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Dr S.M. SHARIF
Educational Adviser
Ministry of Education
KARACHI, Pakistan

Dear Dr Sharif,

as you will kindly see from the enclosed letter, which I am sending you for your perusal, I am extending an official invitation to Dr. F.A. Khan, requesting his attendance at the inaugural ceremony of the Exhibition of the archaeological material brought to light in Swat.

The exhibition is to be housed at the Palazzo Venezia, and the date for the ceremony is settled for March 10; I need not stress the importance we attach to this cultural and social event, which will enable wide sections of our cultured public to admire the wealth of finds yielded by our excavations campaigns. Nor need I say how keen I am to have Dr. Khan honour us by his presence, thus acknowledging our gratefulness for the close co-operation he has unfailingly granted us in these last years of common works.

We would therefore be most obliged to the Government Authorities of Pakistan for facilitating the granting of permits to Dr. Khan: I am addressing you directly to this purpose, as I have come to rely on your constant kindness towards us, and I thank you from this moment for the support you would be so good as to give him in this connection. With best regards, and assuring you of my highest consideration,

Yours truly,

(Giuseppe Tucci)

Enclosure ✓

(Courtesy National Archives of Pakistan)

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**Behind the Buddhist Communities:
Subalternity and Dominancy in Ancient Swat**

Luca M. Olivieri

Introduction

In the last ten years the IsIAO Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan has documented and studied 59 painted shelters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. These rock-art sites were mostly discovered in the upper Kotah valley, in the Swat-Malakand region, at an average height of 1,000 m asl (49 sites). To this group have to be added other 10 analogous sites documented in 2010 in Swabi and Manshera Districts¹. All these painted shelters display coherent features in terms of style technique and physical setting. The majority of them are executed in simplified linear-style, with red-ochre pigment, and are housed in shallow gneiss shelters. Despite their coherency, major stylistic changes can be detected: from an early simplified linear-style similar to a late evolved linear-style showing a significant enrichment of details. Syntax and spatial organization progress from an early well-organized structure toward a less ordered one. Notwithstanding the paintings show a reduced capacity of osmosis toward the main Swat valley cultures (henceafter: 'macro-phenomena'), during relevant contact-phases a progressive enrichment, integration and/or mutation of the lexical heritage occurred.

* All photos are by the Author in collaboration with C. Primangeli; drawings are by E. Morigi (Courtesy IsIAO).

¹ See references in Olivieri b, this issue: § 2.2; a final reappraisal is available in Olivieri 2010a, *ibid.*. A comprehensive monographic study is in press (Olivieri, in press; *ibid.*). Other few paintings have been discovered by Pakistani scholars in Swabi (KP Province; Shah Nazar Khan 1995; Nasim Khan 2000) and by the Pak-German team nearby the Babusar Pass (Chilas) and Gor (Gilgit) (Gilgit-Baltistan; H. Hauptmann and M. Bemann, personal communication).

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One notes the use of a recurrent lexicon consisting mainly of ideograms, pictograms and psychograms. Earlier paintings feature the dominant presence of grid-like ideograms. Major iconic scenes are: (a) agricultural rituals, (b) cultic role of the ibex, (c) heroic figures/anthropomorphs in a central or dominant role with body-modifications, (d) hunting scenes and wild animals, (e) farming scenes. These categories can be traced to self-representations produced by the culture which also produced the painted shelters. The first two categories are uncontaminated self-representations of their authors' ideology and they are never associated to lexical items attributable to elements of the main valley cultures. The latter three categories are also commingled with representations of 'alien' icons, like warriors on horseback and representations of Buddhist architecture.

Despite their omogeneous physical setting, the painted shelters display a gradation of isolation and visibility. It has been possible to establish that some paintings are housed in rock-shelters which could be defined as 'Sanctuaries', others paintings in shelters defined as 'Hermitages', 'Public or signaling sites', and 'Casual/Private painting places'. The major self-representative paintings are found in the first two types of shelters in Kotah's central valley. The other typologies of shelters are equally present in the upper valley of Kotah. Generally, the paintings located on the S slopes of the area, are housed in sites of the fourth type. The phenomenon, in time, physically shifted from the middle valley of Kotah, toward the head of the valley, and then again, in a later phase, to the S slopes of the watershed that divides Swat from the plains of Mardan. This shifting was accompanied by a progressive de-ritualization of the shelter as a physical place, and it is contemporary to the progressive movement of the Buddhist communities towards areas of high altitude. Its peak falls in the second half of the 1st millennium CE.

If the most ancient paintings have been dated to a pre-(Buddhist) contact phase (end-2nd – mid-1st Millennium BCE), then all other elements represent indicators of post-contact phases. The later contact phase occurs simultaneously with the diffusion of Brahmanistic forms in lower Swat, and can be roughly placed at approximately the 7th Century CE.

Marginality and Acculturation: Space and Time

Therefore, it appears possible that even if our paintings do not represent not a culture in itself, they none-the-less represent a widespread phenomenon in time. It is found to be parallel to or to fall within a chronological arc characterized by a series of cultural macro-phenomena, all of which have been archeologically documented: (a) The existence of the of small agricultural settlements and centers of exchange, which relate culturally to a period contemporary to the Late Harappan phase (Localization Era; Swat Period IV c. 2nd millennium BCE); (b) the so-called 'Gandhara Grave Culture' (henceforth: the 'graveyards'; end-2nd millennium BCE - mid-1st millennium BCE); (c) the progressive intrusion of Buddhism with its cultic foundations, from 3rd century BCE, that reached its peak, both in quantitative terms and spatial distribution from the 1st to the 4th-5th century CE²; (d) urban settlements created and linked to the same local power system described above (end-2nd century BCE - 5th century CE)³; (e) the foundation under the Turki- and Hindu Shahi dynasties of Brahmanic cultic centers (7th century-11th CE)⁴.

