

11 Concluding Remarks

Summary 11.1 A Few Implications. – 11.2 Post-scriptum.

11.1 A Few Implications

Some of the colleagues who read this work in its various stages before its publication have repeatedly expressed the thought that somehow the work lacked a conclusion. The observation, though fair, has put me in difficulty, as if in fact, at the present stage, I am not yet able to propose a real conclusion, or rather a conclusive definition of the theme. The topic is still open, and new data and new hypotheses will change the tenor of our knowledge very soon. Perhaps as a 'conclusion' I could instead mean the sense that studies in this direction might have for a deeper (or 'different') understanding of the problem.

In this sense, a point that must be stressed, as a direct consequence of this work, is that we need well-conducted and well-documented excavations. We can no longer equate the complexity of data that result from an excavation that is well done and well published (such as Faccenna's), with non-homogeneous data from approximate excavations, from hasty surface reconnaissance, or even worse, from illegal excavations. Moreover, illegal excavations bring with them, as a side-effect, that many data comes from pieces that only a few can see in person (this is the case, for instance, of the Senavarma inscription). A subsequent corollary of the above is that we should really start to be very careful in considering materials from illegal excavations, also because - especially in this century - they are increasingly and deliberately mixed with blatantly false materials, which intoxicate and weaken the discipline and the scientific debate.

I believe it is essential to begin to put archaeological data back at the basis of our art-historical and religious-historical study of the past. Know-

ing the reality of the past is perhaps an illusion, but the more solid and reliable data we have, the more we can propose a model of reality that, even if similar to the Platonic shadow cast on the wall, comes as close as possible to the profile of the object of our study.

While another aspect that should be emphasised is that of regional differences, we should also consider the role of 'universals' especially when it comes to the processes associated to political power and to the role of the elites. Among these processes are those of emulation and race to secure the men who can best ensure the success of emulation. In this context, the role of manual labour as a connector is particularly relevant,¹ also to understand regional differences, as we have seen in Swat, and as others have pointed out, for instance, in the Arsacid world.² The art as technique, as the discipline of knowing how to do, and of doing better than others, is probably one of the most important connectors of world history in pre-modern contexts.³ *A latere*, one should also consider that technical competence has a very important place in the Buddhist vision of human society.

11.2 Post-scriptum

While I was proofreading this work, the problem of writing a concluding chapter was somewhat overcome by the preliminary results of the excavation we were conducting in the ancient city of Barikot in the Swat valley. It is indeed true what I said in the opening, that new results could change or challenge our knowledge, and that any conclusion would be premature.

At the end of October 2021, when our fieldwork on the city's acropolis was coming to an end, we explored a series of clandestine digger's trenches in the central area of the ancient city, in the land recently acquired by the provincial archaeological authorities [fig. 88]. The excavation trench was named 'BKG 16'.

Once the pits were emptied and the intact archaeological levels were reached, the excavation of BKG 16 revealed an extraordinary Buddhist monument preserved, despite the vandalism, for over 3 m in height. It is a building on an apsidal podium on which stands a cylindrical cell, opened to the West, which housed a small stupa. The monument is located inside a rectangular *temenos* (also open to the West). On the sides of the front of the monument are a minor stupa, a cell, and the podium of a monumental pillar or column. The staircase leading to the cell has been reconstructed in three phases, the most recent dating back to the second-third century CE, coeval with a series of vestibule-rooms that led to an entrance that opened onto a public courtyard overlooking an ancient road, one of the axes leading from one of the city gates to the centre of the ancient city. In fact, the discovery

1 As I write these notes, I read about an important exhibition at the Palladian Basilica in Vicenza, significantly entitled *La fabbrica del Rinascimento. Processi creativi, mercato e produzione a Vicenza* (The Factory of the Renaissance. Creative Processes, Market and Production in Vicenza). The exhibition touches on the theme of the role of symbolic capital, and therefore also on the economic value of the technical, manual component of art in the courts.

