

Excavation at Takht-i-Bahi, an ancient Buddhist temple in North West Pakistan

Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Reports 1907 - 1908

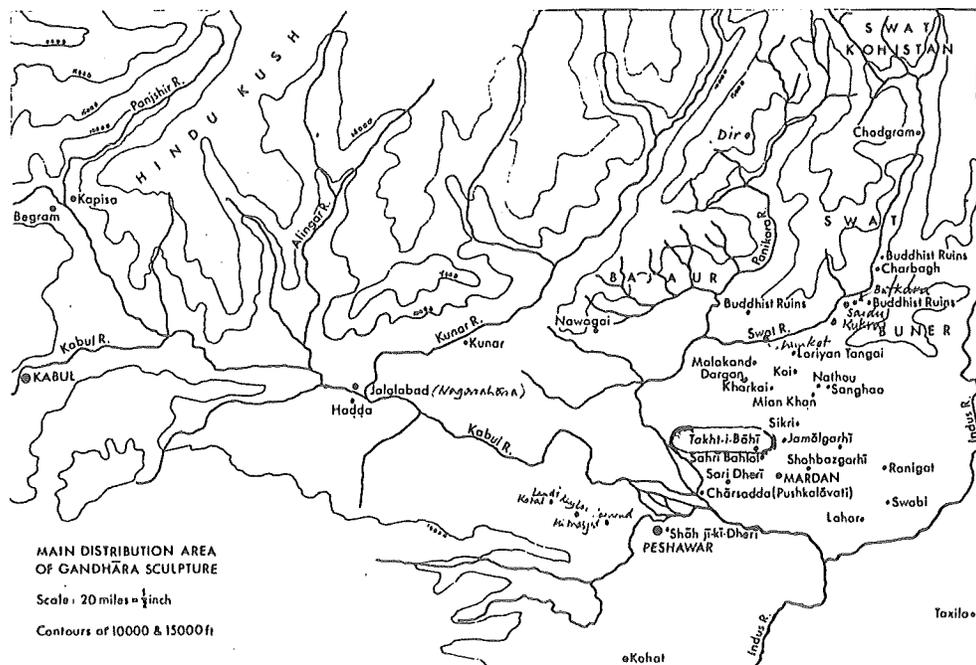
by D.G.Spooner pp.132 - 148

久我 篁子*

Abstract

Takht-i-Bahi 寺はパキスタン西北部のガンダーラ地域（略図マップ1）にある紀元2世紀頃の仏教遺跡である¹（写真1、1907年当時）19世紀半ばから西欧考古学団による発掘が行われ今世紀に入っては日本も参加、京都大学考古学部が重要な調査を行った。本稿は、今世紀初期英国の考古学者 Spooner²による発掘録に焦点をあてるが、前半で特に留意したのは中国求法僧玄奘の大唐西域記³に基づいて比定された当時の所在地である。一連の学者は当寺の存在は西域記に記録されていないとするが、それは初期の考古学者の同記読み込みに誤りがあり、所在比定がずれているためその様な結果になっているので、Spoonerの調査に添いながら Errington の新説及び自己の現地調査も参考にして当古寺の所在の検証を試みた。後半は、タフティバイ出土の石材、テラコッタ材の仏像、壁彫刻について Spooner 発掘当時の所在場所、あるいは保存度を現在資料につきあわせる形をとって所在確認を試み、同寺の復元図の原資料作りの一助とならんことを目指した。本稿後半は ASI 掲載の発掘品写真を指摘する部分がかかなりあるが、スペースの関係上その大半の掲載を割愛するのでご了承願いたい。

Key words Gandhara, archaeological survey, structural analysis, Jataka stories, Buddha stories



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The Location of the Temple

Since 1871 European Scholars have been carrying out excavations and surveys of Takht-i-Bahi. In 1871 Sergeant Wilcher carried out the first scientific excavation, since then, however, Spooner has found his work unsatisfactory. In his report Spooner defined the site as a Buddhist complex, while Wilcher failed to recognize this. Spooner's structural analysis and artefactual studies are extensive and diverse.