All these macro-phenomena had an evident and recognizable impact on the social history of the antiquity of the Swat valley and represent phases of acculturation. Acculturation phases interspersed with phases of cultural marginality (or the late persistence of earlier cultural forms), which may however coexist with the former in remote areas of Swat⁵.

² This progress locally occurred under the patronage linked to the power of various foreign dynasties, first the Sakas, the Parthians, then the Kushans and finally the Kushan-Sasanians. In a later period, after the 5th century CE, the distribution of the active Buddhist foundation narrows progressively, principally in the valley off the left bank, to the N of Barikot (Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006; Olivieri 2010c).

³ The most important documented centers were the well-known sites of Barikot, Udegram and Mingora/Barama I; see ref. in Olivieri 2003b, this issue: § 3.1.

⁴ The cultic centers remained in use through the arrival of Islam in the 11th Century with Ghaznavids, and connected to system of organized power, first under the Turki Shahi rulers, then under the dynasty of Hindu Shahi (Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006; Filigenzi 2006; Id. 2010; Olivieri 2010c). The Hindu Shahi phase is characterized by a system of fortifications that covered the N ridges (right bank) of the Swat River as far in Dir and Buner (Olivieri 2003a).

⁵ Tusa 1979. On the question s. also Ratnagar 1998: 39. Compare these five macro-phenomena to the four 'Tidal Waves of Indian History' described in Falk 2006. These

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The major components of the macrophenomenon (d) (see above) were the foundations of the urban centers (initially fortified, then at least at Barikot, from 1st century CE, demilitarized), the diffusion of organized forms of social interactions (currency and writing as well, Indian and foreign, e.g. Greek), and intensive agriculture. The the progressive religious dominancy of Buddhism is closely linked to this urbanization phase⁶.

We have no iconographic trace of these macro-phenomena in the painted shelters, if we exclude the introduction of the horse icon, the Buddhist architecture, and, icons of the Brahmanism in late antiquity. It is therefore possible that the painted shelters are an expression of communities, which were peripheral or subordinate to the macrophenomena; however segregated to the remote living space. The ecological space available coincides with the economic areas dedicated to hunting and gathering, pastoralism/sheep-farming, and subsistence farming: in fewer words, with the wild.

This situation, *mutatis mutandis*, is similar to that present in Swat until the 80s. The most privileged agricultural lands are owned by ethnic Yusufzai landlords (*khans*). The right of possession is legitimated by the 16th century Yusufzai military conquest, and the permanent distribution of the lands amongst the khans during the Miangul rule in the first half of the last century (Yusufzai State of Swat). Khans and the affiliated farmers live mainly in the main valley, as they have means of communication and mobility; they speak Pashto and their principal market town (in the study area the center of Barikot). The off-center lands (i.e. mountain meadows and conifer forests), valuable common pool resources and patrimony of the khans. These lands are inhabited by semi-nomadic communities, Gujars (semi-sedentary) and Ajars (semi-nomadic), tenants and clients of the khans. These communities

are the four major historical phases into which ‘The time from the Mauryas to the Guptas can be broadly divided [...]’. The macro-phenomenon III can be compared to the first phase (‘Mauryas proper’), nos. III and IV to the third phases (‘intruding Westerns’); V to the fourth phase (‘Indian resurrection’) (ibid.: 145). See also the ‘four periods’ described in Witzel 2006 (470-474).

⁶ Olivieri 1996, 2007. A brief *résumé* on the currency systems in ancient India is in Falk 2006: 153-154. Regarding the role of writing between urban centers and Buddhist communities in peninsular India, see Ray 2006.

have been in the area for several centuries and have come and gone during their various phases of displacement from Kashmir and Punjab. Without doubt their presence (e.g. in the study area) is associated to conditions of economic stability and safety⁷. The Gujars live in small groups affiliated by kinship in hamlets isolated from each other; the villages consist of one to five houses, which are single-unit dwellings with adjoining stables or rock shelters which have been closed or enlarged utilizing walls in stone or clay. Traditionally Gujars are tied to the khans by a relationships characterized by patronage and corvées, from which rises their freedom to utilize the land in exchange for services, among other things the sale of bush products (such as timber, fruit, and berries – wild grapes as well as medicinal herbs), of milk (and butter) and lamb, honey, etc⁸.

Returning to our paintings, we cannot easily imagine what the relationship was between the community of the painted shelters and, say, the people who settled in Barikot and other centers, who traded or produced valuable painted pottery and cultivated rice, barley and wheat in the fertile soils of the main valley during the Period IV. For all we know, if these communities had already begun to paint rock shelters, they might have shared with the communities of the main valley some of the icons painted on the black-on-red ceramic (felines, anthropomorphs); certain representations could arise from the same religious context. Certainly both the main valley as well as mountainous areas during Period IV shared a burial ritual that did not leave taphonomic elements. There are only few elements of cultural contiguity between our paintings in their pre-Buddhist, or proto-historic phase, and culture of the graveyards. Vice versa one may suggest that the two phenomena (painted shelters and graveyards) coexisted and, as we saw in the case of the horse, that the first acculturated to elements typical of the second one. The presence of small graveyards in remote areas could be explained by an attempted intrusion, the temporary

⁷ For instance in the period following the formation of the Yusufzai State of Swat (1917); see the description by M.A. Stein of the Gujari settlements in Swat (Stein 1930: 72).

⁸ On the relationship between the different part of the present-day Swat society s. Barth 1956 e 1960 and Inam-ur-Rahim & Viaro 2002 (104 ff.); on the modern history of Swat, s. Sultan-i-Rome 2008 and Olivieri 2009.

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occupation of grazing areas, such as during the summer season, carried out by small groups associated with the community of the main valley, or as an expression of the process of acculturation to the new burial customs on the part of small groups⁹. In both cases, this could explain the reduced size of the mountain areas graveyards (in Kandak), as well as the simplicity of the cysts, sometimes of a megalithic character, as well as the scarcity of the burial assemblage¹⁰.

