

## Some Terracotta Figurines from the Peshawar Plain<sup>1</sup>

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### *Introduction*

The figurines presented in this paper were collected during the early 1930's by Major D. H. Gordon, a British officer on duty in the North-West Frontier Province of India. Having a keen interest in antiquities, Major Gordon discovered that archaeological remains were being found at Sari-Dheri, about four and a half miles from the village of Charsadda in the Peshawar plain. In his article for the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* in 1932, Gordon described how terracottas and stone artefacts were being uncovered by local villagers, who were using the soil from the mound as fertilizer for their sugar cane fields (Gordon, 1932: 163). It is known that Gordon purchased certain terracotta figurines (Corbiau, 1937: 1), which appeared in many of his publications in archaeological and anthropological journals (Gordon, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1937, 1938).

Six of these terracottas are to be found today in the possession of the Department of Archaeology at Cambridge University. Unfortunately, they have remained hitherto unstudied, save one; CDA2 (figs. 2a and b), which was published by Gordon in a discussion of the dating of terracottas and other finds from Sari-Dheri (Gordon, 1938: Plate VI, Fig. 1, far right). The specimens in question have all been marked with small initials in black ink. Four bear the letters 'SD', one is marked 'BH' and one 'Ch'. It seems likely that these indications correspond to Sari-Dheri, the mound of Bala Hisar at Charsadda and to the general vicinity of the site of Charsadda respectively. All six figurines belong to the type known to Gordon as 'archaic figures' (1938:86) or 'Sari-Dheri type' (1932:163, footnote 1). Significant numbers of these figurines were discovered by Sir Mortimer Wheeler in his excavations at Charsadda in 1958, and it was Wheeler who gave them the name 'Baroque Ladies', which has been adopted in the subsequent literature (Wheeler, 1962:104). This nomenclature refers to the characteristically ornate rosetted 'baroque' head-dress worn by the figurines, which of all their features, sets them most apart as a group. Baroque Lady figurines have been found at various sites and locations in the Peshawar plain, an area to which, at present, they seem to be confined. Although the type is not totally discontinuous with the well-established tradition of terracotta art flourishing in the northern part of the subcontinent since prehistoric times, it is nonetheless quite distinctive.

### *Catalogue of Artefacts*

CDAI<sup>2</sup>

Head and torso of Baroque Lady figurine. Markings 'SD' and sticker number '38' on reverse.

*Height:* 60 mm; *Width:* 54 mm; *Depth:* 16 mm; *Material:* Fine orange clay with mica admixtures, kiln baked, hand-modelled. *Decoration:* incised, applied and stamped, black paint. *Preservation:* Head and upper torso preserved. Half of left breast, most of right breast, end of left arm missing. Nose slightly damaged, general preservation of face good. Apex of head-dress missing.

*Description:* The nose is sculpted forwards and the bridge of the nose is delineated. The eyes and mouth are applied oval pellets horizontally incised. The eyebrows are incised lines from the bridge of the nose to the edges of the head. The torso bears horizontally extended tapering arms, very stylised in

form. The breasts are applied pellets. Applied bands of ornaments adorn the neck; a choker of three applied pellets with many pricked marks, below which is an applied band with stamped circlets enclosing a pricked mark. Large applied roundels over the ears are incised with many short dashes, representing earrings which match the design of the choker. The head is flanked on either side by two applied bands. These are incised lengthwise with herring-bone pattern. Incised lines extend from the forehead to the missing apex of the head-dress<sup>3</sup>, possibly indicating a fringe. The back of the head is flat, the head-dress being part of a separate piece modelled around the face and smoothed into the reverse of the figurine. Black paint has been applied to the incised eyes and eyebrows. Two lines of black paint run from each shoulder and cross in between the breasts. Two lines, discontinuous with those on the front run from the shoulders and cross over on the back<sup>4</sup>.

### CDA2

Head and neck of Baroque Lady figurine. Markings 'SD' on reverse<sup>5</sup>.

