

Kushan power and the expansion of Buddhism beyond the Soleiman mountains

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There is, or was, a feeling among historians of Buddhism that the expansion of Buddhism beyond the north-western borders of the Indian subcontinent began under the Kushans and benefited from the protection of the Kushan Emperors. That feeling rests on substantial evidence: the admittedly legendary date ascribed to the foundation of the first Chinese Buddhist monastery, the White Horse Monastery, by the Han Emperor M ng (died in AD 75); the more ascertained date of the first translations of Buddhist texts into Chinese by An Shigao (AD 148), Zhiloujiachen also called Zhichen (Lokak ema ?, floruit AD 167-186) and An Xuan (floruit AD 180-190), i.e. during the times of the so-called Great Kushans; the depiction of Kani ka by Xuanzang as a devout *upāsaka* and patron of Buddhism (Watters 1904,I: 203-209 and 270-271); and last, by the opinion, still valid although much refined, that the bulk of the Gandh ran images, so influential in Central Asia and China, date back to the 1st-4th cent. AD, i.e. to Kushan times.

These data are now supplemented and sometimes contradicted by new and incontrovertible evidence, mainly epigraphic. The Surkh Kotal and Rabatak inscriptions prove beyond doubt that Kani ka was no Buddhist, and, judging by their coinage, no Kushan Emperor was ever a Buddhist. These facts make it now difficult to argue that direct support of the Kushan royal family or families was the main reason for the expansion of Buddhism and Buddhist Gandh ran art into the territories west of the Soleiman mountains. The dedicatory inscriptions of the petty kings of Apraca and O i indicate that local dynasts played a great role in the building and founding of monasteries in valleys surrounding the Peshawar plain, and did so before and during the invasion of India by Kujula Kadphises (first half of the 1st cent. AD). That means, to my mind, that during that period Buddhism was already very strong in the Charsa da and Peshawar areas proper which, for geographical reasons, were in closer contact with Gangetic and Taxilan Buddhism [Fig. 1]. If so, there is no reason to reject the possibility that Buddhist establishments already were founded west of the Soleiman mountains. Indeed early inscriptions and finds of coins in Buddhist buildings prove the presence of Buddhism in the vicinity of Jal lab d, Kabul, Balkh and Termez already in the times of Azes II

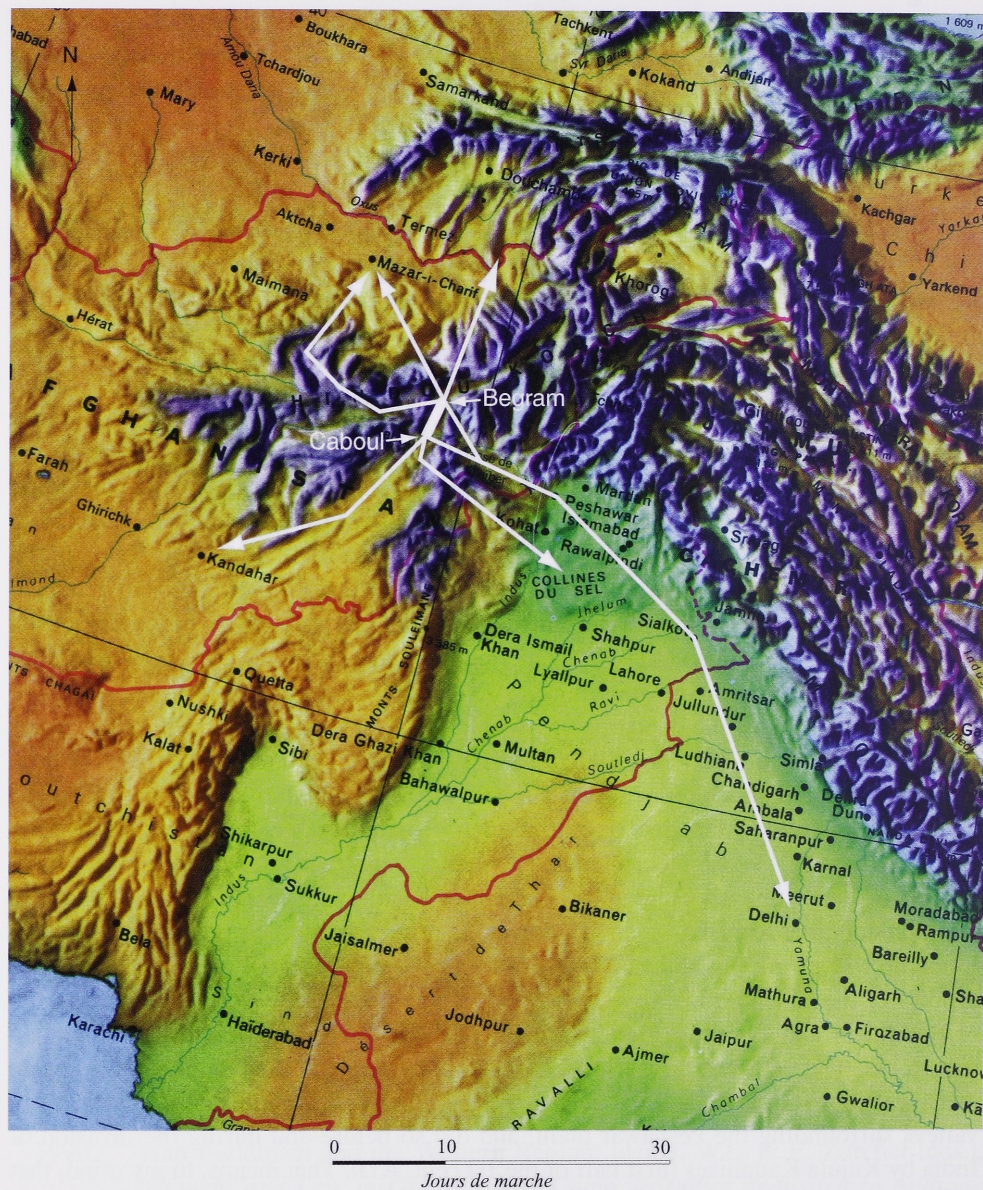


Fig. 1: Map showing the roads leading from Northern India to Central Asia. Scale in caravan march days. From Fussman, Ollivier & Baba Mourad 2008: 189, pl. 1.

and S t r Megas. Last, the early dating of the B mar n gold casket and some Sw t sculptures and the so-called “year 5 Buddha” are conclusive evidence, to my mind, that the techniques of the sculptors evolved very fast in the 1st cent. AD and had reached full maturity already at the beginning of Kaniska’s reign (lastly: Fussman & Quagliotti

2012). In other words, the crucial period for the development of the classical Gandhāran style is the reign of the shivaite (at least according to the legends and types of his coins) Wima Kadphises, a statement which would have shocked most historians of Gandhāran art fifty years ago and still comes as a surprise for many of them.

If the Kushan imperial power was not directly responsible for the building of every *stūpa* and monastery in India during the 1st-4th cent. AD, i.e. they did not fund them, who are the people who favoured the introduction and development of Buddhism outside India, when did that process begin, when did it reach its apex? These are the questions this paper will try to address, although the dearth of well-dated inscriptions and monuments prohibits us from giving definitive answers.

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The first Buddhist monks who arrived in the Nagarahāra/Jalālābād area did not feel like being in a foreign country: weather, language, probably customs and social organization did not notably differ from what they had encountered around Peshawar. There was no political border between the two provinces which most often belonged to the same political unit. In that sense, R. Salomon is right to make the Jalālābād country, or at least its settlements on both sides of the Kabul river, part of his "Greater Gandhāra". Buddhism around Jalālābād is mainly an offshoot of Buddhism around Peshawar.

Xuanzang on his way to India passed through Nagarahāra (Watters 1904, I: 182-198), but most of the places he mentions cannot be traced anymore. For instance, the exact location of the main settlement¹ and of the monasteries built in its vicinity is unknown. The main Buddhist site in that country, Haḍḍa, was partly excavated by French (A. Barthoux) and Afghan (Dr. Ch. Mostamendy and Dr. Z. Tarzi) archaeologists. The results were spectacular, but very little that could serve for chronological analysis was recovered, less so published. The dating of the monuments still rests on the finds made by Honigberger and Masson in 1833-35, the palaeography of inscriptions on jars and mural paintings, some of them still unpublished, and the feeling of art historians. Nevertheless Z. Tarzi feels, without being able to adduce any evidence discovered by him, that the earliest buildings in Haḍḍa predate the Kushans. According to him, the earliest constructions, dating back to Azes II, were razed to the ground and levelled before the erection of new monuments and lodgings for the monks, so that all the early chronological evidence is lost (Tarzi 1981: 17-20). The four *stūpas* and 44 caves of Lalma still to be seen three km south-west from Haḍḍa did not furnish any chronological clue other than stylistic to the Japanese archaeologists who last surveyed the site (Mizuno 1968).

Luckily, Ch. Masson, whom I deem one of the best archaeologists having ever worked in Afghanistan, recorded in a very precise way the contents of the relic chambers he opened in that region (Wilson 1841: 61-113). Some contained coins, which usually can

¹ Probably the Dasht of Bégram shown on Wilson's 1841 map (pl. I, facing p. 118), was never excavated and be it only by trial trenches. It is now covered and destroyed by a suburb of Jalālābād.

be identified from his indications and the drawings reproduced on Wilson's plates. For the purpose of this paper, these rough identifications will suffice.²

Coins usually give only a date *post quem*. Supplemented by a knowledge of the history of coinage in North-Western India during the 1st cent. AD, they give us a time frame. It was, and it is still the custom, when depositing relics inside a *stūpa*, to add some offerings in precious stone and metal, the whole often corresponding to a sample of the "seven jewels" (*sapta-ratna*: gold, silver, pearl, crystal, lapis or beryl, diamond, coral). In ancient India, and still today, you never offer raw materials. Masson did not find any silver or gold ingot. You always offer wrought material, e.g. necklaces or golden petal flowers. Coins are wrought material and, for that reason, may be found in the relic chambers of ancient *stūpas*. Now, the currencies struck under the Indo-Greek and Saka kings were either silver or bronze. There were some gold coins and tokens, but they were not used as a currency. Under the last Saka king, usually called Azes II (R.C. Senior would disagree), the silver coinage was heavily debased, probably because silver metal could not be procured anymore. Silver coins had been dilluted to billon or were plated copper. The result is that true silver coins were hoarded and difficult to procure. The chronological successors of Azes II, Kujula Kadphises and Sōtēr Megas, faced the same scarcity of silver and issued only bronze coins. Wima Kadphises started a new system shortly after coming to the throne. At least no other types bearing his name are known. He issued heavy and large bronze coins, struck by thousands, for everyday use, and gold coins of great value, struck in great quantities. As a consequence all the previous coinage, except the heavy Sōtēr Megas bronze coins, ceased to be used in the bazars.

Now devout Buddhists, prone to spend huge amounts of money for procuring relics (or a manuscript folio), building the *stūpa* encasing them, funding the inauguration ceremonies etc., would not offer debased metal coins if they could procure true silver or gold coins. The consequence is that, when good silver coins are found in a relic chamber and no Wima or post-Wima coin, these silver coins give a *terminus post quem* and the deposit and with it the building of the original *stūpa*, is earlier than Wima's reign. When debased silver coins only were deposited near by the relics, the original *stūpa* was built in the short time between the debasement of the silver and the beginning of Wima's new coinage, i.e. somewhere, using a wide time span, between AD 15 and 50.

The earliest coins³ found by Masson are the following:

² E. Errington published in Jongeward *et alia* (2012: 135-156) a new survey with many outstanding illustrations of the caskets and coins found by Masson dealt with below. It does not bring new identifications and is marred by the late date which, following J. Cribb, she attributes to Azes II (ca. AD 60 or ca. AD 40-90, p. 135). That would put Azes II more than 100 years after the beginning of the reign of Azes I and 40 years only before year 1 of Kaniṣka if Kaniṣka began to reign in AD 127. I do not see any reason for that late dating other than the desire to keep the late date formerly attributed to the Bīmarān golden relic casket. See also Fussman 1998: 630, fn. 132.

³ I list only those earlier than Wima Kadphises' reform.



Fig. 2: Tope no. 2 of Bīmarān in 1965. Below, Ali Ahmad Mostamedi at that time Director of the Kabul Museum. Courtesy Photothèque de l'Institut d'Études Indiennes du Collège de France.

- Tope no. 2 of Kotpur (Darunta): 10 copper coins in the names of Hermaios (obverse) and Kujula Kadphises (reverse).
- Tope no. 2 of Bīmarān (Darunta): 4 [Fig. 2]: “four copper (i.e. billon, according to D. Mac Dowall) coins, in excellent preservation, having been inserted new” of Azes II.
- Tope no. 3 of Bīmarān (Darunta): 27 bronze coins of Sōtēr Megās.
- Tope no. 4 of Bīmarān (Darunta): 6 bronze coins of Sōtēr Megās.
- Tope no. 5 of Bīmarān (Darunta): There were 7 “apartments”, one above the other, the three lower ones excavated by Honigberger, the upper one by Masson, the others by locals from whom Masson was able to recover most of the finds. All the apartments

⁴ This is the *stūpa* where the famous golden casket, now in the British Museum, was found.

