

Some Remarks on Taddei's Review of Shnaisha

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Reviews aimed at promoting science and knowledge are always welcome. But the trouble with some review writers in the field of archaeology (where difference of opinion has a comparatively wider canvas to play than in other disciplines) is that they seldom try to go deeper into the subject so as to be able to catch thought processes of the writer to be reviewed; and generally get entangled into frivolities which have no scientific value. Similarly under the false and rather presumptuous impression that a single brief visit to an excavation site can make them a lot more wiser than the excavator who had been toiling there for years and years turning over in the process every bit of stone and sherd time and again in the hope of gaining more and more information, they quickly jumped at hasty and misjudged conclusions and then firmly believe in their accuracy.

This precisely was the case with my dear friend Prof. Maurizio Taddei for whom I have had great regard and whose brief visit to Shnaisha at a time when the site was in utter disrepair made him believe that he had gained more than enough knowledge to pass a series of judgements on the Preliminary Excavation report of Shnaisha¹ authored by the present writer. But unfortunately the judgments leave so much to be desired. I only wish he had discussed the matter with me before delivering his verdict. In this way he could have avoided the pitfalls he kept falling into one after the other.

When we did meet at last, shortly before his death, it was already too late. He was accompanied by an officer of the Italian Embassy and both of them were in Lahore to assess the needs of the Lahore Museum for further development. During our meeting in the Museum, he found an opportunity to refer to his review, but I purposely ignored the reference, for, as I thought, my comments in the presence of a diplomat from the Italian Embassy, would create an atmosphere of embarrassment for him. But then I did find time to politely tell him that I owed him an answer. His reply was "why not". It is in fulfilment of this promise and also to set the record straight that I have written the following few pages. This, let me make it absolutely clear, is not in the least an attempt to disparage or belittle the image of a friend who is no more amongst us.

The first point raised by Prof. Taddei² concerns the name of the rivulet flowing past Shnaisha between Saidū Sharīf and Marguzār which, he says, is recorded as Saidu Khwaṛ in the survey maps as well as in Tucci's accounts of these ruins, but it is given as Marguzār Khwaṛ in the Shnaisha report (and also by Said Qamar and Sir Aurel Stein), which needs to be corrected. Why should the name of the survey maps and of Tucci³ be looked upon as sacrosanct and the current name as abominable and odious is known only to Taddei; he does not spell it out in detail. In any case it is so trivial a matter that it needs no comments. Nevertheless I wish to point out that Swāt is not a dead country where names once given would fossilize and endure to the end of the world. In living countries names keep on changing in consonance with the demands of ever changing socio-economic phenomena. What has happened only shortly ago and is still happening to such names in Swāt, and also in Pakistan for that matter, every body knows. Shakhorai of yesterday is the present day Jahanabad, Churrai is Madayan and even Butkara (actually Butkada), where Taddei spent a major portion of his life in digging, is now known as Gulkada. Should it also be corrected accordingly because it is not given in the survey maps?

If Taddei recommends the use of an older name as a principle then it needs to be kept in mind that even the name Butkara frequently used by him is too not very old. The oldest known name of this place is probably T'a-lo as Tucci puts it.⁴ Butkara, meaning the House of Images (or simply temple or stupa having images) is a Persian word and was coined by Persian speaking Muslims Tajiks, when they entered this area some time during or after the 12th century A.D., for the place where they came across large quantities of images. The use of the word *But*, a corrupted form of *Buddha*, (meaning an image) was first used by Muslim writers, and, in the context of Swāt, it cannot be older than the 11th century A.D. when Muslims first occupied this region. Should than we use T'a-lo instead of Butkara?

Neither can the sanctity of the nomenclature given by the survey maps be upheld any more when we know the original and actual names from other more reliable sources. For instance, the name recorded as Attock in the survey maps, to quote a very ordinary example, is actually Atak as reported by all contemporary sources, Nowshera is Nausharah and Outch of the maps is actually Uchchah.

