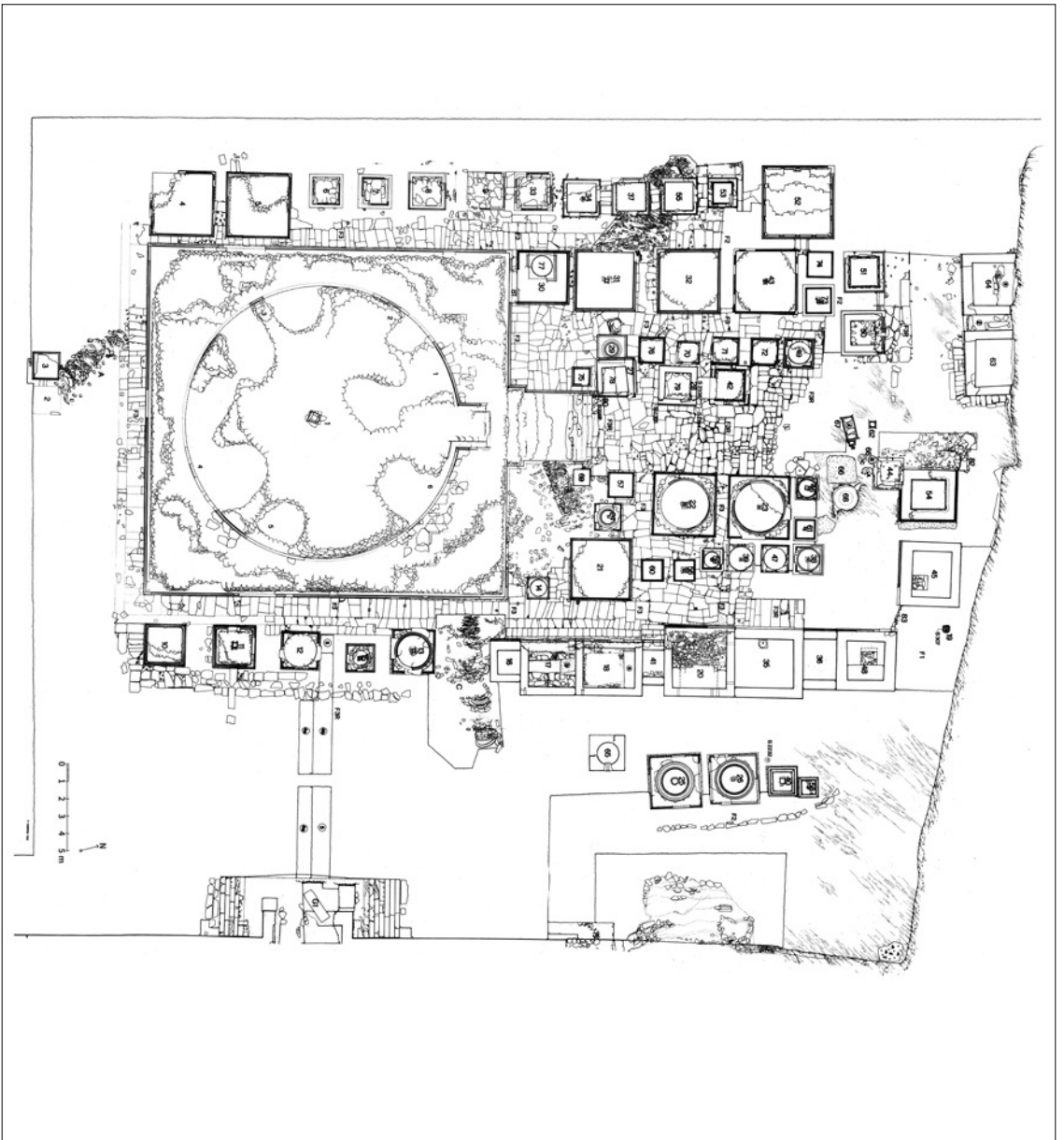


Plate VII Saidu Sharif, general map (after Faccenna 1995; drawings by Francesco Martore)



Plate VIII Saidu Sharif, general map with structural periods (after Faccenna 1995a, fig. 32; drawings by Francesco Martore)

With regard to the Azes Era, this study tends to follow the dating to 47/46 BCE proposed by Falk and Bennet (2009), also given the concordance with the Kharoshthi inscriptions (CKI) adopted here as *editio princeps* (Baums, Glass 2000-). If, on the other hand, we were to take the Azes Era to coincide with the Vikrama Era, as was the unanimous practice up to 2009 (for example: Salomon 1982),<sup>2</sup> we would have to shift back by ten years, to 58/57 BCE.

The question is still debatable. The 47/46 BCE dating is a reconstruction, while the previous dating (58/57 BCE) associates the Azes Era with a historically attested era. As far as the present study is concerned, the issue – which I consider crucial also for Saidu – concerns the dating of the Senavarma inscription (Salomon 1986): this would be around 70 in the first case and 60 CE in the second, thus placing the beginning of this sovereign's reign at 56 or 46 CE. As for the general chronology, a dating ten years earlier (the one based on the Vikrama Era, i.e. 58/57 BCE) would, archaeologically speaking, be more convincing for the entire sequence of events considered here. Henceforth, for the sake of completeness, the interval between these two dates will in all cases be indicated with the approximately equals sign (also known as double tilde), e.g. 28/27≈18/17 BCE or 59/60≈69/70 CE (simplified this way: 27≈17 BCE or 60≈70 CE).

The material culture of this 'Saka-Parthian' phase<sup>3</sup> shows a certain westernisation of customs, doubtless influenced by the fact that before arriving in Gandhara these peoples had spent some time in areas that were already showing a certain response to Hellenistic culture, such as Sistan (Sakastan).<sup>4</sup> Not far from there, in Kandahar, in Arachosia, Greek had been spoken since the time of Aśoka.

It is true that the use of Greek, attested in Swat in the Indo-Greek age in onomastic graffiti on vessels, disappeared (with the exception of some coin inscriptions) in the Saka phases, and was replaced in graffiti on pottery by Gandhari Prakrit (*gandhārī*) written with Kharoshthi (*kharoṣṭhī*). It is, however, also true that many new western elements found their way into the material culture of these phases. We may take, for example, the introduction of terracotta figurines known as 'Hellenistic Ladies', the decidedly Hellenising painted or moulded decorations, and the use of particular products from the Greek world like the pyramidal loom weights and tripods or *lāsana* for cooking (see Coloru et al. 2022).

This was the background to the art-historical episode that led to the apogee of the Frieze of Saidu. The development of the Gandharan sculpture school, which can be followed with a certain continuity better in Swat than elsewhere, eventually showed an abrupt advance that is worth looking into.

An important point that needs making is that we find no evidence of a sculptural tradition or art (neither local nor imported) in Swat and Gandhara before the development of Gandharan Buddhist art. Apart from the two

<sup>2</sup> "Therefore the long standing problem of the origin of the Vikrama era can now be considered solved: *Azes I was the founder of the Vikrama era*" (Salomon 1986, 68; italics in the original text).

<sup>3</sup> Archaeology has not yet been able to distinguish a 'Saka' from a 'Parthian' phase in Swat in the material evidence. The two major changes in material culture, and in pottery, occur at Barikot first in a phase in which Saka coins are dominant and Indo-Greek coins disappear (in absolute chronology ca. 50 BCE = beginning Macrophase 3b), and then in the first period associated with Kushan coins (in relative chronology ca. 80-90 CE = Macrophase 4a) (see Olivieri et. al. 2019).