First, he comments on the Chinese monks's records and their omission of Takht-i-Bahi following Foucher's observation without referring to the original text but he cannot hide his surprise by saying that "The observant Chinese pilgrims should have failed to mention a site of such unusual interest seems almost incredible."⁴

He still goes on to agree with M.Foucher's conclusion; "the fact remains that the Chinese pil-

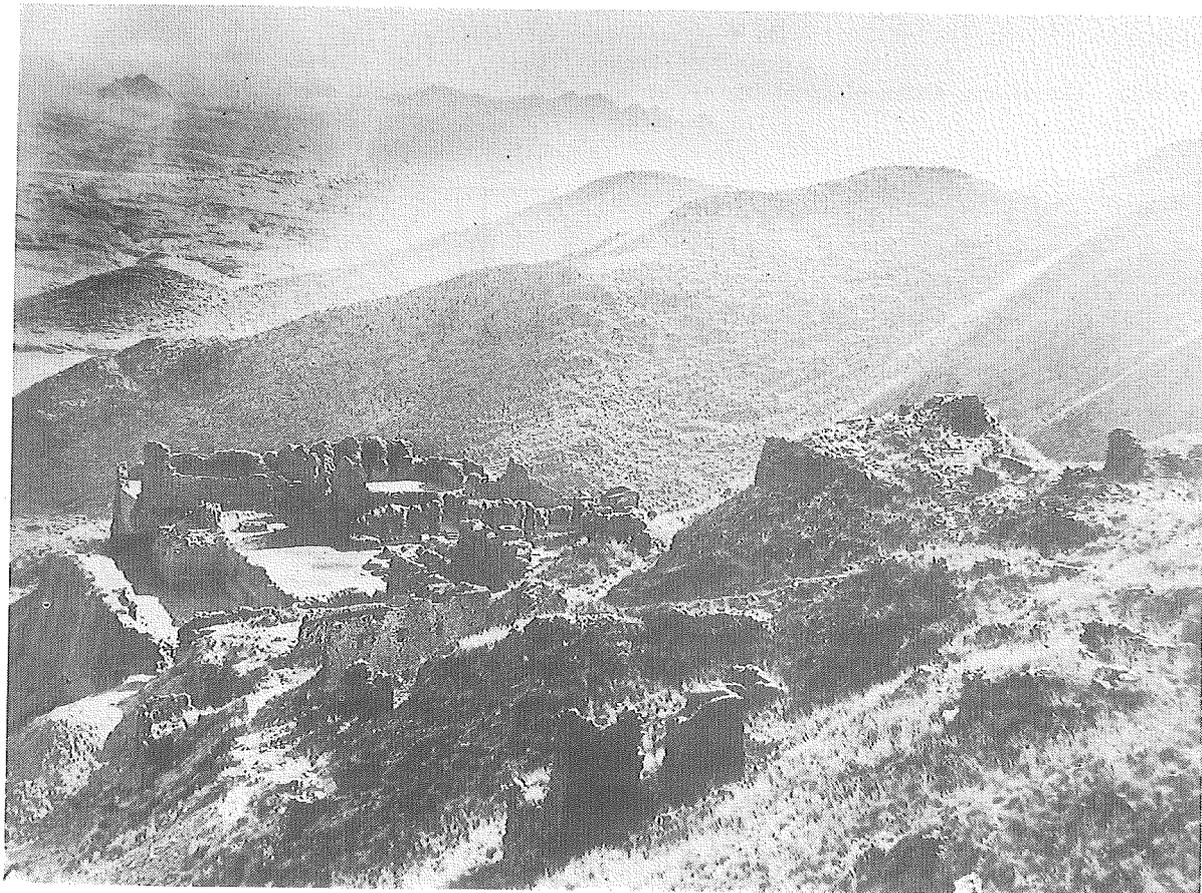
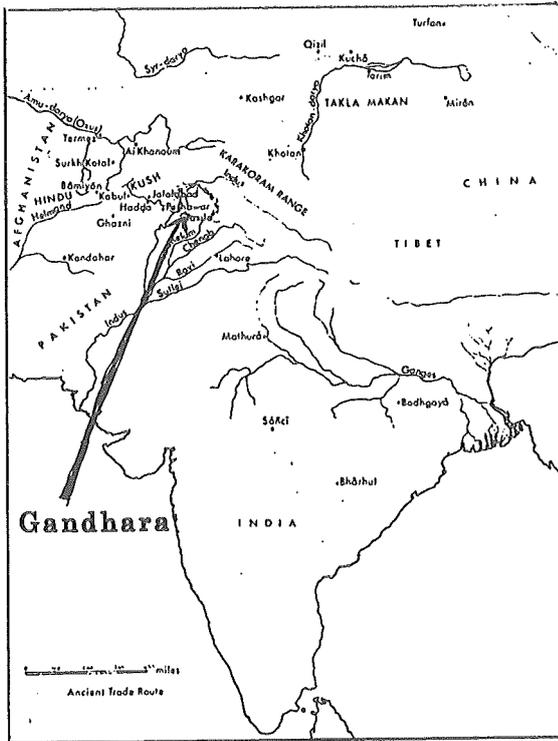


写真 1

grims do not mention it, whatever the reason may be", adding that "unless and until further excavations yield positive evidence, the problem of its identity will remain unsolved." After 75 years, E. Errington⁵ offers a fresh perspective on the location of the site in her paper, 'In search of Pa-Lu-Sha', by referring to translations of the original Chinese monk's diaries together with the excavation evidence. The conventional idea that Palusha was in the place now known as Shabazgarhi she revised, placing it instead in what is now known as Sahri Bahlol. This re-location naturally effects the relative position of the other surrounding sites. Following Errington's analysis it is convincing that the site is mentioned in their diaries and most markedly in Hwen-Thsang's. The description of Mt. Tantaloka fits the outlook of Takht-i-Bahi.

