

**Shahi Kingdoms • Part 4. Archaeology and Establishment: The Shahi in Swat (Barikot) and Surrounding Regions**

# 19. Addenda

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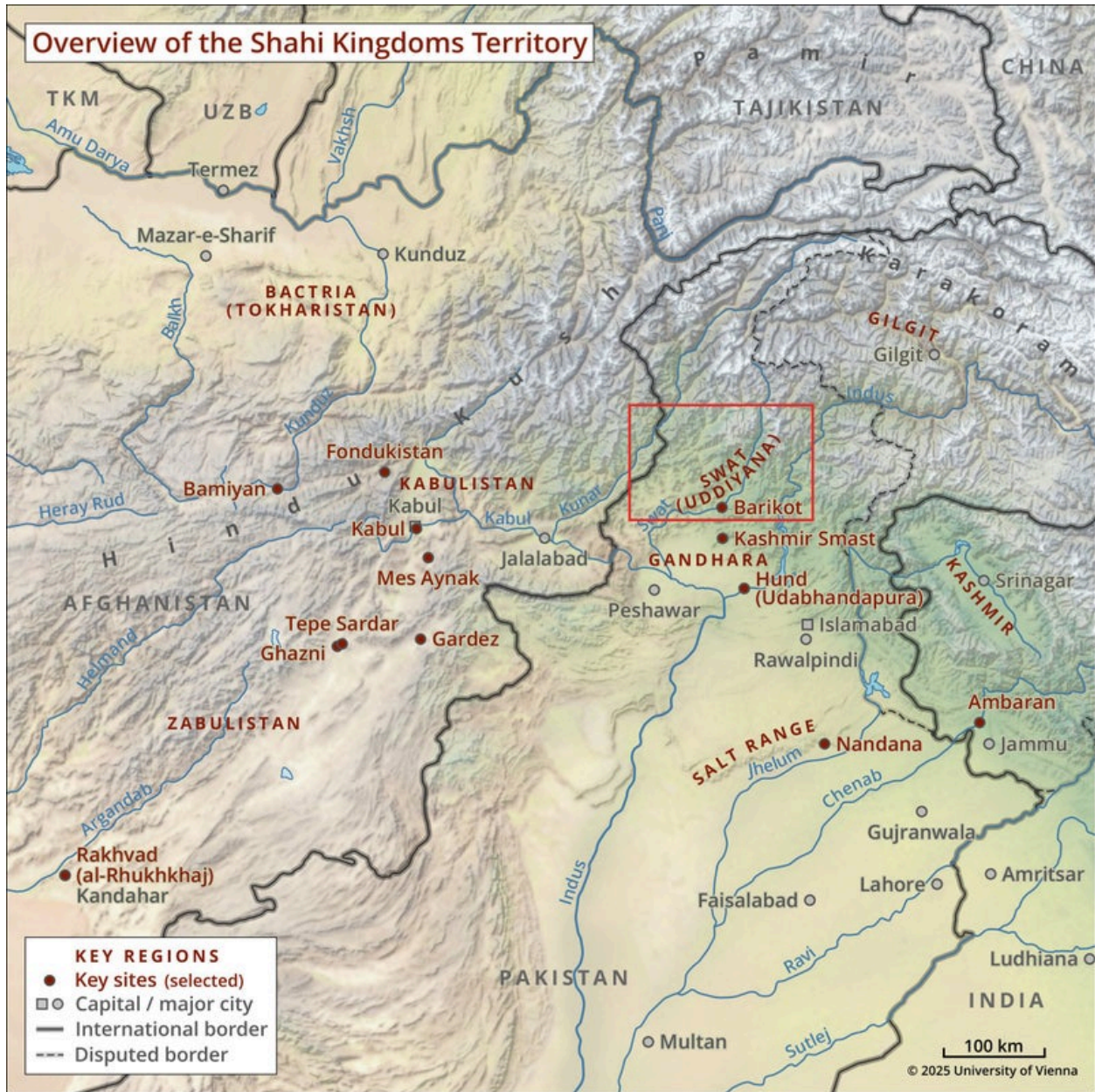
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## **Exploring the Contributions of the Shahi Kingdoms to Inner and South Asia**

