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EDITOR

Ibrahim Shah, PhD

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CONTENTS

1. **The Quest for Harappans in Northern Balochistan, Pakistan: Initial Results and Understandings of the First Systematic Transect Survey in Tehsil Bori, District Loralai** 1
Muhammad Zahir and Muhammad Adris Khan
2. **Origins and Interactions of the Ethnic Groups of Greater Dardistan I: A Tooth Size Allocation Analysis of the Khow of Chitral District** 23
Brian E. Hemphill
3. **New Light on Ancient Gandhāra** 101
Abdur Rahman
4. **Physiology and Meaning of Pottery Deposits in Urban Contexts (Barikot, Swat): Archaeological Field Notes with an Addendum on the *lāsana*/λάσανα Pottery Forms** 123
Luca M. Olivieri
5. **Three Rare Gandharan Terracotta Plaques of Hellenistic Origin in the Lahore Museum: Were these plaques mobile models of travelling foreign artists?** 141
Rifaat Saif Dar
6. **A New Kushan Hoard from Ray Dheri, Abazai (Charsadda, Pakistan)** 161
Gul Rahim Khan and Mukhtar Ali Durrani
7. **Bhamāla Excavations 2015-16: A Preliminary Report** 171
Abdul Hameed, Shakirullah, Abdul Samad and Jonathan Mark Kenoyer
8. **Multiple-Perspective and Spatial domains of the Islamic Art** 185
Mamoona Khan
9. **The Bradlaugh Hall Building (1900): A Neglected Historical Monument in the Walled City of Lahore** 199
Ayesha Mehmood Malik, Muhammad Nasir Chaudhry and Syed Sajjad Haider

Three Rare Gandharan Terracotta Plaques of Hellenistic Origin in the Lahore Museum:

Were these plaques mobile models of travelling foreign artists?

Rifaat Saif Dar

Abstract: This paper presents a study of three small terracotta plaques in the Gandhara Collection of the Lahore Museum – each with a different scene in low relief and each being a cast from a single-mould. The scenes depicted are purely classical in theme and Hellenistic in form and execution. No such scene has so far been found from any other site in Gandhara. According to the available information in the record of the Lahore Museum, these plaques were procured about 96 years ago from some unknown site in the Peshawar Valley and were deposited in the Lahore Museum. For a long time, they remained hidden from the eyes of curators until 2006 when they were identified with those briefly described, but not illustrated, by Sir John Marshall in 1922. They are being studied here in some detail for the first time. The technique of making these hand-pressed casts is the subject of this article together with making such tiny moulds and the role of their casts as travelling models of art work. Attempt is also made to show what other comparable objects can be identified with examples available in Gandhara or within its cultural peripheries as having been copied from such mobile prototypes.

Keywords: Antigone, Creon, Dionysus, Europa, Haemon, Psyche, Saint Peter, Sophocles, Trojan Horse.

Introduction

The Lahore Museum preserves a good number of small-sized male and female terracotta figurines, emblemata, stamped wares, and casts and moulds of plaques from various sites in ancient Gandhara. However, few of them are from unrecorded sources and with unspecified dates of their arrival in the Lahore Museum. Among them, there are three moulded plaques which, despite their worn-out state of preservation, stand out from others on accounts of their subject-matter, especially the masterly handling of the figures depicted on them and technique of moulding. On closer examination, it becomes clear that instead of potsherds broken off from some larger pots; these are complete and finished artefacts in all respects. These are casts taken out of their moulds by pressing wet clay with hand fingers and then burnt to terracotta.

Ambiguity about their provenance and date of accession

When did these objects arrive in the Lahore Museum? When and from where were these discovered and by whom? And, when and under

what accession number were these objects entered in the Museum record? We are not sure. Currently, these bear accession numbers G-335 (disc with two busts; acquired on 22 January 1921) (Figs. 3a, b) G-340 (rectangular plaque with woman and child, Figs. 2a, b) and G-351 (oval plaque with three standing figures (Figs. 1a, b). For all intents and purposes, the present accession numbers were allocated in 1969 after the wholesale reorganization of the Museum, and consequently new registers were prepared for all sections including Gandhara Gallery. Knowing the erratic documentation record of the Lahore Museum – and this particularly applies to the Gandhara collection (Dar 2016), it has always been a problem for curators to confirm original accession numbers, dates and provenances of Gandharan pieces received in the Museum¹. Therefore, the present-day order of succession of three plaques under our study may not be taken literally as indicative of true dates of their arrival in the Museum. Except for one², in none of the original five Accession Registers maintained during 1867 and 1965, these plaques have been mentioned in a recognizable form. Similarly,

in none of the published annual reports of the working of the Central Museum from 1915-16 to 1943-44, there is any reference to these plaques. The only exception is the circular disc bearing No. G-335, which appears to have been acquired on 20th January 1921. This is the time when Sir John Marshall published his paper titled 'The Monuments of India' wherein he mentions 'three fragmentary ceramic wares' from the neighbourhood of Peshawar (Marshall 1922:612-649). The description in the Second Register of Additions, started in 1903) is brief and specific but it refers only to a single object.

Marshall's Statement revisited

Before we describe and discuss our three plaques in detail, we would like to revisit the valuable statement of Sir John Marshall about these findings and the identity of scenes on them, which he contributed in 1922 (Marshall 1922:612-549). Unfortunately, Marshall makes no mention of their whereabouts in a museum nor did he publish any picture of them from which fact we infer that probably he wrote his article immediately after their discovery but before their allocation to the Lahore Museum. Besides, he probably knew these objects only through their photographs. Still more, he wrote his paper with a panoramic approach towards monuments of India in general and as such he causally refers to a few interesting artefacts including three plaques presently under our study and with two recent finds from Taxila. The reason as to why he selected only these five objects from entire India was because, according to him, these '*derived their inspiration from the Hellenistic School*' (Marshall 1922:646).

Thus, among his '*some fragmentary ceramic wares*' Marshall gives details of only three artefacts in the following words:

Of earlier and purer workmanship a charming illustration is afforded by some fragmentary ceramic wares from the neighbourhood of Peshāwar, the designs on which are singularly human, and singularly Greek, in sentiment. On one of them are depicted little Amorini at play; on another, a child reaching for a bunch of grapes in the hands of its mother; and on a third, a scene from *Antigone*, where Haemon

is supplicating his father Creon for the life of his affianced bride.