Marguzār Khwaṛ is indeed the name now used by the people living in the area no matter what the survey maps or Tucci have got to say on the subject. Even at the time of Sir Aurel Stein's survey of Swāt in the first quarter of the last century it was known as such. The name Saidū Khwaṛ of the survey maps owes its origin to the location of Saidū Town, at a point where this *khwaṛ* empties into the river Swāt. It was the capital of the rulers of Swāt at the time when the survey maps were prepared. Apparently the surveyors had their office at Saidū and recorded the name as it was known there. Under what name the *khwaṛ* went above Saidū they just ignored.

The second point raised by Prof. Taddei concerns the image of a 'Lokesvara' with a standing Bodhisattva on his left 'on a rock near the stupa'. This he says 'has escaped the attention of later scholars who have nevertheless recorded a considerable number of Buddhist rock sculptures from the nearby village of Kukurai'. This statement is followed by a reference to Pls. XX-XXII of the Shnaisha report compiled by the present author, which clearly shows what is implied by 'later scholars'.

Unfortunately he is absolutely incorrect. A detailed description of this rock relief by 'later scholars' can be seen in the same report referred to above by him. It reads:

A group of relieves nearest to Shnaisha is found on a rock just below the extreme northern end of the Kukrai (Kukurai) spur, which lies between Shnaisha on the one hand and Kukrai (Kukurai) village on the other. The rock lies at a well frequented pedestrian route behind the house of a certain Ihsān Gul. It measures .90 m in breadth and .85 m in height. The reliefs are much too decayed to be subjected to a scientific analysis. Yet the extant remains show two human figures—one seated and the other standing. The seated figure (probably Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara)...has the right leg folded upon the seat while the left hangs down. The left hand holding a lotus stem rests at the left knee, the right hand is missing. In the standing figure, ...the right arm, bedecked with a bangle, hangs down while the left is akimbo'

There is no other rock bearing the figure of Lokesvara 'near the stupa'. The description given above nicely tallies with the photograph (Fig.2) of the relief reproduced by Taddei. Thus the image has not escaped the attention of later scholars. It has been fully described in my report.

Another point raised (but greatly misreported) by the learned professor is concerned with the roles of the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, in the excavation of Shnaisha and that of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar. 'This two headed

initiative', he remarks 'accounts for the unusual fact that two preliminary reports on the same excavation campaign were published almost at the same time'. This however is not the case.

There is no doubt that excavation work at Shnaisha was started by the government department. The site was first opened up in 1989 by a representative of the federal government. As a result of this excavation the northern (i.e. the front) and eastern sides were thoroughly exposed down to the paved floor of the Main Stupa. In addition to it, a trench connecting the eastern side of the Main Stupa with another structures, named as Eastern Platform in my report, laid bare two votive stupas and part of the steps of the platform just mentioned. This entire area is marked out in my report as NK area. It was at this time that a deep cut was made in the western side of the drum and dome of the stupa to reach the relic chamber. But unfortunately, except for fragmentary relic casket bearing an inscription in black ink, it is not known what was found inside the relic chamber. Nor is there any record of the antiquities. However, during my stay in Swāt I spotted some defaced panel reliefs lying in baskets in one of the rooms of the store house of the Saidū Museum, which looked very much the same as found by me at Shnaisha. My curiosity led to a little probe into the matter and I soon came to know that they belonged to the 1989 excavation of the same site. With the kind permission of the curator I made a list of them and subsequently borrowed them for study. This list is included in my report (pp. 46-54) under the heading Antiquities from the NK area. These antiquities are now lying in the museum of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar. After the excavation which continued probably for a month or so, the site was left unguarded by the Federal Department and thus once again placed at the mercy of antiquity robbers.

The first regular campaign to scientifically probe the site was started in June 1990 by the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar in collaboration with the government department. The collaboration was based merely upon a verbal promise of the same department to partially fund the excavation work. The University team was headed by the present writer whereas Mr. Mian Said Qamar was nominated by the government department as their representative. But shortly afterwards the Director General of the same department refused to release the promised funds. Thus the so-called collaboration suddenly came to an unceremonious end. Had the government department defrayed its own share of funds, it would have been possible to extend the excavation season and save some more antiquities.