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Chapter 19. Addenda

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**Map 13–19.** Key regions of the Shahi territories discussed in chapters 13–19 (University of Vienna, Department of Geography and Regional Research, 2025, with annotations, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

With the conclusion of the 2022–24 ALIPH-ISMEO project “Saving the Archaeological Site of Bazira” (discussed in the previous pages, [chapters 13–18](#); see [chapter 13](#), n. 2), on June 1, 2025, the 2025–28 Khyber PATH project (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, DSAAM/[Directorate-General of Archaeology and Museums, Govt. of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa \[KP\]](#)) began, financed by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS).<sup>1</sup> Like the previous one, this project is also directed by myself, with Elisa Iori as Deputy Director.

As part of the Khyber PATH project, which involves work at eight sites from [Barikot](#) to Sirsukh ([Taxila](#), KP), work has begun at Sites 1a–b ([Barikot](#)), 2a–b ([Gumbat](#)), 3 ([Hati-dara](#)), and 4 (Hati-lar). For the purposes of this book, it is considered appropriate to report on the main results from Sites 1a, 3, and 4 (updated December 31, 2025).

## ADDENDUM 1

### **Barikot (BKG) Site 1a, Swat District**

#### ***Preamble***

For this site, the reader should refer to the previous pages and the bibliography cited therein. This addendum refers to Trench 6 of the acropolis of the ancient city—the area of [Temple 6](#) of the Shahi phase (Macrophase 8a–b), in particular the minor cultic building partially explored and described in the preceding pages.



**Fig. 84.** View of the excavated acropolis from the north-northeast (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

#### **Trench BKG 6.12**

In 2022–24, on the north side of [Temple 6](#), and parallel to it, we documented a second building that seemed closely related to the temple. This monument is built on a large low base. The preserved elevation is square in shape, with one side projecting to the east—this is the body of a stairway.

The small building, whose stairway was later elongated, can be considered a minor shrine analogous to the larger one and certainly associated with Period 2a (Turk Shahi: 7th–9th century CE). It should be ruled out that the building is a later modification of a Period 1 minor stupa: the orientation and height of the foundations make it coeval to [Temple 6](#) in Period 2a (**Figs. 84–86**).



**Fig. 85.** View of the acropolis from the east; Shrine 6.1 is visible on the top right (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

The excavation of this area revealed the entire preserved extension of the square building. It was enclosed by a cobblestone pavement and later structures that were only partially exposed. The monument can undoubtedly be identified as a Hindu shrine (Shrine 6.1). The demolition of the temple, like that of the larger [Temple 6](#), took place during the Ghaznavid period (Macrophase 9a = Phase 3 = ca. 1020–1050 CE). Other wall structures with orientations that slightly differ from the east-west orientation of Shrine 6.1 also belong to this period (see **Fig. 86**).

At the end of the excavation, the monument and the structures in elevation and plan were preserved with a composition of lime, sand, and brick dust applied with trowels between the joints of the cobblestones and/or masonry slabs.



**Fig. 86.** Aerial view of Trench BKG 6.12 with the findspot of inscription BKG 12207 (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

***Inscription BKG 12207***

A dedicatory inscription in Late Sharada script (inv. no. [BKG 12207](#)) was found on the surface of the fill at the northeast corner of the monument, which must have been part of a votive stele statue related to the cult of Shrine 6.1.

The fragment [BKG 12207](#) (now in the Swat Museum, **fig. 87**) is currently under study by Prof. S. Baums (Munich), the epigraphist of the mission.