2 I refer here to Pappalardo, Messina 2019.

3 The technique of 'doing' of the ancients or their faculty of 'well-doing' (considered in its double meaning: the ethical and practical one; cf. Giambattista Vico's *facere, facilitas, facultas* in *De antiquissima Italorum sapientia*, I, VII).



Figure 88 Barikot, aerial view of the centre of the ancient city (N at the bottom) (MAIP; photo by Malak Abrar Torwali, elaborated by M. Minardi)

of this religious monument in the centre of the ancient city of Barikot, is also linked to the discovery, in the same days, of one of the gates and street axis of the ancient city. We can hypothesise, as also at Sirkap in the Taxila valley, the existence of a real temple street along the axis of the road that from the peripheral sector of the city walls went up towards the acropolis.

The oldest stairway of the monument still bore in situ half of a step-riser with a dedicatory inscription in Kharoshthi, which can be dated to the first

century CE on palaeographic grounds (BKG 7394).⁴ The other half of the step-riser was found turned upside down, reused as a floor slab in the later phase of the monument (BKG 7393). The surviving portions of the inscription tells us that the monument (?) was made by an individual, “the son of Saṃgharākṣida” in honour of “all the buddhas” and in honour of the mother and father.⁵ The evaluation of chronology is at the beginning, but it is very likely that the monument, or rather the phase of the monument referred to in the step-riser inscription, belongs to mid-first century CE, and it is coeval with the Stupa of Saidu Sharif. In addition to the coins and the stratigraphic sequence, the ceramic assemblage is also extremely clear with its Saka-Parthian forms, intense red-orange pottery, well fired, ‘clinky’, with thick and polished slips, the so-called ‘Eastern Sigillata Ware’ type (see Maritan in Callieri, Olivieri 2020). The fact that the name “Saṃgharākṣida” was that of the father of an individual who had a dedicatory inscription written in the mid-first century CE implies that the term *saṃgha* had already entered onomastics at least two generations earlier. I must therefore correct what I wrote in the first chapters of this book. The presence of structured Buddhist communities (*saṃghas*) and monasteries should predate the Monastery of Saidu, which therefore would not be the first, but only the earliest monastery that we know.

By the way, the name Saṃgharākṣida is extremely interesting, as it is mentioned as the donor of a beautiful reliquary (obviously from a private collection) whose inscription (CKI 403) mentions the year 60 of Azes (4≈14 CE) (Baums 2012).⁶

In the year 60, on the 15th [month] of Ksandikos, by Saṃgharākṣita, son of Śiraka, a relic is established in honor of all buddhas. (transl. Baums 2012, 207)

With all the due cautions, if this Saṃgharākṣida were the same individual mentioned in the Barikot step-riser, a mid-first century chronology for the BKG 16 monument reconstruction would be further confirmed.⁷

⁴ Personal communication by S. Baums.

⁵ Personal communication by S. Baums. The final reading will be done by Baums in the forthcoming excavation report.

⁶ CKI 403 shows “distinctly archaic features of both writing and language” (Salomon 2000, 57), some of which appear to be shared by the inscriptions BKG 7393-7394 (‘all buddhas’). On CKI 403 see references in Baums 2012, where the date is resolved as 2/3 CE. The onomastic suffix *-rakṣida* (‘protected by’) is extremely common (CKI 43, CKI 50 and 267, CKI 175, CKI 441 and BC 15 [Bajaur Collection], CKI 403 and CKI 359). The latter is the donative inscription of the Avaca dynasty (Apraca) dated 22≈32 CE (Baums 2012, 218-19), which mentions Aśorākṣida, the pupil of a superintendent of a *navakarmika* (see above § 3.4).