The government representative was quite enthusiastic at first and attended the excavation work regularly. But he had other domestic duties as well to attend to, so that he gradually slowed down and became relaxed till, after some time, his participation in the excavation work became merely symbolical. Although collaboration had already come to a grinding halt for all practical purposes, the University team continued to pay respect to the government representative and feed him with information about the progress of work. Collaboration or no collaboration, he was after all an old colleague and every time he found an opportunity to visit the site he was received most ungrudgingly and given all the information regarding stratigraphy and important finds. He was at liberty to take photographs of the site and sculptures. Over and above that, he was allowed to copy the entire descriptive record of the antiquities prepared by the present writer.

This, perhaps undue, kindness shown to him emboldened the man to take the most unscrupulous step. Groping in the darkness and knowing not what to do with the government requirement of completing a certain number of research publications, he suddenly hit upon the brilliant idea of quietly writing a preliminary report of Shnaisha. Thus, it can be seen that it was not a 'two-headed initiative', as Taddei reports, that led to the appearance of two preliminary reports, it was rather the unethical behaviour of a colleague, who was later severely reprimanded by his own department, that led to this curious coincidence.

Professor Taddei has also drawn my attention to the following points:

1. The upper most of the three drums of the stupa, he says, has a slightly receding or tapering rather than a straight vertical profile as shown in the drawing reproduced in the Shnaisha report.
2. The dome is not quite as perfectly hemispherical, he remarks, as the drawing shows.
3. In the lower most of the three drums of the stupa, he further remarks, the drawing 'shows the capitals of the pilasters as composed of the echinus, a low smooth intermediate abacus and a notched (or voluted) abacus- but no intermediate abacus is visible on the spot'.
4. The niche or hole containing clay tablets with Buddhist creed is not on the east side as mentioned in the Shniasha report, he confidently remarks, it is rather on the west side. He comes out with a curious explanation:

'I wish to point that it is no real niche rather on inner recess, as shown by the fact that its side walls are interrupted in the front portion. It is highly probable that it was originally a walled up and inaccessible relic recess which was later opened and used for offering the so-called...clay tablets with Buddhist creed'.

All these points are of the nature of mis-statements based upon misjudgement. Had he looked upon the main stupa more carefully than he did during his visit, he would have certainly abstained from raising such objections. In fact he knew the weakness of his own statements. Regarding no. 1 he remarks: 'needless to say this (tapering effect) may be a wrong impression due to the fact that it is based on naked-eye observation'. I take up these points one by one for brief comments.

1. Firstly the drawing to which Taddei has raised his objection was made by Mr. (now Dr.) Muhammad Farooq Swati (lecturer) and Muhammad Naeem, an experienced draughtsman of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, with whatever instruments they had at his disposal, but certainly not depending merely upon naked eye. Secondly, even if the wall has some slight taper, it would disappear in a drawing based upon a much reduced scale. Thirdly, Taddei's impression may be due merely to optical illusion.
2. Whether the dome (*aṇḍa*) is hemispherical or not is merely a guess, for, much of it on the eastern and western sides had disappeared before my visit. Similarly how did it look like on the top (apex of the *aṇḍa*) is hard to say, although one may surmise that it was flat, because a huge umbrella (*chhatravali*) could not be supported on a curved base. Moreover, M. Naeem's drawing shows that the dome is more or less vertical at the springing point. Now, all these points go against its being a perfect hemisphere. But the dome was in a much better condition at the time of Sir Aurel Stein's visit who describes it as a 'hemispherical structure'. In a general sense, he is not wrong. In spite of its slight verticality at the springing point and a probable flattish top, the over all impression is that of a hemispherical structure.
3. The lowermost part of the drum definitely has a 'low smooth intermediate abacus' in the pilaster capitals as shown in the drawing. There is absolutely no doubt about it. In fact one may observe a kind of systematic development of the pilaster capitals in the whole scheme. For instance, the pilaster capitals of the platform of the stupa, although most elaborate of all, do not show 'intermediate abacus' which for the first time appears in the lower most part of the drum. In the middle portion it develops further so that capitals now show more than one of these abaci. It seems the 'naked eye' of Prof. Taddei didn't help him much.
4. The 'niche' or hole in question is definitely on the east. Maurizio Taddei's 'naked eye' is to be blamed yet again for his incorrect observation. It may however be clarified that it is not a properly built niche and looks more like a cavity left behind by one or two fallen or decayed

stone blocks in the uppermost part of the drum. If it is so, it must have happened when the stupa was already in a state of disrepair.