On my visit to Sahri Bahlol, in the summer of 1995, I studied the walls of the village in the light of Errington's theory. I saw the original solid wall structure, along both the east and west side of the village, which supposedly surrounded the old town of Palusha. In the original text⁶ Palusha is transliterated in Chinese characters as follows, 跋虜沙 paryu sha, and in character analyses pa(or ba) means "walking on a watery surface", (lu) means "captivated in a small house (amongst water plants)" and (sa) means "a space (with sandy soil)". For Tantaloka, (tan) means an altar, stage or platform. However, if the original reading of the character was ta or da, rather than tan or dan, it could mean giving, originating from the Sanskrit *danato* to give and (ta-lo-ka) meaning "many things falling", the latter of seeming no apparent relevance to the site. From this we can infer that Sahri Bahlol might be Palusha, as it has a lot of houses on rich marshy land and that Tantaloka is probably Takht-i-Bahi, being as it is situated on a fairly steep ridge and having a high plateau on which the assembly hall and west part of complex are built. The stage or platform in Tantaloka might also refer to the large square near the water tank on the summit of Takht-i-Bahi as this is

how it appears from the south and north foot of the hill.⁷

The Structure of the Temple

Spooner mentions the inscription of Gendophares⁸ from the year 104 (46AD). As it was mentioned as being in Lahore Museum I searched for its documentation record in the Gandhara Collection⁹ but could not find it. In these records there are 4 columns as follows: 1) No. in Register; 2) Date of Acquisition; 3) Site/Area of Discovery; and 4) Description. The earliest remaining records start at 1-10-1867, from Taxila. As Spooner knew the location of the inscription in 1907, its recording must have been done prior to 1867. I did notice, however, that this report does not itemise every artefact individually; often finds were grouped and catalogued together. Therefore, it could be included in No.2 the collection of carvings/friezes i.e., antiquities of the Yusufzai donated by J.H.Cooper in 1867 or in No. 1088. 50 pieces of sculptures and four ancient seals collected in Peshawar District presented by Dr J.Ph. Vogel of Archaeological Survey, Punjab Circle in 1902. still, it is unsatisfactory that this valuable inscription is not mentioned in marked words because in a later entry there is a record of an inscription, which is under No.2827, and it reads that one inscription and three pieces of sculpture were received from the Supptt. Hindu and Buddhist Monuments.

From the precipitous sides of the monastery complex massive walls (写真2) still rise to a height of nearly 50 feet in place enclosing the summit of the site. Spooner found this enclosure had been artificially levelled and laid out in a series of quadrangles terraced one above the other, when in 1871 Wilcher failed to determine the original levels, and was unsure of the depth of the terracing. Spooner points out that the main entrance to the monastic enclosure appears to have been on the South. At this stage this entrance had not yet been cleared, but he says it seems probable that from it a passage led north to the Western end of