<sup>4</sup> On this Saka phase in Sistan the study by Paolo Daffinà (1967) has yet to be bettered. Of the recent contributions, Gazerani 2015 on the Saka and the epic cycle of Sistan is worth adding.

enigmatic prehistoric pillar heads studied by Massimo Vidale,<sup>5</sup> the great necropolises of the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age (1200-800 BCE) and associated settlements – from which we have many terracotta figurines, both human (female) and animal – have yielded no artistic objects in stone. I exclude from the list the rough manufacture of farming implements: mortars, pestles, scale weights and sharpeners (Stacul 1987; Vidale, Micheli, Olivieri 2016). And yet a certain technique must surely have evolved in the quarry activities. Apart from agricultural tools, stone was widely used for building – for foundations and part of the superstructures – and tomb roofing.<sup>6</sup>

In the phases of what is known as the ‘second urbanisation’ of India in the North-West, in the mid-first millennium BCE, at Barikot, where we find notable evidence of transfer of ceramic models from the Ganges plain and Iran, indicative of craft specialisation (copper, iron, glass), we have no stone products apart from farming and domestic tools. We have to wait for the Indo-Greek phase to see the beginnings of a local production of small vessels and dishes in chlorite schist and steatite, which found increasingly widespread circulation (also as reliquary caskets for the stupas) precisely during the Saka or Saka-Parthian phases. From the very outset the production was highly refined, showing use of the lathe as well as fine abrasives and skilful use of the burin. It is perfectly evident that in this phase technical and pyrotechnical skills relating to chlorite stones in general must have found their way to Swat, for the same period saw a growing practice of firing vessels with talc-based slip to obtain a lasting and visibly striking effect of golden lustre (called Golden Slip Ware).<sup>7</sup> As for the production of stone vessels, sub-spherical forms occur most frequently, in some cases internally compartmented, and on a smaller scale cylindrical pyx forms, lamps and, finally, small decorated and figured plates, in some cases also compartmented (called ‘toilet trays’).<sup>8</sup> The first evidence we have of sculpture as such associated with this phase is to be seen in a metope fragment in green chlorite schist depicting an eight petals lotus flower (BKG 2726). This was found on the surface of a layer of waste material dating to the Saka-Parthian period, part of an extra-urban dump on the slope of the defensive rampart outside the walls of Barikot [figs 9-10].

Quite clearly, from the rigid forms with flattened frontal perspective of the early sculptural endeavours found at both Taxila<sup>9</sup> and Butkara I<sup>10</sup> to the subsequent production attested in both sites the advance in terms of formal elements is as distinct as it is abrupt. As we have seen, the period in question showed a proliferation of technical innovations and possibly also of

**5** Inventory nos. V 504 and V 503 (Swat Museum): Vidale 2006.

**6** We observe the first and only fully developed form of stonework in a mysterious creation found at Barikot *in situ* in strata dating to around 1100 BCE. It is a large disc of unknown function, 1 m in diameter, skilfully chiselled and smoothed on both sides (BKG 3289, Swat Museum).

**7** See Maritan et al. 2018 and the contribution by Maritan in Callieri, Olivieri 2020. The art of work in steatite and firing of it was widespread in India in the Bronze Age at Harappa and Mohenjo-dharo, but it came from the south-west regions of Iran.

**8** On which, see the study by Lo Muzio 2018 with preceding bibliography.

**9** Marshall 1951, 699-703, pls 212-13. See Marshall 1960a, §§ 3-4.

**10** Here I am referring to B 6841 (which belongs to the series of lion protome cornices of monument 14 of Butkara I; Faccenna in Faccenna, Callieri, Filigenzi 2003, fig. 6), the series of pseudo-capitals B 197, B 286, B 3396, etc. (Faccenna, Taddei 1962-64, pls DLVI-DLVIII), and series of reliefs with the Buddha (B 2147, B 6461, etc.) (Faccenna in Faccenna, Callieri, Filigenzi 2003, figs 16-17).



Figure 9 BKG 2726 (ACT; photo by Aurangzeib Khan)

transfer of expert craftsmen (indicative, here, are the loom weights).<sup>11</sup> The sudden burgeoning of artistic productions already showing maturity and yet apparently unrelated to the earlier traditions may have had to do with immigration of artists and craftsmen to a certain region.<sup>12</sup>

As we know, in the ancient and premodern world, artists and technicians in general (including in the military sphere) moved between culturally distant areas, bringing to some the technical and symbolic capital of others; suffice it to recall the Comacine masters, the Abruzzese Romanesque stonemasons, etc.<sup>13</sup> For our story we recall the cases of the artists (a painter, an ivory carver) who moved from India to the lands of the West (the Yavana country) (Scherrer-Schaub 2009, 32 fn. 18). For our particular case, the most, albeit later, striking example is Tita, the artist from Miran who

**11** As pointed out to me by Chiara Spinazzi Lucchesi, looms and weavers move together, the artisans with their instruments (including the specialist tools used by sculptors such as the drill), and never the contrary.

**12** My colleague Sara Mondini rightly reminds me of the work of Alka Patel and Elizabeth Lambourn on the movement of works and workers from Gujarat. The reader will be able to find there the most appropriate bibliographical references.

**13** And the visit by Giovanni Bellini to Istanbul: exemplary is the case of the portrait of Mehmed II, a reproduction of which adds a touch of solemnity to the entrance to Ca' Cappello, in the premises of our university department in Venice. As for examples, these are innumerable: they range from Indian craftsmen in Ghaznavid and Ghuride Afghanistan (Flood 2009a, 157) to European experts at the court of Persia and the Sikhs (e.g. see Lafont 1992; Galletti 2008). Regarding the first example, Flood explicitly speaks of “masons and mobility” with reference to symbolic and visual capital: “These juxtapositions of similar subjects executed in different idioms offer, I suggest, an example of what Terry Allen calls ‘style as consumer choice’. Allen suggests that imported forms, decorative idioms or techniques (in Allen’s case those found in some twelfth-century Syrian monuments) may sometimes have been chosen for their ‘exotic’ qualities, ‘a fashion statement in the advertising language of today’s mass market’ (Allen 1988, 108). The question of the market is relevant, for the twelfth century sees the rise of the famous urban ‘bourgeoisie’ in the eastern Islamic world, with a palpable impact on the production and consumption of ceramics, metalwork and manuscript painting” (Flood 2009a, 149-50).



**Figure 10** A view of the Barikot (Bazira): SW quarters of the city; Mt. Ilam in the background (ACT; photo by Luca M. Olivieri)

demonstrated, with his signature in Kharoshthi, that he was originally from Gandhara, although we do not know how long he and his family resided in the area of Tarim.<sup>14</sup> We shall be returning to Tita later on. Then we have the ‘Indianising’ art and associated techniques in Southeast Asia. We might take the simple and exemplary case of an important ceramics class in the Gandharan area known as ‘Fashion Ware’. This ceramics class, with its rich figurative repertoire, suddenly appeared in its already mature form in Swat and the surrounding regions in the mid-third century CE. Its appearance there can only be due to artists and master craftsmen coming from other regions.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.2 Indirect Epigraphical Data

The dating of the Seṇavarma inscription is also highly relevant to the chronology of Saidu. The simultaneous mention of a son – a young adult, we imagine – of the Kushan king Kujula Kadphises is decisive. Kujula’s occupation of Gandhara can be placed later than 45≈55 CE and was certainly consolidated by 65≈75 CE (again with respect to the two possible dates of the beginning of the Azes era). The first dating is derived from the later inscriptions mentioning Parthian sovereigns: that of the reliquary of Ariasrava (40≈50 CE) and that of Takht-i Bahi (or, better, Sahr-i Bahlol) (45≈55 CE).<sup>16</sup> The second dating is derived from the rock inscription of Panjitar (Mount Mahaban, Eastern Gandhara) which, mentioning the year 122 of the Azes era, can be put to 65≈75 CE.<sup>17</sup>

**14** As for the name Tita little can be said: the hypothesis that it is coined on the Roman name ‘Titus’ is in principle not entirely impossible, however it would be the only established case as opposed to the ‘Greek’ names of Gandhara (see Baums 2018). Echoes of the name Caesar, e.g. in the Ara inscription of the Kushana king Kanishka III (kaisara) (ca. 268 CE) and in the name of the Turki king Sāhi Fromo Kesar (eighth century) do not stand out.