The site of the sacred structure it seems kept on attracting pilgrims even in its dilapidated form. Evidently, it is during this period that a faithful pilgrim deposited the clay tablets in this 'niche or hole or cavity'. This cavity has been mixed up by Taddei with the relic chamber which is almost in the centre of the monument and not on the western side as he believes. The relic chamber almost square in shape is a vertical shaft and shows regularly built walls. The roof consisted of flattish stone slabs. The western side of this chamber and also of the stupa were severely damaged in 1989 as mentioned above. It is therefore only from the western side that one can have a partial view of it. This relic chamber and the niche or cavity containing clay tablets are two different entities and belong to two different parts of the Main Stupa. The photograph (Fig 6) reproduced by Taddei showing this chamber was apparently taken by Dr. P. Callieri with my permission when he came to visit the site while I was excavating there. It is incorrectly captioned: 'a recess in the west side of the Main Stupa'. It is not in the west side as shown above. Moreover there is no evidence to show that the relic chamber was opened repeatedly, as alleged by Taddei.

The Two Late Period Cells

To the west of the main stupa were found two late-period cells of which Cell 1 is located near the steps of the monastery a little further west, while Cell 2 is adjacent to the west side of the platform of the Main Stupa. Both the cells were built when layer 9 (representing a phase of abandonment of the stupa) was already in place and therefore belong to our period II. It is in this layer that foundation courses of both the cells were laid. Of the two, Cell 1 is slightly later as its western wall rests upon layer 8 which is a thick deposit of gravels and sandy streaks brought down by a flash flood caused by heavy down pour on the Tarkāna hills. This seems to have happened not much longer after the construction of Cell 2, for, there is no intervening cultural debris separating the layers 9 from layer 8. In the area of the circumambulation path this layer was levelled up and turned into a floor (our floor 2). Layer 7 accumulated when both the cells were in use. Thus, stratigraphic relationship between the two cells is quite clear and so are the foundation of Cell 1 and 2. Thus, Taddei's question 'was then Cell 2 without foundation?' is obviously quite misplaced. In a footnote on page 176 he writes 'Abdur Rahman is not wholly consistent in the numbering of the two cells—on p. 15 of his report he refers to "Cell 1" instead of Cell 2'. As layer 9 passes under both the cells, there is no inconsistency in numbering the cells. The reference to Cell 1 is correct.

Approximate Date

It is very difficult to address the question related to the precise dates of these cells on the basis of internal evidence, and yet it is the internal evidence that had been my sole guide in such matters. Associated with the cells were found a few late Kushan coins datable to about the 4th century A.D. Evidently the cells were constructed in this period. But the hardest part of the question is when were the sculptures, particularly the controversial stele of Cell 2, placed there? If Cell 2 was built particularly to exhibit this sculpture, one may argue, the earliest date on the basis of numismatic evidence would be the last quarter or end of the 4th century A.D. But the sequence of coins ends here and we are left with no solid evidence to guide us any further.

The two 10th century coins found on the surface do not actually belong to the life time of the stupa; they came centuries after the sacred monument had gone into disrepair and therefore do not help in determining even an approximate date for the end of the site. Therefore a 10th century date as postulated by Ashraf in this context and invoked by Taddei in support of his hypothesis has no legs to stand upon; there is no evidence in our excavation to support it. Even a 7th century date as early Śāradā characters found on the clay tablets may suggest, is untenable, for, the tablets reached Shnaisha when the sacred place was in an advanced stage of decay. Stratigraphically, layer 6,

composed of hill detritus, marks the end of the site. But it yielded no coins to help us in this context. However, keeping in view the post-Kushan historical scenario when Hephthalite invasions caused widespread political turmoil and anarchy in the country leaving less and less money in pockets one may not expect to find many coins in a restricted area covered by our excavation. It is not unlikely therefore that Shnaisha was still functioning during this period and might have gone into disuse towards the end of the 6th century A.D., though its reputation as a great place for worship continued longer to attract devotees.