This complex relationship can be explained if we return to the more solid ground of the long period of contact between the painters' communities and the Buddhist communities. We may infer that the first group was not composed of Buddhists, from the fact that representations referring to the world of Buddhism are depicted solely through the use of the architecture of buildings, while the icons of the cult, or representations of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, are completely absent from the graphic repertoire of the paintings. In their language, architecture represents an exterior representation, we would call it documentary, as it refers to physical evidence; their inner purpose, their psychological meaning is not at first clear. It could be a mere description, although this does not fit given in the context of isolation in which these paintings are found. However, we never find representations of Buddhist architecture in contexts defined as 'Sanctuaries' or 'Hermitages', but in 'Public painting places'. Before introducing a possible solution to this question, let us briefly examine the process of expansion of the Buddhist communities between 1st and 4th-5th centuries CE in the study area.

In general, one may have the impression that the painted sites correspond to the only available free areas left by the spatial expansion of the Buddhist communities. In some cases the paintings are located just on the outskirts of the area occupied by a Buddhist foundation. This marginalization is repeated, other than in Swat, also in Swabi and Manshera Districts.

⁹ Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006: 121-22. According to Tusa 1979 (690), the passage from Period IV to Period V was slow and progressive, and it didn't imply the obliteration of the earlier cultural forms.

¹⁰ Megalithic cysts have been found in the graveyard of Adina, Swabi, in Buner and in Dir, and always in remote or secluded areas; see Olivieri 1998.

It is evident that at a certain moment the Buddhist communities intruded into the ecological space of the painted shelters' people. It is possible that this phase of contact, not unlike other stages defined in rock-art as 'post-contact phases,' typical of contexts in areas colonized by Europeans in the recent past, has had some form of conflict. It is certainly clear that the two communities, one Buddhist and the other involved with the paintings, were competing for the control of the mountain areas¹¹.

In the later phases, the Buddhist communities have expanded in the upper mountain territories following a process of acquisition of visual and vital space, which at this point included mountain passes, springs, summer pastures and forests. These spaces were considered to be a part of the economic wealth of the monastic community. At this time, one could assert the gradual *reductio ad silvam* of the community of the painted shelters¹². In a later phase, when we can assume that the mountain communities welcomed elements of Brahmanism (due to the pre-existence of a common religious substratum?), the paintings were already shifted towards S, outside the valley Kotah.

About the existence of a 'Tribal Belt'

It is therefore clear that the painted shelters' phenomenon refers to something that might be synthesized in a non-scientific language as 'tribal.' Therefore, we should briefly discuss the presence, extension and role of a 'Tribal belt' in these areas of ancient Swat¹³.

¹¹ A paragraph of Olivieri 2008 read: '[In post-contact rock art production] 'alien' pictograms such as auto vehicles, firearms, European soldiers and ships are frequent. Leaving aside the issue of chronology, chariots and mounted warriors [*and Buddhist architecture*] in Swat may also be interpreted as indicators of a cultural disparity rather than signs of acculturation. Ultimately, they might represent a kind of psychological response of the rural communities facing fast transformations affecting the most privileged areas of their territory' (23). S. also Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006: 134 and fig. 79.

¹² Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006: 133-4.

¹³ In current Indian archaeology there is a very interesting trend, which recently introduced the concept of 'Indigenous Archaeology' or better 'Archaeology of the Subalterns', according to the brilliant definition molded by Pratap 2009. S. also Ratnagar 2004.

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The existence of ancient Indian tribes of the NW has become known through Greek sources¹⁴. Typically in these there is no clear differentiation between tribes organized as chiefdoms and those organized in groups/bands or clan. With regard to ancient Swat, this is true with the exception of the Assakenoi (identifiable in the area between Mingora and Barikot in the 4th century BCE) who were clearly described as a chiefdom¹⁵.

The perception of the 'others' offered by early Sanskrit Indian sources is more detailed, even if their anthropology is clearly confined to the two categories of 'civilization' and 'non-civilization': the civilians are also those people who live in cities or that contribute to their livelihood (farmers and shepherds) but in general, they are the people whose role falls within the order of the ritual and its hierarchy or *dharma*. The *dasyu* people (non-civilians) are regarded as degraded because of the oversight or neglect of the correct rites and eugenic prescriptions: as in the case of the 'fallen/decayed *kṣatriyas*' described by Panini, i.e. the mountain people of NW India, such as Darada and Kamboja¹⁶. In literature, the land inhabited by these people is called *mleccha-deśa*, but this, more than the forest or the mountains, is the land of foreigners or degraded people. In *Maṇu*, X, 45-56, one sees how the lowest anthropological category is not expressed as relating to peoples or nations (only the groups referred to a *varṇa* have a name), but human types. These were apparently coined due to the perception of the inhabitants of the wild, as sub-human symbols of being: the 'hunter', the 'terrible,' the 'tribal,' or 'wild rooster/grouse' (which live in

¹⁴ See Megasthenes, Frg. LVI A.

¹⁵ Olivieri 1996.

¹⁶ Tucci 1977: 37-38; see also Erdosy 1989. For the role of the 'blood' in the aristocratic genealogy, amongst local and 'foreign' dynasties, in historic India, see Falk 2006: 147-153. A digression: one may not notice the curious coincidence between the early list of the 'decayed *kṣatriyas*' and the new 'martial races', a concept introduced in the military rules of British India. By the way the Kamboj[as] are mentioned in both lists. An interesting list of of people degraded to the lowest rank is provided in *Maṇu*, X, 44; among these are the Kamboja, the Yavana, the *kirata* (or 'mountain people') and the *darada*, a term that has been translated as 'people of the cliffs (i.e. the Darada of Panini)'. The role of the border people or *mlecchas* in early Sanskrit texts (*Maṇu* and *Arthaśāstra*, amongst the others) has been described by M. Witzel in a recent paper (Witzel 2006: 482-486).

mounds, trees, mountains, and woods), or the 'wild,' the 'cooker of dogs' (who live outside the village). In general, Brahmanic India lacks a true anthropology of the 'others' unless they in some way have a role in the national and religious epic. Therefore, they are likely to search in vain for possible literary traces of the communities as elusive as ours, unless they are among those recognized or until they play a somehow recognizable role: like during the Buddhist contact-phase. In the Buddhist literature, one finds a new approach based on three factors. First, the *mleccha-deśa* was going to be the land of expansion of Buddhism (as it was of the Mauryan Empire¹⁷), especially towards NW India. Secondly, in doctrinary terms, Buddhism attaches less importance to the eugenic issue, than the ethical one, since the decadence is reversible.