Inv. no.	Source	Description	Conditions	Measurements	Material
<b>BKG 12207</b>	Trench BKG 6.12 (1)	Early-Sharada inscription with five incomplete lines with surviving ranging from 3 to 14. Four or more lines lost above and an indeterminate number below, horizontal extent unclear. The end of a sentence or verse division at the end of line 1. No regnal year of date is present. Chronology: ca. 9th–10th century.	Fragment. Broken at all sides. Part of a votive stele	th. max 11.5 h. <i>aksharas</i> ca. 1.0 h. max 9.0 l. max. 25.5	White marble

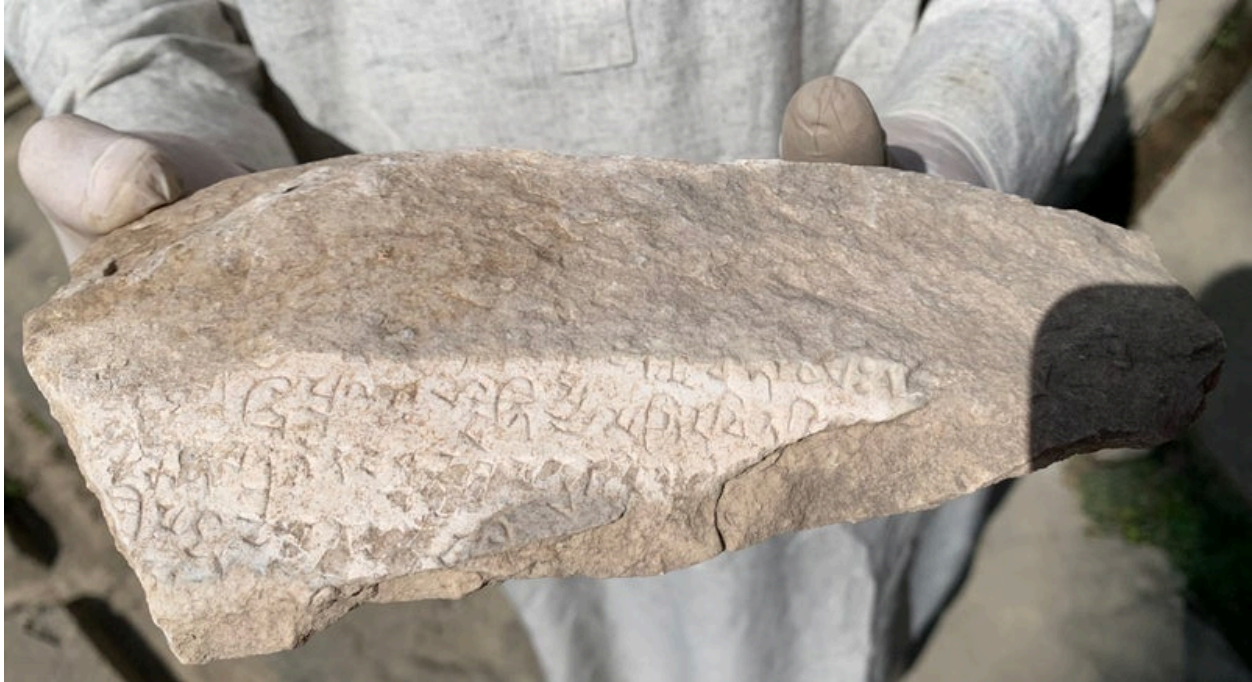


Fig. 87. BKG 12207 (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

## ADDENDUM 2

### **Hati-dara/Zalamkot (HDZ) Site 3, Hati-lar (HL) Site 4 (Malakand District)**

#### ***Clarifications***

The monument simply known as “Takht” (Foucher 1899), which commonly takes its name from [Zalamkot](#)—a nondescript, small village—should henceforth be more correctly referred to as [Hati-dara](#) (Site 3) due to its topographical position in the valley of the same name that cuts through the northern slopes of the mountain range of the same name.<sup>2</sup> This is one of the highest peaks of an almost continuous mountain ridge that leads through a series of passes—from the east, Cherat, Gunyar, Shah-kot, Hathiano-kandao (or Hati-kandao)—up to the Malakand Pass (1,362 m above sea level). Malakand can be crossed by a British military road that has been renovated several times to date. In reality, the shortest and easiest route would have been the Shah-kot Pass (623 m above sea level), which the British were unable to use due to opposition from the Ranizai tribe, despite various punitive expeditions that began in 1852. The site stands guard over the ancient highway known as Hati-lar (Site 4) or the Elephant Walk/Road. The latter connected eastern Gandhara (Swabi, Mardan) with [Swat](#) (and then Bajaur, and Kunar and Nangarhar [[Nagarahara](#)] in Afghanistan), and it was part of the great road, or Uttarapatha, of which the magnificent remains of Hati-lar represent the only surviving traces.