Along with these three artefacts, Marshall also mentions two non-ceramic objects of the same category of Hellenistic origin from Taxila. One is an ivory pendant adorned with two bearded heads³. The other object is of greater significance. It is a vine-wreathed head of Dionysus in silver *repousse* discovered from Sirkap. He regarded these articles as 'both equally Hellenistic in character and equally devoid of any Indian feeling' (Marshall 1922:646).

Although Marshall did not tell us as to where the three 'fragmentary ceramic ware' deposited in 1922, we are sure that the three so-called 'fragmentary *ceramic wares*' of Marshall's description are housed in the Lahore Museum as shown in figures 1-3 and described below:

Description of Haemon and Antigone beseeching Creon, the king, for the life of Antigone (Figs. 1a, b)

Date of Acquisition: Not known

Old No: Not traceable

New No: G- 351. The number was probably allocated in 1969

Size: 2x5.8x0.5 to 2cm.

Description: This terracotta plaque is almost square in shape but looks ovoid on account of its rounded corners. The background is very uneven – thicker on right side and thinner on the left. The front side is concave with figures moulded in relief over a concave surface. The backside is irregular but depressed.

The front side is covered with three figures (Fig. 1a) – the central figure is that of a man of mature age with muscular body and taller than the others. On his left side stands a young man who clings to the central figures in a beseeching posture. He hardly reaches the armpit of the central figure. On the opposite side stands a female figure somewhat bent but with resisting posture leaving sufficient space between the two figures.

This plaque is a cast out of a clot of wet clay with rough and depressed surface on the back (Fig.



Figures 1a, b. Front and back views of terracotta plaque (Lahore Museum No. G-351, Size: 22x5.8x0.5 to 2 cm). The scene represents the legend of Haemon pleading his father king Creon to condone death penalty of Antigone. Approximately 2nd century BCE. (Photograph courtesy: The Lahore Museum).

1b). The figures, as they stand today, are moulded in relief over a concave surface. The backside is rough and uneven and shows finger-impression caused by pressing the wet clay inside a mold. The mould, probably, was also of burnt clay.

The sections of edges on all sides are smooth and original as at the time of sending to the furnace. There is certainly no sign to suggest that this sherd was ever part of a larger pot with figures embossed on it. With all intents and purpose, this is a complete object in its own right to be used in some other way. Its backside may be compared with that of another terracotta mould with a hunting scene, recently discovered from Bhir Mound, which is still unpublished (Fig. 4a). Both the Lahore Museum and the Taxila Museum plaques appear to have been formed with the same technique and hence seem to be contemporary works. Like the old plaques, this new mould is also made of wet clay with rounded edges and roughened backside. Likewise, the mould from Taxila too was a complete article and not a sherd broken from some larger pot and hence meant to be used as a portable model. Its owner, with all probability, was a travelling artist moving from place to place with the kit of his models and

designs.

In the current Accession Register of the Lahore Museum, the scene in plaque (G-351) has been described as a genre one (see Lahore Museum Collection Register No. 115, p.50). But certainly, it cannot be termed so. The central figure, which dominates the two accompanying ones, is huge, domineering, robust with an attitude betraying arrogance – at best uncompromising. Shown completely naked in Greek fashion, his role appears to be that of a military general or a 'tyrant'⁴. The position of his arms is indicative of his dual behaviour – protective in case of the male figure on the right side and arrogant and cruel in the case of female figure on the left side. Attitude of the young man, as shown by his bent posture and spread out arms, is that of beseeching and imploring person as the senior man has taken him under the protection of his left arm-pit. The scene on the other side is quite opposite to it. Here the young lady is being dragged by the same central figure by catching hold of her left arm while the lady, as seen through the completely bow-like-curve of her body, shows her as pulling away from the central figure. Her face is upturned in horror, agony and apprehension. All the three figures

are shown completely nude. These are the key-points, which may help us identify the story being presented to us.

To identify this scene accurately, one needs to revisit the paper of Marshall referred to above. A careful reading of this paper offers no difficulty in identifying it with a scene from the famous drama *Antigone* by Sophocles. And the three characters as Antigone, Haemon and Creon. This drama was staged in Athens in 442/441 BCE⁵.

Here we cannot indulge ourselves in fuller details of the tragic story of *Antigone* which revolves round the misfortunes of the House of Oedipus of Thebe⁶. Suffice here to say that Creon, the King of Thebe ordered for Antigone (his own niece, fiancée of his son Haemon and the ill-fated daughter of Oedipus, to be buried alive in a vaulted tomb. As shown in this plaque, both Haemon and his fiancée are shown together beseeching the king to forgive the penalty but of no use. She was sent to be buried alive in the tomb where she hanged herself. Haemon described this behaviour

of his father as tyrannical. On hearing the news of Antigone's death, Haemon, and, together with him his mother too, ended their lives by stabbing themselves. It was not too late for Creon to realize his mistake and he also ended his life.

Terracotta plaque representing a Maenad enticing infant Dionysus with a bunch of grapes (Figs. 2a, b)

Date of Acquisition: Not Known

Old No: Not traceable

New No: G-340

Size: 7.5x5.0x1.3cm / 3x2x0.5 inches

Description: This plaque is of vertical format and rectangular shape but with rounded corners and irregular outline. Obverse side is convex. The backside is flat in the main but towards the ends it tappers upward. The front side depicts a standing female figure with a child in high relief, but details of the figures are blurred. Backside is tooled but plain. There



a.



b.

Figures 2a, b. Front and back views of terracotta plaque (Lahore Museum No. G-340, Size: 7.5x5.0x1.3 cm). The scene represents the infant Dionysus and a Maenad with a bunch of grapes (Photograph courtesy: The Lahore Museum).

are no signs that the figures were finished after firing with some layer of slip of clay, lime or paint. It is a complete object and shows no sign of having been broken away from some larger pot.