Stucco Figures

The thick coat of lime plaster seen at the back of the much damaged Buddha in stucco seated on the south side of the Main Stupa unfortunately does not extend to Cell 2, though there is a suggestion that originally it did and covered part of the southern wall of the cell as evidenced in the numerous fragments found lying on the ground: but no *in situ* piece showing their mutual relationship could be traced. The evidence of the fragments is therefore very weak and cannot be used with confidence. The stucco images were confined merely to a small area in the vicinity of cell 2 and did not cover the whole length of the south side. Nor was there any trace of them on the west side of the Main Stupa. The north and east sides had been dug up before my arrival at the site, but no traces of stucco images could be seen there. A much decayed stucco image, probably a seated Buddha, was found to the right of the flight of steps of the eastern Platform as one looks to the east standing there.

Soapstone Capital

The capital shown in Pl. XVb of my report, whose exact location and find spot Taddei wanted to know, was found above the plinth level, along the west side of the Main Stupa a little to the north of the Bodhisattvas sitting at the same level.

Bodhisattva to the north of Cell 2

Flanking cell 2 on the north were found four Bodhisattva figures in a row on the base moulding of the stupa. These together with the stucco figures mentioned above were attributed to the time of floor II which yielded late Kushan coins. My interpretation of this evidence was as follow:

That the Bodhisattva figures were fresh addition to the sculptural wealth of the main stupa, and not simply materials from an earlier period reused afresh, is made clear by (1) their better state of preservation which makes them stand out prominently in the whole collection particularly when compared to the time ridden older panel reliefs found in a deplorable condition, (ii) their placement on the moulding not used for this purpose at any earlier time and (iii) their grouping near the 'Mahādeva' shrine suggesting contemporaneity with the latter.

Taddei has raised doubts about this interpretation on the grounds that:

Three of the four Bodhisattva resting on the moulding to the north of Cell No. 2, which appear to have been already damaged when they were placed there- the ends of the stool of the image in pl. XIIIa are missing, the halo of the Maitreya image in pl. XIIIb is broken and its seat is also badly damaged, the stem of the lotus on which the Bodhisattva of pl. XIVa is seated, is broken, etc. All this damage could not have occurred after the images were placed on the moulding, if they were actually found in that particular position- they were already damaged and then reused close to cell no.2, which appears to have remained as the focus of Buddhist devotion when the sanctuary was almost abandoned.

Taddei's doubts are unfounded (as we shall see below) and based partly upon his lack of knowledge of the precise circumstances under which these images were discovered, and partly upon his long standing obsession that any thing that does not fit into the pattern of Tapa Sardar automatically falls into the domain of doubtful objects.

Dating Problem

I shall first take up the problem of dating. Keeping in mind that chronological framework suggested in the Shnaisha report and sharply delineated in the present write-up is strictly based upon the internal evidence of the site, that is to say, the evidence of stratigraphy, coins and type of masonry, external evidence is treated as of secondary importance. As the Bodhisattvas were found in the same stratigraphical level as the stele in cell 2 which, in addition to these, also yielded in late Kushan coins, one could hardly escape the conclusion that they all belong to the same general context, i.e. approximately 4th to 6th century A.D. It is quite likely that the Bodhisattvas and the stele may not have entered the scene simultaneously, but it is difficult to know which of them came first. One would have expected the stele as coming later as our present knowledge of such sculptures suggests. But Taddei's hypothesis that cell 2 became the focus of devotion when the Sanctuary was almost abandoned, evidently points to the stele as the first entrant. A little later however he records that the Bodhisattvas are not quite so late as the stele.

He then proceeds to compare these images with 'two Bodhisattvas' from what he calls a 'stratified inhabited area at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai which are to be dated mid 2nd to late 3rd century A.D.' I have not seen these 'two Bodhisattvas' but I accept his statement as true, which at the most shows that images of the type we found at Shnaisha were available in the 2nd to 3rd century A.D. as well. But was their production completely banned in the succeeding centuries. Taddei does not tell us. At least I don't know of any such prohibition.