Although the monument has been variously described as a “watchtower” or a stupa until recently (Swati 2002; Khan et al. 2005; Naz and Sardar 2020), there is no doubt, as stated since 2006 (Nasir 2006; Meister

2020; Olivieri 2023b; various authors in Olivieri et al. 2025), that it is the monumental podium of a Shahi-era Brahmanical temple similar in size and orientation to [Temple 6](#) in [Barikot](#).



**Fig. 88.** Sketch map with the location of the HDZ sectors: HDZ I: “Takht”; HDZ II: residential area; HDZ III: minor cultic building; HDZ VI: Gate E and bastion 1; HDZ V: Gate E and bastion 2; HDZ VI: Walled circuit W; HDZ VII: masonry pit-well; HDZ VIII: water tank (stepped); HDZ XI: ancient Muslim graveyard; HDZ X: cluster of rock-carvings; HDZ XI: *kanjur* quarry area and water mill; HDZ XII: peridotite quarry area; HDZ XIII: watchtower (*kot*). Stars indicate the presence of natural springs; yellow dotted line = walled circuit; yellow line = ancient road network (Hati-lar); white dashed line = modern pathways. (Google Earth map, elaborated by the author)

### Topography and Fieldwork (Fig. 88)

Today, the recently inaugurated tunnels of the Swat Motorway pass beneath the mountain of [Hati-dara](#). To the south of the mountain lies the ancient settlement of Palai (Foucher 1915), while to the north is the irrigated plain of Alladand-dheri, the site of a paleo-lake that was the source of the district's fortune, one of the most fertile in all of South Asia (1896 Report of A. Caddy, cited in Olivieri et al. 2025: 45). The presence of the ancient lake, with its connections to early Buddhist legends of [Swat](#), was still visible—albeit reduced to a marsh—at the time of my first visits in the 1980s. The place name Alladand means “beautiful lake” (the village stood on a mound, hence the suffix “dheri”). Hati-kandao has been used since ancient times, as evidenced by the rock graffiti on its eastern slopes (Nazir Khan 1983). At the time of the

monument's construction, the area was crossed by a paved road with curves supported by careful retaining walls, connecting [Zalamkot](#) to Palai, known as Hati-lar (Site 4). The trail runs alongside an enclosed area (HDZ VI) with ramparts and barbican (?) gates (HDZ IV–V). The enclosed area (about 40 hectares) features residential quarters (HDZ II, where among the abundant materials, also several square brick tiles with floral designs have been found), monumental buildings, peridotite and *kanjur* quarry areas (two very different building materials, both used in the Shahi period), three springs, a large masonry well (HDZ VII), a stepped tank over 20 meters long (HDZ VII), and, in the center, the monument, which is updated here: HDZ I (see **Fig. 89b–c**). The inhabited center, grandiose and well-fortified to guard its favorable position, can only be the city identified as “Jayapālanagara” in the [bilingual Persian-Sanskrit inscription](#) of [Zalamkot](#). The mention of the city was not noticed in Abdur Rehman 1998, but brilliantly intuited by Ehsan Shavarebi (with Ingo Strauch), who mentions this hitherto “forgotten city” in the title of his work as the city where, on June 19, 1011, the *kotwāl* Bektāš,<sup>3</sup> on the orders and with the funds of the Amir of Tus (now in northeastern Iran), built a mosque (Shavarebi 2022). The search for this lost mosque (mention of which in the inscription was first detected by Shavarebi) is ongoing within our project.