*Height:* 53 mm; *Width:* 50 mm; *Depth:* 25 mm; *Material:* Fine orange clay with some mica admixtures, well fired, slightly blackened core. Hand-modelled. *Decoration:* applied and incised. *Preservation:* Facial features very well preserved, nose slightly worn. Head and neck preserved up to shoulders. Upper parts of head-dress missing.

*Description:* The face is very delicately crafted with a finely modelled nose. The eyes are raised oval shapes with the brow ridges also slightly raised. The eyes and mouth are horizontally incised lines and the eyebrows are delicately arched incisions from the centre to the edges of the forehead. A very small, applied circular pellet between the brows indicates a *tika* marking. The contours of the oval-shaped face, the forehead, cheeks and chin are delicately modelled. The neck is slender and long, enclosed by a choker of an applied band vertically incised. Below this, there are traces of round applied and incised pellets. Either side of the neck, below ear-level, are large lenticular earrings which lie flat against the sides of the neck. The edges of the earrings, which face the front, are incised horizontally. The earrings bear incised crosses with a very small applied pellet in their centre. Half-oval shapes at ear-level bear almost vertical incisions, perhaps representative of hair. Two applied bands flank the head, meeting at the missing apex of the head-dress. These are incised lengthways. Below the apex is an applied pellet vertically incised. There are traces of another circular pellet on the right side above the hair.

### CDA3

Head of Baroque Lady figurine. Markings 'SD7' on reverse.

*Height:* 50 mm; *Width:* 47 mm; *Depth:* 21 mm; *Material:* Fine dark brown clay with some mica admixtures. Face darkened in places due to uneven firing. Hand-modelled. *Decoration:* applied and incised, possible traces of black paint. *Preservation:* Head well preserved above chin. Nose, right middle pellet and lower left pellet of head-dress chipped.

*Description:* The nose and eyebrows are pinched forwards. The eyes are large, oval applied pellets. The mouth is a small, circular, applied pellet. The eyes and mouth are horizontally incised. The brows are incised lines from between the eyes to the edges of the head. The face slopes sharply away above the brows. A rounded chin is discernible. The foundation of the head-dress is an applied 'halo' of clay which is separately attached and modelled into the flat back of the figurine. This is overlaid by round, applied pellets. Vertically incised pellets are attached to either side of the head below eye-level. Of these two, the right hand pellet bears a horizontal incision at the top, from which the vertical incisions descend. The apex of the head-dress is a vertically incised, circular, applied pellet. On either side and set slightly lower, are circular, diagonally incised pellets. Between them and the forehead are diagonal incisions angled towards the apex of the head-dress. Diagonally aligned incisions also adorn the

spaces between the applied pellets of the head-dress. Two applied rosettes at brow level are of circular form with zigzagged edges. Incisions radiate from the centre of the rosettes, covered by small, circular, applied pellets. Traces of black or dark-brown paint are visible on the left side of the chin, the right hand ear-level pellet and on the reverse of the figurine.

#### CDA4

Head and neck of Baroque Lady figurine. Markings 'BH' on reverse.

*Height:* 51 mm; *Width:* 56 mm; *Depth:* 19 mm; *Material:* Medium-fine dark orange clay with considerable mica admixtures. Well fired, blackened on reverse from firing process. Hand-modelled. *Decoration:* applied and incised. *Preservation:* Face preserved, nose and upper middle part of brows chipped. Part of neck preserved. Apex of head-dress, half of right, and left earrings missing. Rosettes slightly chipped.

*Description:* The face is pinched forwards, and the eyes are applied oval pellets. The eyes, brows and mouth are horizontally incised. The chin is barely rendered. No ornaments are discernible on the part of the neck which is preserved. Curved, lenticular, applied earrings, horizontally incised can be seen on either side of the face. The head-dress is separately attached, modelled into the flat back of the figurine and overlaid by applied pellets. Traces of a round pellet are discernible at the missing apex of the head-dress. Two larger applied rosettes frame the sides of the head, with zigzagged edges and incised decoration radiating from a central point. Incised diagonal lines are angled towards the missing apex, either side of which are round, modelled ornaments bearing diagonally incised lines.

#### CDA5

Baroque Lady figurine. Markings 'SD9', sticker number '38' on reverse.