Scene: In the current official record, this plaque has been described simply as: 'Moulded figures of a mother and a baby standing facing each other'. The female figure occupies full length of the plaque. Her face is turned towards right with her back turned three quarters towards spectators. The head and neck portions are completely blurred probably due to erosion of the plaque. She is standing upright with her left leg stretched slightly backward and weight of the body is shifted on to the right leg. Her right arm is raised with a slight bend at the elbow. In her left hand she holds what appears to be a bunch of grapes, which she is offering to the little boy. The naked little boy, with his face and hands lifted upwards towards the grapes, is obviously tantalized by the bunch of grapes she is holding. Although, the figure of the lady is quite blurred, but there are indications that she is naked save a long cloak (*chlamys*) that covers her left shoulder and falls in a fold on the back down to her legs (Fig.2).

Tentatively, the plaque either represents a genre household scene of a Mother and Child or Aphrodite frolicking with an Eros/Cupid. But, we think, the scene can be more precisely identified as Hermes and Dionysus. According to Greek mythology, Dionysus was the son of Zeus from a mortal woman named Semele. In order to save him from the wrath of Hera, his wife, Zeus handed him over to Hermes – one of the minor Olympian gods. In turn, Hermes entrusted young Dionysus to the Nymphs of Nysa in Asia or to his own three sisters who later on became the leaders of Maenads. They continued to nurse Dionysus even when he became of age. Dionysus's love for grapes, wine, and ecstasy of nymphs had been a favourite subject in Greek art. With this background in mind, this plaque under study reminds us the famous statue of Hermes – the messenger of gods – by Praxiteles found in Olympia⁷ and dated in the 4th century BC. shown as a standing nude carrying the infant Dionysus in his left arm. Hermes's broken right arm is raised

in such a fashion that has presumed to be holding a bunch of grapes for which the infant Dionysus was trying to reach (Starr n.d.:144). What was originally 'Hermes tantalizing infant Dionysus with a bunch of grapes', our artist of Gandhara terracotta plaque has turned into a scene of mother tantalizing her son with the same fruit.

The other example that helps us in identifying this scene is a glass cameo of Roman origin of first half of the first century CE⁸. It represents a Satyr tempting young Dionysus with a bunch of grapes exactly in the same manner as our plaque in the Lahore Museum.

Terracotta disc with busts of Psyche and Cupid (Figs. 3a, b)

Date of Acquisition: 22 January 1921.

Old No.: Not traceable.

New No.: G-335.

Size: Diameter is 3.5cm/1.5inch and thickness is 1cm/0.6 inch.

Description: It is a circular disc of burnt clay with busts of two figures on the front. Backside is flat in the centre, but sides are tapering upwards as it spreads out. It is well-fired. On the front side, the two busts are in the centre with flat cut-out area around them. Their gender is not clear enough but still it is not difficult to ascertain them to be 'man' and 'woman'. The figure on the right-hand side, holding a wine cup, is certainly a young lady whereas the one opposite to her is that of a young man.

Scene: It is relatively a well-finished piece on both sides. The backside, like that of a shallow cup, is flat in the centre with upwards tapering edge. On the obverse side, the two moulded busts are covered with a thin slip as is clearly visible in the chipped-off portion near the bottom of the plaque. The Museum Register of 1969 describes the disc as:

'A disc of baked clay with conjugated human busts (emblematic figurines) (indescribable being worn out)' (see Collection Register No. 115, p. 48a. No. G-335).

Marshall (1922), however, was tempted to take



Figures 3a, b. Front and back views of a terracotta disc in the Lahore Museum (No. G-335, Size: Diam. 3.5 cm). The front shows busts of a couple in low relief representing Psyche offering a wine cup to Eros. (Photograph courtesy: The Lahore Museum).

them as a pair of cupids. On closer examination, it becomes clear that both are fully clad, the face of the right figure is round and smaller of the two and hence that of woman whereas the face of the left figure is elongated and larger and hence that of a man. The female, with a bun on the back of the head, is holding a wine cup offering to her companion. The male figure, on the other hand, welcomes the offer with his extended arms.

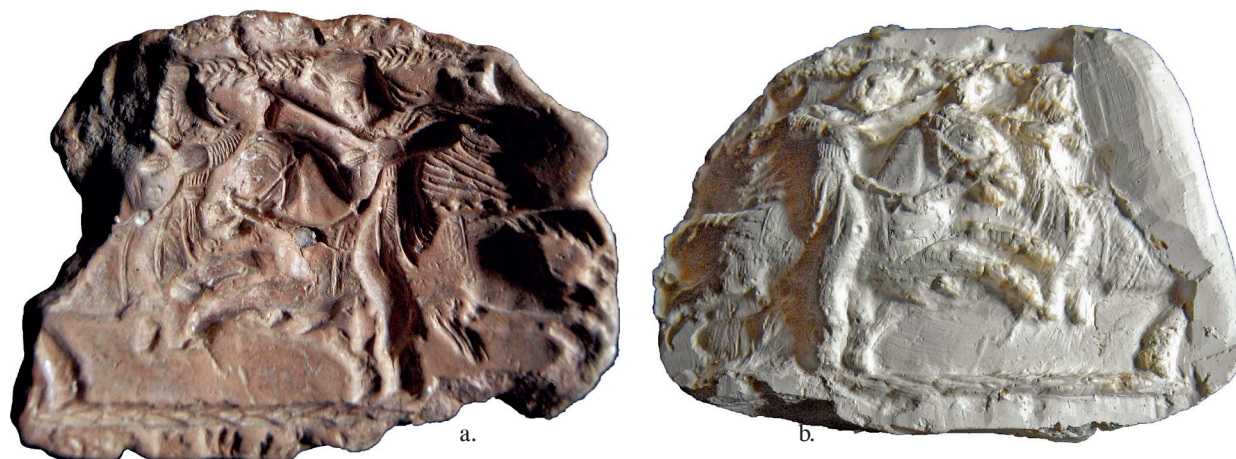
If it is accepted that the figures represent two mature individuals and not naked cupids or Eros and that they represent fully-clad male and female making a toast of a wine cup, then there is no doubt that the two figures represent either a genre scene of a couple in dalliance or, more specifically, Psyche and Eros – the latter being more probable.

Like the two other plaques, this circular disc is also not a fragment of some ceramic ware but a complete object.

What purpose did these plaques serve?