“furnished a steatite vase”, five of them also contained a set of 30 or 31 coins. Masson gives the following account of the coins from bottom to top:

- 1) 25 or 26 bronze coins in the names of Hermaios and Kujula Kadphises, 4 bronze coins of Azes II,⁵ 1 bronze coin of Gondophares discovered by Honigberger “near by the base”;
- 2) 6 bronze coins in the names of Hermaios and Kujula Kadphises recovered from locals by Masson (i.e. 25 out of 31 were already lost);
- 3) 26 bronze coins in the names of Hermaios and Kujula Kadphises, 4 bronze coins of Azes II, 1 bronze coin of Gondophares recovered by Masson from another local;
- 4) 15 bronze coins in the names of Hermaios and Kujula Kadphises also recovered by him (i.e. 16 out of 31 missing);
- 5) 16 bronze coins in the names of Hermaios and Kujula Kadphises and a casket excavated by Masson himself “at the summit of this monument”.

The Azes II coins were all “in excellent preservation”, the Gondophares ones “much worn”.

- Surkh Tope: 1 Azes II bronze coin, but not in the relic chamber.

- Jani Tope (Ha da): 13 bronze coins in the names of Hermaios and Kujula Kadphises, 2 bronze coins of Azes II,⁶ 1 bronze coin of Gondophares.

- Tope no. 3 of Ha da: 1 square bronze coin of Hermaios, 1 bronze coin of Gondophares, 2 Azes (which one?) bronze coins, 12 bronze coins in the names of Hermaios and Kujula Kadphises.

It should be remembered that coins are a relatively rare occurrence in relic chambers. Most did not contain any coin. There is thus a possibility that there were other establishments, earlier or of roughly the same date, which cannot be identified because they were devoid of coins. Nevertheless the overall picture fits well into the other evidence. It is congruent with the chronological data of the inscriptions of the Apraca and O i kings who held territories, in a sense, similar to the Nagarah ra area, i.e. close to the Peshawar plain but outside of it. We can state that, according to the available evidence, Buddhist monasteries⁷ existed in the Nagarah ra area already during the last years of the Saka supremacy, in any case during the years when Saka kings and *ksatrapas*, Indoparthian kings and the Kushan Kujula Kadphises fought for the possession of Gandh ra and the Taxila area, i.e. between ca. AD 15 and 50. These dates are in a way surprising because we may surmise that these years were a time of war and desolation, not propitious for setting up expensive religious buildings except if you can use war booty like (at least I

⁵ From the context I infer that they were Azes II coins. But they are not illustrated and being of “the horseman type” could be Azes I or S t r Megas coins.

⁶ See note 5.

⁷ The *st pas* opened by Honigberger and Masson were not isolated buildings. Their presence was almost always indicative of the existence of a monastery, i.e. a building meant for monks. They were standing in front of quadrangles, i.e. ruins of the buildings where Buddhist monks were residing. Masson did not pay attention to the remains of these monasteries, but Foucher was still able to see them in 1923 (Foucher 1942,I: 151).

suppose it was so) the Apraca and Oḍi kings. Another group of donors may have seen the miseries of war or participated in such action and turned devout Buddhists as in the case of Aśoka. In any case, there can be no doubt to my mind that Buddhism was well alive in Nagarahāra before Wima Kadphises and that the Kushans had nothing to do with its first success.

It should be stressed that the earliest *stūpas* were not the huge monuments depicted in Wilson's plates, some of which could still be seen in the 1960s. Masson often hints at the fact that the casket(s) and coins he found were buried under a smaller cupola, encased at the bottom of the *stūpa*, i.e. inside an earlier and smaller *stūpa*, later covered by the masonry of a larger *stūpa*, which itself may have been enlarged in the same way a number of times. The earliest Buddhist establishments were thus small and not necessarily very expensive.⁸ Later buildings, built under the Kushans and even later, were much more impressive. It would not be wrong to date the heyday of Buddhism in Nagarahāra from the times of the Kushan onwards, although some huge *stūpas* (Tope-e-Kalan, others maybe) were erected much later.⁹ But we have no other evidence for a Kushan dating than the palaeography of the few inscriptions discovered during excavations at Haḍḍa and the feelings of the art historians.

In any case, there is no evidence whatsoever that Buddhist establishments in Nagarahāra were started by Kushan kings or benefited from their patronage. There may have been occasional gifts, but they left no trace. That is an *argumentum e silentio*, which does not prove much. It is nevertheless symptomatic that Xuanzang, so prone to attribute the erection of Buddhist monuments to Kaniška (probably a generic name for the Kushan kings) in Kāpiśī and Gandhāra, does not link his name with any Nagarahāra building: the local Buddhists had no memory whatsoever of a Kushan political patronage. The only names known from Buddhist texts are those of Aśpavarman¹⁰ and of the *kṣatrapa* or *mahākṣatrapa* Jihonika/Zeionises,¹¹ two dynasts active in the same span of time as

⁸ One may surmise that for an unimpressive building, the inaugural ceremonies were not excessively lavish. But, if the *stūpa* was "established in a place where there was no previous *stūpa*", it was part of a newly established monastery: the donor(s) also had to build a residence for the monks.

⁹ The coins discovered there by Masson (Wilson 1841: 108-110) could not have been buried, according to Göbl's dating, before the 6th cent. AD. Life went on in some Haḍḍa monasteries till the 8th cent. AD (Tarzi 2005: 61-64). Tarzi found layers of ashes in Tapa-i-Kafariha and Tapa-e-Shotor, but that does not contradict Barthoux's well argued statement that the monasteries were not purposely destroyed (Barthoux 1933: 64): lightnings often set fire to these constructions lit by oil lamps, furnished with many wooden doors and columns, close to *stūpas* adorned with bells and crownings often made of copper. The inscription of Senavarma and the story of Kaniška's *stūpa* in Peshawar are good examples of destructions brought about by lightning. Archaeologists are often too eager to attribute layers of ashes to war destruction. Accidental fires are very frequent occurrences in every village or town anywhere in the world.

¹⁰ Last edition and comments in Glass 2007: 85-89.

¹¹ Last edition and comments in Glass 2007: 96-98.

when the erection of the earliest Nagarahāra *stūpa* took place. But these very incomplete texts, supposedly found and copied in the ruins of a Nagarahāra monastery, probably are copies or adaptations of earlier texts composed in Gandhāra proper. Indeed the name of Jihonika, in the manuscript last published by Glass, is linked with Taxila and Gandhāra. Thus it cannot be concluded from the mentioning of these dynasts in the Gāndhārī fragments kept in the British Museum that they were active in Nagarahāra and impressed local Buddhists by their devotion.

Nor do the three extant Nagarahāra inscriptions with donors' names refer to any king. The earliest one, now dated sometime between AD 20 and 50, is engraved on the stone casket which contained the famous golden Bīmarān reliquary. To make a long story short,¹² it states that the casket and the relics of the Buddha it contained were donated by a member of a Hindu family, Śivarakṣita, son of Mujavada, who does not boast any title nor indicate his occupation. The superb and celebrated golden Bīmarān casket, now in the British Museum, so beautiful that it could have been presented by a king or a high official, was found inside that stone casket. It is now widely agreed that the golden reliquary was first installed in an earlier *stūpa*, decayed or partly destroyed, and later re-installed by Śivarakṣita in a new *stūpa* encasing the remains of the earlier one. I do not think that Śivarakṣita would have dared to repair a royal foundation, nor to usurp the earlier casket, without mentioning the name of the royal donor. The Bīmarān golden casket is not a royal gift, but the donation of a rich individual who bought or ordered it from a jeweller from Nagarahāra city, Puṣkalāvati/Charsaḍḍa¹³ or Taxila.

An inscription dated to the year 28 (of the Kaniṣka era) records the establishment of relics “in the Rama monastery, in a *stūpa*, by Saṃghamitra, the superintendant of construction (*navakarmika*)... for the best share of Rama”.¹⁴ Here again the main donor of the monastery (*dānapati*, *vihārasvamin*), still alive or dead long ago, is a devotee bearing a Hindu name (Rāma), not boasting of a title. As for Saṃghamitra, the inscription does not say he gave the relics, only that he “established” them, i.e. was responsible for the erection of a new *stūpa* inside or outside the monastery. There is no hint at any royal intervention.

It is not impossible that, in lieu of “Rama monastery” and “for the best share of Rama”, we read and translate “in the village monastery” and “especially for the village”¹⁵ for that is the reading on a dedicatory gold leaf published by A. Sakadata (1996: 305-308). R. Salomon believes it is a forgery and, for that reason, the inscription is not included in S. Baums' corpus of reliquary inscriptions.¹⁶ It is true that some details are puzzling,

¹² Last edition in CKI 50; S. Baums in Jongeward *et alia* 2012: 249, no. 52. Last comments: Fussman in Fussman & Quagliotti 2012: 30-31 and Fussman 2013: 133.

¹³ It seems that Peshawar/Puruṣapura/Kaniṣkapura was founded, or at least became the major bazar in Gandhāra, only under Kaniṣka.

¹⁴ Last edition in CKI 155; S. Baums in Jongeward *et alia* 2012: 243, no. 41.

¹⁵ Fussman in Sadakata 1996: 307, fn. 21.

¹⁶ Salomon 1999: 144, no. 3. S. Baums in Jongeward *et alia* 2012: 201; CKI 455.

but they do not suffice, to my mind, to enable us to declare that inscription a forgery.¹⁷ Indeed it is both quite original, not copied from anything we know, nevertheless we may adduce some parallels to it. That inscription says that in the year 39 of Azes (ca. 18 BC) a group of villagers “established a *stūpa*, in a place where there was no previous Buddhist foundation, in the village monastery (or garden) in Heḍraya”. Then follows a list of 23 proper names, followed by their patronymics. Most of these names are Indian (Buddhist or Hindu), some cannot be etymologized. The name of Jihoṅika appears twice, once as a donor, then again as the father of a donor. None of them needs to be the *mahākṣatrapa* referred to above, and none probably is. In the same way, Hirmaa, rightly identified by Falk (2010: 27) with Greek Hermaios, obviously is not the homonymous Greek king. If the inscription is genuine, which to my mind it is, we have an instance here of a local confraternity, called *sahayara* in the inscription (a word appearing in other Gāndhārī inscriptions: see CKI, s.v. *sahayara-*, *sahara-*) funding the erection of a *stūpa* or building it by collective and voluntary labour. The initiative comes from local villagers, without any official incentive. That could also explain the puzzling description by Masson of the finds in Tope no. 5 of Bīmarān (above): seven “apartments”, apparently one above the other, each furnished with a casket, five with the same set of 31 bronze coins. Tope 5 would have been built by a confraternity of local people, divided in 7 groups or comprising seven members, each of them would have placed its/his own deposit in the *stūpa*.

The data available today (never forget: they are defective) point to the importance of local people in the establishment of the first Buddhist monasteries, but say nothing about their later and impressive development except that no trace was left of any direct intervention of the political power as such. We may nevertheless propose some hypotheses, without forgetting that a large part of the Nagarahāra area, now settled by Pashtun tribes, is forbidden country even for Afghan officials. The archaeologists know only those monuments built near by the road leading from Bactra to Taxila. Neither Xuanzang nor Masson nor Foucher ever went beyond. But the country and the western slopes of the Soleiman mountains were probably covered with Buddhist monuments of which only one example is known, although never published, the Kama Dacca monastery.

According to Xuanzang, Buddhism was the dominant creed in the Nagarahāra area, but Buddhist monks were few (Watters 1904,I: 183). Z. Tarzi also noticed periods he calls “hiatus”, during which the site of Haḍḍa was almost deserted. The wealth of Haḍḍa is partly due to an illusion: it seems less apparent when we take into account the long duration (ca. 700 years) of the site, the low cost of the stucco (in fact: plaster) decoration, and the geological conditions which helped to preserve it when the monuments began to decay (Barthoux 1933: 64-65). The gifts of the locals and the money brought in by the travellers and pilgrims who used to come to pay their respects to the famous relic of the Buddha’s collar-bone kept in Haḍḍa and tour the places supposedly visited by the Master

¹⁷ Falk (2010: 27) gives reasons for his taking it as genuine.

nearby¹⁸ were probably sufficient to build and fund the local monasteries and *st pas*.

The Darunta, B mar n, Passani, Nand ra etc. *st pas* opened by Honigberger and Masson stood on the lower slopes of the hills and cliffs bordering the valleys of the Kabul river and its affluent, the Surkh-rud or “Red River” (Foucher 1942,I: 151). On the map the *st pas* seem to be built on both sides of the road leading to Kabul and thus to be linked with trade and the passing of armies. The money would have come from the gifts of the traders. But no inscription alludes to merchants and, as Foucher signals, the road they border is a modern one, leading to Kabul through the Lataband Pass. In antiquity it was not very much in use,¹⁹ the main road being that leading to Begram/K pi si which went up along the Panjshir river. The money which supported these monasteries probably did not come from trade, but from the agricultural wealth of that section of the Kabul valley which Foucher describes as “une bande restreinte, mais extr mement fertile, qu’emplissent de leur verdure des champs de riz, bl  ou de cannes   sucre et des vergers de m riers ou d’orangers” (ibid.). That may explain how local Hindu landholders or even villagers were able to fund monasteries.