The excavations are being conducted under the auspices of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan (in collaboration with the Directorate General of Archaeology of the Pakistani province) and are part of the ongoing Khyber PATH project.<sup>4</sup>



**Fig. 89a–c.** (a) The upper podium or “Takht” (HDZ I) at the end of the cleaning operation (view from southwest); (b) the water tank HDZ VIII; and (c) the pit-well HDZ VII (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

Before excavations began, the “Takht”—a rectangular building oriented east-west—was covered with dense vegetation. Thick bushes, shrubs, and small trees had spread throughout the area surrounding the structure, obscuring its architectural features and accelerating the deterioration of the exposed stones (**Fig. 90a–c**).







**Fig. 90a–c.** The upper podium or “Takht” (south side) before and during the cleaning operations (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)







**Fig. 91a–c.** View of the east side with the ruined stairway during the conservation activity, May 2026 (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)



**Fig. 92.** Trench HDZ I-1: The lower podium of the “Takht” at the end of the operation (a view from west-northwest) (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

Biodisturbances and human interventions (treasure hunters’ pits that cut the corners and part of the masonry body) had weakened the stability of the monument, producing a progressive detachment of the external wall facing from the roughly layered rubble core. That resulted in gaps and cracks as well as displacement of stones (see **Fig. 93**), which put the structural stability of the “Takht” at risk. The study for the conservation masterplan is ongoing under the direction of Marco Pinelli and Alessandra Buizza (Khyber PATH). During this year’s operations, Trench HDZ I-1 was laid out on two sides of the “Takht”: one part on the north side, measuring 26.80 meters x 3 meters, and another part on the west side, measuring 8.70 meters x 3 meters (**Figs. 91–92**). On the north side, the base of the upper podium was exposed. The exposed part of this wall shows that some portions are well preserved, maintaining their original stone masonry, while others have collapsed or slipped due to the sloping nature of the terrain. The elevation measured circa 5 meters from the bottom of the “Takht” (or upper podium).



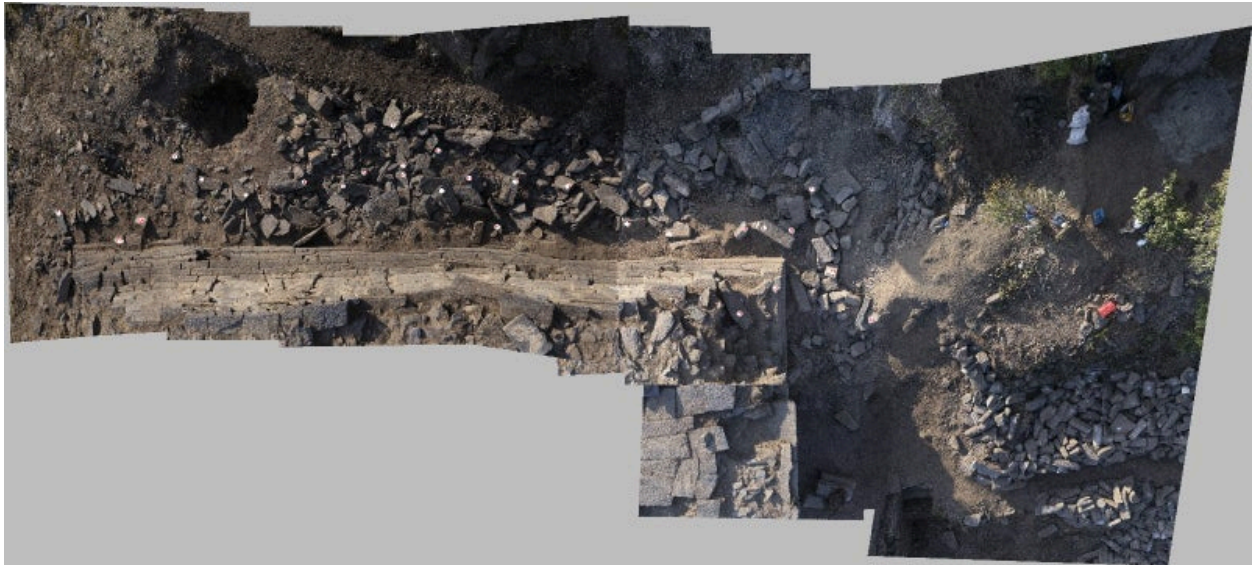
**Fig. 93.** Trench HDZ I: Traces of displacement at the bottom of the northeast corner of the upper podium (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