**15** On this topic a specific study is to be published (by the present Author). As for the mobility of specialised artists, another quote from Flood (2009a, 150): “Precedents exist for such migrations: for example, in the *Rājatarāṅgini*, the twelfth-century Kashmiri royal chronicle, we read of a craftsman from the land of the Turks (*Turuṣkadeśa*) who was employed to gild a parasol (*chattra*) on a Shiva temple built by King Kalasha, the Hindu ruler of the Kashmir Valley between 1063 and 1089 (transl. Stein 1900, 7: 528-31). Gilding was rarely used on Kashmiri metalwork, and the context in which this commission occurs suggests that itinerant artisans were particularly valued for their possession of specific skills that were not common to the artistic production of both regions, despite their proximity” (see § “Markets, Mobility and International Hybridity” in Flood 2009b, 189-226).

**16** Respectively CKI 53 and CKI 358. For the later chronology, see Falk 2015, no. 060. The association of the inscription with its stupa-shaped reliquary would have been important to the chronology of the former (as already argued in Fussman 2003, 518) if only this association were certain. Indeed, since the discovery of these objects and their actual location are shrouded in mystery, no one can prove that the two objects are connected.

**17** With the proviso that the inscription does not mention the name of the sovereign, but “the Kushan”, a typical formula of the inscriptions of Kujula Kadphises. However, mention of the year should eliminate any doubt (Falk 2015, § 065). There should always be a counter-hypothesis, and for this (among others) readers and myself are indebted to Antonello Palumbo, who wrote to me: “We should not overlook the Panjitar inscription (CKI 59): it mentions a *maha-ṛaya[sa] Guṣaṇa[sa] rāja* which Salomon and Falk among others identify as Kujula, and a year, 122, attributed to the Azes era, although it is not mentioned. In an old article (1914, 372) J.F. Fleet observed that the form *Guṣaṇa*, with the initial G, is late: it is effectively to be found in two other inscriptions, that of Manikiala (discussed in Fleet 1913, 105), which apparently mentions someone claiming to be a distant descendant of Kanishka, and that of Kamra, on which see G. Fussman, “Documents épigraphiques kouchans” (1980, 45-58), which dates back to the time of Vasiṣka. I expect that palaeographic considerations suggest for Panjitar a date in the first rather than the third



Thus around 70 (or 60) CE, in the fourteenth year of the reign of *Seṇavarma*, the latter had explicitly acknowledged the political role of the Kushans,<sup>18</sup> who had yet to take possession of Swat but ruled over the cities of the plains which depended largely on the double harvest of Swat for their supply of foodstuffs (Spengler et al. 2020; Olivieri forthcoming). Hence the great importance and wealth of the local princes. But the *Seṇavarma* inscription has more to tell us, casting light on the personality of this unique figure in the ancient history of the valley.

Four highly significant details can be picked out amongst the many others in the *Seṇavarma* inscription. Although he was not the first of his lineage to abandon the calculation of time according to the Azes era, which continued elsewhere until it gave way to the Kanishka era, the inscription calculates the date as year 14 of the *Seṇavarma*'s reign. The inscription mentions the *saṃgha* three times,<sup>19</sup> whose settlements *Seṇavarma* was evidently favouring. *Seṇavarma* also stated that he wanted his lineage to outlive his enemies “for a thousand years’, in an expression that has puzzled more than one scholar” (Palumbo 2011, 10).<sup>20</sup> Finally, *Seṇavarma* dwelt on the royal genealogy and the metaphysical aspect of the lineage which, as we have seen, was the same as that of the Buddha.<sup>21</sup> It is evident that – at least until he had no choice but to accept the supremacy of Kujula – *Seṇavarma* had ‘big ideas’. But even with regard to Kujula, with his recollections of the latter’s son, he wished to show to posterity his familiar relations with the

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century CE; interestingly enough, on Gandhari.org [= Baums, Glass 2000-], Baums puts a question mark after ‘year 122 of Azes’, and suggests no other dating”.

**18** As for the fourteenth year, see the curious antecedent of Ashoka who enlarged a stupa in the same year of the reign: “King Piyadassi, dear to the gods, in the fourteenth year of his reign doubled the size of the *stūpa*” (English translation of Pugliese Carratelli 2003, XXIX).

**19** In the epigraphic repertory of the early first century CE, I could find no mention of monasteries, with the possible exception of the “Monastery of Rama” in inscription CKI 455 dated to the turn of the Christian era (on the issue of its authenticity, see Fussman 2015, 160-1). CKI 455 also refers to a “confraternity”, *sahayara*, the term we also find in three inscriptions dated to the first half of the first century CE (CKI 45, CKI 51, CKI 47). The term may be alternative to or developed from *saṃgha* (?). For an image of the *Seṇavarma*'s inscription, see Baums 2012, fig. 6.9.

**20** Palumbo points out the anumerical value of the term “thousand years” as sufficing to define an impressive length of time, certainly used in the Iranian world (Panaino 2018), then in the Roman world and finally in the Buddhist world (Nattier 1991, 42-8; Salomon 2018, 52). We may recall here Philip the Arab, who celebrated the millennium of the foundation of Rome. Jan Nattier writes: “In the early years of the Buddhist community the figure of five hundred years given for the duration of the Dharma in a number of scriptural sources must have seemed reasonably generous. Around the first century CE, however – that is, around five hundred years after the death of the Buddha – we begin to find a new version of the prophecy of decline. In certain Sarvāstivāda and Mahāyāna texts the life span of the Dharma is now given not as a mere five hundred years, but rather one thousand, a total sometimes treated as consisting of two ‘sub-periods’ of five hundred years each” (1991, 42).

**21** Again, Palumbo wrote to me: “The *Seṇavarma* inscription makes no reference to the kinship between the Oḍi kings and the Buddha. Now, if there is any text where such descentance should be mentioned and extolled, it is precisely that long inscription. But there is no mention, and this silence should be accounted for. The other point is that the document attesting the *Iṣmaho* = *Ikṣvāku* equivalence is about a century after the time of *Seṇavarma*. In a century many things can happen. Perhaps assimilation between the two names, which might originally have been unrelated, occurred in that period; or perhaps, if on the other hand the identity existed from the outset, it is possible that attribution of the Buddha to the lineage of *Ikṣvāku* came about later. In any case, I feel it needs to be explained why *Seṇavarma* did not state that his was the lineage of the Buddha, if this was the current opinion in his times” (personal communication).

great king.<sup>22</sup> If we conventionally accept 60≈70 CE as year 14 of the reign (depending on when the Azes era began), Seṅavarma must have ascended to the throne around 56 CE (with the Azes era at 47/46 BCE) or 46 CE (with the other option). It is, broadly speaking, in this period that the building of Saidu is to be placed, in the light of which we might not unreasonably imagine that Seṅavarma himself was the interlocutor of the artists who worked at Saidu.