⁷ Salomon warns us against easy associations: “[t]he name of the donor of the relics, Saṃgharākṣita, is also the name of the donor in the ladle inscription (Konow 1929, 89) as well as of one of the donors in the Shāh-jī-ki Dheri inscription (Fussman 1987, 79). But given the generic character of this Buddhist name, there is no particular reason to assume that these three Saṃgharākṣitas were the same individuals. Although the donor’s father name is Śiraka, which reminds us of Śira, the (female) donor of the Taxila gold plate inscription (Konow 1929, 86), but here too the resemblance is probably only coincidental” (Salomon 2000, 57, with refs). The presence of ‘archaic’ features in both CKI 403 and BKG 7393-7394 may not be just ‘coincidental’. If the two names referred to the same individual, it would be possible that the Saṃgharākṣita reliquary was illegally excavated in Barikot. By the way, I suspect that many objects that have recently emerged on the antiquities market were actually looted in Barikot, and that the name of the site was always cautiously omitted, knowing full well that the Italian Archaeological Mission had been active at the site for years. Not considering sculptures and



Figure 89a-b

BKG 7224 and BKG 7284 (MAIP; photo by Aurangzeib Khan)

Very important, again in relation to Saidu is the detail, certainly not minor, that amongst the decorative material of this phase of the monument in BKG 16, we found elements in greenish schist, very close to the materials of the Stupa of Saidu, in terms of material processing and forms: false railing pillars, cornice elements, double volute brackets; even their dimensions are not distant from those of Saidu, obviously smaller, but with similar proportions [figs 89a-b].⁸ This is another element in favour of the exemplary role that the Stupa of Saidu and its Master, with their technical and formal innovations, played in Swat.

The most interesting information comes from the most evident of the pre-Saka phases of the monument, which may date (?) to the Indo-Greek period (c. 150-50 BCE), as confirmed by coins and pottery assemblage. In this phase, there was an earlier monument, also surrounded by a rectangular *temenos*, with an apsidal plan looking like an enclosure with a stupa. On the outside of the apsidal enclosure there were, more or less in the same position of those of the following phase, an 'Indian' type stupa and two bases of pillar or column. The structural sequence is very well readable in the

coin hoards but only inscribed objects, in addition to CKI 403, see for example the stone vessel CKI 404 (Salomon 2000) which mentions a toponym, Vajrakuḍa (Vajrakūṭa), which in my opinion can be tentatively associated to Bazira/Vajra-Beira/Vaira i.e. Barikot (see Baums 2019, 169-70). The latter is mentioned as Vajrasthāna in a Śāradā inscriptions of the Shāhi times found on the acropolis of Barikot and now in the Lahore Museum (LM 119) (see the contribution of O. von Hinüber in Callieri, Olivieri 2020); in a fifteen-century Tibetan text (*deb-ther sngon-po* or *The Blue Annals*) Buddha himself gives a prophecy on king Indrabuthi, whose seat was located "In the northern quarter, in Śrī-Vajrasthāna, Oḍḍiyāna" (Roerich 1949, 361; curiously, the toponym is absent in Wylie 1957).

⁸ Very interesting is also the discovery, not far from BKG 16, of a small inhumation cemetery (BKG 17), which seems coeval to the Saka-Parthian phases and then to the burial of Butkara IV, which was discussed in the previous pages.



Figure 90 Barikot, aerial view of the trench BKG 16 (N at the bottom) (MAIP; photo by Malak Abrar Torwali, elaborated by M. Minardi)

aerial photograph reproduced here [fig. 90]. It should be noted that, during the excavations we found clear evidence that the ‘Indo-Greek’ monument was actually built upon an earlier structure. I am confident that our next excavation season (2022) will reveal more details of this earliest structural phase. For the moment I prefer to wait for the radiocarbon data, which will soon be available. What is certain, for the time being, is that here we have a sacred Buddhist monument configured as a sacred empty space, that was demolished and rebuilt around the middle of the first century CE. The earliest monument at BKG 16 was a chambered monument (or ‘womb-stupa’? Both terms seem to refer to the same feature), without an axial or central entrance, whose foundation may predate the mid-second century BCE. The monument was rebuilt around the mid-first century CE. In the reconstruction, the external apsidal form was maintained, but the inner chamber was filled with earth and layered stones. This way the former chamber was transformed into a raised apsidal podium on which a circular chamber, accessible by a central staircase, was built. In a second phase, a low bench-like structure was added around the apse of the podium. The inner chamber enclosed the upper part of a small stupa.