But what purpose these plaques were intended to serve? Outlines of these plaques may look, at first sight, irregular, their surface uneven and unfinished but, still, the edges were smooth and not sharp like broken fragments from some larger vessel. Instead, all these are complete objects.

These were certainly not decoration pieces to be hung on the walls or placed on mantelpieces or offered as objects of worship in a shrine. Nor do these appear to be an appliqué part of some other vessel such as a moulded scene found at the inner bottom of a Megarian bowl from Pir Manikrai (Dar and Jan 2015: fig. 18) or an emblem at the inner bottom of a shallow *phiale* from Shaikhan Dheri (Dani 1965:65; pl. XXXI). Besides, these were also neither mould out of which some casts were meant to be taken nor were these prototypes from which permanent and final molds were to be prepared for making more casts for some commercial purpose. Instead, these are certainly clay-turned-terracotta casts for some unspecified purpose. Our plaque at figure 1 is similar to a terracotta mould recently discovered from Bhir Mound (Taxila) (Figs. 4a, b) representing an equestrian scene showing a well-caparisoned horse charging forward with its soldier-rider. Backsides of this mould and that of our plaque (Fig. 1b) show identical treatment. The question arises as to how these two casts were ultimately utilized? If in the former case the cast was meant to have been used for stamping on the surface of a larger pot, then the cast immediately becomes part of a larger body of some ware like the handle of a jug with Alexander's head from Bhir Mound,



Figures 4a, b. Mould and its cast. (a) A recently discovered terracotta mould from excavations at Bhira mound (Taxila) representing an equestrian scene. (b) Fresh cast presently, on display in Taxila Museum. (Courtesy: The Taxila Museum).

now in the Taxila Museum (Fig. 5) and the two emblemata one each from Pir Manikrai (Dar and Jan 2015:26f, Figs.13, 18) and Shaikhani Dheri - mentioned above. - Though both from adjacent regions but slightly of later date. The Lahore Museum plaques from the Peshawar Valley, however, do not form part of any larger ware. These were casts taken out of their respective moulds. Their edges were smoothed out before firing. Obviously, these were intended to be kept as such, for a use which is not very clear. Nor do we find terracotta plaques in such a form quite frequently from sites in ancient Gandhara and its cultural peripheries.

After prolonged thinking and ruling out all routine answers usually put forth in connection with uses of moulds and their casts, we put forward a new hypothesis or solution to the problem which, on the first sight, may look outlandish and even outrageous to some. It is proposed that the three plaques under study were portable models of artists travelling from the Mediterranean countries to Gandhara and beyond moving along with caravans of trade either along the land or sea routes⁹ or more precisely a trade caravan coming from Mediterranean countries to Gandhara and beyond along the *Uttarapatha* – the Grand Northern Route (Dar 2006:37, 63, 87, 161-62). If these artists were already settled in Gandhara, they were free to move from one place to another with kits of their tools and copies or

sketches of their designs and/or portable models of their products including miniature portable finished works of arts such as toilet trays of 2nd-1st century BCE (Dar 1998:129-172), silver *repousse* head of Silenus (Marshall 1950: III, pl. 209a; Dar 2006:282, pl. 78), bronze statue of Harpocrates from Taxila (Fig. 8b) and statue of Serapis from Begram (Fig. 7a), - all of 1st century BCE and 1st century CE - in search of patrons to commission some works in any medium and size of their choice. As and when an artist found some patron, he would get examined his prototype models. And once a design or specimen was approved, the artist would set up to prepare a new specimen of dimensions/sizes as per requirement. Such miniature models, being three-dimensional, would have more appeal than a two-dimensional design on paper or cloth.

The idea of making terracotta plaques or figurines in Gandhara pre-dates the Greek and Scytho-Parthian rule in this country. But such terracottas were either in the form of solid handmade figurines or with round bodies or two-dimensional figures – single or multiples, pressed from single moulds datable between 1st/2nd century CE and 2nd century BCE (Marshall 1950, III: pl.132, 6). Some new techniques of making terracotta figurines were introduced in Gandhara after this region was exposed to influence of the West. The need for using hollow casts came into greater demand after the iconoclast activities were



Figure 5. Head of Alexander in the guise of Hercules on the handle of a Krater of Black Greek pottery from Bhir Mound (Taxila). Datable to the 4th century BCE. Presently, on display in the Taxila Museum. (Photograph courtesy: The Taxila Museum).



Figure 6. Terracotta Figurine of Urang-otan or Gorilla of Indonesia. Cast with solid head and hollow body. From Sirkap (Taxila) discovered in 1929 and dated in 2nd century CE. It was probably made locally from some mould belonging to some travelling artists. Now on display in the Taxila Museum. (Photograph courtesy: The Taxila Museum).

started by the Greeks in the 2nd century BCE. Perhaps the earliest example of a hollow or solid cast from a double mold is the 2nd century BCE small statue of naked Cupid holding a bird from Shaikhhan Dheri (Dani 1965:57, Pl. I/92 on Title Page and Pl. XXIII/ A-C). Two other interesting examples of this category are a lady with lamp from Dharmarajika (Taxila) (Marshall 1950, Vol. III: pls. 125/14 and 129/141) and a 2nd century CE terracotta bust of an Indonesian Urang-otan or Gorilla from Sirkap (Taxila) (Marshall 1950: III, no. 53) now in the Taxila Museum (Fig. 6).