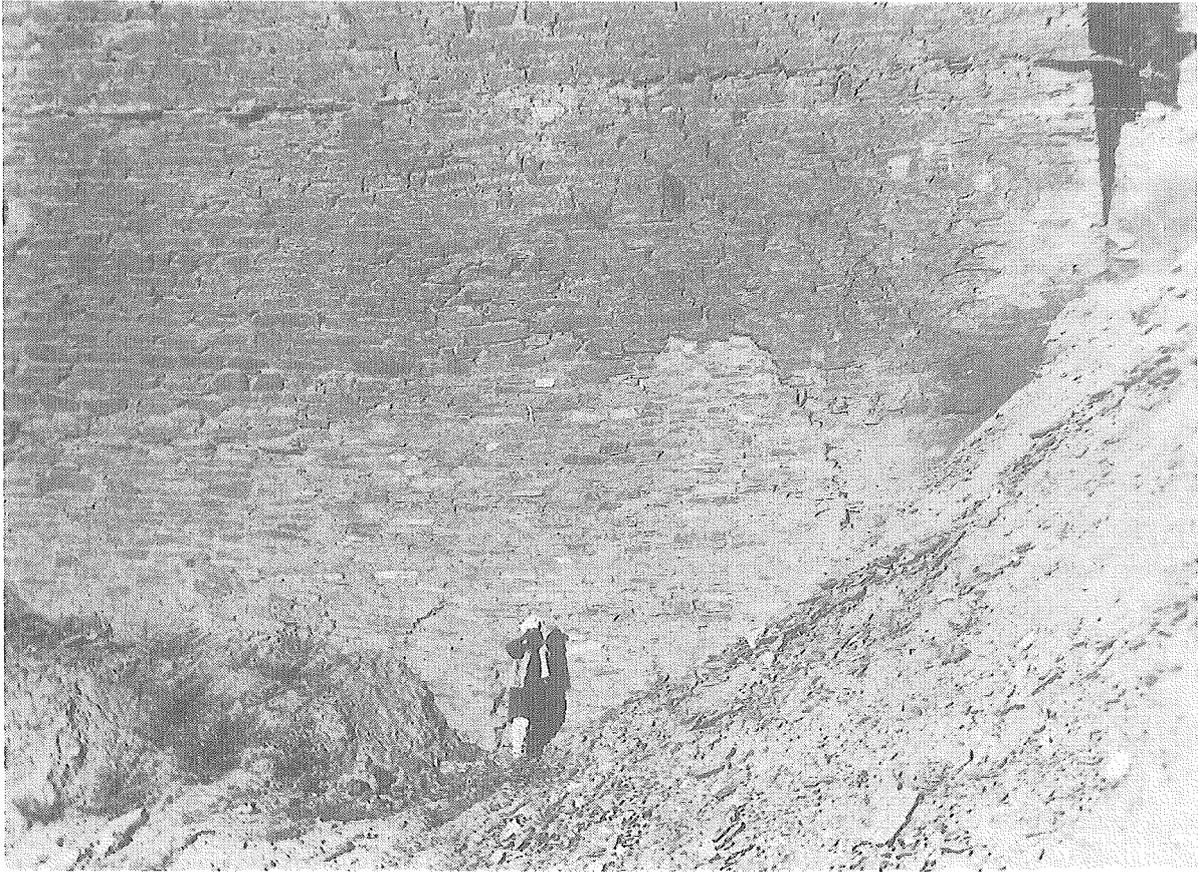


写真 2

the rectangular courtyard B which appears to have been on the same level. This description is still not clear because he regards the south entrance as on the same level as courtyard B.

On the slope of the ridge, the south side is naturally highest, and access to the site would surely be from the Southwest side, where the descending south path and the ascending north path meet. Spooner fails to produce evidence as to why the gate would be in this position: e.g., easy accessibility, a well trodden path, a gatehouse with a high doorway, etc. His identification that the underground area of which the top layers are the same level as courtyard B, and are structural and not excavations in the rock make it obvious that the natural level of the rocky hill top lies well below the level of courtyard B. He says it is probable that the chambers were built underground but it could be said that they were covered over at a later date for reasons such as the change of monastic rules, structural crisis or even by an order from the then

ruler. Courtyard B is described as a mass of little stupas surrounded on three sides by lofty chapels and bisected from north to south by a paved passage running between the little stupas and miniature shrines and connecting courtyards C and A, both of which lie at higher levels than courtyard B itself. By ascending 15 steps to the south one enters the court of main stupa and faces the main square stupa base with a few badly preserved steps. The main stupa platform is now reconstructed and the square base for the stupa is on the top. It seems to me the one foot indent is not wide enough for circumambulation and this raises the question of whether the mound was correctly reconstructed. There are the chapels round this courtyard on three sides. Foucher pointed out there were originally 5 on each but in the course of time, the figures had increased in number and the space between the chapels were increased to accommodate 29 miniature shrines. P. Brown's reconstructed main stupa court illustration, does not

seem to fit the archaeology of Takht-i-Bahi especially in reference to the roofs.

Spooner expresses his good fortune at finding two of the chapels retaining their original roofing. As they were the only existing examples of this construction it was vital they were preserved. But there was a structural problem in that. The chapel walls were too weak to hold their roofing, as either the wooden lintels had been robbed or they had decayed. Spooner used iron girders to restore the lintels instead of wood or stone slabs, disguising them effectively. Although he had to fill the original opening above the lintel for structural reasons, he did mark this clearly as a reconstruction. Similar measures were taken in reconstructing the chapels in the courtyard B. Repairs were carried out after Spooner's time, particularly in the last 10 years by the Pakistan Archaeology Department. They marked the repairs with inlaid thin metal tape or a layer of whitish cement especially for the walls. The most serious damage on the backs of the western chapels have been filled up. These repaired backs of the chapels are facing Spooner's assumed gate. It is effective in that it gives a good impression of the scale and dignity

of the site.