Special mention should nevertheless be made of the Darunta/B mar n group. These *st pas*, now destroyed by recent irrigation works and galloping urbanisation, stood at the eastern end of the Surkh-rud valley. They were overlooking the junction of the Kabul river and the Surkh-rud; the ferry by which travellers from Nagarah ra to Begram used to cross the Kabul river, leaving its right bank in order to march upstream on its left bank; and the junction of the Kabul and Begram roads. Not far was the opening to the Laghman (ancient Lampaka) valley. Moreover the place where they were located was for the ancients the geographical, climatic and linguistic north-western border of India as demonstrated by the location of the Aramaic A okan Laghman inscriptions, the historical records concerning Alexander’s inroad into India and by Xuanzang himself (Watters 1904,I: 131). One may suppose that people (traders, Kushan officials) coming from India used to propitiate fate by paying respect to the Buddha and giving alms to the monks; that travellers coming from Central Asia and Begram (armies, officials, traders) used to do the same to thank the Buddha for their safe arrival in a less difficult country. That would link the erection and in any case the enlargement of the Darunta *st pa* and monasteries both with the agricultural wealth of the valley and the gifts of the travellers, probably more numerous during the relatively peaceful times of the Great Kushans than during the warring period of the first half of the 1st cent. AD.

The link between the existence of traffic along that road and the building and enlargement of Buddhist monuments during Kushan and possibly later times is also backed by negative evidence. Almost all the Buddhist monuments are located on the right side of the Kabul river. Masson saw very few of them on the left bank, where

¹⁸ Watters 1904,I: 183-184. Lamotte 1944,I: 550-554; Kuwayama 1991 = Kuwayama 2002: 117-120.

¹⁹ As rightly pointed out by A. Foucher, Kabul was of minor importance in the 1st cent. AD. But that itinerary was nevertheless used by some travellers, I suppose, for it also was a shortcut towards Ghazni and Kandahar.

the road did not pass. Indeed the Basawal group (seven sets of caves) is the only one mentioned in the scientific literature (Mizuno 1971). No Buddhist site is recorded in the very rich lower valleys of the Laghman and Kunar rivers although some archaeologists went through them. Xuanzang says there were ten (i.e. a handful; it is a round figure) monasteries in the Laghman valley, but gives no detail except adding that the population was mainly Hindus (pagans?) (Watters 1904,I: 181-182). The few details we know about the religion of the ancient Kafirs, now Nuristanis, of the Upper Kunar valley do not contain anything reminiscent of Buddhism. We may assert that these two rich valleys were not touched upon by Buddhism, in any case were not Buddhist strongholds, maybe because the Bactra to Taxila road skirted them. That road not only brought gifts and alms to the Buddhist monasteries established on the right side of the Kabul river. It also enabled Indian monks to travel more or less safely and start new establishments, modest in the first half of the 1st cent. AD, more numerous and impressive later, when the so-called Kushan peace favoured trade and protected local people from the extortions of warring armies.

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Leaving Darunta, travellers began to climb the difficult mountain road leading to Bactra via Begram and the Hindu Kush passes. The first resting place was Begram/Kāpīśī, a city founded by the Greeks, probably by Alexander himself, which could boast of a rich agricultural hinterland and which gave way, to the West and to the North, to the high passes crossing the Hindu Kush; to the South, to Kabul, the Logar valley, and the roads leading to Ghazni and Kandahar. The existence of two recent publications (Fussman, Ollivier & Baba Mourad 2008; Paiman 2013) dealing with the Buddhist monuments of that area enables me to sum up their conclusions and refer the reader to them for more detailed data and chronological discussions.

Around Begram, two monasteries may have been earlier than the Kushan conquest: Paītava and Shotorak, whose foundations, according to flimsy evidence, may go back to ca. AD 50 (Paītava) or even earlier (Shotorak). Shotorak, which lies close to at least one unexcavated huge monastery, is usually said to have been the convent erected by Kaniška for his Chinese hostages (Watters 1904,I: 124). Suffice it to say that the exact location of that monastery is not known, that there is nothing to prove that Shotorak should be identified with it, that the story of the hostages may be a local fabrication to explain the existence of “paintings of the hostages who in appearance and dress were somewhat like the Chinese” (they may have been donors of Western Turkestan origin), that even if Xuanzang’s story is true and Shotorak (or the nearby ruin) is the hostages’ convent, its foundation may be earlier than Kaniška who may only have rebuilt and enlarged it. In any case, Kaniška’s name was remembered in Kāpīśī and there would be no scandal in attributing to him the funding of at least two important Buddhist monuments near by his summer capital: this hostages’ convent and a *stūpa*, probably erected at the entrance of the Salang valley, now destroyed (Watters 1904,I: 127).

Begram lies on the right side of the Ghorband river. On the left side, almost unexplored,



Figs. 3 and 4: Shotorak, donors in local dress. Meuni  1942: 58, pls. XX and XVIII.

the first buildings of Koh-e Muri monastery may have been erected in the 1st cent. AD, i.e. just before Kushan times or under Wima or Kani ka, but no evidence links them to the Kushan power. On the contrary, most of the huge *st pas* whose remains may still be seen on the right side of the river are ascribed by Xuanzang to old kings or queens. As their outer envelope, which may hide earlier construction(s), may be dated between the 3rd and 6th cent. AD, there is a chance that they were built under the patronage of Kushan kings or queens, probably later than Kani ka. Their location shows that monks looked to the resources of Begram and the nearby villages for their maintenance. There is no evidence that trade generated their existence, except indirectly, through the money it brought to locals.

It should never be forgotten that there were many more Buddhist establishments in the Begram area²⁰ than those surviving into Masson's times. Of almost all of these some remains may still be seen located on non-built-up waterless spurs, not far from the cultivated areas but above the level of the upper irrigation canal. The country, before the 1978 civil war broke out, had very rich agricultural resources which probably also contributed to the maintenance of the monks settled there. Moreover, although the Buddhist creed had not eliminated all other creeds, it may be surmised that there was a monastery in almost every big village. Witness the Pa tava monastery which would have stayed unknown without a chance find and was almost entirely destroyed when seen for the first time by an archaeologist. There were probably many other Pa tavas. These village monasteries were mainly funded and supported by the locals. These are depicted on the plinths of many a sculpture belonging to the Pa tava workshop and donors in Indian or Gandh ran dresses (women in Meuni  1942, pls. X, 36; XII, 42; XVIII, 61; XIX, 62; men – if not monks – *ibid.*, pl. XII, 42) or so-called Kushan dresses (*ibid.* pl.

²⁰ The area was called Koh Daman till the 1980s. It is currently called Shamali, "Northern" (i.e. north of Kabul). These are the present Parwan and Kapisa provinces.



Fig. 5: The Shevaki I *stūpa*. Courtesy Photothèque de l'Institut d'Études Indiennes du Collège de France.

IV, 12 [a *sahayara*?], Pl. XVIII, 58, Pl. XX, 63 etc.) which may have been the local dresses at that time. These are the people, local officials, landlords [Fig. 3], peasants [Fig. 4] etc.²¹ whose donations enabled the construction of monasteries and *stūpas* in villages and ensured the monks' everyday subsistence.

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²¹ We have no indication whatsoever on the structure of the society and the property regime during Kushan times. But we may surmise that poor labourers also gave alms to the monks and added to their resources.

The pre-Muslim city of Kabul was probably located east of 19th cent. Kabul, south of Tepe Maranjan, between the Kabul and Logar rivers. The site is called Bagrami today and, starting a few years ago, is being rapidly urbanized. It was never excavated and we do not even know whether the town was walled in. A trial trench in the Bala Hisar, the old Kabul fortress located between pre-Muslim Kabul and Old Kabul, was made by DAFA (Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan) in 2010. It is said that



Fig. 6: Earlier *stūpa* inside the Shevaki 7 *stūpa*. From Fussman, Ollivier & Baba Mourad 2008: 250, pl. 62, a.

3rd and ca. 6th cent. AD. These enlargements date back to Kushan times, but there is no evidence that Kushan kings or officials were involved in this pious work.

Two sites deserve special attention, Tepe Maranjan 2 and Tepe Narenj, both very close to the Bala Hisar, undoubtedly the seat of the administrative and military power at that time [Fig. 7]. Tepe Maranjan 2, where relics were (first?) deposited under the main *stūpa* ca. AD 20-50, was probably the first Buddhist monastery erected in Kabul. What is left of the main *stūpa* is probably a later reconstruction, but the location and planning point to an ensemble larger than Shevaki 1 or Kamari 2. On the other side of the Bala Hisar, Tepe Narenj, a *mahāsāṅghika* monastery, was already in existence in the 2nd or

some sherds from Graeco-Bactrian times were found at the bottom of the trench. I did not see them, but I would not be surprised if evidence surfaced that the first settlement dated back to that time or even earlier.

Bagrami/pre-Muslim Kabul lies on the surface of a dried up lake encircled by plateau and rocky hills whose slopes and gullies shelter many *stūpas* and monasteries. The more important ones were excavated by Masson and Honigberger in 1833-35. An analysis of their finds and subsequent researches has shown that at least three of these monuments (Shevaki 1 [Fig. 5], Kamari 2, Tepe Maranjan 2) were built ca. AD 20-50, i.e. under or after Azes II and under Wima Kadphises. But Shevaki 1 and Kamari 2, at that time, were not the huge buildings which can still be seen a few kilometers south of modern Kabul. The objects and coins which enable us to give that date were found inside an earlier and very small *stūpa* (as on Fig. 6), later much enlarged. The impressive *stūpas* sketched by Masson and which since then have been often photographed are later constructions, tentatively dated between the



Fig. 7: Buddhist sites in Southern Kabul. From Fussman, Ollivier & Baba Mourad 2008: 199, pl. 11.

3rd cent. AD (Paiman 2013: 73). It could be as old as Tepe Maranjan 2, but its earliest part cannot be excavated for it is now covered by tombs of Muslim saints and martyrs. Judging by its location and the extent of the ruins, it probably was very big.

Tepe Maranjan 2 was found almost razed to the ground when unearthed. It was probably deserted before AD 385, the latest possible date for the small fort overlooking it. A small *stūpa* (the so-called Tepe Maranjan 1) was later built against the western wall of that fort. It is now dated to the 6th or 7th cent. AD because the superb clay Bodhisattva statue found nearby is dated accordingly for stylistic reasons. But it also could have been later and part of an ensemble still in existence in the 8th–9th cent. AD. Indeed statues found nearby that *stūpa* exhibit resemblances with those found inside the portico excavated at Tepe Narenj by Z. Paiman in 2012 (Paiman 2013: 67ff.) and dated, from coin finds, ca. AD 850–900. It can be surmised that both Tepe Maranjan 2 and Tepe Narenj, during their long existence, received offerings from the political power, but there is no evidence that they were state monasteries. Z. Paiman, in his preliminary reports, used to call Tepe Narenj a “royal monastery”, but the only evidence for that appellation is a tiny crowned head [Fig. 8], whose exact original location is not known, and which may point to a visit and donations by a local or neighbouring *rāja*, if this head is truly a royal head and not the head of a Maitreya statue (Paiman 2013: 54, no. 23 and 50, no. 3). In any case, that statue was not given any prominence. It is not bigger than other clay effigies of donors wearing the so-called Kushan trousers and boots of

horsemen (ibid. 136) or tunics with long sleeves (ibid., cover picture and 144), which apparently were the “civilian” dresses of the rich people at that time for they also wear them in the Mes Aynak paintings.

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The valleys south and east of Kabul, including the important Logar valley, are almost unexplored. The Afghan governments never fully controlled these areas and often were not willing to let foreign archaeologists wander there. Locals also viewed archaeologists with a suspicious eye, fearing that they would rob them of hidden treasures. Some limited surveys were made, but, as a rule, foreign and Afghan archaeological missions and their governmental sponsors were more interested in fruitful excavations than in surveys.



Fig. 8: Tepe Narenj, crowned head no. 23.
Photo by Z. Paiman. See Paiman 2013: 54.

That explains why no archaeologist ever gave a look to the Khord Kabul monuments, ca. 30 km east of Kabul, since they were described by Masson (Wilson 1841: 115). There is no valid evidence for their date, supposed by Masson to be later than Wima Kadphises.

Still closer to Kabul, the cultivated ground of the Chahar Deh plain, now part of Greater Kabul, is probably hiding many a *st pa* and monastery. A chance find, thus, led in 2005 to the discovery and unfinished excavation by the Afghan Institute of Archaeology of the Kunjakai *st pa* [Fig. 9], supposedly built under the Great Kushans (Fussman, Ollivier & Baba Mourad 2008: 114-116, elaborating upon Paiman 2006). It may be surmised that, in the same way, many villages of the Chahar Deh plain, through which a road passes leading to Ghazni, boasted at least a small monastery.