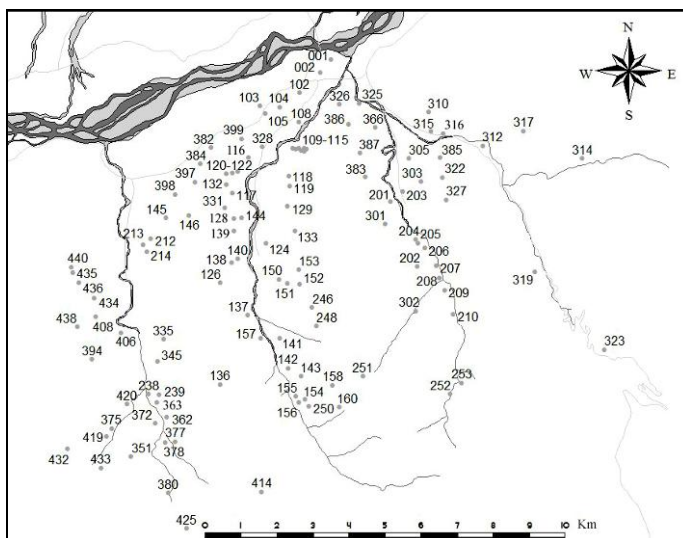


Fig. 1

¹⁷ In the Maurya era, in *Arthaśāstra* one finds a first form of recognition other than the *mlecchas*, the people which speak different languages and the people deprived of rank, of the *aranya-cārah*, the populations of the forests, towards them it was said to be useful to follow a paternalistic policy; the same recognition and the same approach was seen, obviously in Aśoka. This is explained both by the tradition and the political necessities of an empire, and with greater elasticity of the Buddhist approach. For the references. s. fn. 56 and fn. 57 in Thapar 1971.

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(Diffusion of the Buddhist foundations and settlements: 1st-4th CE)

Lastly, it should be noted that Buddhism was involved with the acquisition of power by the *mleccha* dynasties, Sakas, Parthians, and Kushans in the ancient NW India¹⁸. These three issues largely explain the reasons for the new Buddhist approach to the problem of the tribes and specifically and also specifically explains why the Buddhist communities, as we shall see, tended, if not to integrate, to symbiotically interact with mountain tribes in our area of interest.

That said, Buddhism continued moving in the line of the tradition, and to search for traces of these ‘others’ it is necessary to look within the characterization and portrayal of genre. The ‘other’ is taken as a symbol, and the man of the tribe becomes character in the tales, a type of *homo selvaticus* or *Wilde Mann*, who is both the protagonist of a story and symbol of an ethical category¹⁹.

Subsistence and Role of the ‘Tribal Belt’

What can we say regarding the spatial expansion of the Buddhist foundations in Swat and especially in the area of Barikot? Since the beginning of our era, and for approximately four centuries, the archaeological data display a building boom, with more than 100 sacred areas identified within about 400 sqkm (s. Fig. 1)²⁰. As mentioned

¹⁸ Thapar 1971: 418-19.

¹⁹ A good example, among the few, is the story of Aṅgulimāla or, according to the beautiful definition coined by P. Brancaccio, ‘The Taming of the Forest’ (Brancaccio 1999). Aṅgulimāla is less the kind of *Wilde Mann* which we seek than its idealization: an anthropological category that becomes part of a mythical story of conversion, linked on one side to the events of previous lives of Aṅgulimāla, and on the other to the critic of the false asceticism. Also here the ‘other’ must fall within recognizable categories and, in this way, eventually tamed. This story has been rightly viewed as ‘as one of the few instances where members of jungle tribes are incorporated in the Buddhist milieu’ and put in connection with the ancient NW India, for it is common in the Gandharan representations (by the way, Aṅgulimāla himself and said to be a native of Taxila). In general for the role of the subalters in ancient India, see the seminal Thapar 1971.

²⁰ Amongst the entries of the Sites List published in Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006: 98-115, and here displayed in Fig. 4, only 24 are the sites labelled as ‘Settlements’.

territorial expansion was not uniquely related to the individual appearance of buildings, but to the acquisition of agricultural land in its control, exploitation and irrigation and, we believe we may also say, control of mountain passes, springs, pastures, forests, and their products (e.g. butter, timber, fruit, and honey)²¹.

Certainly between the 1st century BCE and the 4th century CE, the territories in question were under the political control of local aristocrats linked first to the Indo-Greeks, then to the Saka, Parthians, followed by the power of the Kushans and their successors²². These should be the original legal owners of the lands acquired over the time (by way of donations or transactions) by the Buddhist community. Once the land became part of the monastic properties, we must expect that the monasteries managed the properties and were active in their economic improvement. An interesting post-2nd century CE inscription from Malakand shows that also hydraulic/irrigation infrastructures could become part of the system of donations and liberality towards Buddhist community²³. This fact fits perfectly with the picture suggested by the conclusion of the AMSV work in the Barikot area of Swat in 2006²⁴. According to this model the Buddhist territorial expansion not only must have eroded the living space of mountain communities, but must have also forced them to a certain extent to be involved in agricultural work, and other related activities. Even if it resulted in their conversion, it is not possible to know, as there is no evidence. We believe that we can say that Buddhism, inasmuch as it had a popular character, did not have universalist ambitions: at least in contexts such as these, its main target would have been to have on its

²¹ There are examples of spring management in the study area, e.g. the spring of Gumbat, Kandak, that displays two tanks, one – probably protohistoric - carved onto a small flat granite boulder, the second one in masonry work (1st-4th CE) (Olivieri & Vidale 2004: figs. 18, Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006: 131-135, figs. 54).