The conference hall which rises from the hillside having a high enclosure on the west and north was filled with debris, which gradually put pressure on the walls. To relieve the pressure they removed the debris to the original floor level. They found buttressing them was impractical because of the height. Nearly a hundred years after the excavation, the wall is still standing intact, but on closer observation from the foreground of the underground chambers it is apparent that the wall is bulging out towards the south-end. The hall is presently used as a resting space for the construction workers.¹⁰ Spooner says that while the monastic quadrangle was choked with debris clearing it was quite straightforward as the quadrangle was surrounded by a series of monastic cells and there was hardly any sign of sculptures. The cells must have had roofing as they have a divisional mark around the middle of the inside wall of the building similar to the two storied buildings. Spooner does not speculate whether there were stairs to an upper floor.

The joining courtyard B was almost unknown at this stage, though Sergeant Wilcher had report-



写真 3

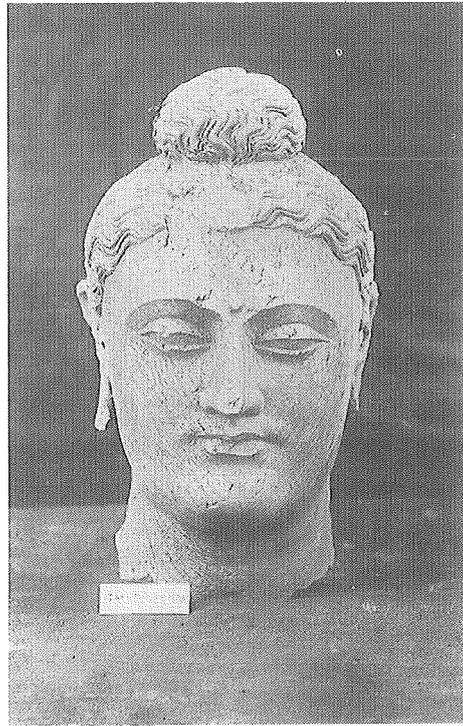


写真 4

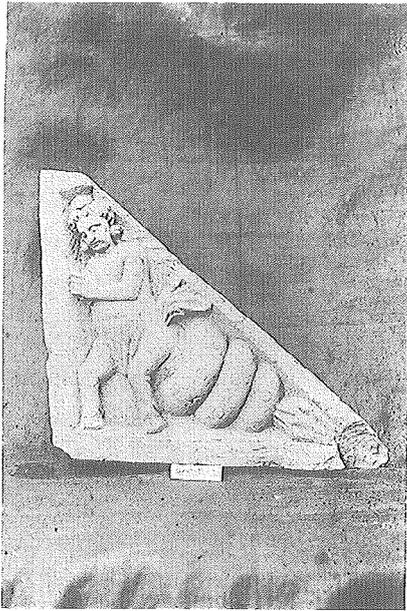


写真 5



写真 6

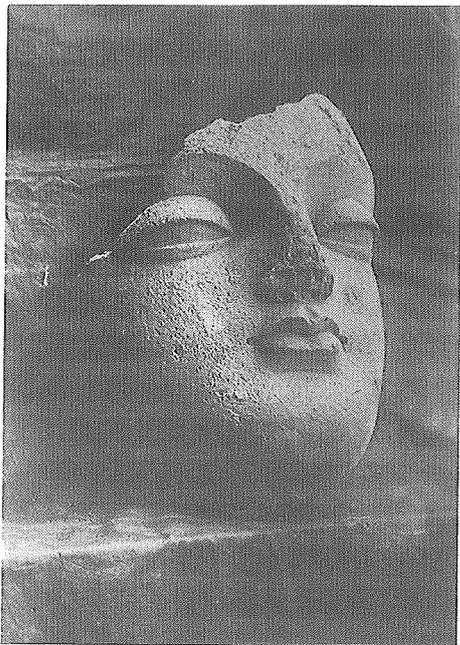


写真 7

ed that it was excavated. As Spooner was engaged with the trial excavation at Shjiki Dheri he arranged for a telegram about the state of the court to be sent to him but it failed to materialise. Consequently Spooner himself had to come and found it almost untouched.

The Artifactum of the Temple

On his arrival digging advanced and sculptures were found in large numbers lying obviously as they had fallen. With the good progress of digging Spooner hoped that a complete map¹¹ of the complex within the enclosing wall could be drawn.¹² The most successful aspect of this excavation was the recovery of a large number of sculptures. They filled 15 cases containing 472 specimen (some of the example piece 写真 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) besides some dozen larger sculptures. These were classified in the way Sahri Bahlol sculptres had been recorded. Namely: 1) fragments which illustrate archaic elements prior to the appearance of the Gandhara School;¹³ 2) Stones illustrating chiefly foreingn elements introduced into Indian art so far as is known, for the first time by this school; 3) Legendary scenes from the life of the Buddha; 4) Fragments which appear to have been relted more directly to the cult of Buddhism (Spooner calls them devotional sculptures); 5) Bodhisattve figures; 6) Buddha figures; and 7) fragments which do not fall into any of the above divisions. The sculptures are numbered from 679 to 1151 in Pe-