*Height:* 93 mm; *Width:* 40 mm; *Depth:* 14 mm; *Material:* Fine orange-red clay with mica admixtures, kiln-baked. Hand-modelled. *Decoration:* applied and incised. *Preservation:* Almost full, but most of right arm and left breast missing.

*Description:* The face is prominently pinched forwards. The eyes are applied, incised oval pellets on either side of the head. The brows are an incised uneven 'V' shape on the top of the head. A small incision under the nose is likely to be the mouth. The arms slope downwards straight away from the head, with no discernible shoulders. They are tapered and triangular; a highly stylized rendering. The breasts are small, circular applied pellets, the surviving right breast bearing a horizontal incised dash. The waist is slightly indicated. The legs are conjoined, tapered and lean slightly to the left. They are indicated by a vertical incision. An incised girdle, around the front of the body, and the pudendum are rendered by incised lines. Four incisions at the bottom of the legs define anklets. Decoration around the neck is incised, with many hemispherical dashed lines denoting necklaces. Many vertical incised dashes cross over the top, creating a carelessly rendered web. Three of these lines extend down between the breasts and curve past the left side of the pudendum. Many small, applied pellets, with almost horizontal incised dashes, frame the face. The back of the head is flat and almost concave.

#### CDA6

Torso of Baroque Lady. Marking 'Ch' on reverse.

*Height:* 36 mm; *Width:* 60 mm; *Depth:* 24 mm; *Material:* Fine dark orange clay with mica admixtures, well fired. Hand-modelled. *Decoration:* applied and incised, black paint. *Preservation:* Torso only preserved. Lower part of neck with ornament intact. Right arm, tip of left arm and right breast missing.

*Description:* The arms are horizontally extended, tapering and highly stylized. The breast is an applied cone. An applied band around the neck bears an incised zigzag pattern, above which are diagonally incised dashes. Between the breasts an applied strip stretches down towards the waist, bearing vertical incisions with horizontal incisions at the bottom. Black paint, in broad brush strokes runs from the shoulders and crosses in the back. There are also two large, round spots of black paint on the back of the neck.

### *Synopsis of the Literature on the Baroque Ladies*

Figurines of the Baroque Lady type were published by Ananda Coomaraswamy in his paper 'Archaic Indian Terracottas' (1928:64-76). The three examples presented (Tafel 1, figures 1-4) are said to have come from the Peshawar district and are described as having especially Indian characteristics, such as anklets, depicted by incised lines (1928:66). More particularly, the presence of the *channavira* indicated a strong link with familiar Indian iconography (Tafel 1, figures 1-3). The similarity between the pinched nose of these figurines and certain Harappan female forms (Banerji, 1994: Plate 17), led Coomaraswamy to conclude that the terracottas represented pre-Mauryan types of the second millennium BC (1928:67). D. H. Gordon provided many examples of the same 'archaic' type, yet consistently argued for a later date, which would make the figurines contemporary with other Hellenistic types recovered from the mound of Sari-Dheri (Gordon, 1934: 58, 1935:117, 1938). Simone Corbiau added grist to this chronological mill by conducting brief excavations at the site in 1936. She favoured a much earlier date, interpreting the figurines as representative of a newly discovered northern extension of the Indus chalcolithic civilization (Corbiau, 1937:1). Major Gordon maintained a dating of 200 B. C. to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A. D., citing Codrington's contention that the ubiquity of the *channavira* in the iconography makes it unsuitable for use in claims of especial antiquity for the figurines (Codrington, 1931:143-144) (Gordon, 1938:85). Gordon pointed out the similarity between the Baroque Ladies and a bone figurine from Sirkap (Coomaraswamy, 1928: Tafel 6, no. 38). Gordon had also recovered figurines of the Baroque Lady type which were not hand-modelled, but moulded (1938: Plate VIII, Fig. 9). These significant finds allowed for comparison with the tradition of Hellenistic moulded terracottas, as did a circular, rosetted 'Baroque' head-dresses on a Hellenistic figurines from Sari-Dheri (1932: Plate XIV, Fig. 1, nos. 25 and 26, 1938: Plate VIII, Fig. 8).