We might therefore imagine the Saidu Stupa as the ‘Palatine Chapel’ of the court of the Oḍi, if not of the sovereign himself, built in the brief period of Seṅavarma’s political independence.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.3 Synchronisms Between Taxila (Dharmarajika), Butkara I and Saidu

Before returning to the Saidu Stupa, let me make a brief digression on some cornices from the sanctuary of Dharmarajika at Taxila, and their relevance to the chronology of the Great Stupa (phase 3) (GSt 3)s of Butkara I. Faccenna’s approach, based on the chronological succession between the new formal language of the phases associated with GSt 3 and the mature development we find at Saidu, sounds very convincing to me.<sup>24</sup>

The chronology of Saidu is defined on the basis of a few elements: the epigraphs on the somewhat archaic ceramic sherds (Callieri 1989) and an (imitation) coin of Azes II associated with a pavement of the Monastery of Saidu corresponding to the final phase of the first period of the Stupa.

The chronology of GSt 3 of Butkara I is clearly attributed on numismatic evidence to the Saka phase in the light of the key find of Azes II tetradrachms deliberately placed, also under the pavement of a later phase of GSt 3 (Faccenna in Faccenna, Callieri, Filigenzi 2003, 283-6; Faccenna 2001, 141). The chronology of these coins is fixed to after the second half of the first century BCE.

Helping to make the context a little more certain are the data we can glean from two cornices of shrine L of Dharmarajika, dealt with by Domenico Faccenna (2005). Both Faccenna and Chantal Fabrègues (1987) underlined how close these pieces are to the cornices of monuments 14 and 17 as well as various others from Butkara I (GSt 3 phase), see below [pl. xviii]. The two fragments from Dharmarajika (Taxila Museum, inv. no. 8509 and 8510 = cornices A and B in Faccenna 2005) both show a dedicatory inscription

<sup>22</sup> The situation reminds me - almost to the letter - of the relationship between the *bādshāh* Miangul of Swat and the British authorities of Peshawar, all between his descendant and successor, the *wali* of Swat, and the president of Pakistan in the 1950s and 1960s. The friendship and family ties between the two guaranteed the autonomy of Swat from Pakistan until 1969.

<sup>23</sup> The affiliation to the Kushans is announced in the Seṅavarma inscription: “Sadaṣkaṇa, son of the great king, chief king of kings Kujula Kadphises, son of the gods, [...] is honored” (CKI 249; Baums 2012, 231-2). For the chronology, see Falk 2015, 93-4. The *editio princeps* of the inscription can be found in Hinüber 2003.

<sup>24</sup> With a *caveat*: Faccenna writes that “[a]nche se abbiamo acquisito questi importanti elementi temporali, essi non possono risolversi in una equivalenza di principio e di fine di questa produzione. Certamente il fregio di Saidu Sharif I non costituisce il termine di essa, così come non possiamo ritenere che nn. 14, 17 e 135 di Butkara I ne segnino l’inizio” (These important temporal elements cannot be considered automatically as the beginning and the end of this production. Certainly the frieze of Saidu Sharif I does not constitute the end of it, just as we cannot assume that nos. 14, 17 and 135 of Butkara I mark the beginning) (Faccenna 2001, 145).

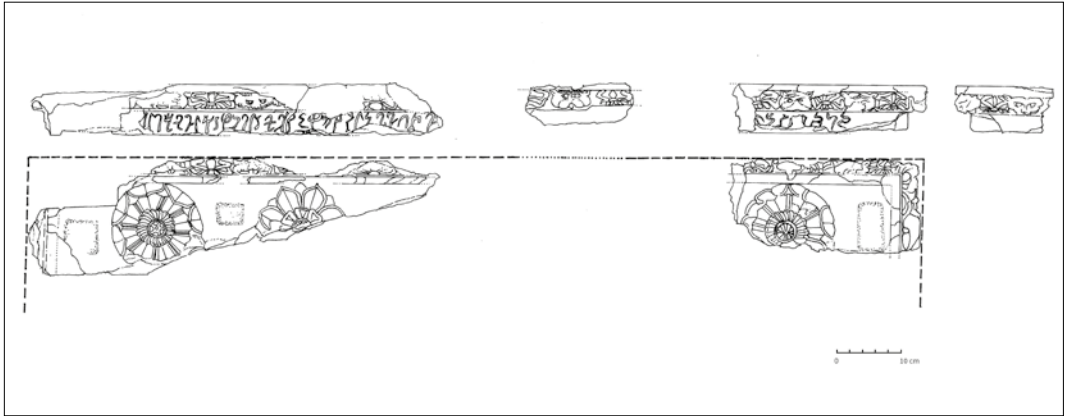


Figure 11 Three cornices from Dharmarajika (Taxila) (MAIP; drawings by Francesco Martore)

[fig. 11]. Actually, the two fragments belong to a single cornice, cornice A representing the left corner and cornice B (Fabrègues 1987, fig. 4) the right. It is a projecting cornice with leonine protomes alternating with palmettes on the (cyma reversa) outer face, while on the lower, flat one are preserved open lotus flowers of different forms. The projection of the cornice was supported by brackets, as evidenced by the shallow recesses to be seen on the lower face of both fragments. The inscriptions run along the lower fillet of the cornice, thus being very much in sight. There is also a third fragment without inscription (inv. no. 467 = Marshall 1951, 710, no. 80, pl. 217; Fabrègues 1987, fig. 3; Faccenna 2007a, figs 15-16), again from the same context; in terms of material, style and decoration it is close if not identical to the previous fragments, and indeed would appear to be part of the same cornice (but not certainly, for it shows somewhat inferior crafting). The fragment was reused in another monument, as evidenced by the cut on the lower part and the addition on the upper face of a rebate and socket for a metal cramp, which - as we know - was not utilised at the time when the piece was sculpted. As for the material, it is worth noting that Faccenna, with his thorough knowledge of the stone materials of Gandhara, observed that the chlorite schist of the cornices of Dharmarajika could have been from Swat, and is very similar to that of the cornices of Butkara I (Faccenna 2005, 92).

In the inscription on cornice A,<sup>25</sup> Stefan Baums reads: "(1) In honor of..., (2) for the gift of good health of his own relatives, friends and kinsmen, (3)... of (?) the Hoḍrea". The latter term may be associated with the Oḍi, or princes of Swat (Baums 2019, 168 fn. 5).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Inscription CKI 69: (1) ... e puyae, (2) at[va]nasa ñatimitrasalohidaṇa arogadaḥṣiṇae, (3) Hoḍreaṇa.o... (Baums, Glass 2000-, <https://gandhari.org/catalog?itemID=43>).

<sup>26</sup> I owe thanks to Stefan Baums for the reading of the inscriptions and Antonello Palumbo for this hypothesis. The latter wrote to me "As for the matter of Hoḍrea, that it may be a variant of the name better attested as Oḍi is implicitly recognised by Baums himself in his article on the toponyms in the inscriptions, seeing that he cites the phrase with Hoḍrea together with two other 'somewhat obscure expressions' (which include, respectively, the forms [u] ḍi and oḍrea) to qualify the observation that the name in question 'is consistently spelled Oḍi' [Baums 2019, 168 and fn. 5]".

On the fragment of cornice B,<sup>27</sup> where I believe the inscription CKI 185 begins (Kharoshthi is read from right to left), the inscription is translated by Baums as “in the ninety-third year”. Thus, with reference to the era of Azes, we are in either 46/47 or 35/36 CE. The central part of the inscription (i.e. of the cornice) is missing. This would be where the third fragment (a reused piece) would be placed, were it not for its poor execution.