Buddhism was still flourishing in Swat in the middle of the 7th century and, according to Tucci it lingered on although sparingly in the form of pockets till about the 13-4th centuries.⁵ If Buddhism was there in Swāt naturally demand for images must also have been there, (at least in the first half of this time frame) and so also sculptors and their workshops. Why then should we assume, as Taddei would like us to do, that Bodhisattvas of Shnaisha could not be a fresh addition? Were there no fresh sculptures available during the time of our period II? Had the art of making sculptures decayed into vulgar forms? This in my view was not the case. It seems to me that inspite of the so-called persecutions unleashed by Hephthalite rulers, Buddhist culture in this period saw its efflorescence, not degeneration, permeating all aspects of life. Thus chants of Buddhist devotees, one may visualize, must have reverberated in the air filling the valleys with the echoes of religious songs. This cultural exuberance, in the field of art, took expression in almost all conceivable forms and materials. Thus we find sculptures in stone (schist, limestone, soapstone, marble), stucco, ivory, clay, terracotta, wood, metals (gold, silver, copper, bronze) and quite interestingly on boulders and rocks as well—all yoked in the service of Buddhism.

The perfect ease and profundity with which the hands of sculptors moved on the surface of rock exploring moods and feelings suggests richness, not impoverishment, of culture in these centuries. It is not a phase of decadent art practised by shepherds that we witness in the rock reliefs, it is in fact the manifestations of a living tradition.

Although we are more used to compartmentalizing Gandhāra art reserving one compartment for stone sculptures, another for stucco and a third for reliefs and then putting them one above the other with a view to arranging them in chronological order of our own choice, there is no indisputable evidence to support such an iron-grid classification. The evidence of Shnaisha in which stone and stucco sculptures have been found together with stele having close resemblance

with rock reliefs found elsewhere provides us with a very significant clue as to the mutual relationship of stone, stucco and rock reliefs during the period under discussion. Thus, instead of putting the compartments one above the other, there is reason to put them side by side so far as our period II is concerned.

Damaged Condition of Bodhisattvas

Taddei has also pointed his finger at the damaged condition of the Bodhisattvas which, he remarks, 'could not have occurred after the images were placed on the moulding'. I don't blame him for this statement as it is based upon his ignorance of the actual circumstances under which these images were found and saved from robbers. It so happened that the images under discussion came to light towards the close of the day's works. The excavation team did an excellent job and continued to work till evening to fully expose them all. Having done that we had two options: (1) leave the images *in situ* till the following day to complete their documentation, or (2) remove them for the night and bring them back the next morning. The first option included the risk of losing them altogether. We could not trust the watchmen; even their increased strength would not have guaranteed the safety of the images, as our past experience showed. As night was approaching fast we could see robbers prowling around in the maize fields we had to walk through before reaching the road, we decided in favour of option 2 and hurriedly removed the images and transported them to a safer place. In spite of utmost care some little damage could not be avoided for the simple reason that, having been buried in wet soil for centuries, some of the stones showed signs of decay, particularly at the ends, at the time when they were suddenly exposed to fresh air and light. This kind of damage hardly suggests that the images under discussion had been previously torn out of the decoration of some other monument before they were re-used at Shnaisha. Thus the damaged condition of the Bodhisattvas pointed out by Taddei can easily be accounted for. These details were of course not known to him.

Date of the Main Stupa

Regarding the precise date of the construction of the Main Stupa Taddei remarks:

I shall abstain from any chronological consideration based on masonry technique due to the uncertainty of the information provided.

There is in fact no uncertainty regarding the masonry style which he must have amply noticed during his visit to the site and also from the photographs reproduced by the present writer. A person who could spot a tiny little detail regarding the 'intermediate abacus' while looking at the stupa could not have altogether missed out such a prominent feature of the monument as the style of masonry. But argument based on masonry technique did not suit his preconceived chronology for this monument. The masonry style of the Main Stupa, described as 'late diaper' in the Shnaisha report, shows roughly shaped stone blocks with comparatively thicker interstitial chips than those of Butkara III, where the masonry style may be described as early diaper, which is a characteristic of the Scythian and Parthian periods. Early diaper must have continued during the reigns of the first few Kushan rulers, but the typical style of the rest of the Kushan period is late diaper. This however did not suit his line of thought because he wished to push the time of the construction of the stupa to a date earlier than that of Huvisha which presumably required early rather than late diaper. This seems to be the reason why he stopped short of invoking the evidence of masonry.