Gordon's claims were borne out by Mortimer Wheeler's excavations at Charsadda in 1958, where excavations at Bala Hisar established a date of around 250-100 B. C. for the Baroque Lady figurines (Wheeler, 1962:105). Examination of the Taxila site report also reveals a number of possible Baroque Ladies amongst his terracottas (Marshall, 1951: Vol. III, Plate 132, nos. 1-5). More Baroque Ladies were also found by A. H. Dani in his excavations at Charsadda in 1964, supporting Wheeler's dating (Dani, 1965). It has been asserted by Dani, after the example of Gordon and Wheeler, that the type was superseded by Indo-Greek moulded forms, as evidenced by a certain figurine with the head prepared in a mould (Dani, 1965: Plate XXVII, Fig. 9), of which only the head, breast and the right, and part of the left, arms are preserved. It is certainly significant that no figurines of this type have been found in layers predating 250 B. C. despite the fact that occupation at Charsadda goes back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century B. C., the time of the Achaemenid annexation of the region. Recent excavations at Gor Khuttree in the modern city of Peshawar have also revealed a figurine of the same type from Indo-Greek layers (Durrani *et al.*, 1997).

Wheeler provided the following typology for the Baroque Ladies: (1) the nose is prominent and pinched forwards in a projection continuous with the forehead; (2) the eye is an applied pellet, gashed horizontally; (3) the mouth is small and inconspicuous; (4) there are one or more large earrings; (5) the hair hangs down laterally in long braids; (6) there are one to four large necklaces; (7) the breasts are small and applied; (8) the navel is not indicated; (9) there is often a girdle on the hips, sometimes shown by a single incised line; (10) immediately below, the pudenda are sometimes not invariably indicated; (11) the legs taper and are separated by an incised line; (12) anklets are indicated by horizontal incisions; (13) the arms are horizontally extended and are pointed stumps; (14) the head-dress normally includes a separately affixed rosette on each side and sometimes a third (generally missing) above the centre (alternatively it may resemble a three-pointed tiara, and other variations occur); (15) a chain or sash is often worn across the body, held together front and back below the level of the breasts by a perforated boss (this feature may be indicated by incisions or dark paint or both (this has been identified as the *channavira*); (16) finally the figure is steatopygous, sometimes markedly so (Wheeler, 1962: 104).

This typology can be accepted with some qualifications. Amongst the neck jewellery there is often a pendant which hangs down between the breasts to the waist. This can be seen on a number of the figurines found by Wheeler at Charsadda (1962: Plate XX, A. Plate XXIII, No. 5. Plate XXIV, Nos. 4, 6) and is either an applied decoration, or indicated by incisions. This feature also appears on a number of figurines published by Coomaraswamy (Coomaraswamy, 1928: Tafel 1, No. 4), Gordon (Gordon, 1932: figs. 1a, 1c, Fig. 4. 1937: Plate III, No. 5. 1938: Plate VI, Fig. 1, far left), and Dani (Dani, 1965: Plate XXIV, No. 1. Plate XXV, Nos. 2, 6, 7. Plate XXVI, Nos. 6, 8). Although some of the figurines have either applied or incised hair hanging down on the back, not all do. It is possible that applied hair may have become detached, but some figurines merely sport the characteristic head-dress. As regards the head-dress, it is likely that it represents braided hair which supports large ornamental rosettes, perhaps with additional textile padding. The figurines are nearly always hand-modelled, despite the few exceptions mentioned earlier, and decorations are normally applied and incised, though paint is also used, normally in the rendering of the *channavira*. It has been established that they are made in three ways:

1. the head, body and legs are separately made in three parts and then joined together;
2. the right side and left side of the figurine, sometimes including the head are made separately and joined together;
3. in rarer cases the head is cast in a mould and then joined onto a hand-modelled body (Dani, 1965-66).