Partial confirmation of this chronology is offered by two other fragmentary inscriptions (CKI 70-71), one being a poorly preserved cornice, both from shrine L. Both are close to the preceding inscriptions – from which we have a probable dating – in terms of material and style – and both refer to the wife of a personage we find in contemporaneous contexts a little closer to us. The donor of both, whose incomplete name (...*mitra*) recurs twice, is the wife of a certain Indraseṇa. The name Indraseṇa, although not exclusive to this period or indeed to this region, also appears in one of the most important donor inscriptions of the Avaca (CKI 257) as son of a high-ranking Śātruleka official who donated relics in 30/31 CE or 40/41 CE (again, on the basis of the era of Azes). This may be the same person, as might be proved by the dating of the cornices, which can be placed fifteen years later, when this Indraseṇa was married and his wife made personal donations.<sup>28</sup>

So where does this digression take us? If the Dharmarajika inscriptions considered here were contemporaneous with or even a little later than the pieces, they would date back to the first half of the first century. Having ascertained that the two Dharmarajika cornices are coeval given their stylistic affinities with the cornices of monuments 14 and 17 at Butkara I, the dating of the inscriptions could also apply to the Butkara I cornices. Production of these materials should any case be placed within the first half of the first century. Saidu came shortly after, just enough time (one generation later, as Faccenna says, perhaps less) for both the artists and indeed the clients to become familiar with a totally innovative language.

If we were to conjecture an absolute chronology, the Saidu Stupa could date to around the period of the intervention supported by Seṇavarma on the Ekaūḍa stupa (in 60≈70 CE).<sup>29</sup> Thus, I believe, the Saidu could be dated slightly later than hitherto supposed: it should in fact have been built shortly after 50 CE (if we accept the equivalence between the eras of Azes and Vikrama = 58/57 BCE), or in the following decade (if we take the era of Azes as 47/46 BCE). I incline towards the former hypothesis. In any case, we are in the golden age of Seṇavarma, when the Oḍi had yet to yield power over Swat to the Kushans.

<sup>27</sup> Inscription CKI 185: *sambatsa[ra]ye treṇa///(\*vadimaye...)* (Baums, Glass 2000-, <https://gandhari.org/catalog?itemID=159>).

<sup>28</sup> The fact that an inscription of members of the Avaca family cites the Oḍi is hardly surprising: in the first century it was not infrequent, to the extent that it is believed that there may have been matrimonial alliances between the two families (Salomon 1999, 153 fn. 27; Callieri 2004).

<sup>29</sup> Which makes it all the more likely that it is not that of Butkara I, given that the major restorations of phase GST 3 had been carried out there previously.

## 2.4 The Stupa and Its Decoration

The sculpture materials and the visible parts of the Stupa are in two types of schist, respectively serpentinite (green chlorite schist) and whitish talc schist. For definition of the materials I take reference from the specialist contributions appearing in the excavation reports (bibliography in Giuliano 2015, 25 fn. 8).

The Stupa rests on a square podium measuring about 20 m per side,<sup>30</sup> standing at a height of 3.32 m, with a stairway giving access on the north side. The facing of the masonry, subsequently plastered, was in small *opus isodomum* talc schist blocks. The stairway leads to the paved upper level of the podium, each corner of which is marked by a tall column in talc schist surmounted by a seated lion facing towards the centre of the Stupa. The stairway and podium show a stone railing made up of posts and cross-bars in talc schist. The Stupa is built on the podium and has a circular plan, consisting of three cylindrical bodies (drums)<sup>31</sup> and a solid dome (*aṇḍa*) surmounted by a series of umbrellas or *chattras*. The total height is estimated at 14 m. The first storey of the Stupa (15.87 m in diameter) is broader than the others (13.48 m in diameter); at 2.2 m above the level of the podium there is a path for ritual circumambulation or *pradakṣiṇāpatha*; 2.30 m in width, reached by a second stairway aligned with the principal one.

Around the second drum next to the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* was the Frieze and the accessory register decorated with a false railing (or false-*vedikā*) both in green chloritoschist [pls VIII-XI, fig. 82].

The Frieze is made up of a series of figurative scenes separated by semi-columns of the Gandharan-Corinthian order. It runs along the drum of the second storey of the Stupa with scenes arranged in a narrative sequence running clockwise. The sequence recounts the episodes in the life of Prince Siddhārtha, from conception to awakening as Buddha, and then on to the preaching, his *parinirvāṇa*, the distribution of relics and the return of Utaresaṇa to Swat. The Frieze was accompanied by an accessory register of the same height depicting a false railing. In the reconstruction proposed in this study the Frieze was set above the railing (I will explain why later on).

The Frieze was interrupted by a large central panel framed by two Gandharan-Corinthian pilasters of about 1 m in height (Faccenna 1995a, 542-3, fig. 263). These two pilasters and the two pillars with square registers constitute further evidence of a probable break in the registers of the second storey of the Stupa which, in the light of the new material, we conjecture as having been a large central figured false niche with three antas: a central panel and two side panels.

Both Frieze and false railing were topped by cornices of rows of acanthus leaves, the latter showing slight differences which we will return to later on. Above the decorated cornice of the Frieze ran a projecting cornice in plastered masonry created with same technique as the cornice of the podium: a framework of small projecting and recessed slabs coated with slaked lime and modelled with a template to create the moulding. The latter was reconstructed by Faccenna (2001, fig. 4) as consisting of fillet, cavetto, ovolo, straight reverse ovolo with dripstone and covering slab.

<sup>30</sup> The lengths of the four sides range from 20.84 to 19.92 m. See Faccenna 1995a, 433.

<sup>31</sup> Faccenna uses the term third body (storey) or second circular body (storey) (2001, 19).

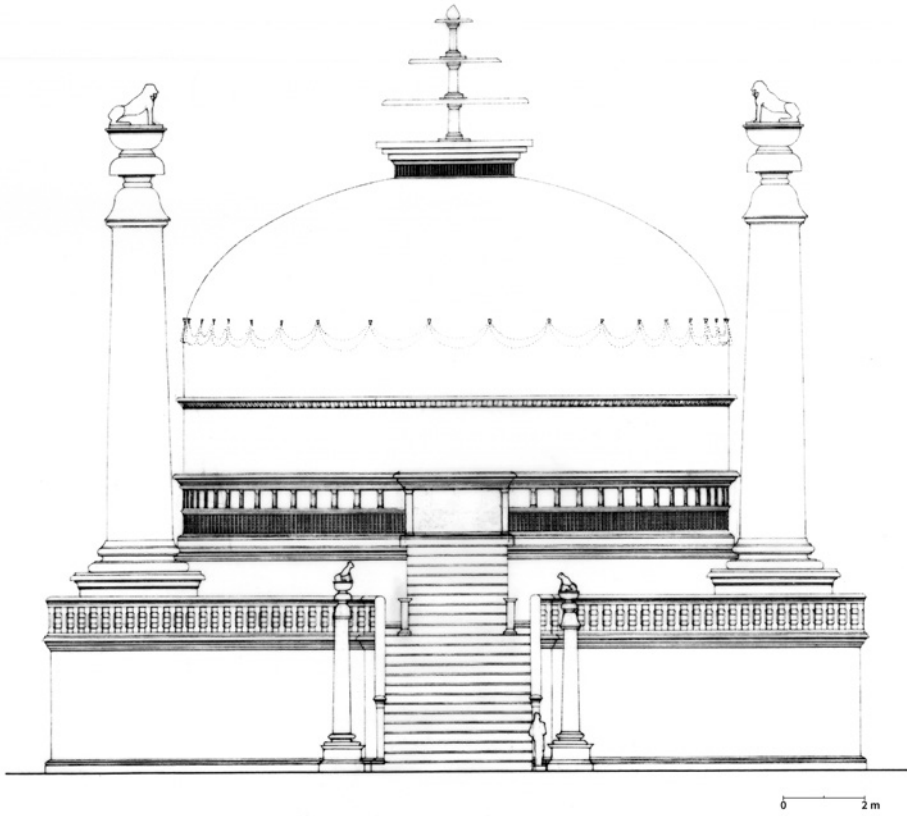


Plate IX Saidu Sharif I, main stupa, front view (N) restitution (MAIP; drawings by Francesco Martore)