Until a few years ago, only one monastery was known in the all-important Logar valley,²² the Gul Dara monastery now dated, mainly on palaeographical grounds, to ca. AD 350-500 (Fussman, Ollivier & Baba Mourad 2008: 75). The very rich deposit found inside the main *st pa* would suggest a rich donor, maybe the main landlord of that cultivated agricultural area, now called Musahi-ye Logar/Mosa-e Logar, the last bulwark of Kabul against an attacker coming

²² Its importance mainly lies in the fact that the road leading from Kabul to Gardez, Khost and Ghazni (i.e. India and Kandahar) follows the lower course of the Logar river.



Fig. 9: The Kunjakai *stūpa*. Photo by Z. Paiman. From Fussman, Ollivier & Baba Mourad 2008: 201, pl. 13 a.

from the South (Fussman & Le Berre 1976: 101-102). We do not know the political system of the Kushans, but it is quite possible that the Mosa-e Logar landlord was also a high Kushan or Late Kushan official with military responsibilities.

Since 2004 the Afghan Institute of Archaeology is digging the huge site of Mes Aynak, 40 km south of Kabul. It owes its existence to the presence of a huge copper deposit. On the outskirts of the miners' village, five Buddhist sites are being excavated, three of them being complete monasteries with residences for monks and *stūpas* (Khairzada 2013). The way the excavation is conducted, without any registration of the finds, leaves little hope to recover precise evidence for dating the buildings. Physical analyses of the slags and remains of wooden columns etc., when done, will at least indicate the span of time during which the mine and the monasteries were functioning. Judging from the sherds recovered and now scattered on the surface of the site, the "industrial" exploitation of the mine began in the early 1st cent. AD, i.e. under Sōtēr Megas or Wima, and did not continue after the coming of the Muslims, for no Islamic sherd and very few Islamic coins were recovered. The monasteries, as we saw them in 2011 (the lower layers were not yet explored and still are not in 2014), are not earlier than the 3rd cent. AD, at least at a glance. There is no doubt that they owe their existence to the presence of the mine, but miners usually are poor people. They probably brought alms and offerings, and may have pooled their resources to build small structures. But, as demonstrated by remains of clay statues and depictions on paintings in two monasteries, the main sponsors were much richer people, local officials and contractors who derived much income from the working of the mine. As in Tepe Narenj, these donors wear two kinds of clothes, the so-called Kushan trousers and boots of horsemen when represented by clay statues, tunics with long sleeves when portrayed on paintings. Some of these people should have been



Fig. 10: The Al Ghata *stūpa* (Wardak province). Photo by Z. Paiman.

Kushan officials, but we cannot say more because we do not know whether the ore was property of the king/state, and have no information whatsoever on the role and control of the political power in the working of the mine.

*

West of the Logar river, the important province of Wardak, through which the metallised road from Kabul to Ghazni runs, should also hide many a monastery as testified by the unexpected discovery of a monastery in the Al Ghata valley, 30 km south-west of Kabul.²³ It was partly dug out by DAFA in 2005, nothing is published and, I am afraid, will ever be published. It is said to be part of a huge ensemble. I only saw photographs of a small *stūpa* (plinth, one quadrangular base without staircase, traces of a circular drum or dome) encased in a court [Fig. 10]. The walls of the base of the *stūpa* are made of diaper masonry. They show an irregular alternation of trapeziform and pointed arches

²³ Al Ghata (Lat. 34°24'13"; Long. 68°40'58") is located in the Wardak province, not in the Wardak valley, some kilometers south-west from Maidan Shahr/Kotai-Ashro, the capital of the Wardak province, not far from the Kotagi and Darmandyan villages (information kindly provided by Z. Paiman). From Maidan Shahr, it is reached through the road leading to the Unai pass. The excavation had to stop before being completed because of threats by the Taliban.



Fig. 11: Two Khavat *stūpas* (Wardak province) in 1972. Courtesy Photothèque de l'Institut d'Études Indiennes du Collège de France.

supported by pilasters with corinthian capitals. A small cylindrical pillar is standing on each capital, in between the arches. Under the arches, one can still see remains of plinths supporting clay Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. The same decor may be seen in Shotorak (Meunié 1942: pl. V no. 14, with regular alternation of the arches), Guldara (Fussman & Le Berre 1976: pl. XV no. 10, with regular alternation of the arches, the pillars being replaced by stone spindles, i.e. stone skeletons of clay Garuḍas), and Mes Aynak (Khairzada 2013: 68, regular alternation of the arches but fanciful placing of the pillars). That could point to a date ca. 2nd to 5th cent. AD.

The main Buddhist monuments known in the Wardak province are located on the upper

course of the Wardak river, which gives them their present name (Fussman 1974a).²⁴ They were first made known, as usual, by Masson who heard about their existence and sent people to excavate them (Wilson 1841: 117-118) [Fig. 11]. That would imply that, in his time, no other huge *st pas* were known in the province. Masson's people discovered an inscribed relic casket, now called Wardak 1, published in 1858 by E. Thomas and since published anew many times. There is no way to know in which of the four big *st pas* extant in 1974 it was discovered. In 2008, H. Falk published another inscribed vase (Wardak 2) from a private collection, undoubtedly of the same provenance. Wardak 1 was probably found at the bottom of one of the huge *st pas*, in an earlier smaller *st pa* later enlarged. Wardak 2, as shown by the inscription, probably comes from the same *st pa*, but the associated finds demonstrate that it was later reinstalled in an (or the same) enlarged *st pa*. The contents of the two inscriptions are the same, except for a few details and the names of the donors: Wardak 2 was installed by the sister of the donor of Wardak 1. Both inscriptions have recently been reedited by S. Baums (in Jongeward *et alia* 2012: 243-246, nos. 43 and 44), whose translations I shall quote partly below for the convenience of the reader.²⁵ Some details are still unclear, but there is no doubt about the most important sentences. I shall authorize myself to dwell at length on these two inscriptions for they are documents of the utmost importance, especially for this paper. Indeed they would deserve long comments on their linguistic peculiarities and religious contents.²⁶ Here I shall be satisfied with pointing to the information they give on the culture of Kushan officials during Huv ška times. I should have made these comments 40 years ago, but since I learned a lot, at least I hope so.

Wardak 1

- 1 In the 51st year, in the month Artemisios, after 15 (days), at this time,
- 2 Vagamarega, son of Kamagulya,
- 3 he establishes here in Khavada, in the *kadalayiga* Vagamarega monastery, in a *st pa*,

Wardak 2

- In the 51st year, in the month Artemisios, after 15 (days), at this time,
- here at Khavada, at the *st pa* of the Vagamarega, son of Kamagulya, monastery, in the *kadalayiga* monastery,

²⁴ The Wardak (Khavat) *st pas* are located farther from Kabul than Al Ghata and reached through the road leading from Pul-i Alam to Behsud, 26 km east (upstream) from the old dam called Band-i  ak.

²⁵ The numbers in the left column do not refer to the lines of the inscriptions, but to syntagms I comment upon.

²⁶ For comments on the religious aspects, see Lamotte 1944: 483-484. For comments on rituals (Wardak 2), see Falk 2008. For comments on the contents, see Errington in Jongeward *et alia* 2012: 157-158.

- | | |
|----|---|
| 4 | in the possession of the <i>mahā-sāṃghika</i> monks,
the little daughter (?) establishes the daughter's <i>stūpas</i> (?). |
| 5 | relics of the Lord, the Śākya sage...
In each of them relics of the Lord, the Śākya sage, are established... |
| 6 | May it be for the best lot of the great king, chief king of kings Huviṣka ... |
| 7 | May it be in honor of my mother and father.
May it be in honor of my mother and father. |
| 8 | May it be in honour of my brother Haṣṭhunaḥ-marega.
May it be in honour of Haṣṭhunaḥ-marega. |
| 9 | And may it be in honor of my further relatives, friends, and associates; and
May it be for the best lot of Vagamarega. |
| 10 | may it be for the best share and lot of me, Vagamarega,...
And may it be for the reward of health of me, the daughter... |

The inscriptions were written by a monk on instructions of the donors, and engraved by a skilled worker who may have been responsible for some strange wordings. The understanding of Wardak 2 would be facilitated if, in lieu of “little daughter ...” (4), we read and translate: “⟨his⟩ little daughter Dhida establishes in ⟨his⟩ *stūpa*”, thus removing the contradiction between 3 and 4. There would be only one *stūpa*, with two sets of offerings, probably one above the other, like in Tope no. 5 of Bīmarān (*supra*, p. 157f.). That would also easily explain how the two sets of relics were deposited on the same day: there was only one big ceremony. Of course, that would be a *translatio facilior*, something which good epigraphists never favour.

The two inscriptions give the place name, Khavada. It still exists as known since Pargiter (Fussman 1974a: 89). Indeed Masson, who was more precise than me, gives as a subtitle: “Topes of Kohwat in the district of Wardak” (Wilson 1841: 117). Place names occur in Gāndhārī inscriptions, but seldom enough. I suspect that Khavada is mentioned twice because Vagamarega was its landlord by right of Kushan conquest or/and its governor by the favour of Huviṣka. In any case he was a high official for he takes care to give the benefits of his pious foundation first to the reigning Emperor.

The two Wardak inscriptions give us a glimpse of a remarkable Kushan transcultural and transnational family. It is undoubtedly a family of Bactrian origin. It is known for long that Vagamarega is a Bactrian name (Sims-Williams 2010: 40, no. 49²⁷ and 90,

²⁷ “Slave of the God”, a compound of βαγο “god” and μαρηγο “slave, servant”. Add to the bibliography Maricq 1958: 367. Sims-Williams does not list Haṣṭhunaḥ-marega, perhaps because the first member of the compound (Haṣṭhunaḥ), probably of non-Indian origin, does not have till now an etymology. Marega alone, uncompounded, is also a proper name (Sims-Williams 2010: 90, no. 260; Maricq 1958: 367). It may have survived in the name of a famous 19th cent. Nuristani

no. 260). Marega looks like a kind of family name as it is also the last part of the name of the elder²⁸ brother of Vagamarega: Haṣṭhunaḥ-marega. But the father of Vagamarega bore an apparently Indian name: Kamagulya.²⁹ Although a Buddhist *upāsaka*, not adverse to Indian culture and religions, Vagamarega, who no doubt supervised the writing of the inscription, did not want that the date be given according to the religious Indian calendar, with the traditional Indian names of the months. The calendar he uses, and he instructed the writer of the inscription to use, is Bactrian, heir to the Greek calendars of Bactria and North-West India. The month is Artemisios, i.e. Nisanu/Nisān of the Seleucid Babylonian calendar (Samuel 1972: 140-141), and the month should thus be April. The ceremony took place on day 15, a day which should not have been chosen without due reflexion. It is the beginning of either the dark or bright fortnight. According to all probabilities, Artemisios 15 thus corresponds to *amānta* Vaiśākha 1, the supposed day of the Buddha's birth. The ceremonies recorded in the two Wardak inscriptions took place, as usual (Fussman 1988: 9; Salomon in Jongeward *et alia* 2012: 187), on an auspicious day, here on the most sacred day for Buddhists. But that day is expressed in the Bactrian way, with a month bearing the name of a goddess whom Vagamarega may have never heard of.

The deposition of relics in a huge *stūpa* like the Wardak *stūpas* is done before the *stūpa* is entirely built (Fussman 2013: 131-132). Wardak 1 thus records not only the establishment of relics, but the building of the main *stūpa* and probably the foundation of the monastery. There were at least four monasteries in Khavada, and we do not know whether they were all founded by Vagamarega or members of his family. Wardak 2 shows that members of his family participated in these foundations. If Khavada was their hereditary estate, there are chances that all these *stūpas* owe their existence to them. But they were not content with founding monasteries, they also built a new town [Fig. 12] and irrigation works for bringing water to it (Fussman 1974a: 85-88). The cultivable land of Khavada is very fertile when irrigated, at least by Afghan standards, but the valley is very narrow, with steep rocky slopes [Fig. 13]. I doubt whether it could give the Marega family resources enough to build these monasteries and support the existence of the inhabitants of the town. Indeed the *stūpas* are almost at the end of the valley. Thence one may go upstream, by a (formerly?) difficult path, to Behsud, i.e. to the highest slopes of the Koh-i Baba range of the Hindu Kush. The country was always unsecure, now because Hazaras still resent the conquest of the valley by Pashtuns in the early 20th cent., in the past because poor mountaineers are always prone to make raids on settled peasants. The *kalas* (farms built like fortresses) built upstream are the most impressive I ever saw in Afghanistan. There are also remains of ancient fortresses. The

(Kafir) warrior, Torag Merak (Robertson 1896, *passim*). The meaning “servant, slave” could have been given the restricted meaning of “slave (*bandhak*) of the king”, hence warrior.

²⁸ “Elder” because Vagamarega pays him his respects.

²⁹ If the name of the sister of Vagamarega is Dhida, as I suggest, there is no difficulty in finding an Indian etymology for it.