All the stone blocks and decorative elements of the original temple have been numbered to ensure accurate reference during the recording and for the future conservation activities. So far, we have numbered more than two hundred decorative elements *in situ* both pertaining to the upper podium and from the elevation of the lost shrine (**Fig. 94a–b**). All the blocks, each of them weighing between 150 and 250 kg, were carved into a local basalt. Fifteen decorative blocks—all part of niches and decorative friezes of the facades of the lost shrine—were inventoried and handed over to the Swat Museum. This featured, as in the case documented by Aurel Stein in [Gumbat](#) (Lower Dir, Talash Valley; see Casalini, [chapter 16](#)), a square cell surrounded on three sides by a corridor, equipped with a staircase leading up to the upper sanctum of the shrine.

The tentative reconstruction of the volumes of the original monument, certainly a Vaishnava temple, give us the following dimensions: the lower podium was circa 5 meters high and circa 30 x 20 meters in plan (excluding the staircase block)—plain, isodomic ashlar masonry; the upper podium was almost 4 meters high and circa 14 x 21 meters in plan (also excluding the staircase block)—with false pilasters with floral base and modillion capital, surmounted by an entablature of false brackets with inverted trilobate

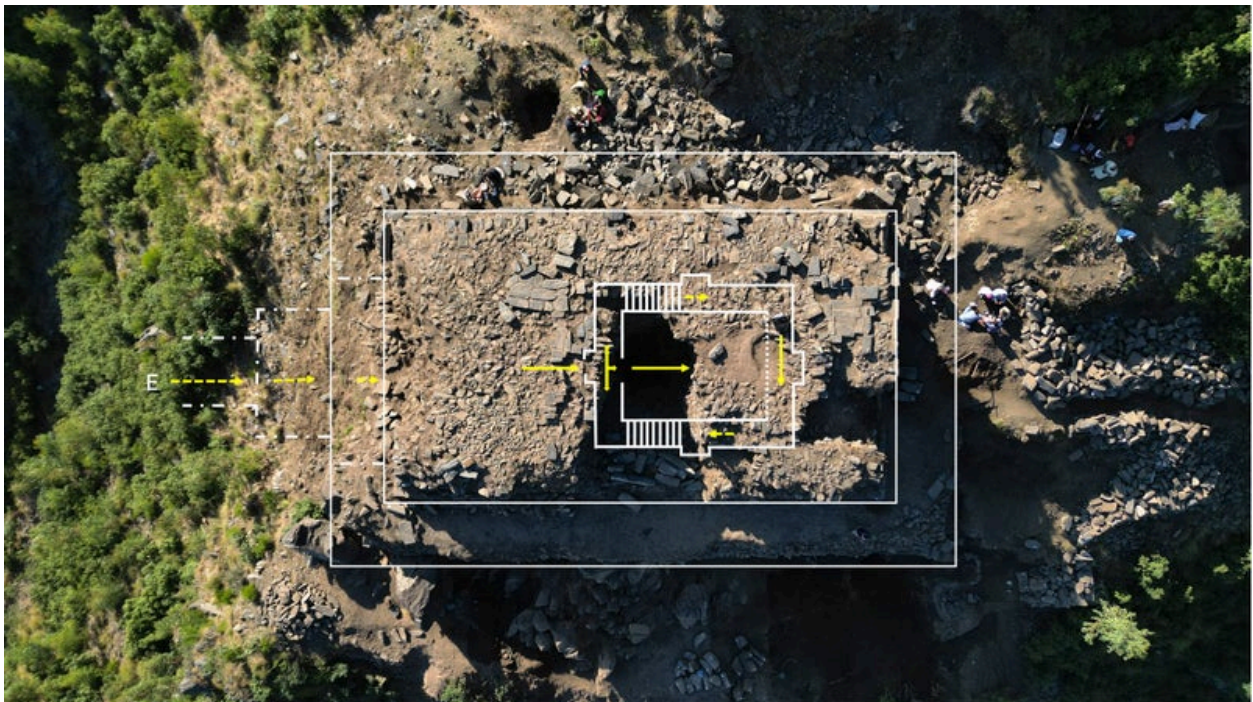
capitals. On the upper face of the upper podium, ample traces of the paved floor have been documented; the shrine must have had a square plan (ca. 5 x 5 m in plan) excluding the antechamber with a cella measuring circa 4 x 4 meters in plan. The stairway, located on the east side, has a monumental size; it was elongated and formed by more than one part with probably at least two landings (**Fig. 95a–b**).