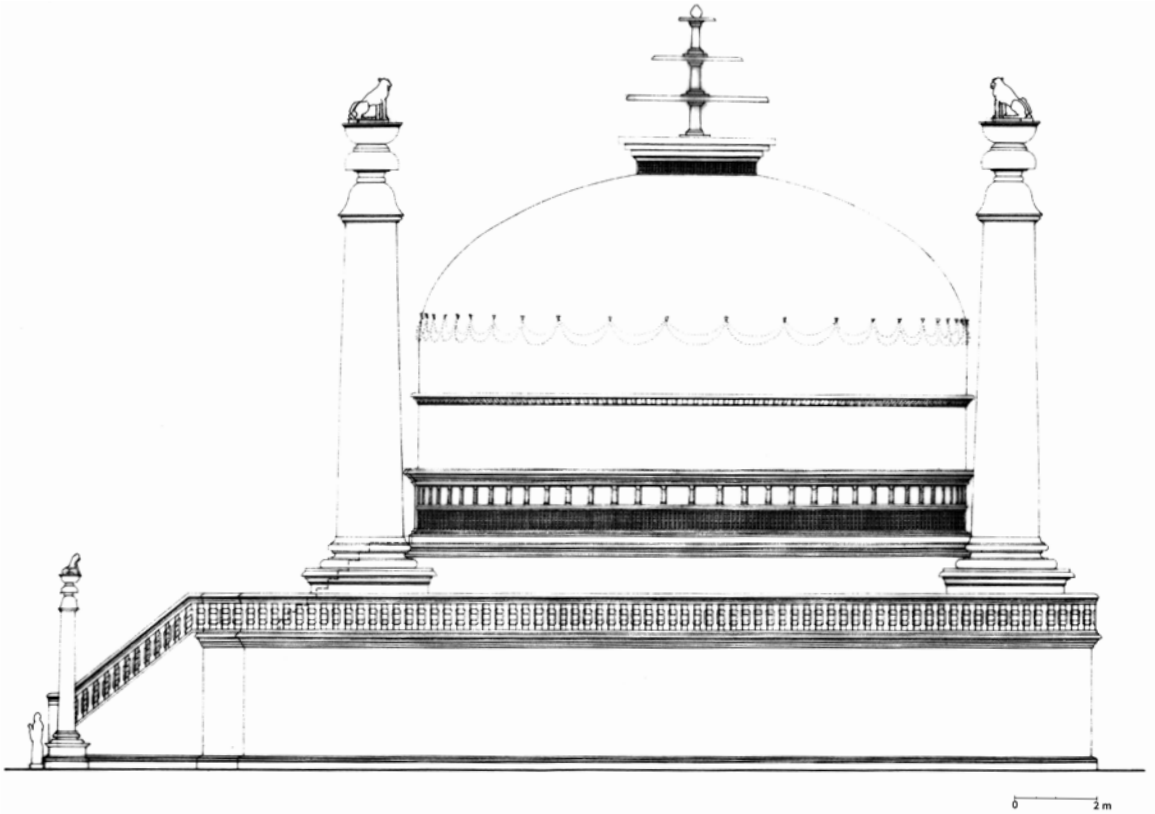
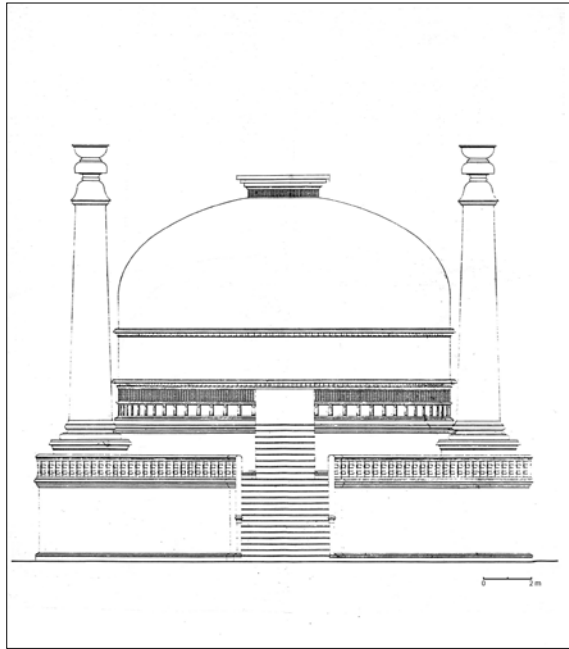


Plate X Saidu Sharif I, main stupa, side view (W) restitution (MAIP; drawings by Francesco Martore)



**Figure 12**  
A sketch of the front view of Saidu Sharif I. 1992 (MAIP; drawings by Francesco Martore)

Here we conjecture that the Frieze and the false railing were interrupted at the front, where the stairway was situated, by a large composite central panel or a false niche. It must be said that the term is purely conventional and refers to an architectural element typical in Gandharan stupas on a podium with a central staircase (Faccenna, Filigenzi 2007, pl. 20; Kuwayama 2019). The term ‘niche’ (or ‘false niche’) suggests the idea of an albeit minimal recess, while at Saidu at least (but also at Amluk-dara) the ‘niche’ is projecting from the frieze line.<sup>32</sup> So in Saidu by ‘false niche’ we mean a ‘major central panel’. The reader should bear this clarification in mind. The existence of a central false niche was not ruled out by Faccenna (1995a, 543; 2001, 46, fn. 11) and today, in the light of the new fragments yielded by the excavation, it has practically become a certainty.

That Faccenna seriously considered the matter, far more than was left in writing, is demonstrated by a drawing, reproduced here, dating from the early 1990s, in which the hypothesis, as an empty space, was made clear in a reconstructive sketch [fig. 12].<sup>33</sup> As the reader will see, the general dimensions of the central empty panel are the same as in our reconstruction, which is now based on the discovery of new sculptural fragments too large to fit into the Frieze. Today we are therefore in a position to fill that empty space.

The false railing was a continuous openwork decoration made up of small pillars and cross-bars, again in chlorite schist, set against the wall of the Stupa to represent a railing like the real one (*vedikā*) shown on the podium

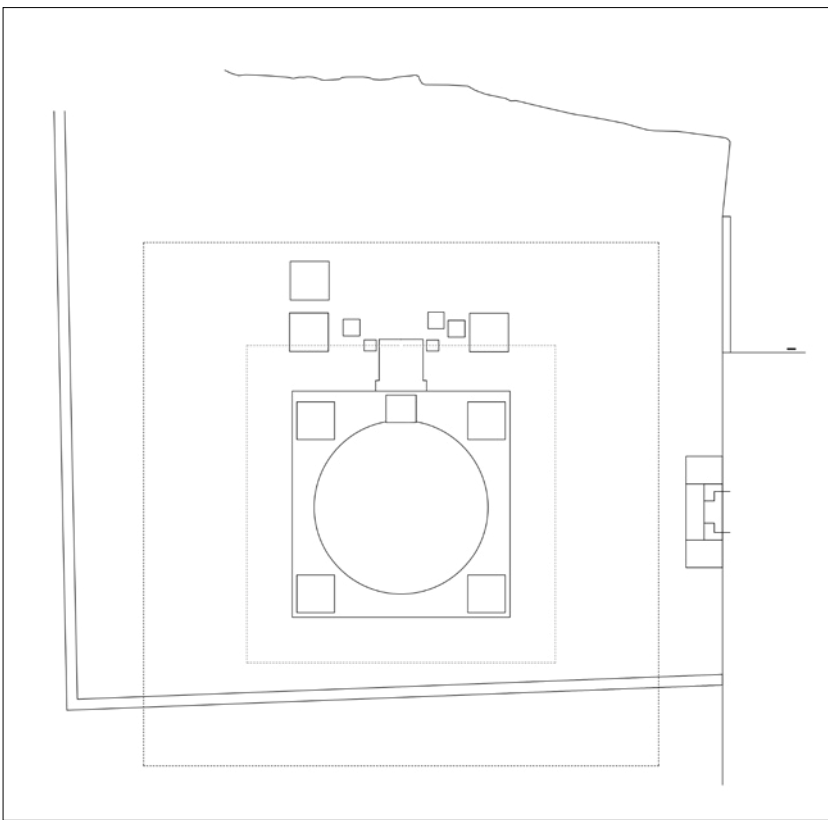
**32** A real niche in recess is found in Tokar-dara (see Faccenna, Spagnesi 2014).