shawar Museum apart from the stucco fragments, of which the majority are heads and objects too fragile to handle and are consequently numbered separately. At this stage, I can see that Spooner's classifications are generally adequate, but he often contradicts himself. No.712 is a miniature stupa, which is a rare piece, and, furthermore, because it is round and complete it is unusual to be found at the site. This gives one a very good idea of how stupas look. It is regrettable that Spooner did not record the location in which the artefacts are found. This miniature stupa may be a relic casket as it is very similar to the one found in Nimogram in Swat. Although the tope and hermica are missing the body of the pagoda is in good condition. The base was probably square and was surrounded by meditating Buddhas in a row. Scene 775 is one of the four chief scenes of the Buddha's life and Spooner found that they were carved in a simplified manner omitting many details¹⁴.

No.841 is four bowls to the Buddha¹⁵. Spooner did not find any "birth scene" in this excavation. So the one we see whenever the Takht-i-Bahi "birth scene" mentioned must be a later addition to the Peshawar Museum¹⁶. No.816 is Dipankara Jataka on a large stone. Spooner speculates that the probable location of this scene is on the dome of some stupa, but peculiarly enough this stone was found buried face downward in one of the underground passages of the monastery. The great renunciation is No.784 and the "white dog" which barked at the Buddha is No.794. On its left are 7 Buddhas and Maitreya which make this panel unusually long. Similarly long and narrow is No.772 showing the "First Sermon" complete with six standing Buddha figures on the left. Here, Spooner concludes that these two fragments originally formed part of a single frieze, with legendary scenes, apparently not in any chronological order, intervening between repeated groups of the eight Buddha's. It seems that looking at evidence from the other sites such as the Sikri stupa (displayed at the Lahore Museum) show that often, when the Jataka and Buddha stories are depicted, their chronological

order is not of primary importance and more a matter of artistic preference. Spooner presents No.769 as an especially noteworthy piece because this right corner pedestal of a large standing Buddha (only the left foot visible) has two scenes from the miracle of the "Fire temple" in the legend of the "Conversion of Kashapa" instead of the scenes usually seen of Brahma and Indra in the act of worship. As the present fragment is only the extreme right side of a panel it seems probable that there could be four more scenes, preceded either by Kashapa, or other religious disciplines', related stories. Spooner states his frustration repeatedly. Another legendary scene of special interest is the pedestal of the figure of the Gautama. It depicts the two merchants "Tripusha and Bhallika" whose caravan of wagons were miraculously stopped when approaching the grove wherein the Buddha was meditating. The fasting Siddhartha who is about to gain enlightenment is exhuming an awesome atmosphere. About No.792, two scenes on the panel, Spooner holds a different opinion from Foucher's hypothesis. On the right is a scene clearly of Naga-Raja Kalika and his spouse Nagi praising Buddha. Its left side being the focus of the question. Foucher defines the scene as a standing couple, the male figure leaning against the female as a reflection of Naga and Nagi adoring the empty seat under a bodhi tree or waiting for the Buddha to come. But Spooner cast doubt over this for two reasons, in which, if the artist knew the legend well, there is no way the two would appear in this manner and if they are Nagas they should have a serpent hood (Foucher dismissed the fact of the absence of the hood as no insuperable obstacle), and concludes that they are the devas who give homage to Buddha, quoting Beal's translation (Romantic Legend of Sakya Buddha) of the hymns. Spooner refers to the Lahore sculpture No.384 for similarity¹⁷. With No.787, a false niche, four legendary scenes are described horizontally. In the second scene is the empty seat Buddha standing nearby. To support his theory above Spooner states "the foliage is an

clearly that of a pipal tree as it is in the former sculpture, while the presence of the *dava* of the tree and of the Earth-Goddess removes all possible doubt."

I'd like to put forward that the cross legged figure looking rather arrogant with his left arm on the female's shoulder, standing in the shade of the umbrella held by another female, is Mara. I will research this further¹³. Spooner cannot readily explain fragment No.789 but judging from the way that the Vajrapani wears his long sword hanging over his striding left leg showing his back resembles the Dipankara scene, he speculates that it could be one of the Jataka stories. There is a snake like object, though perhaps a little too fat in the middle, carved on the Corinthian pillar and this suggest it could be the "subjugating of the serpent" though Buddha's arm is missing and it is difficult to ascertain why a female is kneeling down in front of Buddha. Spooner cannot identify No.790. It could be Visvantara Jataka as it looks like the ascetic taking the kneeling child away from Buddha. No.795 is also difficult to define not because it is mutilated but as it is unknown in Buddhist legends. Five women and two children are executed in a very realistic manner, one holding a bunch of flowers accompanied by playful children, the other carrying a plateful of food on her raised arm, and they all look to their right at an assured central figure. Spooner tried to piece together scene No.807 though the central figure missing but they possibly represent the scene of Yasodara coming to the palace with her attendant women for her nuptials with Prince Siddhartha.