²² One refers, in the Saka-Parthian period, to the dynasties of Apraca and Ođi (Callieri 2002 and ref. cit.).

²³ Falk 2003: 79-80. About the donations of *vihara* and monastic building in site of Kashmir-smast, see Id. 2008. The water and land management in the Sanchi area is now well known thanks to seminal work carried out by Julia Shaw (e.g. Shaw 2000, 2001); for the relationship between Buddhist communities, agriculture and land ownership in ancient India, s. also Ray 2004, Fogelin 2004, and their references.

²⁴ Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006: 131-35.

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side the political elites, merchants and craftsmen: in other words, the residents of the cities. But if even in the cities, as the evidence at Barikot shows, forms of popular religion persisted, we can imagine that the communities of mountains or forests, although involved in the activities of the monasteries, were not converted²⁵.

In this sense, the evidence offered by the painted shelters in our area is extremely interesting. In general, all the representations of Buddhist architecture appear, as mentioned, to represent something alien, something ‘other’ than the world of the authors of the paintings. Therefore, the presence of these representations of Buddhist architecture, although not absolutely indicative of a conversion to Buddhism, may indicate rather a situation of coexistence, certainly subordinate, however, positively oriented. The presence of Buddhist architecture in the paintings’ lexicon could be explained by the fact that, despite the loss of the vital space of the mountain communities, these were partly integrated at the borders of the monastic life, perhaps through the performance of semi-servile *corvées*, i.e. procuring goods necessary for the monastic – not necessarily autarchic - economy (fruit, honey, etc). In short, the mountain community may have found in the Buddhist community a natural ‘market,’ for the skills and products of their natural world. Their activities could be regarded as analogous to those practiced today by Gujars²⁶. Amongst these activities, possibly also the extraction of quartzite stones used as a flint (today called *bakrai*), and the production of oil for the miriads of lamps found by the archaeologists in the Buddhist monasteries and coeval settlements²⁷.

According to this model the presence of the Buddhist architecture may

²⁵ The coexistence of different religious creeds even within areas dominated by Buddhist communities in ancient India is confirmed (s. Ray 2008: 248-250, with ref.).

²⁶ A similar relationship between the Buddhist monasteries and the tribes (Dards) is recorded until modern times in Ladakh (Zanskar).

²⁷ One may record also the cultivation of mustard plants, typical in Swat at this altitude, from which in the recent past oil was extracted for lighting but also used for the ritual lamps of the Hindu community. It is possible that the also fuel for the monastic lamps, used also for ritual purposes, was extracted from mustard seeds (cultivated in India since protohistoric times) or obtained from butter (but it might also be extracted from grape seeds; on the grape harvest and post-harvest activities see below).

be explained as they were perceived by the mountain communities as related to their welfare, and as such - like a beneficent spirit – are to be recognized through their reproduction in the painted shelters.

Another hypothesis might explain the presence of such icons. As often occurs in ancient India, a holy place or a sanctuary is also revered by the worshippers of different creeds. In this sense, it might also be possible that through the work of the the painters' communities, the image of the Buddhist architecture have been credited with being endowed with a sort of spiritual power. The two hypotheses are not in contradiction.

The presence of semi-forced labor related to the activities of the monasteries is well known²⁸. Perhaps less known is the network of collateral activities that could be associated with this people in the countryside, just as agricultural work, maintenance of the water infrastructures, mountain passes and springs, and various other corvées or duties related to the forest activities²⁹.

One of these activities could be the harvest of wild grapes and their crushing or pressing. Interesting data regards the documentation of 20 infrastructures for pressing grapes found in areas of high altitude in the valleys of Kandak and Kotah (the two typology are illustrated in Figs. 8 and 9). These infrastructures, if considered contemporary, could have produced up to 6-8.000 hl of wine per year³⁰. The majority of these presses are concentrated in an area of approximately 50 hectares.

²⁸ Schopen 1994.

²⁹ Several ancient axe-sharpener stations, have been found in Kandak and Kotah valley (e.g. Olivieri 2006: figs. 21, 22; Olivieri & Vidale 2004: fig. 35; Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006: fig. 27).

Our recent survey of the Tanawal painted shelters has revealed in two sites a new interesting element: pictograms depicting a tree (a pine-tree for its shape). In one site, these kind of pictograms are always represented capsized, while some of the human figures are depicted holding an axe. These pictograms are always associated to representations of Buddhist architecture. It is evident that we are in front of representation of forest cut and timber activity: the cut pine-trees, were probably the highly valuable *cedrus deodara*. Their repetition might be interpreted as iconic scenes. Therefore, it is possible that timber was the most relevant economic activity of the communities of upper Manshera in Buddhist times (Olivieri in press).

³⁰ S. Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006: 142-46. A 'Pl. 5.2'-type infrastructure was found at the same altitude in the Jambil valley, while other tank-like infrastructures have been documented in the upper Saidu valley (ibid.: figs. 42, 43, 83).

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There are two types of structures are well known in a 'tribal' environment, the 'Kafir-Dardic' where the production of wine was common when not ritualized.