The monument belongs to a type that, to the best of my memory, was never been archaeologically documented before in Gandhara [pl. XXI]. It might be an example of the otherwise elusive ‘chambered’ or ‘womb’ stupa-monu-

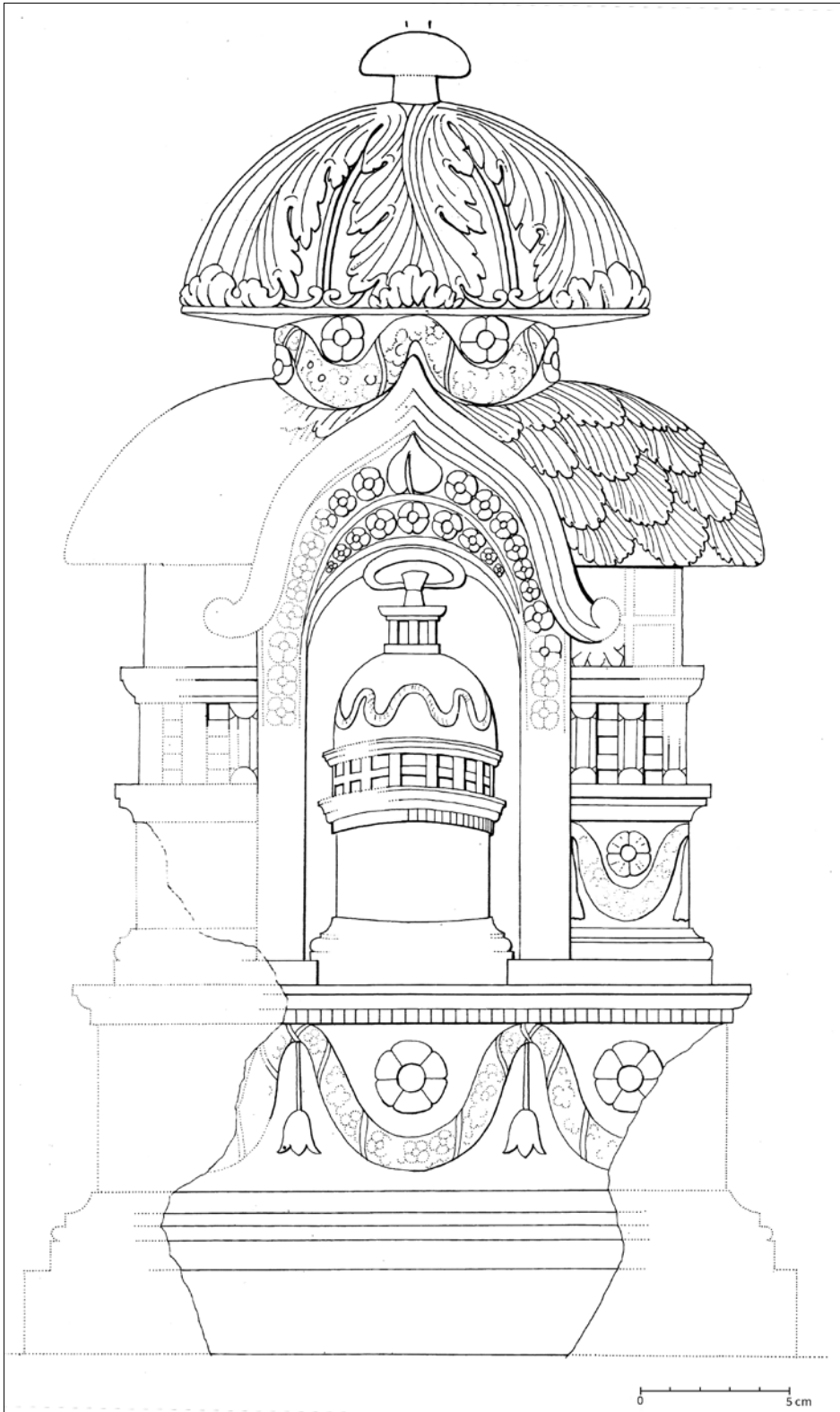


Plate XXI Butkara I, panel B 920, detail of the monument
(MAIP; drawing by Francesco Martore; reproduced in Faccenna 1995a, fig. 253)

ment, like the Ekakūṭa stupa⁹ of the Śeṅavarma inscription.¹⁰

Fussman's *traduction littérale* of the Śeṅavarma inscription reflects a situation and a structural history that somehow recall the structural history of the BKG 16 monument:

[1 a] Il salue de la tête les pieds de ceux en qui est né le chemin, de ceux qui pratiquent la pénitence, de ceux qui pratiquent la vie religieuse de continence, de la double communauté rassemblée, très chère, agréable, protectrice du *stūpa*. [1 b] Le seigneur Senavarma, roi(telet) d'Oḍi, chef suprême, fait savoir. [1 c] Le *stūpa* Eka-kuḍa que voici a été fondé par un membre de la famille royale; comme j'en suis l'héritier, je fais ce don pieux... afin de prolonger le nom de mon frère Varmasena. [1 d] Quand cet Eka-kuḍa fut fondé, alors, pour obtenir la qualité d'*Arhat*, [2 a] pour moi, pour mes père et grand-pères, il fait le *stūpa* grand, pas inaccessible (?). [2 b] Le revêtement de terre est fait par Senavarma et cet Eka-kuḍa est achevé avec une grande hauteur et circonférence ; [2 c] l'ayant correctement établi, je poursuis mes efforts. [2 d] Voici que sur l'Eka-kuḍa, il y a chute de foudre. Le *stūpa*, incendié par elle, subit des dommages. Toute