The stone Spooner failed to number (would it be 796 or 800?) is illustrated in plate XLIII. On the pedestal a number of ascetics are sculptured. Spooner finds difficulty in determining what location Buddha's meditation took place in this scene. Following Beal's translation he proposes that Buddha's sojourn is on Mt.Pandava. The same piece in Ingholt 106 as the "Visit of ascetics to the Buddha" who was in Magadha. The fragments depicting the Erotes have come from the top of

some miniature stupa or the upper dome of a chapel and this is interesting from the point of view of reconstruction. The occurrence of the same motif is likely to appear on the rim or dome of a free standing stupa pedestal whether it is round or square.

Another theme widely used were the rows of Buddhas. Spooner's effort to piece No.794 and 772 together failed but he assumes that the two pieces are from a single frieze being punctuated by legendary scenes. Although dependent on the (unspecified) size it may have come from the plastered adjoining wall between the Eastern back of the main stupa court and the smaller stupa court. The seated Buddha with Bodhisattvas on either side d) plate XLIV throws up many interesting questions. Extending the theory that the Dyani Buddha (the Amitabha) is depicted with Maitreya and Avalokiteshvarah, instead of Indra and Brahma, as his attendants, Spooner speculates that this illustrates the transition from the Hinayana in the view of the positions of the Bodhisattvas. Drawing a parallel with sculptures 158 and 171, from Sahri Bahlol, Spooner illustrates this idea that the change in position of the figures is indicative of the transition between the two periods. On the Takht-i-Bahi stone, Avalokiteshvarah is in the place of honour on the left, suggesting it is from the Mahayana, and on the Sahri Bahlol stones Buddha has Maitreya on his left, suggesting it is from the Hinayana. If it is the case, this has implications for other finds such as the colossal Buddhas which are said to be found only in these two sites in the whole of Gandhara, and their dating would need to be revised. The transition from Hinayana to Mahayana was clearly a very slow process and there is no clear dividing line between the two.

Spooner recovered a very interesting Buddha figure. Its peculiarity lies on its pedestal and back. The asymmetrical grouping of the figures on the pedestal are unusual in themselves and even more interesting is the fact that there are a number of crudely incised miniature Buddhas at the back of the sculpture. The purpose of these rough carvings

is not clear but the quality of the work does not seem to be worthy of the eye of a spectator and Spooner says they could have been "freaks of some apprentices idle moments". Although he asserts that they were not free standing despite the decorated rear this is not all together convincing especially as there are no other similar finds to compare with this in Gandhara.

Lastly Spooner attempts to rank the finds in rough chronological order. The oldest phase is that the phase which is closer to the Hellenistic prototype and the middle phase is Hellenistic. The most recent phase includes the remainder of the finds and is contemporary with the end of the Gandharan School. And he claims "Without pretending that this classification is beyond criticism in regard to individual pieces" and he "believes it very fairly represents what is held to be the general development in Gandhara, at the present state of our knowledge." If he had drawn more parallels with other sites and finds his dating methods would have been more convincing.

Conclusion

Spooner's excavation report concentrates on the themes of the sculptures and is of limited use when researching the archaeology of the site. His interest in the site seems to be primarily art historical and as such he omits vital information such as the size of the finds and the exact point where they were excavated. This naturally leaves gaps in our understanding and has negative implications for the dating of the site. Spooner does not offer dates for most of the finds even though the site was occupied for more than three hundred years. His omission of illustrations for many of the finds is also problematic especially as the cataloguing seems to be inconsistent. Spooner's interpretation of the chronology of the finds is, in parts, very subjective. He bases it mainly on what he might term as 'artistic worth' rather than on a more sound method of measurement such as recording of archaeological levels, although of course he may

not have had access to this technology. Spooner was the first to discuss the sculpture of Takht-i-Bahi in any length and this has served to compensate for the lack of such discussion in the work of Wilcher, Cunningham and Bellew.