As was stated earlier, the figurines are not discontinuous with the rich tradition of Indian terracotta art beginning in proto-historic times. Any analysis of terracottas should be rooted in an examination of this context. Terracotta art has its origins in the western part of the sub-continent, the regions known as Baluchistan, Seistan, Makran and Sindh. The very earliest examples come from Mehrgarh and can be dated to between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> millennia B. C. Human and animal forms are represented in unbaked clay. During the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B. C. baked clay figurines-terracottas- start to be produced. Interestingly, some of the examples from Mehrgarh of female figurines exhibit conjoined legs, separated by an incised line (Banerji, 1994: Plates 2 and 4). Even from this early date, female figurines are characterized by heavy applied ornamentation around the neck and head (Banerji, 1994: Plates 2, 4 and 8). Great stylistic evolution accompanies the period culminating in the second part of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the early 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia B. C. At this time, just prior to the Indus Civilization, a number of interesting female forms exist from the site of Kulli-Mehi. The figurines are flat bottomed with no legs, and have a plain and cylindrical body. The arms are bent at the elbow and attached to the body at waist-level. Importantly the face is formed by pinching the

clay forwards and the eyes, ears and breasts are applied pellets which are punched with holes. The figurines, like those under study here, are highly ornamented, bangles are indicated with incised lines above the hands and multiple punch-marked bands gird the neck (Banerji, 1994: Plate 13).

The Baroque Lady figurines also bear more than a passing resemblance to certain types from the Indus Civilization, a feature noted by some of the authors here cited (Coomaraswamy, 1928, Corbiau, 1937). Whilst disagreeing with the dates postulated upon this likeness, we may still join with them in noting the resemblance, particularly the applied eyes and breasts and the extremely ornate applied jewellery of some of the Harappan figurines (Banerji, 1994: Plates 17-18). The head-dresses of these types are also very important though they are in the manner of a fan-shaped turban, and as such have nothing in common with those of the Baroque Ladies. The post-Harappan period seems to have been something of a 'dark age' for terracotta art. Few human, though myriad animal, forms were produced. Those female forms dating from this period show less technical expertise than those preceding them and might reveal a greater concern with ritual utility and fertility. The forms are highly stylized and the reproductive organs are often very prominent. It is not until the advent of early Northern Black Polished Ware culture that female figurines relevant to this study begin to appear. This period was, of course, a new era in the cultural history of the subcontinent. Janapadas with fairly well defined boundaries were established. Female figurines have been recovered from the site of Mathura dating to this period. They are heavily steatopygous, with a wide appliqué incised girdle above separated legs. The arms are extended away from the body. The breasts are applied and the punch-marked navel is prominent. Most importantly, however, the figurines have ornate head-dresses consisting of applied and incised circular pellets. Large earrings are worn, as well as a heavy applied necklace, often with a centrally descending incised strip, which hangs between the breasts (Banerji, 1994: Plates 90-91). The general ornamentation of these figurines and especially their rosetted head-dress is strongly reminiscent of the Baroque Ladies.

### *Analysis of Artefacts*

The six figurines catalogued in this paper represent a rather diverse range of styles of manufacture within the typology. The facial features vary between those which are carefully modelled showing the contours of the face (Fig. 1a, Fig. 2a, Fig. 3a), and those whose faces are simply pinched forwards (Fig. 4a, Fig. 5a). Figurine CDA2 (Fig. 2a) is particularly well modelled, and is distinctive in that the eyes are modelled and incised rather than applied and incised pellets. The eyebrows are finely arched lines rather than straight incisions. It also has a *tika* marking between the eyebrows which does not seem to be present in other examples. Figurine CDA5 (Fig. 5a) might be said to represent the other style of manufacture, the face being pinched forwards, with the features more roughly executed. This continuum of modelled and pinched facial forms is also discernible in the published literature. Most seem to be pinched forwards with varying degrees of exaggeration, but some are also carefully modelled (Coomaraswamy, 1928: Tafel 1, No. 4. Gordon, 1934: Fig. 1, No. 1. Wheeler, 1962: Plate XXI No. 5. Dani, 1965: Plate XXIV, No. 1).