The elevation of the lost shrine is calculated as circa 10 meters high excluding the topping of the dome.





**Fig. 94a–b.** HDZ I, south side: the collapsed stone *in situ* from (a) aerial view and (b) side view from the west (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)



**Fig. 95a–b.** Trench HDZ I–1: Aerial view of the “Takht” with tentative sketch plan of the two podia, stairway, and the cella with the corridors (north to the bottom) (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

### ***Decoration of the Shrine***

As mentioned, more than two hundred decorated or molded pieces that belonged to various parts of the elevation of the lost shrine were recovered and documented during the clearance and excavation (over

two hundred were numbered on the spot). Most of the fragments were documented at the bottom of the south side in secondary collapse facies (i.e., ante 1899) (see **Fig. 94a–b**). Safe removal of these pieces and excavation of the intact layers beneath them is the task of the fieldwork planned for spring 2026 (Khyber PATH season 2). Fifteen of the pieces were inventoried and handed over to the Swat Museum.



**Fig. 96a–c.** HDZ 15, HDZ 13, and HDZ 8 (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

The podium of the shrine, like the base of the upper podium, featured a thick torus molding running all around the building interrupted at the east side where the projecting body framed the entrance (*pronaos*). Above the podium, there was a plain wall marked by a series of false pilasters with pseudo-Ionic floral capitals (see **Fig. 97a**), surmounted by a second band decorated with a smaller torus and figured metopae (Ganesha, Varaha-Vishnu) flanked by semi-columns (**Figs. 96a, 97e**). Capitals and upper parts of the figures were part of a third band. A fourth band was formed by smaller and closed pilasters (missed), surmounted by a fifth band with capitals and projecting architectural elements topped by a row of dentils (**Fig. 96b**). The dome formed the upper part with an unknown height and profile that might have been formally analogous to those in the coeval Kashmiri architectural school.



**Fig. 97a–f.** Details of other inventoried architectural pieces (numbered from top to bottom, left to right) (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

Other pieces belong to the (three) projecting niches that can be hypothesized as present on every side but the arched entrance of the cella (see **Fig. 96c**; also **Fig. 40**, HDZ 8, in Iori, [chapter 15](#)). Some pieces still bear traces of stucco. We can therefore put forward the hypothesis that the entire monument was plastered with (colored) stucco.

One cannot but praise the versatility of the Shahi sculpting school of art: in a radius of 50 kilometers, sculptors were active roughly contemporarily on different stone materials: sandstone at [Gumbat](#) (Talash, Lower Dir) and [Chiga Sarai](#) (Kunar), *kanjur* and stucco at [Barikot](#), and peridotite at [Hati-dara](#). The materials are currently being studied by Elisa Iori.



**Fig. 98.** Handling of heavy pieces in the Mission House's storerooms (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