**33** The drawing had already been published without comment as fig. 41 in Callieri, Filigenzi 2002.





Figure 13 SS1 182 (MAIP; photo by Antonio Amato)



**Figure 14** Saidu Sharifi, sight lines (plan) (drawings by Ian Haynes and Iwan Peverett)

and on the first stairway. The false railing consists of plain small pillars, 45 cm high, and (four) cross-bars, and may well have had at the beginning and end two posts (decorated with open lotus) set against the sides of the central false niche. With the central false niche, the pillars (about 6 per panel) would not be 396 (Faccenna 2001, 296) but 369, thus excluding the two lotus flower posts. The two pillars represent important evidence to justify the existence of a central false niche. These are in green chlorite schist and decorated with square registers of eight-petalled lotus flowers, with saw-teeth-decorated vertical fillet, 46 cm high S 1092 and SS I 182 (previously A 41; Faccenna 1995a, 545, figs 265-6) [fig. 13]. Note that, having sockets on one side only, these posts must have stood at the beginning and end of a sequence of parts: considering the dimensions, almost certainly belonging to the false railing.

Above the false railing ran the Frieze (which includes the acanthus leaf cornice) topped by the closing moulding of the second circular storey, described above.

Excluding the false niche, the Frieze appears to be made up - as I calculate - of about 60 (65 according to Faccenna but including the space of the false niche) panels in chlorite schist, reconstructed as being about 45 cm in height (excluding bases and cornices) and about 65 cm in length, including the Gandharan-Corinthian semi-columns.

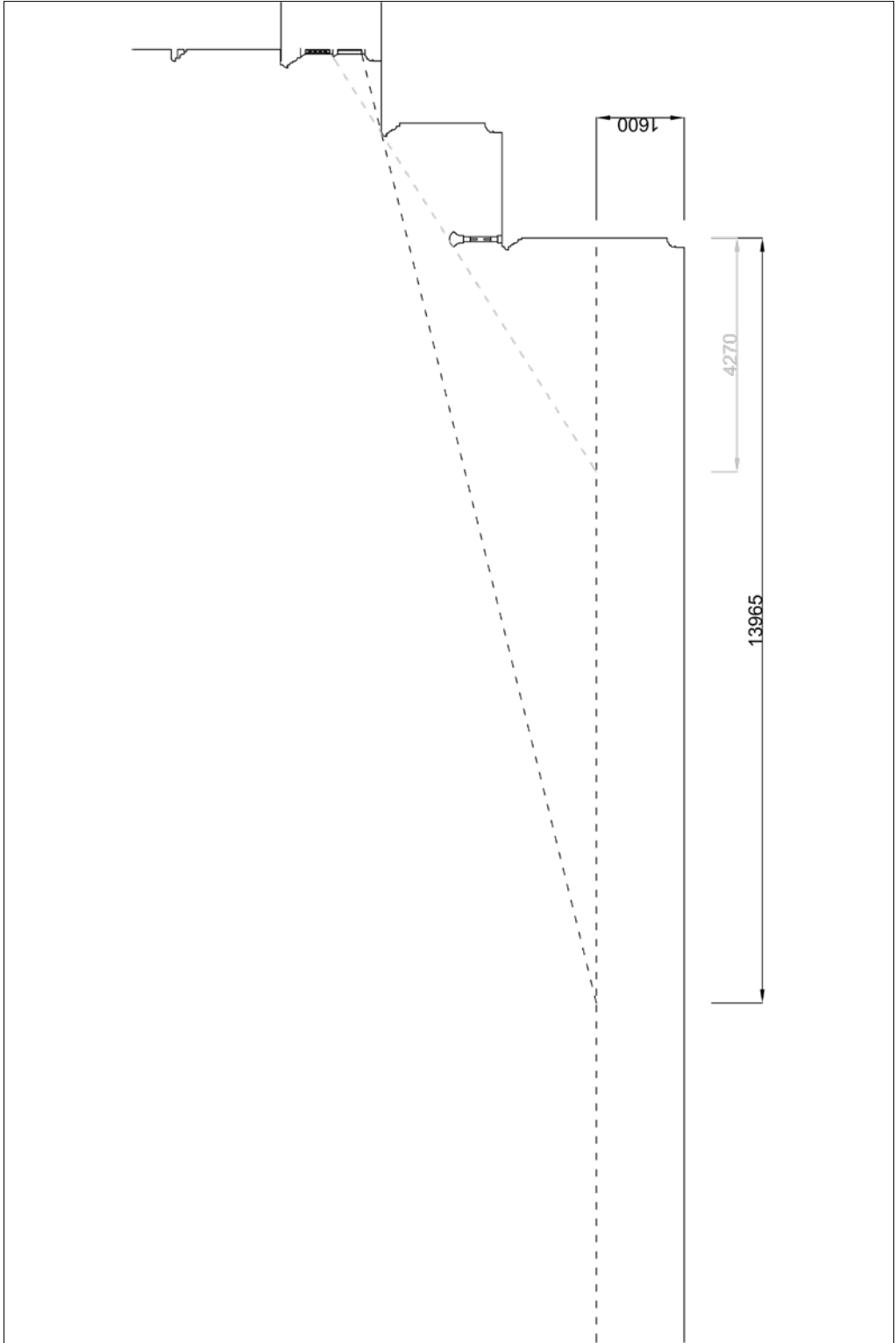


Figure 15 Saidu Sharif I, sight lines (side) (drawings by Ian Haynes and Iwan Peverett)