la partie éboulée (fut refaite) à l'identique (?) ; fut étendue une couche à la base (?) ; fut élevé ce qui avait été jeté à bas (?). [2 e] Alors, ce qui va être établi [3 a] doit être écrit. Le fils d'Utarasena, Vasusena, de la famille Iṣmaho des roi(telets) d'Oḍi, fonde cet Eka-kuḍa. [3 b] A ce moment, dans la chambre située à la base [du *stūpa*], venant de la famille royale, il y eût des reliques corporelles du Bienheureux. (Fussman 1982, 7)

Saidu Sharif,
13 December 2021¹¹

9 On the term Ekakūṭa see Hinüber 2003; Salomon 1986; Fussman 1982; Bailey 1980. For the typology see the mid-1st century relief B 920 with its crowd of adoring aristocrats, princes and pages, ladies and knights (Faccenna 2001, pl. 80a) [pl. XXI].

10 Line 2a of the inscription associates the Ekakūṭa stupa to the term *aduvegahā*, which has been translated as “womb-stupa” (Falk 2003; Baums 2012). The latter is a possible translation based on *gahā/garbha* (womb or deposit), and not on *grha* (house, chapel) (see Salomon 1986: “single (not two) chambered”, and Hinüber 2003 “ohne Reliquienkammer”).

11 When this volume was completed, I had the opportunity to read two works that would have helped me greatly in my study. I quote them below for the sake of completeness: Walters, J.S. (1997). “Stupa, Story and Empire: Constructions of the Buddha Biography in Early Post-Aśokan India”. Schober, J. (ed.), *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 160-92; Zin, M. (2018). *The Kanaganahalli Stūpa. An Analysis of the 60 Massive Slabs Covering the Dome*. New Delhi: Aryan Books International.