In ornamentation, figurine CDA1 (Fig. 1a), is especially interesting. The design of the front-facing earrings matches that of the choker, both consisting of flat round applied pellets with many pricked marks. It is a frequent detail amongst the Baroque Ladies that one particular style of decoration will be adopted for the head-dress and jewellery alike. For example, closely executed dashed incisions might be used throughout, or alternatively widely spaced incisions might be found on both head-dress and neck pieces, as in figurine CDA2 (Fig. 2a). On figurine CDA1, an applied band below the choker has the unusual decoration of consecutive stamped circlets enclosing single

pricked marks. There would not seem to be any other examples as yet of stamped decoration amongst the Baroque Ladies. The lenticular earrings of figurines CDA2 (Fig. 2a) and CDA4 (Fig. 4a) contrast with the front-facing earrings of figurine CDA1 (fig 1a). Lenticular earrings with incised edges would seem to be more common in the literature, amongst examples from Charsadda itself (Wheeler, 1962: Plate XXIII, No. 8. Dani, 1965: Plate XXIV, No. 1) as well as from Sari-Dheri (Gordon, 1932: Fig. 1a). It is a frequent element amongst the published examples that hair is depicted at the sides of the face. Figurine CDA3 (Fig. 3a) has applied oval shaped pellets at the sides of the head, which are vertically incised, as does figurine CDA2 (Fig. 2a), where they are positioned above the earrings. This feature may be seen in many examples in the literature (Coomaraswamy, 1928: Tafel 1, Nos. 1-4. Gordon, 1932: Fig. 1b. Gordon 1938: Plate VI, fig 1. Wheeler, 1962: Plate XXI, Nos. 1-5. Plate XXII, No 1. Dani, 1965, Plate XXVI, Nos. 1-3). It is possible that the incised decoration on the head-dresses of many of the figurines, such as the herring-bone pattern on figurine CDA1 (Fig. 1a), represents braided or carefully dressed hair.

True rosettes, such as those found on a number of examples in the literature, consisting of a small applied pellet superimposed on a large pellet with incisions radiating outwards from the centre (Wheeler, 1962: Plate XXI, Nos. 1, 3-4), are preserved only on figurines CDA3 (Fig. 3a) and CDA4 (Fig. 4a). These last two figurines also differ from the other figurines presented in this paper, as they are of darker material, being particularly well fired. Figurine CDA6 (Fig. 6a) exhibits an applied pendant extending down from the neck, between the breasts (see Wheeler, 1962: Plate XXIII, No. 5). This feature can also be seen on figurine CDA5 (Fig. 5a), although in this case the pendant is indicated by three incised lines (see Dani, 1965: Plate XXIV, No. 1). The *channavira* is indicated on figurines CDA1 (figs. 1a-b) and CDA6 (Fig. 6b) by black paint. None of the bosses which adorn the *channavira* on other examples from the literature are present here, and the *channavira* is painted rather than incised (see Coomaraswamy, 1928: Tafel 1, Nos. 1-3).

Figurine CDA5 (figs. 5a-b) is deserving of particular consideration, as it seems to be more hastily and simply executed than the other examples presented in this paper and in the published literature. The neck ornamentation of Baroque Lady figurines is usually made up of applied bands or pellets which are then incised, but in this case it consists of a web of roughly rendered incisions. The closest analogy with this design seems to be the dashed decoration on the applied bands and head-dress of a figurine published by Wheeler (Wheeler, 1962: Plate XXII, No. 1). The head-dress consists of many small applied pellets with dashed incisions, with no other indication of hair or other ornamentation. A similar decoration of many small applied pellets around the head may be found on another of the figurines published by Wheeler (Wheeler, 1962: Plate XXIII, No. 7). The face is pinched forwards, and the body of the figurine is thin. There is no steatopygy, and the conjoined legs lean slightly towards the left. Perhaps the roughness of the execution of this figurine might be attributed to its having been made either by a child, or an adult lacking in sufficient time or expertise.