Fig. 12: The Khavat Old Town (Wardak province) in 1972. Courtesy Photothèque de l'Institut d'Études Indiennes du Collège de France.

location of the Khavada *stūpas* and the adjacent town would best be explained as the consequence of an order given by the king to the Marega family to settle the country and give the inhabitants of the lower valley the military protection of a fortified town able to stand against marauders and the magic protection of sacred relics and buildings. Khavada was no doubt, to my mind, a kind of *jagir*,³⁰ perhaps hereditary, given to an Indo-Bactrian family of high standing, thus put in charge of the safety of the lower Wardak valley in its entirety and the road leading to the Logar valley and Kabul.

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³⁰ I am sorry for that anachronism, but I do not find any other word to express my mind.



Fig. 13: Khavat landscape (Wardak province) in 1972. Courtesy Phototh que de l'Institut d' tudes Indiennes du Coll ge de France.

Further south, very few Buddhist sites are known. They are located in Ghazni and its neighbourhood and in Kandahar. There should have been dozens more in the Ghilza'i lands, but neither the Ghilza'is nor the Afghan Government allow foreigners or archaeologists to explore these territories. No Buddhist monastery has been recorded so far between Ghazni and Kandahar, neither south nor west of Kandahar, but we should be careful before drawing any conclusion from that absence of evidence. After all, the Kandahar *st pa* and monastery could have been spotted anytime since the 19th cent. by anybody curious enough to walk up the hill and have a close look at a tower-like structure whose existence everybody knew for it is visible from afar [Fig. 14].

The Ghazni *st pa* and monastery stood on a hillock in what looks like a strategic position. The Italian excavators, led by the deeply regretted Maurizio Taddei, mainly brought to light the upper strata of a building which had been many times (at least twice) reconstructed after big fires and was in use at least till ca. AD 800 or even later. The earliest strata (layer 7), of course, has scarcely been touched upon. It could have been early Kushan. The following strata (layers 6 and 5), from where coins of the Great and Late Kushans and stamped pottery have been recovered, probably is not earlier than the



Fig. 14: The Old Kandahar citadel in 1964; behind, on the top of the hill, remains of a former *stūpa*. Courtesy Photothèque de l'Institut d'Études Indiennes du Collège de France.

3rd cent. AD. These dates can be deduced from the data provided by M. Taddei, who nevertheless was cautious enough not to give any absolute chronology (Taddei in Taddei & Verardi 1984: 42-43). Using stylistic considerations, G. Verardi would date the first buildings (the so-called *mahāstūpa* and some nearby secondary *stūpas*) in the early 3rd cent. AD, the second phase in the 3rd cent., and would attribute the foundation of the monastery to Kaniška II or III (Verardi in Verardi & Paparatti 2005: 405-415, especially 410). The evidence he uses for that attribution is an incomplete and puzzling³¹ Brāhmī inscription, paleographically dating back to the 3rd-5th cent., where one can read with some certainty (from the photograph) *kanika-ma[hā]rā[ja]-vihāra* (Riccardo Garbini in Verardi & Paparatti 2005: 430-431). But *kanika* is not Kaniška, and *mahārāja* is not a title borne by a supreme ruler. So that the only thing sure is that the Tapa Sardār monastery was built by a ruler, probably belonging to the Kushan dynasty, but whose power perhaps did not extend further than the Ghazni province, let us say a kind of hereditary governor of the province.

A survey of the Upper Arghandāb valley, south-west of Ghazni, made in 1975 by G. Verardi led to the discovery of at least eight groups of monastic caves (Verardi 1977; Verardi in Taddei & Verardi 1984: 66-68). There is no clue towards a precise dating. Some caves could have been carved out in Kushan times. For the monastery built at the top of the ridge overlooking Old Kandahar, I cannot give a more precise date than 3rd-6th cent. AD (see now the entry “Kandahar” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*).

³¹ By “puzzling” I mean an inscription that nobody till now, including myself, is able to translate entirely.



Fig. 15: The Somara *stupa* in 1969. Courtesy Phototh que de l'Institut d' tudes Indiennes du Coll ge de France.

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The archaeological record does not know any Kushan site along the Hindu Kush section of the old road from K pisi to Bactria. The only Buddhist site known in the Ghorband valley is Fonduqist n, located on a hillock in a side-gully. Already known by Masson from hearsay, it was rediscovered in 1936 after heavy rains (Hackin in Hackin, Carl & Meuni  1959: 50-51), like Butkara III in the Sw t valley. The excavated part of the monastery was built by a local ruler after AD 689 according to the dating of coins by R. G bl (G bl 1967: 314). As the French excavators were only interested in recovering the superb sculptures for the benefit of the Kabul Museum and the Mus e Guimet and had neither time nor money enough to make deep sondages, that does not preclude the existence of an earlier establishment. It would nevertheless be adventurous to make the supposition that there was one.

Every side-valley near by B miy n was very carefully surveyed by Marc Le Berre (Le Berre 1987). He noticed only one Buddhist ruin, the small Somara *stupa* [Fig. 15]

built in front of caves which could have been a monastery, or at least the residence of a few monks, or just one (Le Berre 1987: 80 with pl. 105). This very damaged monument may have been built any time after the 2nd cent. AD. Although that kind of building, once fallen down, leaves no other traces than a heap of stones which the peasants take away for building houses, we need not believe that many other *stūpas* of that kind existed in the valleys nearby. On the contrary, it looks almost certain that Somara was the only Buddhist site in the vicinity of Bāmiyān (see especially Le Berre 1987: 80, fn. 64). That does not come as a surprise: these are poor valleys, fit perhaps for a meditating monk, not for a full-fledged monastery. The monks stayed in Bāmiyān. Further west, there may have existed some full-fledged Buddhist monasteries in the much less explored valleys leading from Bāmiyān to either Balkh or Haybak/Samangan. Till now none is known.

The main enigma is Bāmiyān. There are very few remains which can be dated to the 3rd-4th cent. AD, i.e. from Kushan times, and that dating is made on weak stylistic grounds.³² The bulk of what is now known is later than the 5th cent. For many scholars, the explanation of that somewhat surprising fact is due to a change in trade routes. Indeed Sh. Kuwayama pointed out that “from the fourth century to the second decade of the sixth century, Buddhist monks, travelling from China or from India (actually Gandhāra), shared a common Karakorum route...”. After AD 554, “a new highway replaced the Karakorum route, running ... through Kapiśi and Bamiyan” (Kuwayama 1987 = 2002: 149). That is true, and the closure of the Karakorum route can also be deduced from the interruption of the epigraphic record along that road as shown by Prof. Jettmar and Prof. von Hinüber.³³ But the Karakorum road led to Xinjiang and China, not to rich Bactria, Iran and the Mediterranean countries. Moreover it was a very difficult one, devoid of fodder and even of food for travellers, with many tracks unfit for pack animals. Large caravans could not travel along that road which was not meant for the transport of bulky merchandise. As testified by the travelogues of Chinese pilgrims, that route was fit only for small groups of people: pilgrims, envoys, job-seekers, traders in lighter and high value goods (gold, precious stones, saffron etc.). The Bāmiyān route was the only route truly fit for armies and large caravans. I am convinced that it was in use since Achaemenian times at least and that there was a permanent settlement in Bāmiyān, perhaps small, already during Kushan times. The reason why there is no positive evidence for it is that nobody ever made a deep digging, not even led a stratigraphic trial trench into the ruins of the old town. I would thus not be surprised if some positive evidence surfaced to date the lower Buddhist caves in the times of the Kushans, nor if future archaeologists discovered traces of ancient monasteries levelled down and built over when Bāmiyān grew in political importance in the 5th and 6th cent. and later.

³² There are in the Schøyen collection some manuscript leaves, written in Brāhmī or in Kharoṣṭhī, whose script dates back to Kushan times. But they may have belonged to manuscripts brought there at a later date. We are not even sure they were found in Bāmiyān.

³³ But that interruption is probably much later (ca. AD 700) than the date given by Kuwayama (1987) and mainly due to the Tibetan invasion.

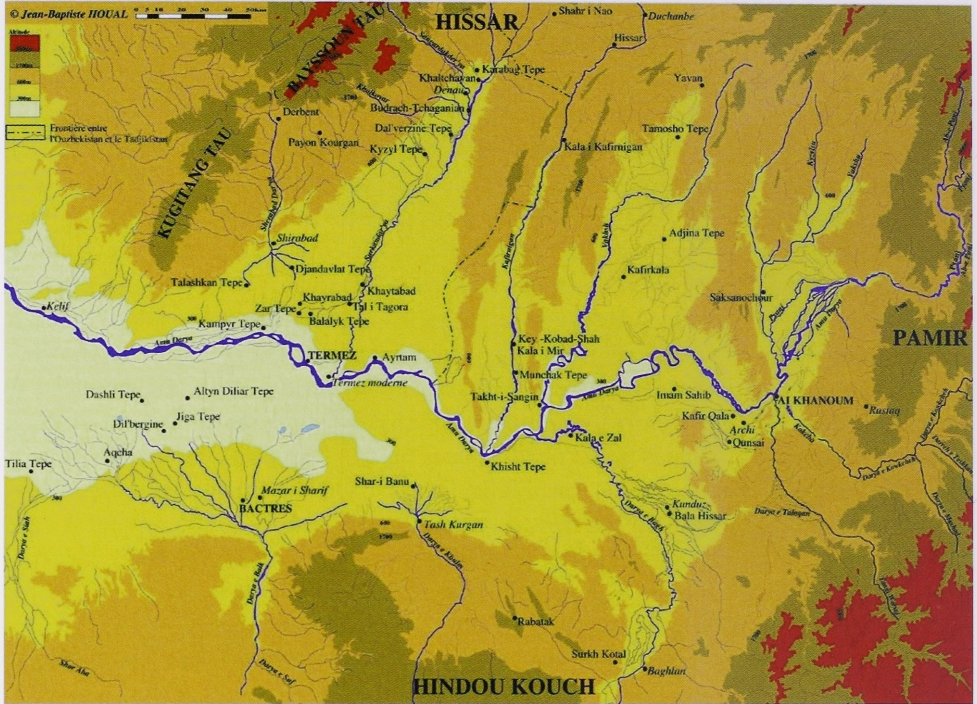


Fig. 16: Map of Bactria. Courtesy Jean-Baptiste Houal, AOROC/CNRS, Paris.

*

The updated French translation (Staviskij 1986) of Staviskij's *Kušanskaja Baktrija* (Staviskij 1977), despite the book's shortcomings,³⁴ contains most of the data and bibliographic references needed to write a survey of Buddhist monuments in Kushan Bactria [Fig. 16]. It dispenses me to give detailed references when they can easily be found in this book. Indeed, the only new data discovered since its publication comes from the French excavations in Bactra and the Uzbek-Japanese excavations in Termez, both published, at least summarily (Marquis & Besenval 2007; Fussman 2011 *inter alia*).

Although the presence of Buddhist communities is well attested, the Buddhist landscape of Bactria does not look like anything we are used to see in Gandh ra and Eastern Afghanistan. South of the Hindu Kush mountains, most huge *st pas* and monks' residences we know are located on the slopes of the rocky hills overlooking the irrigated

³⁴ Staviskij knows quite well Southern Uzbekistan (Northern Bactria, on the right bank of the Oxus river/Amu-Darya) and the Soviet excavations in that region, much less Afghan Bactria (Southern Bactria, on the left bank of the Oxus river/Amu-Darya) which he never visited, a fact which may explain the absence of any reference to the Buddhist monuments of Samangan/Haybak. His lack of knowledge of Buddhist religion and rites is sometimes surprising. Moreover, although being the main excavator of Kara Tepe in Termez, he devotes many pages more to the elusive evidence of fire cults in Southern Uzbekistan than to the well-attested Buddhist monuments.



Fig. 17: The summit of the Haybak *stūpa* in 1962. Courtesy Photothèque de l'Institut d'Études Indiennes du Collège de France.

lands, sometimes even at the top of the ridges. Although, as I pointed out elsewhere, there should also have been *stūpas* and monks' residences, now destroyed or covered by alluvial deposits, in the villages or close by, i.e. in the midst of irrigated lowlands, there clearly was a deliberate intent both to dot the landscape with huge constructions which, being built on high and conspicuous places, could be seen from afar and not use productive irrigated lands for sterile buildings. There is nothing comparable in Bactria, neither north nor south of the Amu-Darya, although the irrigated, i.e. inhabited, lowlands are overlooked by hills or dry alluvial terraces almost everywhere. The only instance I know of a high-placed *stūpa* is the unfinished rock-cut *stūpa* of Samangan/Haybak³⁵

³⁵ According to Marc Le Berre, there were two Buddhist "establishments" close to Surkh Kotal (he did not use the word "*stūpa*") built on high and conspicuous places. One was close to Pul-e Khumri, at the northern end of the ridge overlooking the left bank of the Qunduz river where it enters the plains, i.e. not far from the hydroelectric powerstation. It was destroyed when the canal irrigating the Dan-e Khuri/Surkh Kotal plain was dug out. The other was on the top

[Fig. 17]. The only other monuments built on a hill-top now known are Kaniška's *bago-laggos* (Rabatak, Surkh Kotal, probably Baghlān). That difference in landscapes probably means that a great part of the agricultural population did not support Buddhism: it was not a native religion, but an imported one, whose followers and sponsors inhabited the main towns, or in the immediate vicinity of the main towns as we shall see below. Indeed, when the monasteries were deserted, they were often used for Mazdean burials.