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1. Takht-i-Bahi - One of the main temples in the Gabdharan area in the Kushan period (2nd century AD).
2. D. B. Spooner, a state archaeologist appointed by the colonial government.
3. 唐僧玄奘(600 - 664)が経典を求めて天竺へ旅したときの記録
4. Cunningham (a British Archaeologist) says Takht-i-Bahi agrees with Hwen-Thsang's statement.
5. Dr. Errington, numismatist in the British Museum argued about the location of Gandharan temples in her essay "in serch of Palusha"
6. Taisho Canon Vol.51 p883
7. In April 1996 I climbed up the summit from the back of the mountain approaching from the south-west and walked two kilometres, passing quite a few ruins of secular buildings to get to the monastic complex. I looked up at the walled building from both North and South. There is a route directly leading to the monastery from the South. On the way back I used that path. Although quite steep and sometimes zigzagging sharply the road is well trodden even with a lot of slate stones and not inaccessible by any means. It seems that workers for the site - at the moment about a dozen men are carrying out the reconstruction under the instruction of the Dept. of Archaeology of Pakistan - use the back route to get to Takht-i-Bahi. On the path I recognised old stone steps to get to Takht-i-Bahi. On the path I recognised old stone steps and a dried up water bed. I was told that it is the ancient road. From the summit of this path you can see the village of Sahri-Bahlol straight down to the South, approximately two and a half miles away. The plain is covered in greenery, so it is hard to make out the straight road leading to the hill but as it is so flat and smooth it would be an ideal location for a road connection between the two sites. As the greenery is more scarce nearer the hill there several roads are clearly visible.
8. The most famous ruler of the Saka Dynasty was Gondophares or Gundphar, who is known by an inscription at this site in A.D.45, and in Christian legend was the ruler visited by St Thomas the apostle on his mission to India.
9. I received the documentation (Lahore Museum Bulletin, off-print Vol. V, No.2, July-Dec. 1992) from the author Dr Saifur Rahman on my visit to the museum in 1996.
10. In April 1996 the monastic complex was under reconstruction. Two masons and two builders were at work. The stone bricks which were the quarries at the east-side ridge beyond the glen but facing the west were carried in by two labourers. The supervisor Mr Fauzyr Rehman from Dept. of Archaeology (sub-regional office Peshawar) told me that sometimes in the past the old bricks from the building of secular houses especially from the place above the monastic complex were used for repairs but this has now been disallowed for conservation reasons. Also, they are planting trees at the side of the main access road from the north. But the building he especially mentioned, which encloses a winding staircase and is situated to the south of the main monastery complex is not included in the plan.
11. A plan is found on the last page
12. On my visit to Peshawar Museum, though observing only the display pieces, on the sculptures I found that many of them bear two or sometimes three numbers and as one can suppose that the numbers in black magic ink (quite casually written), the most fresh looking ones must be the latest entry and that must be the present official numbers, which are all in the 2000s. Out of the 156 items which I recorded, I could not recognise any numbers which fell into the numbers 679-1151 mentioned by Spooner apart from 697(M) and 775, both in off white paint illustrating Buddha's story. They were in the second case on the right as you come in from the museum entrance. None of the pieces has its original location on the site recorded, but some of the standing Bodhisattvas and Buddhas have their location written on their feet or near haloes. In such examples I found two Bodhisattvas bearing

- "Takht-i-Bahi 1908" and their numbers but both are 1773 and 1162 in red and in official looking black 2892 and 2894 respectively. Many of the display pieces must belong to the 1908 finds but it seems that the museum has re-arranged the pieces without giving much consideration for their location on the original site and it has become impossible to trace the old entry.
13. His notion that "Artistic elements known to Indian art previous to the appearance of the Gandhara School whether indigenous or of foreign origin" indicates that the Gandhara School proper is Hellenistic and any other factors clearly not part of this period are before this period. Yet when he discusses the heads on plate XLIX he claims the most neat handsome looking Bodhisattva as Gandharan and any slight what he sees as a deviation from this standard e.g., if they have flatter or chubbier faces he defines them as a corruption of Gandhara and says that they are post-Gandharan.
 14. The four scenes are used in many compositions. The grade of excellence in carving varies. When they are applied on the bottom of a stupa or the lower part of chapels they are less elaborate. The scenes mentioned here are represented in Sehrai's "A Guide to Takht-i-Bahi".
 15. In Kuwayama's extensive studies on "Kapishi - A study of the History of Gandhara" the cult of worshipping bowl is said to have prevailed in 5th and 6th century in Gandhara. "Prince's Auspicious occurrence Sutra" Taisho Canon 3 p.339a, and "5 vinaya sutra" Taisho cannon 22, p103 describe the incident. This scene is carved on the pedestal of the fasting Siddhartha recovered from Takht-i-Bahi. When I was at the Swabi Archaeological training centre in the summer 1993, I saw two stones worn out but clearly recognisable as the "four bowls to the Buddha scene" being used for door stops for the director's room. This surely indicates that they recover this type of artefact in large quantities.
 16. There were two birth scenes on display in the museum but not the one from Takht-i-Bahi. They bore the numbers 2722(138), and 2723(252).
 17. According to Dr Humera Alam of Lahore Museum No.384 is now recorded as "Gift of Amrapali". Although the same number is mentioned the nature of cataloguing must be different.
 18. Having written this I found that this same stone is described as Maya and his daughters in Ingholt Fig.62. It must have been identified as such after Spooner.