Pursuing the same line of thought, he further remarks:

I wish to point out that the numismatic evidence available is not enough to allow us to say (as Abdur Rahman says) that the Main Stupa dates back to the time of Huvishka. The only really significant coin is the one 'found under the paved floor in the foundation trench near

the west side of the Main Stupa', but we know too little of this foundation trench which is not even indicated in the section.

It is not a fair comment and seems to be aimed at distorting evidence which is otherwise quite explicit and clear. Coins of Huvishka were found both below and above the paved floor showing continuity of work in the time of Huvishka. Except for a coin of Soter Megas found on the paved floor near one of the votive stupas in the NK area, no coin earlier than those of Huvishka was found anywhere in our excavations. Thus numismatics evidence is neither ambiguous nor insufficient to put the construction of the stupa in the time of Huvishka.

This evidence of coins can however be explained in a different way (as Taddei does) by assuming two constructional phases:- (1) Main Stupa and (2) pavement of the circumambulation path- taking place at two different periods of time. It is possible, Taddei remarks, that time of Huvishka saw the completion of the area, whereas construction of the stupa may have taken place at an earlier date. The evidence brought forward in support of his 'earlier date' comprises 'the green-schist decoration of the lowermost stair-riser of the Eastern Platform (which) appeared to him to be fairly early. It is characterised by palmette leaf devices, he says, which disappear from the late Kushan production... this decoration... can be referred to the early Kushan Period' (Taddei).

In the present context however this 'palmette leaf' decoration was found *in situ* only in the Eastern Platform and may not be relevant to the Main Stupa. Whether the two monuments, separated from each other by a fairly wide court, are contemporary is hard to say. Most probably they are not. To the south of the Eastern Platform was found the only round stupa upon this site which may indicate an early date for this structure.

Taddei compares this palmette leaf decoration with that from Butkara I where it dates from the early Kushan period. But it is pertinent to remark here that Butkara I does not offer panacea for all the ills and problems of Gandhāra art. It was by and large a disturbed site known to art dealers as a rich quarry of sculptures⁶ before its scientific excavation. Besides this, even if we accept that results from the excavation of Butkara I are hundred percent correct where is the evidence to show that this site and Shnaisha were built under the same socio-economic conditions, and patronized by the same people to ensure the reproduction of the same decorative features? As a matter of fact every Buddhist site in the area under discussion has a different story to tell. The only thing common to all is affiliation with Buddhism. At Gangudher, for instance, fragments of this 'palmette leaf' decoration were found in a much later context.

Thus, instead of grouping in the darkness trying to look for parallels from other sites, it would be much better to trust internal evidence for establishing a chronological frame for Shnaisha. This evidence is now available in the form of fragmentary Kharoshthi inscription found in the relic chamber of the Main Stupa in 1989. It was written in black ink on a stone relic casket of which ten fragments have survived and are now preserved in the Swat Museum. Prof. A. H. Dani has reconstructed the inscription as follows:

'Mitradukha Sarira duojaka samghe miyega (?) na mibha (?)
Kasimanedana Kapa rudrane bharya pratithavato'⁷

'Corporeal relic of Mitra Dukha in the monastery of Dujakaa was established by Kapa Rudrana'

On the basis of the style of writing this inscription has been assigned to the 2nd-3rd century A.D. This convergence of dates from two independent sources for the pavement and for the Main Stupa together with the evidence of masonry style on one point cuts across the building blocks of Taddei's arguments leaving no scope for his rather untenable two-tier construction hypothesis.

Moreover, if proper names have been read correctly the inscription also gives us the oldest name of Shnaisha. Thus it can be seen that Taddei is not correct in assuming that the stupa was built earlier than the pavement. As a matter of fact both belong to the time of Huvishka.

Sculptures

Taddei has picked up a group of our panel reliefs showing Caitya arches and assigned them 'a date within the 1st century A.D.'. As the panel reliefs stratigraphically belong to our period 1 and go with the earliest construction of the stupa, they must be dated to the time of Huvishka, c. 2nd century A. D.

Regarding a male head on pl. XLVIb of the Shnaisha report, Taddei remarks:

I have the impression that [this head] should not be assigned to period II (as done by Abdur Rahman), but would belong to the very earliest sculptural activity at Shnaisha.

Taddei's impression is based upon style analysis which, as outlined above, is of secondary importance in the present context, for, we have the more trustworthy evidence of stratigraphy available to us.