The valley of the Qunduz-āb, from Pul-e Khumri till the junction of that large river with the Amu-Darya, offers an easy access to rich agricultural lands and, through a ferry, to the right bank of the river. The Qunduz-āb flows through low hills and alluvial terraces which at intervals almost touch its banks, thus delimitating well defined areas, which I shall call basins, usually with one main town or settlement and many villages. There is plenty of water in the river in spring and summer and the loess soil is very fertile when irrigated.³⁶ The traces of ancient canals, which Gardin and his team were able to map and study, show that these lands were irrigated since the Bronze Age (Gardin, Gentelle & Lyonnet 1989-1998). The southernmost basin is the Pul-e Khumri basin, also called the Dan-e Khuri basin, never object of a detailed archaeological survey for the French archaeologists working there were devoting all the time and funds available to the excavation of the Surkh Kotal temple, located on the top of a hill overlooking from the West the arable lands of that area [Fig. 18]. Following a chance find, remains of a Buddhist building were discovered and excavated in the fields 2 km east of the Surkh Kotal temple. It was an approximatively rectangular platform (sides measuring ca. 14 × 17, 50 m) with remains of Buddhist statues (feet only) on its surface. The Buddhist character of the platform became even more likely when a capital ornamented with a turban was discovered during the excavations. Later, B. Dagens dug a series of trenches in the vicinity of the platform. He found remains of other constructions, but in a very poor condition for being now below the watertable. No plan could be made (Fussman in Schlumberger, Le Berre & Fussman 1983: 75-81). It is thus difficult to tell whether the platform belonged to a bigger ensemble, perhaps a monastery with monks, or not. In comparison with the gigantic Surkh Kotal *bagolaggo*, that platform is a very small building. It would be difficult to call it an imperial Kushan foundation. It was built in Kushan times, but later than Vāsudeva I. There is no other Buddhist monument known in that rich basin.³⁷ That does not suggest the presence of a numerous community of

of the so-called Tepe Kafe in Baghlān. It was destroyed when they built a café there (hence the name) with panoramic view. Both had disappeared before my first trip to Afghanistan in 1960. I have no doubts that there were ruins in these two places, I am not quite sure they were ruins of former Buddhist monuments although Buddhist reliefs are said to have been found in Tepe Kafe (below).

³⁶ Presentation in Staviskij 1986: 96–97, a bit confused where it deals with the Buddhist remains.

³⁷ The existence of a Buddhist monastery above the modern town of Pul-e Khumri is only a possibility: see *supra* p. 182, fn. 35.

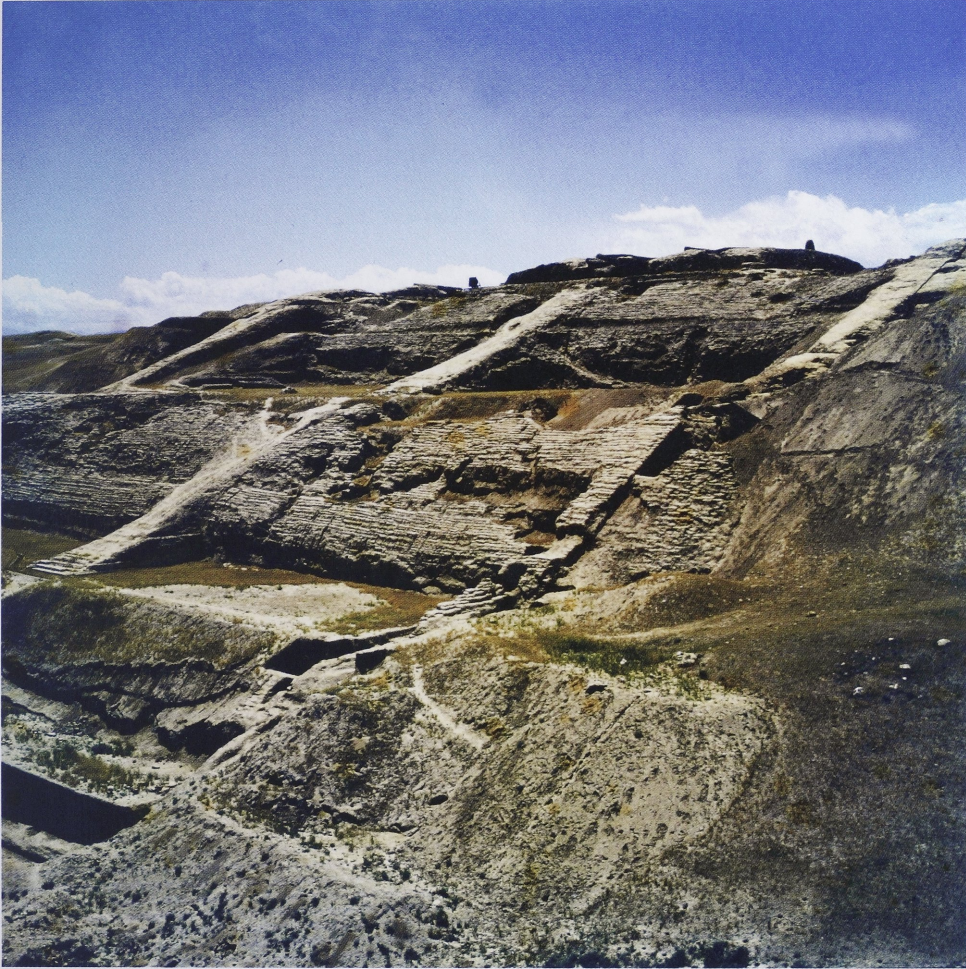


Fig. 18: The Surkh Kotal Kanishka temple after excavation. Courtesy Photothèque de l'Institut d'Études Indiennes du Collège de France.

monks and *upāsakas*, a very weak *argumentum e silentio* of course for the fields, whose surface is now 3,30 m higher than in antiquity, may hide other Buddhist remains. But if it were so, we could expect the presence of Buddhist buildings on the slopes nearby. There is none, as far as I know. And when Kanishka's *bagolaggo* stopped to function completely, a small fire-temple was built on its ruins, not a *stūpa* nor a Buddhist column.

The next basin farther down the river is the Baghlān basin, whose name keeps alive the word *bagolaggo*, either referring to the Surkh Kotal temple as suggested by Henning or to a yet another local *bagolaggo*. No Buddhist building was discovered there, except the dubious Tepe Kafe (supra, p. 182f., fn. 35) said to be the provenance of two reliefs with scenes of the Buddha's life published by B. Dagens (Dagens, Le Berre & Schlumberger

1964: 36-37). Four capitals with Buddhist motives come from Cham Qala, another place near by Baghlān (Dagens in Dagens, Le Berre & Schlumberger 1964: 37-39). These Kushan but somewhat late sculptures enable us to posit the existence of at least two cultic Buddhist buildings in the vicinity of today Baghlān but do not give any hint at the date of their foundation nor at their importance for the population.

The Qunduz basin is the larger one. There the North-South route meets routes leading west to Balkh and east to Badakhshan. There were at least two important towns in antiquity, the Old Qunduz town on the right bank of the river, Kala-e-Zal on its left bank. Only two Buddhist monasteries are known: Ahangaran/Angur Tepe, located 3 km north-east of Qunduz and built after AD 250 for its square rooms were covered by brick cupolas (Hackin in Hackin, Carl & Meunié 1959: 19-21; Staviskij 1986: 205, fn. 35), the other not far from there, at Shahr Dara. This last one is only known through the discovery of a broken Bodhisattva relief (Dagens in Dagens, Le Berre & Schlumberger 1964: 39) which may also have come from a house. I am not quite sure whether many more Buddhist sites wait to be discovered in that basin for in the Qunduz private museum of Sarwar Nashir Khan, a very powerful man fond of antiquities, there were very few Buddhist items: the above mentioned Shahr Dara Bodhisattva, three reliefs with scenes of the Buddha's life said to come from Ahangaran (Fisher 1958: 234-251) and an inscribed copper vase of unknown provenance not earlier than Wima Kadphises, may be much later (Fussman 1974b: 58-61). This last one may have come from elsewhere than the Qunduz area for Sarwar Nashir used to collect items from far away, from Balkh upto Aï Khanum.³⁸ We may add a handful of Buddhist sculptures discovered in a non-Buddhist context by the Japanese expedition to Chaqalaq Tepe (Tissot 2006: 101-103). One cannot even argue that the country is still unexplored: it was surveyed by Gardin and his team, who did not notice any Buddhist monument. All in all, the Buddhist remains whose provenance is more or less known all come from the vicinity of the main town, Old Qunduz. They are not impressive, date from the 2nd to the 5th (?) cent. AD, and give the impression that Buddhism was a minor faith in the vast Qunduz area. They probably have nothing more in common with the Kushan imperial power than the time when they were built.

*

From Pul-e Khumri a route skirting the foot of the hills leads to Balkh. It probably was used in antiquity for it is overlooked by two of Kaniška's *bagolaggos*, Surkh Kotal and Rabatak. No Buddhist monument is known in the semi-desertic space between Surkh Kotal and the Khulm/Tashkurgan oasis. In that rich area, only one is documented, the impressive Samangan/Haybak complex surveyed by Foucher (1942: 123-129) and later by a Japanese team (Mizuno 1962). Impressive, because the main monument should have been a huge rock-cut *stūpa* [Fig. 17], left unfinished. But the monks' residence [Fig. 19] is made from four caves only and the monks, according to Foucher, had to sleep in a dormitory. The project of carving a *stūpa* out of the hill overlooking the monastery

³⁸ There were in his museum two stone objects he found himself (so he said) in Aï Khanum. They led D. Schlumberger to start the Aï Khanum excavations.



Fig. 19: The Haybak cave-monastery seen in 1962 from the *stūpa*. Courtesy Photothèque de l'Institut d'Études Indiennes du Collège de France.

supposes the existence of a rich *dānapati* (or rich *dānapatis*) or the hope to be able to collect enough money from the local *upāsakas*. In any case, the project failed for reasons we do not know and we are left with a small and poor monastery, till now the only Buddhist establishment known in the Khulm/Tashkurgan oasis whose inhabitants, apparently, were not very devout Buddhists.

The date of the Haybak ensemble cannot be ascertained on positive grounds. Both Foucher (1942: 127) and Le Berre (1987: 117-118) adduce arguments, different for each author, not to date it before the 5th cent. AD, i.e. later than the Kushans.

*

Balkh was undoubtedly a great Buddhist center. According to Xuanzang, “there were (in his time) above 100 Buddhist monasteries with more than 3000 Brethren (monks) all adherents of the ‘Small Vehicle’ system” (Watters 1904,I: 108). None of these buildings is reliably identified. Foucher (1942: 59-60 and 67-69) was able to locate a number of mounds, some definitively being ruins of former huge *st pas*, other being possible remains of monasteries, not to reconcile his finds with Xuanzang’s data. Foucher’s map (p. 59) places all the possibly Buddhist remains outside the pre-Muslim town (map by Le Berre in Dagens, Le Berre & Schlumberger 1964: fig. 10 and in Marquis & Besenval 2007: 1851, fig. 3), a fact which can easily be understood for Buddhist monasteries are usually located close to settlements, but outside them. In any case the Old Town would have been built over too intensively to offer enough space for new and extended blocks of buildings. If there were Buddhist monuments inside, we can expect them to be of a relatively small size (see below).

Balkh being built on flat land, the huge *st pas* identified by Foucher could not be built on a slope or on a hilltop like their counterparts in the Kabul-Begram area, as symbols of the Buddhist faith to be seen from far away. They were built at the entrances of the town, like Zurmala in Termez, but only on its southern and eastern sides, i.e. close to the starting-point of the roads leading to B miy n, Termez and Qunduz. None was spotted on the western side. I do not know whether this fact should be put in relation with the apparent absence of Buddhist monuments west of Balkh.

Neither Foucher nor anybody since was able to give a date to the mounds identified as possible ruins of Buddhist buildings. The huge *st pas* may have been established in Kushan times, and possibly enlarged many times since. According to Xuanzang, “the New Monastery <was> built by a former king of the country” (Watters 1904,I: 108). That probably means it was not an imperial (Kushan) foundation, but the result of a donation by a local king, probably subject to the Kushans. The name “New Monastery” implies there were older monasteries whose founders were no more remembered. Remains of one of them, more exactly of a *st pa* which may have been part of one of them, were recently discovered by DAFA in Tepe Zargaran (Marquis & Besenval 2007: 1852-1854; detailed study by P. Bernard in Bernard, Besenval & Marquis 2006 (1217-1229). It is located inside the walled-in town, at its easternmost extension (see map in Bernard, Besenval & Marquis 2006: 1177, fig. 1). Only part of its square base was extant. It measured 6 × 6 m. The top of that platform, together with the capitals of the side pilasters, had disappeared. P. Bernard suggests that when intact, the base was 2.20 m high.

The photograph (Bernard 2006: 1219, fig. 33) clearly shows a circular imprint on its southern side (less clear on the plan *ibid.* 1218, fig. 32). According to P. Bernard, it is the only remains of a drum that measured ca. 5 m in diameter. It was no small a monument.