A very important fact concerns the discovery of one of these wine-presses inside a shelter at the base of the wall that houses a painting. It is clear that the community (or tribe) which produced these paintings also picked the grapes and squeezed them to produce the wine. But who were to be the recipients of the production? Was the wine produced only for use within the community or was it also sold? One fact deserves to be noted: similar tanks, except for the presence of the exit hole, have been documented within or near the Buddhist complexes in this area³¹. The latter might have been used as vats for fermentation of the grape juice, similarly to the rougher vat structures documented in 'Kafir-Dardic' environment³². If that is confirmed by further analysis, it does mean that the possible final recipients of the wine production were (also) the monastic communities. This finding would seem to indicate that the grape harvest took place in the mountains, where the grapevines probably grew, semi-wild, as they still grow today, along with holly-oaks and other local species. The grapes could have been pressed inside the cultivation/harvest areas and the juice transported to the Buddhist foundations, where the fermentation took place in complex work stations. These were composed of a multiple series of tanks, or surfaces with tanks posts utilized to set-up tripods to suspend filtering pots. What is quite interesting is that the spatial range of wine-presses corresponds approximately to the area of the painted shelters contemporary to the Buddhist presence, while they are not found to the S, in the Mardan watershed, where later pictures prevail. If this point is correct, we therefore may hypothesize that wine production, as an economic activity, was concentrated essentially during a precise

³¹ Photographic documentation is available in Olivieri & Vidale 2004: 156-57, figs. 23, 32 ; Olivieri 2006: 148-49, figs. 18, 19, 20. Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006: fig. 11. Other tanks have been found in a similar ecological context at Ranigat, well-known Buddhist site on the mountains between Buner and Swabi. Ranigat has a lot of elements in common with Amluk: the pseudo-isodomic granite blocks masonry technique, the presence of tanks and excavated basins, rock hermitages and cells.

³² Edelberg 1965: fig. 3.

historical period, i.e. those corresponding to the golden age of Buddhism in Swat.

Today there are many elements which suggest a close relationship between Buddhism and the traditional consumption of wine in Swat and the surrounding areas. Amongst the others, we must mention an important passage in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, a text which is generally taken to refer to the 2nd century CE and ancient NW India. This passage shows that the production of non-alcoholic (boiled) grape juices were presented as direct teachings of the Buddha³³. The presence of these traditions within a Buddhist environment may perhaps reflect an attempt by the monasteries to channel local drinking habits towards a direction of temperance.

Conclusions: Who were the painters of the Painted Shelters?

Until other epigraphic evidence is found, as happened in the area of Gilgit and Chilas, regarding the local dynasties of Paṭola and Darada, we will be unable to name any of the peoples and tribes (although not the great dynasties) that have succeeded in Swat. The only exception is

³³ Brancaccio & Liu 2009: 225-227. ““These are fruits from the northern region. They are called grapes. One can eat them after having purified them with fire”. Apparently, after the Buddha and his monks ate some of the grapes, and there were some left, he added: “The grapes should be pressed to extract the juice, and then the fluid should be heated and removed from the fire before it is completely cooked [...] To store the syrup and serve it to the samgha out of the proper time, one should heat the juice until it is completely cooked”” (ibid.: 226; s. Tucci 1977: 34). Evidence that distillation did not only take place in urban sites such as Taxila and Barikot, but also in monastic quarters within urban areas such as Shaikhan-dheri has been present for some time; as it has been known for some time that distillation was an activity subject to a royal monopoly, as is indicated by the *tamḡa* printed on the distillery vases found (Taxila: Marshall 1951: pl. 125, no. 129a; Barikot: Callieri 1990); one may note that the condenser sets from Barikot were found in a 1st-2nd century CE chronological context; at Shahikhan-dheri, have been found more than 100 condenser sets inside a covered space of roughly 350 sqm (Brancaccio & Liu 2009). Other pieces of evidence in this regard will be discussed in other occasions: Luxury pottery certainly meant for consuming intoxicating drinks are common in the funerary goods of the Swat graveyards. In particular, we consider the so-called ‘brandy bowls’, that can be regarded as morphological antecedents of both the Saka-Parthian ‘drinking goblets’ (Salomon 1996) and the ‘Kafir’ cups (Tucci 1977: 32-33).

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the Assakenoi at the time of Alexander and the house of Oḍi at the beginning of our era.

If, instead we attempt to group the elements that derive from the painted shelters, one could attempt to create a coherent overview and perhaps attempt, if not to give a name to these people, at least to individuate their cultural context.

The features of the painted shelters of Swat-Malakand outlined in the Introduction and analysed in the previous pages, do not fall specifically into any of the descriptions of the people of the mountains, to the 'inhabitants of the cliffs', the caste of 'decayed' warriors, and so on. The painted shelters' features and lexicon speak of hierarchically structured tribal communities, living in an ecologically undisturbed area. Their rituals are expressed mostly through the worship of agriculture, and possibly the cult of the ibex; the production of wine had some ritual character too. It appears that the first two activities are represented in a highly representative context: within two shelters defined as 'Sanctuary'. These activities were carried out by an upper rank individuals (priests?). Relevant or recurrent local deities have not been identified: the representation of the anthropomorph in a cultivated field and the binomial leopard-ibex appear only once, but again in a highly representative context, in a 'Sanctuary'-type shelter. However, dominant anthropomorphs are recurrent. Self-representative symbols, such as axes or handprints, are only seen once, but also in this case, in a particularly significant context. The community is for the most part permanent, and carries out a series of recurrent tasks which are of great importance for the social life in this mountainous area. The community participates in agricultural activities (subsistence), hunting, and harvesting (grapes). It is a non-literate society, which nevertheless possesses a significant mythopoeic patrimony. The community also has a strong sense of rock landscape symbolism and psychic dynamics, the latter revealed not only through the use of color (red), but also by the presence of psychograms. It is not inconceivable that the community's religiosity was characterized by forms of shamanic or magical asceticism, as suggested by the presence of a dominant anthropomorph and the diffusion of body modification representations. In these religious formats, the role represented by rock shelters as a place of isolation at particular moments assumes a significant role, and the

painting was an expression of those moments. Finally, it appears that the painted shelters were visited several times and the paintings altered, possibly on the occasion of holidays or seasonal celebrations. It is assumed that this community engaged in a funerary cult which left no taphonomic traces.