Comparable Miniature Models in Gandhara

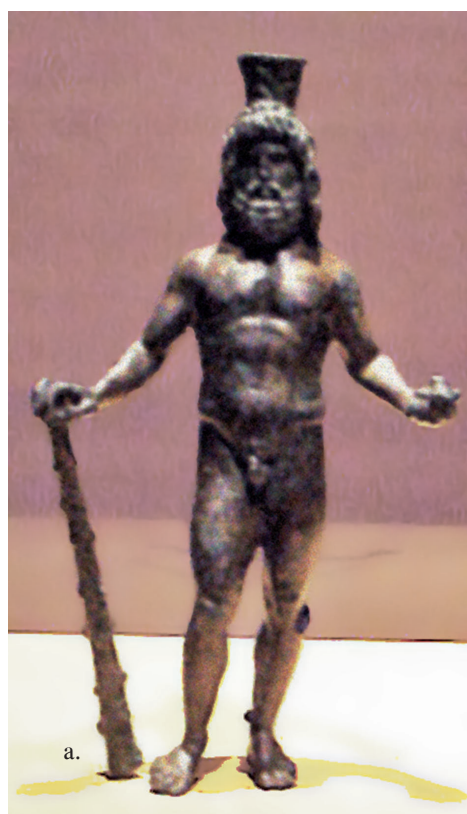
But our concern here is of slightly different nature i.e. use of miniature portable models in Gandhara. The best example of a Buddhist miniature shrine that came from regular scientific excavations is a miniature cruciform stupa from Shaikhhan Dheri (Allchin 1972:15-26; Dani 1965:42, no. 3, pl. XVIII/1-3). It is not totally a new idea. We have been reading about portable models of Buddhist/Hindu shrines in Gandhara and Kashmir, which

pilgrims or sages of different faiths used to carry with them during their journeys from one sacred place to another. As far our knowledge goes, the probable earliest reference to portable shrines of Gandharan, Kashmiri, North-west Indian, Central Asian origins goes a little more than one hundred years back to Aurel Stein (1907). About half a century later Taddei (1965) and Alexander Soper (1965) made more objective studies of this subject. They were soon followed by the studies of similar objects from Central Asia by Phyllis Granoff (1968). More information regarding portable shrines in North-west India came from Allchin (1972), Yoshida (2000), followed by Sen Gupta (2002) and Pal (2004). The two latest contributions – and both of much greater significance – came recently from Yoshida (2013) and Hameed (2014, 2015, 2017). Among these, Hameed's research of 2015 is based on a study of 34 miniature mobile shrines from Gandhara, Kashmir and Central Asia. This study reveals that in both the regions, along with general sculptures and reliefs, such as *'tiny objects were manufactured as private shrines and probably either placed inside homes or carried along by travelers, traders and*

missionaries' (Hameed 2015, *Introduction*). This study provides an excellent overview of miniature portable shrines as seen through the background both of Buddhist and later Hindu Shahi works, mainly in stone and rarely in ivory. One of the primary objectives of his study was '*to trace the origin of the artistic tradition of using miniature portable shrines – particularly the Diptychs*'. These shrines reflect a significant artistic tradition of using miniature buildings and Diptychs. According to him, this tradition first developed in Gandhara and then travelled to Kashmir and thus they played an important role in the diffusion of Buddhist iconography and Gandhara style. But according to his findings, the portable shrines – particularly of Diptych style, date between 1st and 5th century CE and their pictorial art have been greatly influenced by Diptychs of the Consular and similar Private works of the Roman and Byzantine Emperors. Hameed, however, opines that despite our knowledge of the foreign influence

on Gandhara art, nothing appears to have been written on the role of Western elements *vis-à-vis* portable shrines. But we should keep in mind that Hameed's reference to Western elements in portable shrines of Diptych types always implies to their origin in Consular or Imperial Diptychs. (Hameed 2015: Screens 12, 126, 154).

There is no doubt that the three terracotta plaques in the Lahore Museum have Western origin in both in their themes and in technique of mould-making. Besides, these are in miniature in size and are portable. But, it is here where the comparison with Hameed's study ends. First, our examples are neither in stone, nor in ivory, wood or metal – these are all in terracotta. Secondly, the themes depicted on them are neither Buddhist, Hindu nor imperial Roman and Byzantine Christian as is the case with most of the portable shrines and diptychs from Gandhara. Our example, on the other hand, is deeply rooted in Hellenic and Hellenistic traditions. And above all,



Figures 7a, b. Two objects from Begram Treasure. (a) Bronze statue of Serapis, and (b) Syrian glass goblet painted with a scene representing Rape of Europa.

these are datable in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, i.e. much earlier than the portable or miniature shrines catalogued by Hameed.

This brings us back to our topic i.e. the purpose and functions of three terracotta plaques from the Peshawar Valley. The similarities between these plaques and the portable shrines are therefore their being miniature in size and portable in function. In another aspect, these are discoveries from Gandhara. The portable Gandhara shrines have ultimately been derived from Western sources – Roman and Byzantine Empires – 1st to 5th centuries CE. The themes of ‘our’ terracotta plaques, on the other hand, are also ultimately based on themes belonging to the West but of much earlier period – 5th to 1st centuries BCE. Apart from this, these belong to two worlds wide apart from each other – both in material, technique, subject matter as well as in time brackets to which these two groups belong. The Western or Hellenic or Hellenistic aspects and origin of our plaques can be viewed in general background of Western aspects of Gandhara art that have been discussed by numerous writers ever since its discovery in the 19th century (Banerjee 1920; Dar 1973; 1998; Smith 1898; Bachofer 1941; Gordon 1944; Buckthal 1945; Marshall 1947; Rowland 1949; Soper 1951; Carter 1958 and Roberts 1959). Besides, it no more needs any confirmation that Gandhara, being at the crossroads of ancient trade routes between East and West since ancient times, remained for a long time an active centre of meeting place of traders, scholars, philosophers and even artists from different regions (Warmington 1928; Wheeler 1954; Schoff 1912; Mookerjee 1912; Rawlinson 1971; Charlesworth 1961; Chandra 1977; Errington *et al.* 1992; Hauptmann 1997; Allchin *et al.* 1997; Prakash; Dar, 2006; Wheeler 1951; Dobbins 1971; Rawlinson 1975, etc.).

We need not go into details of these international activities between Gandhara and its western counterparts because it will divert our attention from the main subject. Suffice here to say that along with these routes and trade commodities there must have also moved artists and craftsmen with their toolkits of specimens of their works in the form of sketch-books and portable models of their art works. They were on the lookout for

jobs, commissions, and patrons in the new lands soon after their arrival in Gandhara during the 2nd century BCE and 4th century CE. Their ‘samples’ were shown to the perspective patrons, and if anyone of these samples was approved the same was recreated/reproduced according to the required size and position.