### *Conclusion: The Mother-Goddess of Gandhara?*

The general consensus as to the function of the Baroque ladies has been that they are representative of a cult of a mother goddess, associated with creativity and fertility. This can be taken to be suggested by the nudity of the figurines, the presence of genitalia, and the often pronounced steatopygy. This, together with the heavy ornamentation of the terracottas and their 'Baroque' head-dresses would seem to indicate that they are not ordinary females. As we have seen, the *channavira* can not be taken to indicate a specific status (Codrington, 1931: 143). The ornaments of the head-dress can also be considered to be unique with the exception of a much earlier type found at Mathura (Banerji, 1994: Plate 90, No. 1-4, Plate 91, 1-2). The clearest case

for the association of the Baroque Ladies with a mother-goddess was made by Gordon, in his article "the Mother-Goddess of Gandhara" (Gordon, 1937). He postulates that Sari-Dheri is most likely to be a shrine of a mother-goddess, who had an attendant male consort, of inferior ritual importance. Pointing out the continuity with similar mother-goddess cults in Afghanistan and in the Indus region at the time of the Harappan civilization, Gordon identifies the mother-goddess as Hariti and the male consort as Kuvera, lord of Yakshas, local manifestations of the Persian Anaitis and Mithra, the principle deities of Gandhara (Gordon, 1937: 72-3).

It is perhaps most significant that such a cult was being celebrated simultaneously with, and often in the same spaces as, worship at Buddhist sites. This is a central part of Gordon's analysis, which brings in material from Marshall's excavations at Taxila, where a large number of ritual terracotta tanks containing representations of a stylised nude female form have been found. The tanks were dedicated at stupa shrines and are held by Marshall to represent the four elements. Earth is present in the clay fabric, air in the birds perching on the walls of the tank, fire by the torches that burn on the walls, and water in the aquatic animals which are found on the floor of the tanks. Presiding over this and standing in the water which would have filled the tanks is the mother-goddess form (Marshall, 1951: Plate 136, nos. 158-159). Gordon uses the co-existence of local and Buddhist ritual forms to suggest that the mother-goddess cult at Charsadda was a local custom which took on a Syro-Persian complexion, as evidenced by the other votive terracottas and the later Hellenized mother-goddess figurines with cornucopia and mural crown, and was compatible with the Buddhist orthopraxy of the time (Gordon, 1937: 77).

Mother or fertility goddesses figure largely in the archaeological evidence of ritual action from pre-historic times, not just on the subcontinent, but more generally across Europe, Greece and the Levant. It is unlikely that the Baroque Ladies actually originated with the particular deity Anaitis, but rather that they represent a local deity whose cult would be assimilable into more centralised religious practise. Whilst accepting the general label of 'mother-goddess' for the Baroque Ladies, we may still express uncertainty as to the sort of fertility they promoted; human, animal, agricultural, or perhaps a combination thereof. Until further information about context of finds is yielded from systematic excavations, determining the meaning and function of the Baroque Ladies will remain a matter of conjecture. Some tentative suggestions might still be offered however. It is not impossible that the figurines could have been made for children as protective talismans, which could either have been given for the child to cherish, or kept safe by adults. It is also conceivable that the figurines were created for use in female adolescent initiation rituals. The ornate head-dress might in this instance suggest a pre-occupation with beautification and celebration, rather than with a more utilitarian fertility. A more detailed exploration of possibilities based on archaeological and contemporary ethnographic evidence may be found in Ucko's book *Anthropomorphic Figurines* (Ucko, 1968).

Let us conclude with a contemporary tale from the field. The association between female deities, or yakshinis, found all over the northern part of the subcontinent during the early historical period, and water is well established, water being a creative and auspicious element in ritual life (Choudhury, 1995). The connection between the Baroque Lady figurines and various yakshini figures can be considered strengthened by the ornate bi-cornate, and pancacuda head-dresses worn by the latter (Choudhury, 1995). In the countryside of the twenty-four parganas district of Bengal, a local man pointed out water tanks to the archaeologists surveying the area. He explained that these were the abode of *jakkis* (a Bengali colloquialism of yakshini), female spirits living below the surface of the water, who were wont to take young children down with them into their aquatic realm. In the depths of the night the *jakkis* could be heard perambulating around the village along defined routes. Woes betide the family who inadvertently build their house on her path! Her nightly



wanderings were accompanied by the sound of anklets jingling (Chakrabarti, 1994). Is it impossible to imagine a similar sound when following the trail of the Baroque Ladies of the Peshawar Plain?

### Notes

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<sup>2</sup>All catalogue numbers refer to the Cambridge Department of Archaeology; 'CDA'.