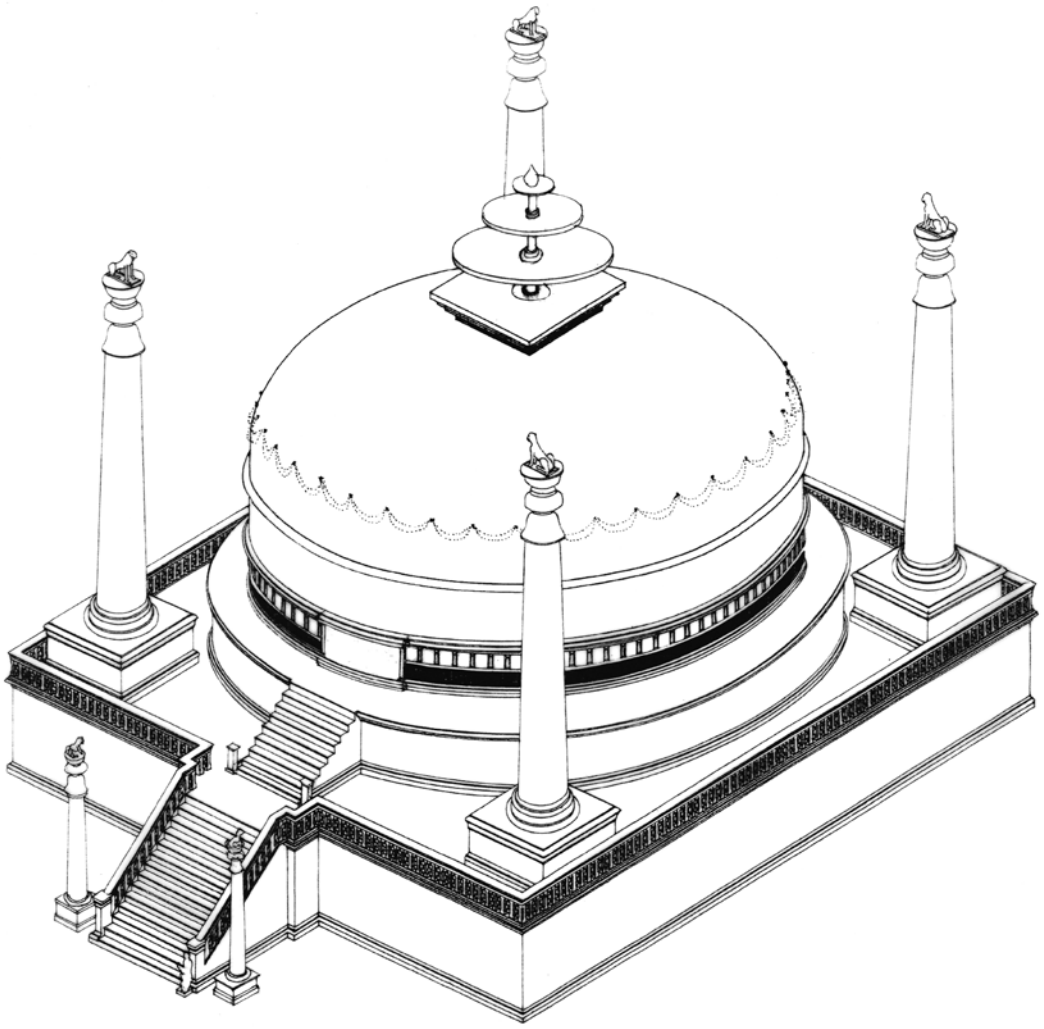


Plate XI Saidu Sharif I, main stupa, isometric view (NW) (MAIP; drawings by Francesco Martore)

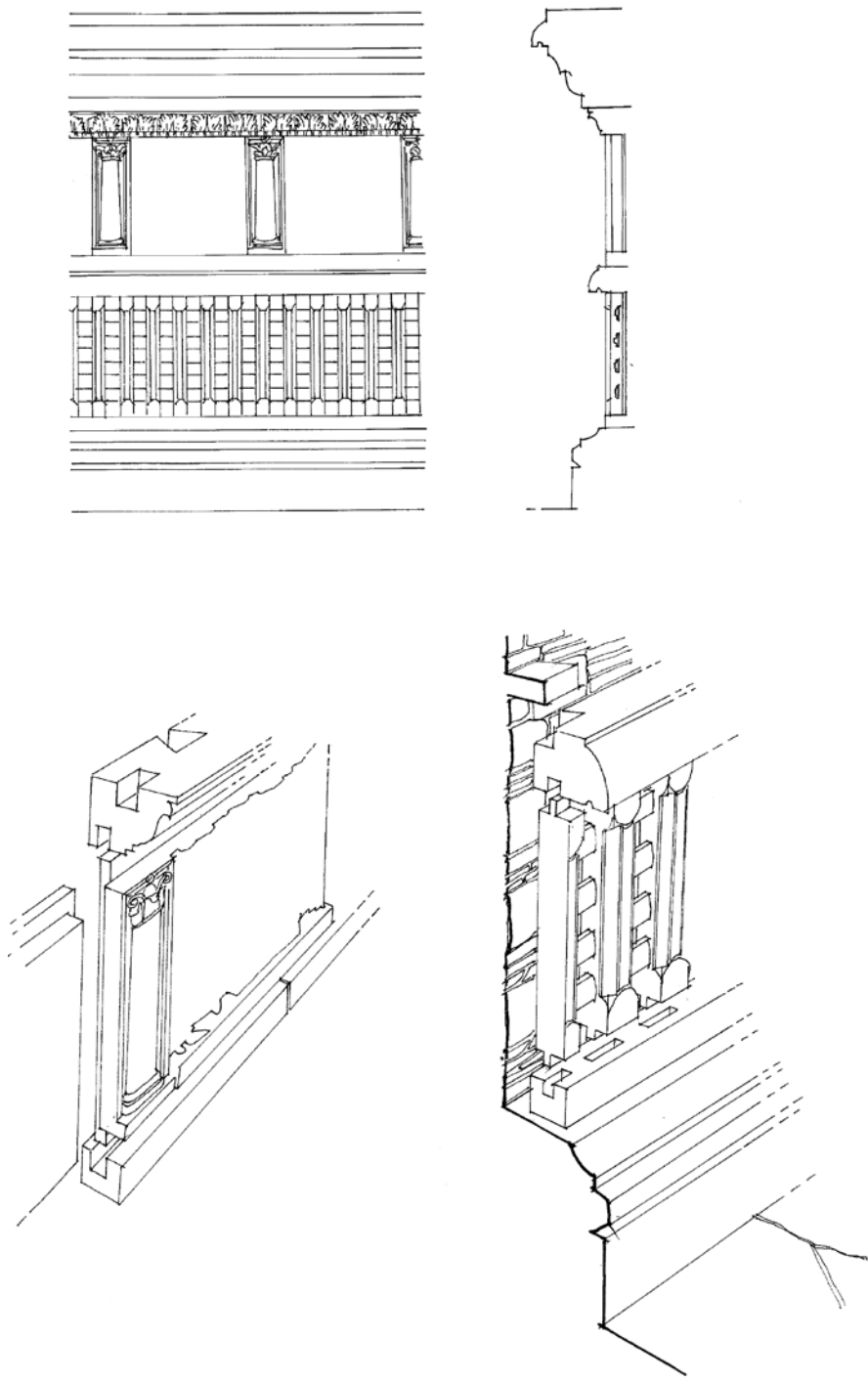


Plate XII Saidu Sharif I, Frieze and false railing, assemblage of registers (MAIP; drawings by Francesco Martore)

As we have seen, the Frieze was most probably on the second storey, and thus visible from the level of the ambulatory path (*pradakṣiṇāpatha*). In the reconstruction proposed by Faccenna based on comparison with miniature stupas and minor stupa friezes with double register (Faccenna 2001, plate 152), the Frieze was positioned below, at the level of the legs of the worshipper, while the register with the false railing ran above. In our reconstruction here, however, the Frieze was situated above, at eye level, while the false railing came below [pt. XII].

If the Frieze were situated in the lower part of the second storey, it would have been visible from outside the Stupa, as far as 10 m away, from which point onwards the Frieze would have disappeared behind the railing situated on the podium, to then gradually reappear on ascending the stairway. Only the panel situated at the centre of the opening of the two stairways would have remained visible from below the Stupa.

In the second reconstruction, which I propose here, the Frieze situated on the upper part of the second storey must certainly have remained perfectly visible from the terrace pavement level up to a distance of 4 m from the podium. This is the natural distance of approach created by the projection of the stairway. Thus, in this second reconstruction the Frieze could not only be seen by the worshipper on the ambulatory passageway but was also visible at all times from the pavement terrace of the sacred area. And indeed, in this reconstruction, therefore, the Frieze was not only closely bound up with the life of the monument but also had a public function [figs 14-15].<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> An interesting comparison can be found at Kanganahalli, where the lower panels of the stupa's drum present a false railing, while the narrative panels are at a height closer to the eyes of the worshipper. This is - as we shall see - the most precise comparison with my reconstruction, which sees the Frieze placed above the false railing.