It is true that we have no written document to confirm such an assumption. The anonymous author of the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (Schoff 1912) of the first century CE gives us a long list of articles of import and export to and from some ports along the Western coast of India from Barbaricon near modern Karachi down to Barygaza, Nelkynda, Muziris, etc. which included among other things clothing, purple cloth, apparel plain and costly, glass, vessels, silver plates, silver vases, brass and copper, tin and lead (objects?), gold and silver *denarii* (Dar 1998:120f). There is no mention of import of art objects, but it is not proper to expect such minute details given in such a document.

Some historical records

We may refer to three historical references that support our contention. These are:

The anonymous author of *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* tells us that during his visit to the city of Alexandria Makarane,¹⁰ he witnessed Greek dramas being staged and Homer’s *Iliad* being sung (Dar 2006:137)¹¹.

In about 44 CE the Cappadocia magician and the traveller Apollonius of Tyana visited a temple in (believed to be the Jandial Temple), wherein he saw polychrome plates with scenes in high relief, fresco paintings and statues executed in the style of some famous Greek painters (Philostratus 1970:57; Dar 1998:88). Whether or not he understood these artworks correctly, his statement implied that the some Greek artists were still working in Gandhara during first century CE.

The Apocryphal Acts of Saint Thomas tells us that services of the Saint were hired in Jerusalem as an architect for building a palace at Taxila for the Parthian king Gondophares. Whether or not this story is true, it confirms

the reputation of Taxila as a destination of architects/artists in search of jobs during first century CE.

It is also assumed that discovery of the so-called Taxila Cross from the site of Sirkap (King, n.d., n.p.; Dar 2006: pl. 33)¹², forms a proof that Christian missionaries started working at Taxila during or after the visit of Saint Thomas at Taxila. The case of Taxila Cross must be studied with reference to the discovery of a minor bronze statue of Saint Peter from Charsadda (Fig. 8a). (Dar 2006:211, pl. XIX/34)¹³. Now whether this statuette was a liturgical object, suffice here to say that it proves that during the two centuries of Common Era; it was quite customary for

portable objects, like our statuette and the three terracotta plaques under our study, to accompany the caravan-luggage of traders, travellers and even missionaries.

Some miscellaneous objects with specific Western themes

Still, there is some more evidence in support of our contention. Take for example the statue of Helmeted Athena from Naogram (2nd-1st century BCE) now in the Lahore Museum (Dar 2006:271, pl. 46) (Fig. 9a). It is Greek in conception and is carved in round like a Greek sculpture but is carved in local grey stone by some Greek or local artist working from a proto-model. We get the same feeling about a smaller partly gilded statuette



a.



b.

Figures 8a, b. Two small size bronze statuettes of Graeco-Roman origin discovered in Gandhara. (a) Statue of Saint Peter holding keys of heaven. Discovered from Charsadda in 1911 but lost soon thereafter (After Dar, *Historical Routes through Gandhara*, p. 211, pl.XIX/34) and (b) Statue of Harpocrates from Alexandria discovered from Taxila. Now in the National Museum Karachi (Photograph courtesy: The National Museum Karachi).

of headless winged Nike (Victory) in Taxila Museum (Fig. 9b) (Dar 2006:278, pl. 68) which is also Greek in conception but carved in local stone and shown wearing heavy local anklets. This small statue might have been brought to Taxila from some other center/workshop in Gandhara by some travelling artist – local or foreigner.

We can extend this evidence to several other sculptural examples such as the panel depicting Bacchanalian Scene carved on a typical Buddhist lion-pedestal in Lahore Museum (Dar 2016: pl. XXXIIIa), the so-called Buner Panel depicting a dancing troupe (Dar 2006: pl. 60) in Hellenistic manners but used as a stair-riser in a Buddhist stupa and a local version of a Greek story of Zeus's

Eagle carrying away Ganymede fixed in a tiara of the turban of Bodhisattva in Lahore Museum (Dar 2006: pl. 95).

Gandharan toilet trays form another category of mobile models. These are always of portable sizes (Dar 1998:129-172). Carved in a variety of local stone, the scenes are mostly borrowed from the repertoire of Greek legends and mythology carved mostly by Mediterranean artists. For paucity of space we are constrained to refer here only to one example from Akra, Bunnun now in British Museum (Dar 2006, pl. 43)¹⁴. It depicts the story of Actaeon watching goddess Artemis bathing and then being devoured by her dogs. Trays like this could have been part of the kit of travelling artists who, in turn, must have influenced local artists.

Among the most interesting Gandhara sculptures depicting unmistakable western or Greek themes can also be quoted the followings, albeit briefly:



a.



b.

Figures 9a, b. Two stone statues of unmistakable Hellenistic origin but made in Gandhara both dated in 2nd-1st century. BCE representing (a) Greek goddess Athena from Naogram, District Swabi now on display in the Lahore Museum (courtesy Lahore Museum) and (b) Greek goddess Nike (Victory) from Sirkap, now on display in the Taxila Museum. (Photograph courtesy: The Taxila Museum).

A plate depicting in relief the scene of Trojan Horse from Charsadda now in British Museum (Fig. 10);

A Female Centaur in stone from Sikri now in Chandigarh Museum) (Dar 2016: pls. XXI, a-b);

A male Centaur in the Lahore Museum (Dar 2016: pl. XXI/d) and

The reclining statue representing Personification of River Nile in Taxila Museum (Dar 2006: pl. 50).

A head of a Satyr in silver *repousse* from Taxila (Dar 2006:282, pl. 78 and 1950: III, pl. 209/21;

A bronze statue of Harpocrates from Taxila (Fig. 8b) (Marshall 1950: III, pl. 186/417) and a bronze statue of Serapis from Begram (Fig. 7a) – both probably from the workshop of Alexandria in Egypt.

And the last, but not the least, a few words about Begram Treasure - a large collection of portable artworks collected from all over the civilized world. Briefly, Begram, the site of the ancient city, of Kapisa, near Kabul. Its history goes back to the second century BCE. This treasure, now in Kabul Museum, was discovered in 1938-39

by Jack Hackin (Rowland 1971:11-21, pls. 17-104). Objects from Begram, like several others from Taxila, Pushkalavati and other centres of Gandhara, seem to have arrived mainly from Mediterranean countries – Egypt, Syria, Greece, Italy, etc. – as well as from China and India. Their presence at one place indicates existence of long distance trade that ran in ancient times partly overland and partly across the sea¹⁵.