Ignoring the evidence of stratigraphy Taddei suggests an altogether different scheme and attributes sculptures to 'Period 1, phase 2 and Period II' which, as he remarks, 'in no way coincided with the structural periods.' Some of the sculptures, he goes on to say, might have reached Shnaisha long before the construction of the stupa. This is just like putting the cart in front of the horse.

As in the case of the head referred to above, Taddei's conclusions are based entirely upon style analysis which, in the view of the present writer, is a less trustworthy tool in determining precise dates particularly within a narrow chronological frame, for the following reasons. Style analysts generally pay no attention to:

1. Availability or non-availability of particular sculptures at a particular time
2. Choice of the person or persons responsible for the construction of a stupa
3. Resources available for construction and decoration
4. Economic status of donors
5. Objectives of donors.

Economic status and objectives generally control the donations. I have seen offerings made at the graves of some Muslims saints which may illustrate the point, for, the underlying objective—appeasement of the soul of the dead person for some personal benefit—is the same whether it is stupa or grave. Some of the graves for instance show tiny little cradles (donated for the sake of offspring), while others have nicely decorated cushions (meant for curing the sick) but no cradles. This hardly means that cradles had gone out of fashion or that they are earlier than cushions. It all depended upon the objectives of the donors. Thus chronological considerations exclusively tied up with style are some times not entirely dependable. Nor would it be advisable to take Butkara I or Tapa Sardar as yard sticks to measure every thing that is related to Gandhara. Taddei's hypothetical periodisation in the case of Shnaisha therefore does not stand the test of reasoning.

Nevertheless I do acknowledge his correction of a spelling, a caption, a page number and a measurement (in the case of pedestal). This he calls minor examples of oversight but, in my view, these are his major contributions. An equally unhappy circumstance, not of course known to Taddei, is the omission of two words from lines 12 and 13 on page 20, which has changed the entire scenario. In the manuscript submitted for printing these lines read: Originally standing against the stupa wall and fixed to it by iron clamps was found the fallen figure...

These small errors entered the text during printing and could not be removed due to the paucity of time as my retirement was approaching fast and I had no time to check the final proof. By the time I came to know about them, it was already too late.

Anna Filigenzi has identified the stele found in cell 2 as Budhisattva Maitreya while Taddei has put his seal of authentication upon it. 'The Shnaisha image', he remarks with prophetic conviction, 'represents the Budhisattva Maitreya, not Siva Muhadeva'. But where is the conclusive proof? Is Maitreya written upon it, or upon any other like it found in Swat? Or, is it based merely upon comparison with other images? For details he refers the reader to Anna Filigenzi's paper read at the 14th International Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeology (Rome, July 1997). Unfortunately I have not read Anna Filigenzi's paper, though I have heard about her work on the rock art of Swat. As soon as I get hold of this literature, I shall be most willing to comment upon it. In fact I was not aware even of Taddei's review for some time before an unknown friend sent a copy of it to me for information. The copy is signed but unfortunately I cannot figure out the name. Nevertheless, I am grateful to him/her for this kind gesture. At the end I must repeat that these few pages are not the result of any personal grudge or vendetta against a person who was also one of my friends; I have just made an attempt to do my duty in putting the record straight. Meanwhile I pray for Maurizio Taddei:

May God rest his soul in perfect peace, harmony and tranquillity.

Notes and References

- ¹ *Ancient Pakistan*, Vol. VIII, 1993, pp. 1-113.
- ² M. Taddei, "Some Remarks on the Preliminary Reports Published on the Shnaisha Excavations, Swat", *East and West* (hereafter abbreviated as *EW*), vol. 48, Nos. 1-2, Rome, 1998.
- ³ G. Tucci gives two different names. At some places (*EW*, vol. 9, 1958, p. 314) he refers to this *Khwar* as 'the Saidu river' and at others as Ilam river (*op. cit.* pp. 312-13).
- ⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 280.
- ⁵ *Travels of Tibetan pilgrims in the Swat Valley*, Calcutta, 1940, pp. 9-12.
- ⁶ G. Tucci, *EW*, vol. 9, 1958, pp. 286-88.
- ⁷ See *The Lahore Museum Bulletin*, Vol. XII, p. 45.