In a nutshell, the fundamental aspects regarding the authors of the painted shelters in Malakand-Swat can be found in this cultural context. These aspects are:

- 1) agricultural rites³⁴;
- 2) production of grape wort for wine production;
- 3) ibex sacrifice/ritual hunting³⁵;

³⁴ Vidale, Micheli & Olivieri, this issue: figs. 1-3. These rituals might find their direct reference in a R̥gvedic environment (think of Kṣetrapati, the deity of cultivated fields, in R̥V IV 57). Recognizing this as the correct interpretation, would imply attributing an antique character to the paintings bearing these icons. They might therefore be considered the earliest representation of a R̥gvedic rite performance not only in the NW Sub-continent (see the fragment BKG 500, s. Stacul 1983; Id. 1987: 109, s. above, fn. 28), but more generally in whole area of India. Forms of these rituals has been documented by the ethnographers in Hindukush, like the ritual sowing of a field (*'Barinzink'*) performed in Hindukush by high-ranking individuals amongst the Jashi (who are considered by ethnographers as the 'aborigines' of the Gawardesh area): this ritual is found in various forms throughout the 'Kafir'-Dardic area as far as Hunza and Gilgit. In Yasin and Chitral this ritual is called *'bi nisik'* ('seed-planting') and is officiated (or it is expected to be) by the ruling dynasties. In some areas of Chitral, the rite is officiated by members of a specific lineage, who 'are mostly the descendants of an ancient people and who are called *bumki* 'aboriginals'' (Cacopardo & Cacopardo 2001: 211). This interpretation, as amply demonstrated by other studies does it preclude a R̥gvedic substrate: with reference to the ancient Indian substrate of the Hindukush mountain cultures see Fussman 1977 (see Olivieri & Vidale 2011, this issue: fn. 2).

³⁵ Vidale, Micheli & Olivieri, this issue: figs. 6-8, 10. If, however, the dominant culture of Swat in the antique Bronze Age did not raise ibex for a particular role, in another moment, tentatively given as the end of the first millennium, the animal appears in an insistent manner, almost as a symbol within the 'mature' phase' of Gogdara I (Olivieri 1998). In a short but important article, Tucci emphasizes the importance of a form of worship typical in Swat, Chitral and Gilgit, of a female deity 'worshipped by hunters and considered to be the overlord of all ibex' (Tucci 1963: 153). The ritual slaughtering of the ibex is officiated by the *zhaban* amongst the 'Kafir' tribes: the priest, the only men allowed in the shrine of the goddess Murkhum, kills the ibex and hangs its horns on the branches of the Sacred Tree (Jettmar 1975: 210-211; s. ref. in Olivieri 1998: 83).

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- 4) the presence of shamanistic characters (as evidenced by the large anthropomorphs with body modifications indicating states of pre-death);
- 5) the dynamic-magical character of actions, even pictorial;
- 6) the hierarchical distinction of roles;
- 7) the presence of places of seclusion;
- 8) the rock symbology;
- 9) the use of paintings in holy places (consider the recent paints of ibex in red ochre in *Jestakhan* of the Kalash tribes);
- 10) the use of painted dots to represent ‘seeds’ or a generative force³⁶.

Now, the consideration of these factors would seem to lead toward an early form of the otherway defined as ‘Kafir’-Dardic environment. At this moment, we choose not to enter into a discussion regarding the linguistic and cultural differences between the two contexts, nor their chronological correlation³⁷. Certainly there is an agreement as to the

This form of worship has been extensively studied (Jettmar 1961, Tucci 1963, Jettmar 1975) and it is associated with a symbol of a Sacred Tree. This icon is always in association with cultures in which hunting has a prevalent value, not necessarily economic, but certainly ritual.

³⁶ Amongst the ‘Kafir’ tribes, dots represent the *peshayak*, the male-ibex’s fertile droppings (Olivieri 2001: 432). The series of black ibex which are surrounded by dots, painted on the white areas on the walls within the Jesthtak Han, are renovated each year on the occasion of the rites connected to the winter solstice (Cacopardo & Cacopardo 2001: fig. 23). It is worthwhile pointing out that the custom of marking the walls of houses in white for apotropaic purposes is still frequent among the populations in the more remote areas of Kandak, Buner and neighboring areas. On all these aspects see also the conclusive chapters in Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006, and Vidale & Olivieri 2002, For the ‘Kafir’ religion’, we refer to Jettmar 1961, 1975, Fussman 1977, Witzel 2004, Cacopardo & Cacopardo 2001 and ref.

³⁷ According to A. Parpola, the population utilizing Dardic languages (Early-Proto-Rgvedic = Early Proto-Dardic; corresponding to the culture of Swat Period IV) preceded the arrival of the those utilizing the spoken Nuristani (‘Kafir’ or Proto-Nuristani = Late Proto-Dardic; corresponding to the culture of the fields of urns in Swat Period V) (Parpola 1988: 243-48; Id. 1995: 373). From the Indological point of view, the ‘Kafir’ or Nuristani/Dardic background (let aside their distinction) have been recently studied according two main models. The first one thinks that this complex echoed the traits of the Indo-Iranian ‘myths, ritual and society, and [...] many aspects of Rgvedic [religion]’ (Witzel 2004: §1.5.6; s. also Parpola 2009). The second one considers the complex of myths, ritual and society, as a partial echo of the

presence of these ancient languages in ancient NW India, possibly as early as 2nd millennium BCE. At various stages, the 'Kafir'-Dardic cultures have been gradually marginalized until they filled an area coinciding with the Hindukush-Karakorum mountains and their piedmont. In Swat, the existence of these cultures is positively attested in late antiquity (around 12th century), and, in their 'Dardic' form, are still recorded in modern times (until the 20th centuries) in different areas of Middle and Upper Swat³⁸.

post Ṛgvedic religion (Fussman 1977).

³⁸ For their antiquity in Swat, see Tucci 1977; Bagnera 2006. For their presence in after 12th century CE, see Tucci 1940; Olivieri, Vidale et al. 2006: 138-142; Cacopardo & Cacopardo 2001: 35.