This Treasure is best known for its rare collection of varied types of objects manufactured in different countries. All these objects are of portable size so that these can easily be transported over long distances along the ancient trade route linking Gandhara with other countries. The objects of Begram Treasure appear to have reached Kapisa in about first century CE. The entire collection was sealed in a room in about 241 in view of an invasion by Shapur I but the property could never be claimed by its owner.

It is a wonderful collection both for its contents and the excellence of manufacturing quality of its objects. It includes a series of Syrian glassware of great historical value, a sizeable collection of Bronze statuettes from Mediterranean countries, Chinese lacquered bowls, carved ivory boxes

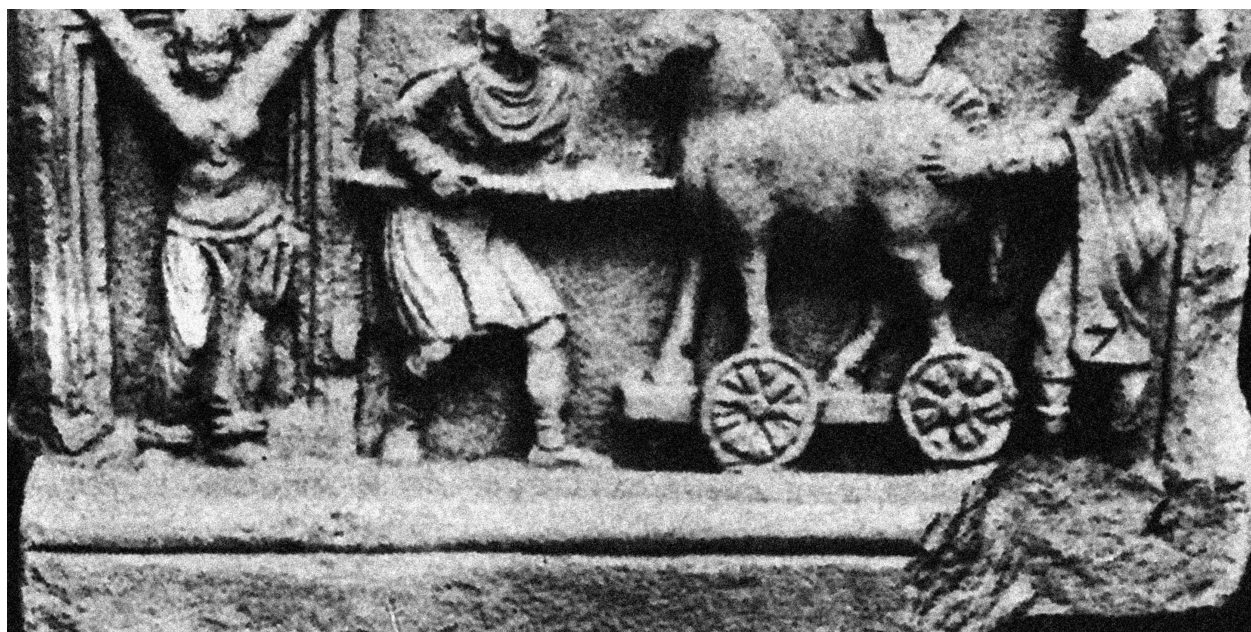


Figure 10. Panel depicting legend of Trojan Horse from Charsadda, now in the British Museum. (*Journal of Hellenic Studies* LXVI: 21-23, Pl. 2).

from India and many plaster medallions showing themes borrowed from Graeco-Roman history and mythology. Important objects include a Syrian glass goblet with the scene of Rape of Europa painted on it (Pl. 7b), a carved ivory box (Dar 2006:263, pl. 23) from India dated 79 CE¹⁶, two bronze statuettes - one of Serapis (Fig. 7a) and other of Harpocrates from Egypt (similar to the one from Taxila as in Fig. 8b), a bronze bust of Greek goddess Athena in the form of steelyard (Dar 2006:273, pl. 53) and a plaster cast of an emblem in the form of a noble lady from some Mediterranean country (Dar 2006:279, pl. 71).

To put an end to this controversy we may be allowed to add here one last evidence. Like the statuette of Saint Peter, there is another missionary article, though of Buddhist import but of great significance. It is a 20 cm/8 inches high jade relief depicting a Chinese Buddhist pilgrimage. It was discovered from Rokri on the Indus near Mianwali sometime before 1901 but was soon lost from the Lahore Museum where it was last seen in 1915 (Foucher 1915:10) (Fig. 11). This portable statuette of a Buddhist monk was dated as contemporary with Gandharan stucco sculpture from this site and had reached here from China as part of the luggage of a Buddhist monk from that country.

Conclusions

The question of portable art works from the West to Gandhara from the second century BCE onwards has taken us a little too far. But it was necessary to prove our contention and hypothesis which being new, though not novel and improbable, was difficult to be digested.

Examples quoted above support our contention that portable miniature works of art were reaching Gandhara and its cultural peripheries not only from distant lands like Indonesia (Fig. 6) and China (Fig. 11), but also from Rome (Fig. 8a). Alexandria (Figs. 7a, 8b) and other Mediterranean countries (Figs. 1-3, 7b, 10) and China (Fig. 11). The evidence quoted about the visit of Saint Thomas, Apollonius of Tyana and accounts left behind by the anonymous author of *The Periplus of Erythrean Sea* are in addition to this. All these

evidences when seen together leaves us in no doubt to decide that during the four centuries – two centuries each on either side of the beginning of the Common Era it was not unusual for artists to be part of a large trade caravan along with their personal belongings including portable works of art and notebooks showing sketches of their art-works. If during the first half of the first century CE fresco paintings were still being produced at Taxila in the styles of some well-known Greek masters as stated by Apollonius of Tyana and Greek drama were being staged and Homer's poetry was still being recited in the port city of Alexandria Makarene, as witnessed by the anonymous author of *the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* and Arab traders were hiring artists (architects) at Jerusalem to work as builders in the city of Taxila as testified by the Apocryphal Acts of Saint Thomas, then why not accept that terracotta plaques with themes of Greek dramas and stories of Greek myths as seen in our figures 1 to 3 were imported from outside as portable works of arts for offering the same to local patrons for making fresh and enlarged copies or to adopt them to the local faith. In final analysis our research shows that the travelling artists visiting Gandhara were carrying with them not only sketches and portable models of their works of western origin, but they were certainly carrying with them actual small-scale objects which were finished in all respects before transporting them to Gandhara. Such works could have also worked as prototypes for their perspective new buyers as 'curios' or actual objects of worship in local centers like Taxila, Pushkalavati, Hadda and many others in Gandhara and Kashmir. However, these centres and their distribution over space and time still need to be identified more precisely.