In the center of the circle a built-in relic chamber was found. The reliquary had disappeared, but there were remains of the accompanying offerings: some beads and five S t r Megas bronze coins which enable P. Bernard to date the foundation of the *st pa* in the reign of that king (or from Wima’s times, before he issued coins, G.F.).

Some details are nevertheless very puzzling. There is no trace of any enlargement of the platform, but its sides are exactly like those of the Surkh Kotal platform, as P. Bernard rightly remarks, which is at least 150 years younger. The Buddhist capital found not far from that Balkh *stūpa* (Bernard, Besenval & Marquis 2006: 1199, fig. 21) and which apparently did not belong to it, is also later. So is an unpublished fragmentary Kharoṣṭhī inscription found near by. If the date given by P. Bernard is exact, the historians of architecture would have to admit that some so-called Kushan capitals could be much earlier than usually maintained.

The drum and the sides of the platform were repaired at least once: the capitals with Buddhist subjects were taken away “lors d’une désacralisation du *stūpa*”, then replaced by plain blocks according to P. Bernard’s (2006: 1221) interpretation of the remains. That is fully in accordance with the archaeological evidence, but taking away some capitals without destroying the whole monument or allowing it to decay is a surprising way of “desacralizing” a *stūpa*.

Last, we do not know when the relic chamber was opened and the reliquary taken away: centuries ago, when the drum was destroyed, or later, in modern times? And why did those people take away the reliquary, probably a small pot without any great commercial value, and leave the coins, which could easily be sold in the bazar, even for a trifle? Were there other coins, which they took away, silver ones which would point to an earlier date and explain why the bronze coins were neglected, or even golden ones, which would indicate a later date? All these inconsistencies make it difficult to assert with absolute confidence that the Tepe Zargaran *stūpa* was built in the fifties of the first century AD, in Sōtēr Megas times. Still it is the best hypothesis according to the available evidence, and it is reinforced by the finds in Kara-Tepa (Termez) where epigraphic evidence attests the presence of Buddhist monks exactly at that time (below). These monks should have come through or from Balkh, which was a much bigger center and which even sent its Buddhist carvers, or its Buddhist carvings, to Termez as evidenced by another capital found in Tepe Zargaran (Bernard, Besenval & Marquis 2006: 1199, fig. 21) whose exact parallel, only smaller in size, was found in the debris of the Kara-Tepa monastery [Fig. 20].

*

The Surxan Darya valley lies opposite Balkh (a two days walk) on the right side of the Oxus/Amu-Darya river. Before the huge irrigation works of Soviet times, it was divided into oases well described by Staviskij (1986: 60-71). Archaeological excavations are going on since the publication of Staviskij 1977 so that his information, otherwise excellent, is not exactly up-to-date. The valley is the shortest way to reach (or come from) Sogdiana and, since the Xalčajan excavations, is supposed by many, including me, to be the place where the Kushan subdivision of the Yuezhi settled first when conquering Bactria, although that does not tally entirely with the numismatic and Chinese evidences.³⁹ The

³⁹ Most of the Heraios coins do not come from the Surxan Darya valley. The Chinese evidence



Fig. 20: Capitals from Buddhist monasteries in Balkh (a: from Tepe Zargaran) and Termez (b: from Kara-Tepa). Courtesy Phototh que de l'Institut d' tudes Indiennes du Coll ge de France.

archaeological map shows the existence of Buddhist establishments everywhere in the valley. In a way, it is deceptive. The Zar Tepe Buddhist sanctuary is a tiny and late building (Staviskij 1986: 272-273). The Zang Tepe manuscripts are still later: 5th-8th cent. AD according to Vorob'eva 1983: 64-69. More important, and probably part of a bigger and unexcavated group of buildings, are the two Buddhist sanctuaries in Airtam

suggests another location for the Kushan segment (*yabghu*) of the Yuezhi tribes: see Grenet 2006.

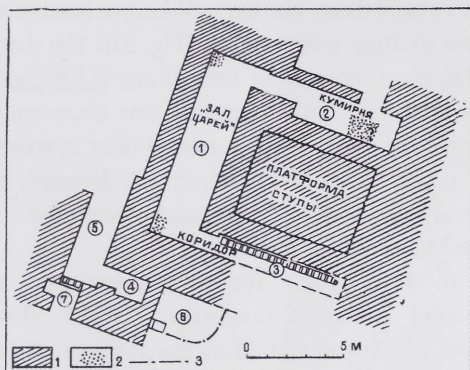


Рис. 60. Буддийское святилище в загородной зоне Дальверзинтепе. План.

Условные обозначения: 1 — пахса; 2 — прокаленная глина; 3 — контур позднейшего захоронения.

Fig. 21: Dal'verzin-Tepe, plan of the Buddhist shrine DT 1. From Pugačenkova & Rtveldzė 1978: 90, ill. 60.

not easy at all, even for Soviets, now Uzbeks, to get a permit to go there, stay a few days, and work with modern instruments.

*

The most spectacular finds were made in Dal'verzin-Tepe. It was a walled-in town founded in the middle course of the Surxan Darya valley by the Kushan kings or their Yuezhi ancestors, probably an important administrative or political center second only to Termez. Two Buddhist buildings were excavated. DT 1 (= Dal'verzin-Tepe, excavation site no. 1), a small mound 400 m to the north of the town, outside its walls, was much damaged by the levelling of the ground for making fields (Pugačenkova & Rtveldzė 1978: 90-97). There is no doubt that DT 1 is the ruin of a Buddhist sanctuary: it was filled with the remains of Buddhist clay sculptures. But the plan [Fig. 21] is difficult to understand. We may agree with the excavators' (G.A. Pugačenkova and B.A. Turgunov) supposition that the monks' cells were 50 m away and entirely destroyed. But I never saw a *stūpa* (on a square basis measuring 8 × 7.7 m) which cannot be circumambulated. There were Buddhist sculptures in the corridor running along its northern side, nicknamed "temple, place for the idols" (*kumirnja*) in the first publication, and a group of Buddha, monks and rulers (*pravitel'*) in the corridor of the western side, for that reason called "hall of kings". The pottery inventory is a mix of lamps and big jars. That does not look at all like a true *stūpa* area. I would prefer to call it, with B.A. Turgunov (1992), the Buddhist "chapel" or "hall of fame" of a great house, perhaps the mansion of an ancient family which placed the portraits of its

(Staviskij 1986: 261-262). One of them is known since the discovery of stone blocks of a freeze carved in a coarse Gandhāran style in 1932.⁴⁰ Both shrines are built over the remains of a fort overlooking one of the many ferries across the Amu-Darya. They are later than Sōtēr Megas, but it is impossible to give them a more precise dating. A Bactrian inscription was discovered nearby. It is engraved on the plinth of a relief almost entirely destroyed (latest study: Bernard 1981) and is said to contain the word *bagolaggo*, which may be wishful thinking. The Airtam area would deserve a systematic investigation, never done although it is only 18 km east of ancient Termez, but it is on the other (left) bank of the Surxan Darya and just on the border, facing Afghanistan. It is

⁴⁰ Latest study, with up-to-date bibliography: Lo Muzio 1995.



Fig. 22: Head of a clay statue from Dal'ver-zin-Tepe (DT 1). From Puga enkova & Rtve-ladze 1978: 217, ill. 152.

ancestor(s) there, viz. the well-known head of a man wearing a conical cap [Fig. 22]. The date is Kushan, not earlier than Wima Kadphises for a bronze coin of that ruler was discovered inside the coating of the ground floor in room 6 (p. 92). When the building was deserted, it became a place for the disposal of skeletons in the Mazdean way (ibid.).

In 1983, B.A. Turgunov discovered a second Buddhist sanctuary, DT 25, that time inside the walled-in town, north of its main street (Turgunov 1989 and 1992). Here also the plan [Fig. 23] is a bit puzzling⁴¹ but can be interpreted as showing a small *st pa* base⁴² (ca. 2.5 × 2.5 m) approximatively in the middle of an open court (the so-called room 3, measuring 11 × 9.5 m) surrounded by quadrangular rooms of varying sizes and shapes, where remains of broken sculptures were found. B.A. Turgunov succeeded in recovering a great number of fragments of huge clay statues, among them statues of Bodhisattvas larger than life. That sanctuary was built over a former construction, of unknown date and nature. B.A. Turgunov dates the building, “on the evidence of pottery finds” (p. 140), to the 2nd or 3rd cent.

AD, but the sculptures are manifestly later. Some inscriptions on pottery vessels are said to be not later than the 4th cent. AD. There is no clue about the identity of the people who founded that establishment nor any hint at monks' cells.

The two buildings DT1 and DT25 cannot be called, for the time being, Buddhist

⁴¹ Turgunov 1989 and 1992 do not coincide entirely, for Turgunov 1992 was written after further excavations. Obviously some hypotheses of the earlier paper were proved wrong. The author leaves us the task to decide which ones. Moreover Turgunov 1992 is an English translation of an unpublished (?) Russian original which Turgunov, not being able to understand the English language, was not able to check. It contains thus inconsistencies both in style and/or translation: e.g. “Room 3 ... was, probably a courtyard, not a hall” (p. 137). I comment the 1992 plan, more detailed than the 1989 one, but which lacks the sections of the 1989 paper (p. 82).

⁴² Turgunov does not describe that quadrangle, quite obvious on his plan, and I may be wrong in characterizing it as a *st pa* base. For him, the *st pa* was smaller and located in the south-eastern end of room 3 (p. 140). On his plan, I see something which looks like stairs, but nothing which looks like a *st pa*.

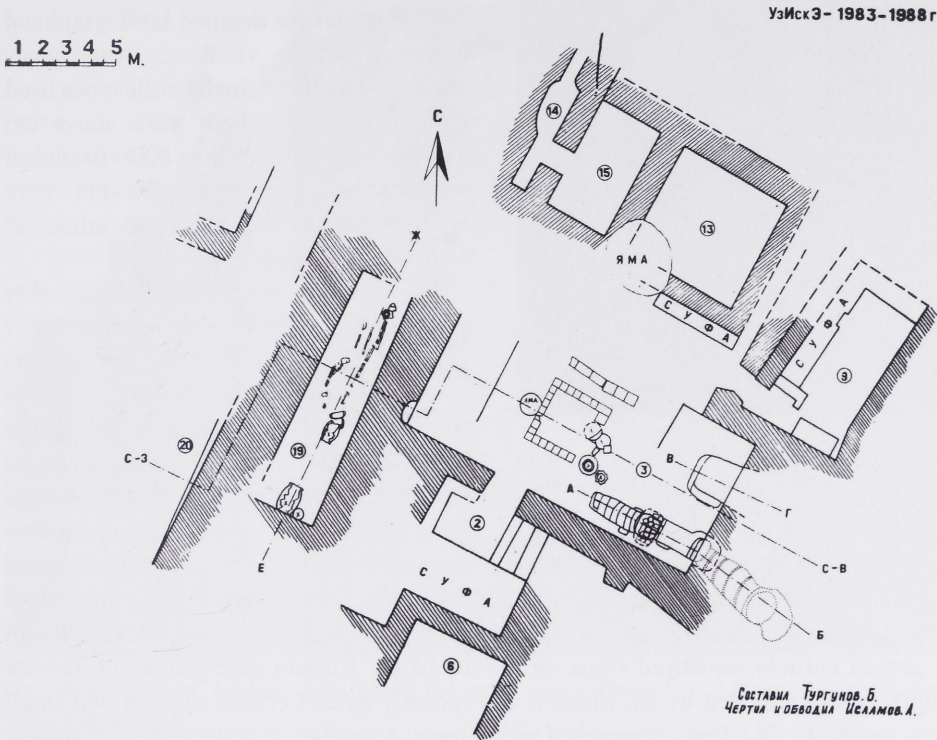


Fig. 1 - Dal'verzintepa. Plan of shrine DT-25.

Fig. 23: Dal'verzintepa, plan of the Buddhist shrine DT 25. From Turgunov 1992: 133.

monasteries for there is no trace of monks' residences nor of a huge cultic *stūpa*. But they undoubtedly are Buddhist "sanctuaries". It is thus evident that there was in Dal'verzintepa a significant number of Buddhist believers. But there were also (if not the same) practitioners of other cults, as testified by the discovery of temples of other deities inside of the town.

In the 2000s, an Uzbeko-Japanese expedition led by B.A. Turgunov dug deep inside the citadel. As far as I know, they did not discover any Buddhist remain there.