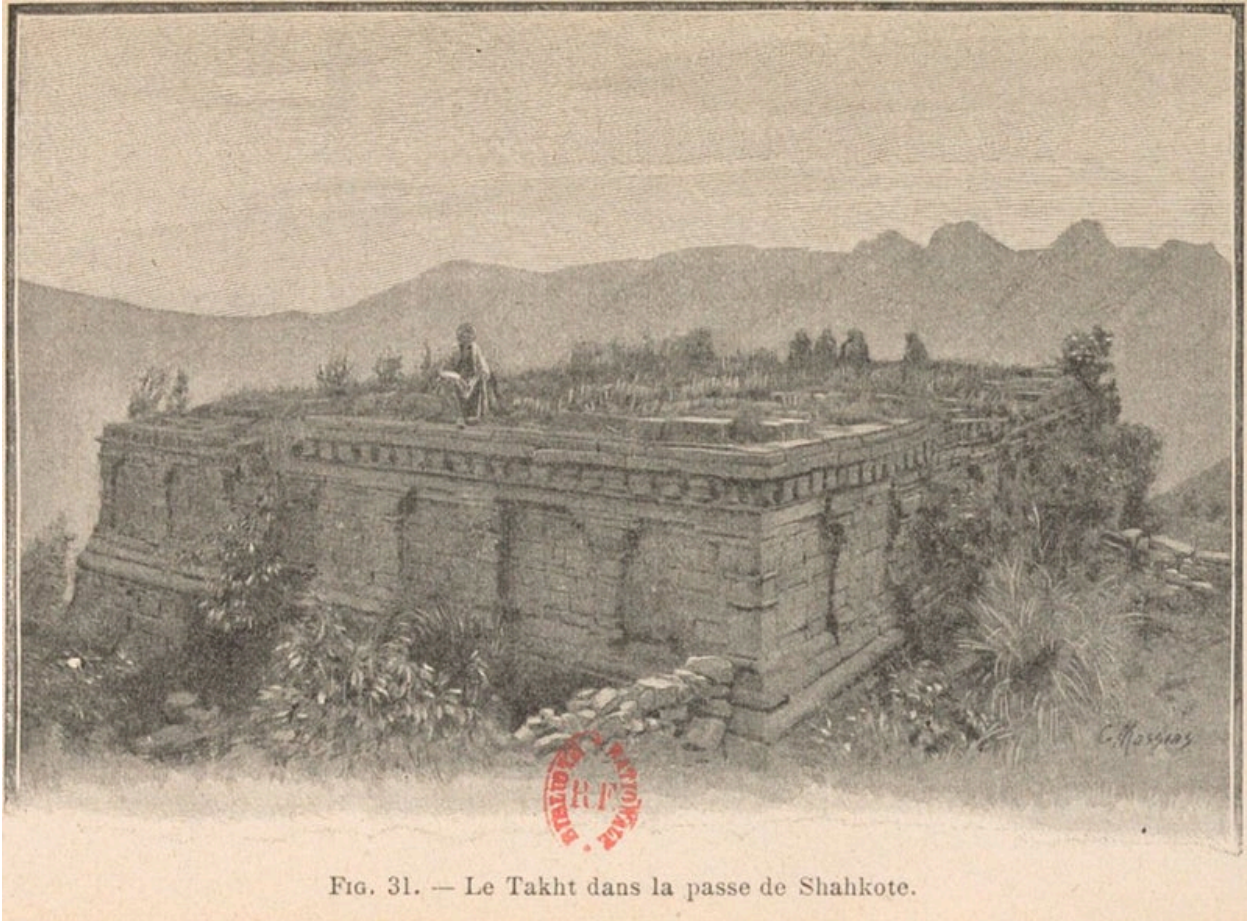


FIG. 31. — Le Takht dans la passe de Shahkote.



**Fig. 99a–b.** The “Takht” throughout one century: (a) a view of the monument taken in 1899 (after Foucher 1901: fig. 31) and (b) the same view taken in 2025 (Khyber PATH, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

## Footnotes

1. Khyber PATH Project (Khyber Protection for Climate Adaptation, ecoTourism, and Heritage) AID 13189/01/0—EUR 3,000,000.00—grant Art. 24 Law 125/2014. See <https://pric.unive.it/progetti/khyberpath/home>. ↵
2. The term *Zalamkot* can rather refer to the rocky hill where traces of an ancient Ghaznavid (?) military installation (*kot*) have been detected (HDZ XIII). ↵
3. With reference to the *kot* of [Zalamkot](#)? See Site HDZ XIII. ↵
4. The excavation (still in progress at the time this contribution was written) was carried out for the project by the Departmental Representative Mr. Nasir Muhmood of the Sub-Regional Office of Malakand, [DGOAM KP](#), and Mr. Fazal Azim, Field Officer of the project. Digital data survey was carried out with courtesy of our friends at EssaNoor Associates. ↵