Notes:

1. Beside loss of original accession numbers in majority of the cases, the Lahore Museum's Gandhara Collection has also suffered from frequent fragmentation by way of distribution among several museums in Pakistan and India such as: The Chandigarh Museum, India and the National Museum of India, New Delhi; National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi; Bahawalpur Museum,



Figure 11. Jade carving depicting a Chinese Pilgrim. Discovered from Rokhri, Distt: Mianwali. It was discovered in 1901 and deposited in the Lahore Museum. It was last seen in 1915 (After A. Foucher 1915)

Bahawalpur and Lyallpur Museum, Faisalabad – all in Pakistan. For a complete account of this see: Dar 2016, Chapter 3 and Appendices I, K, L and M. The collection, that still remains behind, has been allocated fresh accession numbers from 1969 onward at least at three different times.

2. The only exception is the circular disc bearing No. G-335 which seems to have been acquired on 20 January 1921.
3. Initially published in the *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India for the year 1912-13* (Anonymous 1912: pl. XX-d). But, in his final report Marshall describes it

as an ivory handle adorned on either side with a bearded Greek head of a philosopher type, possibly Socrates (Marshall 1950, I: 151, pl. 203).

4. The word 'TYPANNOΣ' or 'tyrant', was used in 5th century BC Greece as a substitute of a dictator. But a Greek 'tyrant' was always a benign dictator who acted, though harshly, but always in the interest of the state and the nation. (see: Kitto 1991:72, 102-109).
5. Sophocles, along with Aeschylus, and Euripides, is one of the three most popular Greek drama writers of the 5th century

- BCE. He is said to have written 123 plays but only seven are preserved. Out of these, three plays namely, Oedipus the King, Oedipus Coronus and Antigone revolve round the family of Antigone (see Starr n.d: 64).
6. As the story goes, Oedipus, at the time of his birth was prophesized to kill his father (Laius, king of Thebe) and will marry his own mother (Jocasta). To avoid this destiny, his parents threw the child in a jungle where the infant was picked up by a passer-by and was ultimately brought up in another royal family. As was destined, he killed his own father in a dual, became himself king of Thebe and married the widow of the king whom he had killed - actually his own mother Jocasta. Out of this union were born four children two sons – Perineikes and Eteocles and two daughters – Antigone and Ismene. Finally, Oedipus came to know about this odd relationship. He abdicated the throne, blinded himself and went into Jungle. His elder daughter-cum-sister (Antigone) accompanied him in exile. When Oedipus died, she returned home only to find that her mother too had committed suicide. In the meanwhile, Oteocles, her younger brother had ascended the throne whereas, the other, took refuge of a hostile family, collected a force and attacked Thebe. In this famous ‘War of Seven against Thebe’ both brothers died fighting each other. Consequently, Antigone’s maternal uncle Creon became the King of Thebe. He issued a decree that Oteocles, the king of Thebe, be buried with all royal honours but body of the rebel-brother (Perineikes) be dishonoured by leaving it in the open. Antigone stood against this decision and succeeded in giving her brother an honourable burial - a right of every free born Greek. Haemon, her cousin and fiancé, stood by her side. What was the result of this defiance against the royal decree is the main theme of Sophocles’ dramas Antigone which partly forms the subject of the terracotta plaque of the Lahore Museum no. G-351 (Fig. 1).
 7. This statue is now in the Archaeological Museum, Olympia (Greece). This has been downloaded from Wikipedia on 1st November 2016.
 8. Information regarding this Glass Cameo has been downloaded from Wikipedia on 1 November 2016.
 9. For land routes during the Parthian period see Isidorus Characeni, *Stathmoi Parthikoi (Mansions Parthice or Parthian Stations)* (With Greek text). In: *Geographi Graeci Minores*, Paris, 1882, pp. 257–305. For sea routes see: Unknown author of the *Periplous Maris Erythaei (Priplous of the Erythrean Sea)* (with Greek text), in: *Geographi Graeci Minores*, Paris, 1882, pp. 73-121 (English translation by W. H. Schoff, *Periplous of the Erythrean Sea*. New York, 1912.). For a comprehensive treatment of these land and sea routes during 200 BC and 200 CE see: Saifur Rahman Dar, *Historical Routes through Gandhara (Pakistan)*. Lahore, 2006, pp. 143-153.
 10. A city also called Alexandria Rhambakia and Alexandria Oreite founded by Alexander the Great on the coast of Makran that was still flourishing during the first century CE.
 11. This reminds us relief panel depicting the story of the Trojan Horse discovered from Charsadda (Fig. 10) and the story from the Greek drama of Sophocles on our plaques (Fig.1).
 12. For Taxila Cross also see: King, *Taxila Cross*, n.d and n.p; B. L. Haines (1970), ‘The Taxila Cross in Lahore Cathedral’. *Al-Mushir* 122 (Lahore): 11f, 13-19.
 13. This statuette of Saint Peter was lost immediately after its discovery in 1910. It is a miniature bronze statue of Saint Peter holding his symbol - the keys of heaven (Fig. 8a). It was discovered in 1910 but was lost immediately soon after its discovery. It has been assumed that it reached Charsadda through the northern routes of the Caspian Sea through Tukharistan where presence of Christianity has been reported through the presence of Nestorian Crosses carved on rocks.
 14. For a detailed discussion of about 150 such trays from Taxila and other sites in Gandhara, see Dar 1998:129-171. The

complete catalogue of 151 trays is given at pp. 157-184.

15. This summary account is based on a detailed account published in Dar 1998:150f.

16. A comparable ivory work in the form of carved ivory handle (Dar 2006:263, pl. 24) is from the ruins of Pompeii (buried under volcanic ashes in 79 CE). It is now in the Oriental Art Museum, Rome.

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