<sup>3</sup>It is possible that the incisions on the head-dresses of many of the figurines of this type might actually represent hair, for example, the herring-bone pattern mentioned above could be plaits. If this were indeed the case, it would not be wholly inappropriate to continue to refer to the ensemble as a head-dress; as what is represented is an elaborate coiffure bearing additional ornaments. As the term 'head-dress' was used by Gordon (1932:165) and Wheeler (1962) in their discussions it will be used here.

<sup>4</sup>This has been referred to by many of the authors cited in this paper as a *channavira*. See Coomaraswamy (1928:64), Codrington (1931:142), Gordon (1938:85) and Wheeler (1962:104).

<sup>5</sup>As mentioned in the introduction, this figurine has already been published by Gordon (1938:Plate VI, figure 1, far right).

### Bibliographic References

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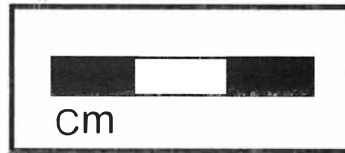


Plate 1-a: Baroque lady figurine CDA1, front view.

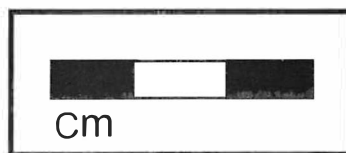


Plate 1-b: Baroque lady figurine CDA1, rear view.

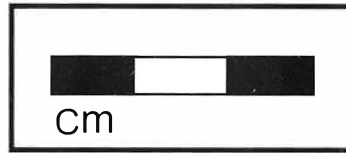


Plate 2-a: Baroque lady figurine CDA 2, front view.

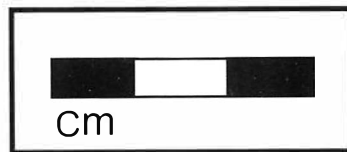


Plate 2-b: Baroque lady figurine CDA 2, rear view.

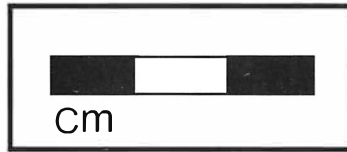


Plate 3-a: Baroque lady figurine CDA 3, front view.

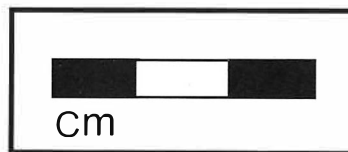


Plate 3-b: Baroque lady figurine CDA 3, rear view.

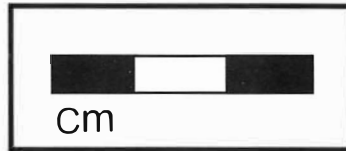


Plate 4-a: Baroque lady figurine CDA 4, front view.

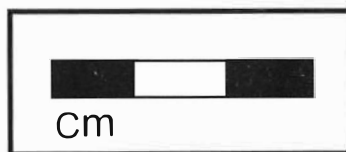


Plate 4-b: Baroque lady figurine CDA 4, rear view.

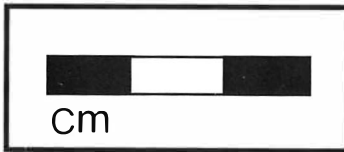


Plate 5-a: Baroque lady figurine CDA 5, front view.

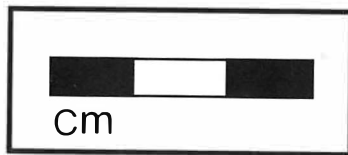


Plate 5-b: Baroque lady figurine CDA 5, rear view.

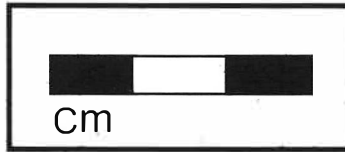


Plate 6-a: Baroque lady figurine CDA 6, front view.

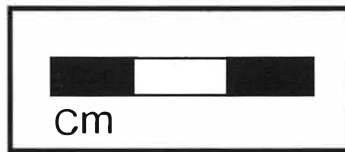


Plate 6-b: Baroque lady figurine CDA 6, rear view.