*

Two archaeological expeditions are currently digging in Termez. The Uzbeko-French expedition, led by P. Leriche and Sh. Pidaev, is digging inside the citadel and the Old Town, and exploring anew its suburbs. The Uzbek expedition led by Sh. Pidaev and funded by Japanese Buddhists (KATO Kyuzo) is excavating the Kara-Tepa ensemble. The Fajaz-Tepa monastery previously dug out by L.I. Al'baum was again excavated, first by Sh. Pidaev, then by T. Annaev, in connection with its restoration on behalf of UNESCO (2000-2005). The results of these excavations are easily available in Leriche



Fig. 24: Kara-Tepa, sherd no. 6, earlier than ca. AD 50. From Fussman 2011: 60.

now lying in the groundwater table below the irrigated fields; remains, or former remains, (with an inscription Fussman 2011: 127-128) of another monastery nearby the former municipal dumping ground for rubbish, probably outside the walls of the Old Town; one almost entirely destroyed st pa on the top of the Kushan enlargement of Termez ( ngiz-Tepa) excavated by M. Masson and recently by P. Leriche; at least two small st pas inside the Old Town discovered by his team; a number of underground chambers excavated by T. Annaev. Except Kara-Tepa and Fajaz-Tepa, any of these monuments may have or not belonged to the m lasarvastiv din monastery of unknown location of whose existence we know through a Tibetan colophon. More Buddhist monuments may be discovered anytime in or close to Old Termez, a huge field of ruins far from being entirely excavated, which also provided the Termez Museum with a number of Buddhist sculptures of whose exact findspot was not documented.

There are detailed architectural and chronological presentations of the Kara-Tepa and Fajaz-Tepa monasteries in Fussman 2011. There is no need to reproduce them here. The Kara-Tepa ensemble is no doubt the biggest today known in Termez and even on the right bank of the Amu-Darya. The paleography of the Indian inscriptions on pottery, which does not depend on the date of Kaniska's year 1, shows that there were monks in Kara-Tepa since ca. AD 50 (S t r Megas times) [Fig. 24] till ca. AD 620 and in Fajaz-Tepa since ca. AD 50 till ca. 400. The date of the earliest sherd from  ngiz-Tepa (surface collection) is also ca. AD 50. That does not mean that every building we see in these sites was built ca. AD 50 and deserted ca. AD 620 or 400 respectively. We may

⁴³ 1000 = 10 monasteries, each numbering 100 monks. I doubt that any monastery in Termez offered enough space for 100 monks. That would only be possible if we posit that every monk used to share his cell with a young disciple (*antev sin*): $50 \times 2 = 100$.

& Pidaev 2008 and Fussman 2011 to which I refer the reader for detailed bibliographical references. They vindicate Xuanzang's narrative, which our Soviet colleagues used to put in doubt: "There were above ten monasteries with more than 1000 Brethren: its topes and images of Buddha were very remarkable and exhibited miracles" (Watters 1904,I: 105).

The number of monks is probably exaggerated,⁴³ but the number of buildings tallies well with the results of the archaeological exploration: two mah sa ghika monasteries built outside the walls of the town, on its northern side (Kara-Tepa, Fajaz-Tepa); not far away a huge st pa (Zurmala), probably part of a big monastery

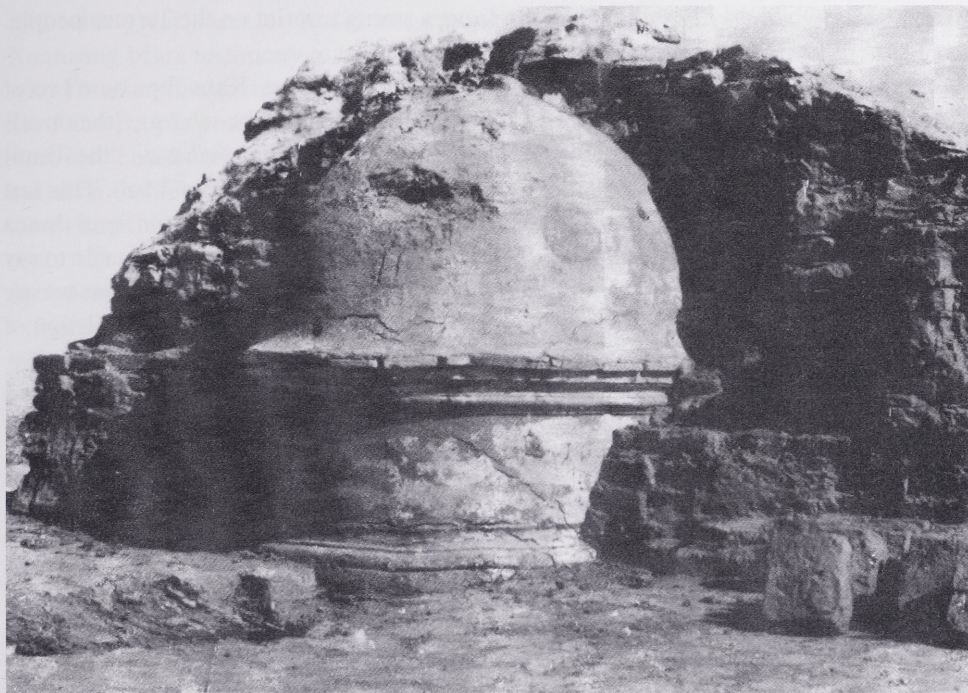


Fig. 25: Fajaz-Tepa. Earlier *stūpa* inside the main *stūpa*. Photo L.I. Al'baum. From Fussman 2011: 158, pl. 20 b.

presume a slow beginning and a progressive abandonment.

The same inscriptions demonstrate that Kara-Tepa and Fajaz-Tepa were two separate monasteries, both inhabited by *mahāsāṅghika* monks during the whole length of their existence. These monks were of different ethnic backgrounds and knew how to write different languages and scripts: Gāndhārī, coarse Sanskrit, Bactrian, the so-called undeciphered script and language, even Greek. The evidence (mural graffiti) for other languages (Middle Persian) is more doubtful. Both monasteries had a long architectural history: the main *stūpas* were enlarged [Fig. 25]. There are repairs. The earliest monks' residence of Kara-Tepa was razed down to the ground and replaced by a new one etc.

That long history and the great number of Buddhist buildings in Termez provide evidence enough to assume that a large part of the local population did adhere to Buddhism. That may be linked with the existence of migrants of Indian origin and/or culture in that area (Fussman 2011: 130, fn. 14). There is no evidence of voluntary destruction bringing an end to the Buddhist communities either in Kara-Tepa nor in Fajaz-Tepa. But when the monasteries were deserted, the cells, corridors and caves were used as dumping grounds for corpses. The same is true for the Kushan ramparts of

Čingiz-Tepa. Obviously Buddhism did not leave a strong imprint on the Termez people: most kept to their old Mazdean-like rites.

The inscriptions provide us with the names of the monasteries. Kara-Tepa bore two or three names all along its existence: *khadeuka-vihāra-* or *khadevaka-vihāra-*, “the (local) ruler monastery” as well explained by V.V. Vertogradova, *dramila-vihāra-*, “the Tamil *vihāra*”, which points to links with the Indian South, and may be *oka-vihāra-*. This last name, written on broken sherds, may be incomplete. The main *dānapati* was thus a local landlord, called “ruler” or “king” (*khadeuka*). As for *dramila*, we are unable to say whether it refers to the ethnic origin of that ruler or was its nickname for reasons we are left to figure out, or whether it refers to the South Indian origin or *nikāya* affiliation of one of the leading monks.

Fajaz-Tepa was called *haya-vihāra-*, “Horse-monastery”, which does not tell us anything about its founder. It is often assumed, on the basis of a damaged painting found on the south-eastern wall of its main cultic room, that it was founded by Kaniška. But that fresco was painted on a wall which did not belong to the first phase of building. It does not allow us to tell that Fajaz-Tepa was an imperial foundation. If it were so, we could expect that its name would have referred to that glorious origin; however, “Horse-monastery” is not bombastic enough for a royal or imperial monastery. Indeed C. Lo Muzio has shown that “nothing compels us to attribute the Fajaz-Tepa composition to Kaniška, as only an inscription might have revealed the identity of the main character of the scene” (Lo Muzio 2008: 195). Lo Muzio adduces strong stylistic evidence and parallels for a late dating of the painting: “some Kuṣāṇo-Sasanian or Kidarite ruler, or even a local notable linked to one or the other dynasty, might have played a relevant part in the patronage of the Buddhist settlement” (ibid.: 201). That seems reasonable enough, but may be a bit late, depending of course on the dating you give to that Kuṣāṇo-Sasanian or Kidarite ruler: the latest inscription (no. 74 FT) is dated, on paleographical grounds, ca. AD 400-450. One could nevertheless argue that it is an *argumentum e silentio*, which is true.

*

The beginnings of the “Buddhist conquest of Asia” are a kind of paradox. It is precisely at the time when armies and tribes were coming from the north and invading India that Buddhist monks went the other way, from India to Central Asia, to build small *stūpas* and monasteries there and try to convert local people to their faith. South of the Hindu Kush, that process began in Azes’ II and Kujula Kadphises’ times. As expected from the geography, the first Buddhist buildings today known north of the Hindu Kush are a few years younger: they go back to the time of Sōtēr Megas, a time when the Kushan empire was already firmly established. There is no doubt that, on both sides of the mountains, these monasteries grew in numbers and size under the so-called Great Kushans. The evidence available does not allow us to be more precise. It is even possible that many became bigger establishments under the Hephthalite rule.

South of the Hindu Kush, in these lands of Indian languages and culture, Buddhism

met with great success. It did not entirely eliminate other cults of Indian origin. Xuanzang bears testimony to their continued existence. But we may confidently assert, with Foucher, that there was a *stūpa* and some monks in every village. The support of the local people and elites enabled some Buddhist monasteries, e.g. Tepe Narenj, to start new constructions upto the times of the first Muslim inroads. It is quite possible, based on the Tepe Narenj finds and recent physical analyses of Bāmiyān paintings, that many Buddhist sculptures to which we are used to assign a "late" date of ca. 5th or 6th cent. AD are still later, by one, two or three centuries. When the last Buddhist monk disappeared, a mullah took his place, not a brahmin.

North of the Hindu Kush, the Buddhist preachers were less successful. Their task was more difficult. These are lands of Iranian languages and cultures, close to the powerful Iranian Empires (Parthian, Sasanian) and the bright Iranian civilization of neighbouring Sogd. The monasteries are fewer and more scattered than south of the Hindu Kush. The *stūpas* are smaller in size and less conspicuous. Most establishments are located close to the larger towns, i.e. in places where we can expect a population of mixed origin, the presence of Indian migrants (traders, petty officers of the Kushan rulers, painters etc.) for whom Buddhism was not an entirely foreign religion. The location of the two small Airtam sanctuaries at the landing place of an important ferry may perhaps be explained in the same way. Side by side with monks of Indian origin, there were undoubtedly monks of local origin, as testified by the Termez inscriptions written on humble pots of everyday use, by a superb Fajaz-Tepa sculpture [Fig. 26], and the renown of *ārya-mūla-sarvāstivāda-mahā-vinayadhara tūkhāra vaibhāṣika ācārya* Dharmamitra. But these Buddhists of non-Indian origin were probably in small numbers. The bulk of the peasant population did not adhere to the foreign faith. When the monasteries were deserted, they were used as dumping grounds for corpses by the local people who evidently had kept to their ancestral Mazdean mortuary rites.

We have no direct evidence that the Kushan imperial rulers directly funded monasteries. There is no legend akin to the story of Kaniṣka's *stūpa* in Peshawar narrated by Xuanzang, except in Begram. But the foundations of some huge *stūpas* near by Begram and in Balkh were attributed by the local lore to local rulers, also called kings (not "kings of kings"), and their spouses. In the same way local rulers and big landlords supported the building of the Kara-Tepa and Fajaz-Tepa monasteries. The "hall of fame" of Dal'verzīn-Tepe is another witness of the Buddhist devotion of some rulers. The two Wardak/Khavada inscriptions may partially explain these facts. They indicate that at least one *stūpa* was built by a high Kushan official of mixed origin (Indian and Bactrian) for the sake of the Emperor Huviṣka and seemingly as a kind of magic protection for the track of land which that Emperor had entrusted him with. In the same way, a number of great personages of the Kushan Empire, possessing lands or *jagirs* (if there were *jagirs* in the Kushan Empire!) on both sides of the Hindu Kush mountains, often commuting, as we say now, between Bactria and India, possibly offspring of mixed unions, may have played an important role in funding or enlarging Buddhist monasteries. They may have

been responsible for the expansion of Buddhism beyond the mountains, not for its first implantation there which dates to a time when the Kushan Empire was not yet entirely established.

The traders, of whom everybody says they were important supporters of Buddhism since Trapa sa and Bhallika, never appear as such, neither in the inscriptions nor on the reliefs. We should assume that they were among the donors, mainly in Bactria (*supra*), but



Fig. 26: Fajaz-Tepa. Buddha between two monks, one of them a local with an artificially cone-shaped skull, the other possibly from Gandh ra.

we cannot bring any evidence other than a reasoning⁴⁴ to support that supposition. The people who enabled Buddhism to come, develop and survive till the first Muslim inroads south of the Hindu Kush were local converts, sometimes grouped into companionships (*sahayara*), peasants, landlords and petty officials like those depicted on the Païtava reliefs, the Mes Aynak murals and the Tepe Narenj clay sculptures. In Bactria, the bulk of the population did not convert to Buddhism despite the existence of Buddhist rulers, and Buddhism disappeared as soon as these rulers themselves disappeared.

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⁴⁴ Merchants need to be assured of the protection provided by the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas before beginning a dangerous journey and should thank them after having returned safely and successfully etc.

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