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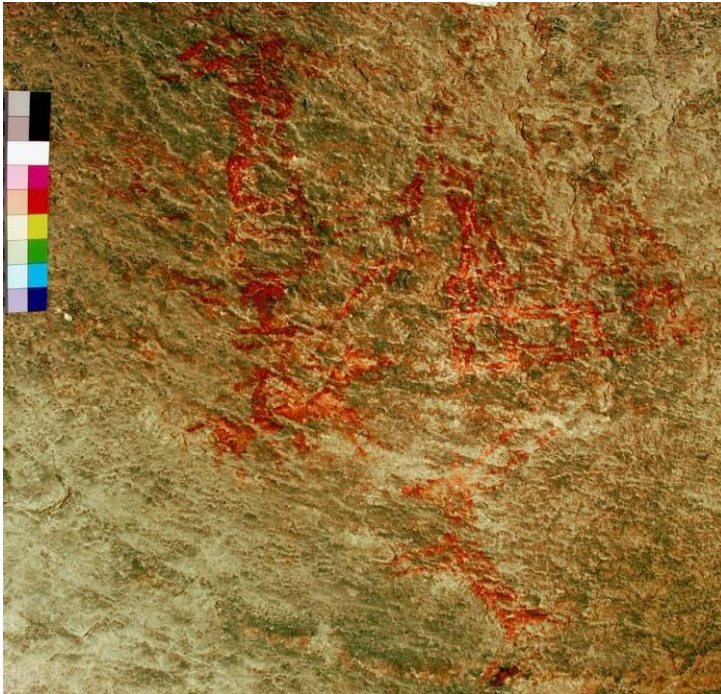


Pl. 1.1
View of the S border of the Malakand-Swat area.

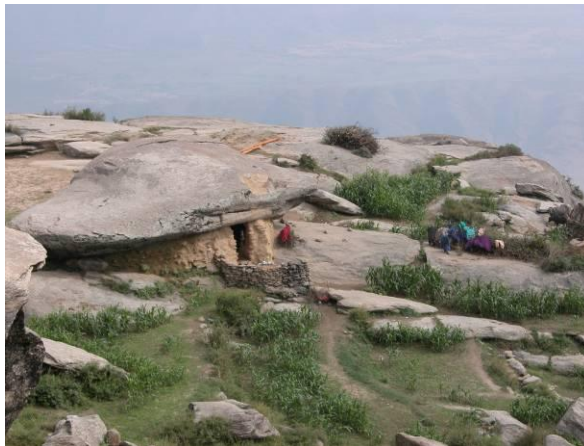


Pl. 1.2
Brahmanic subjects represented at Takht-gat site: no. 26.

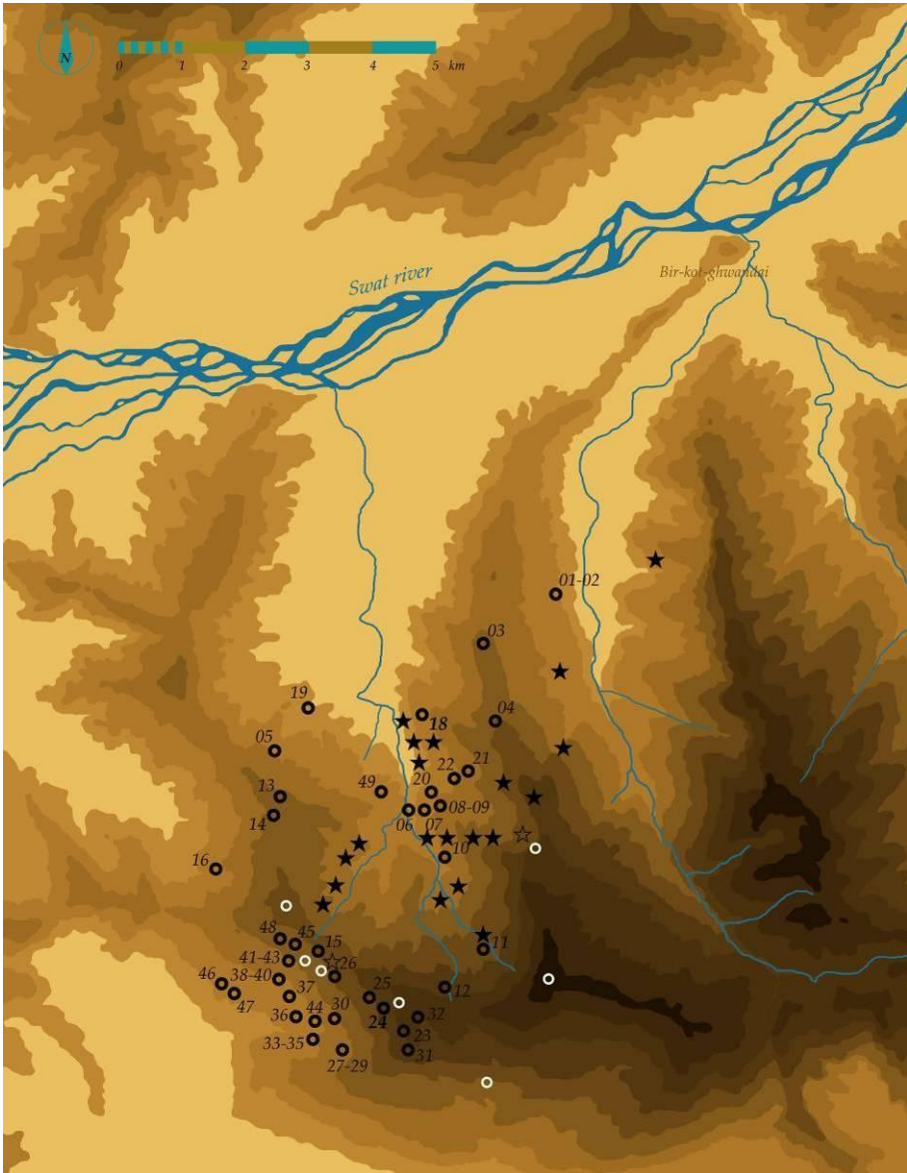
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Pl. 2.1
Deities, beasts and architecture in the Palangai.1 site: no. 41.



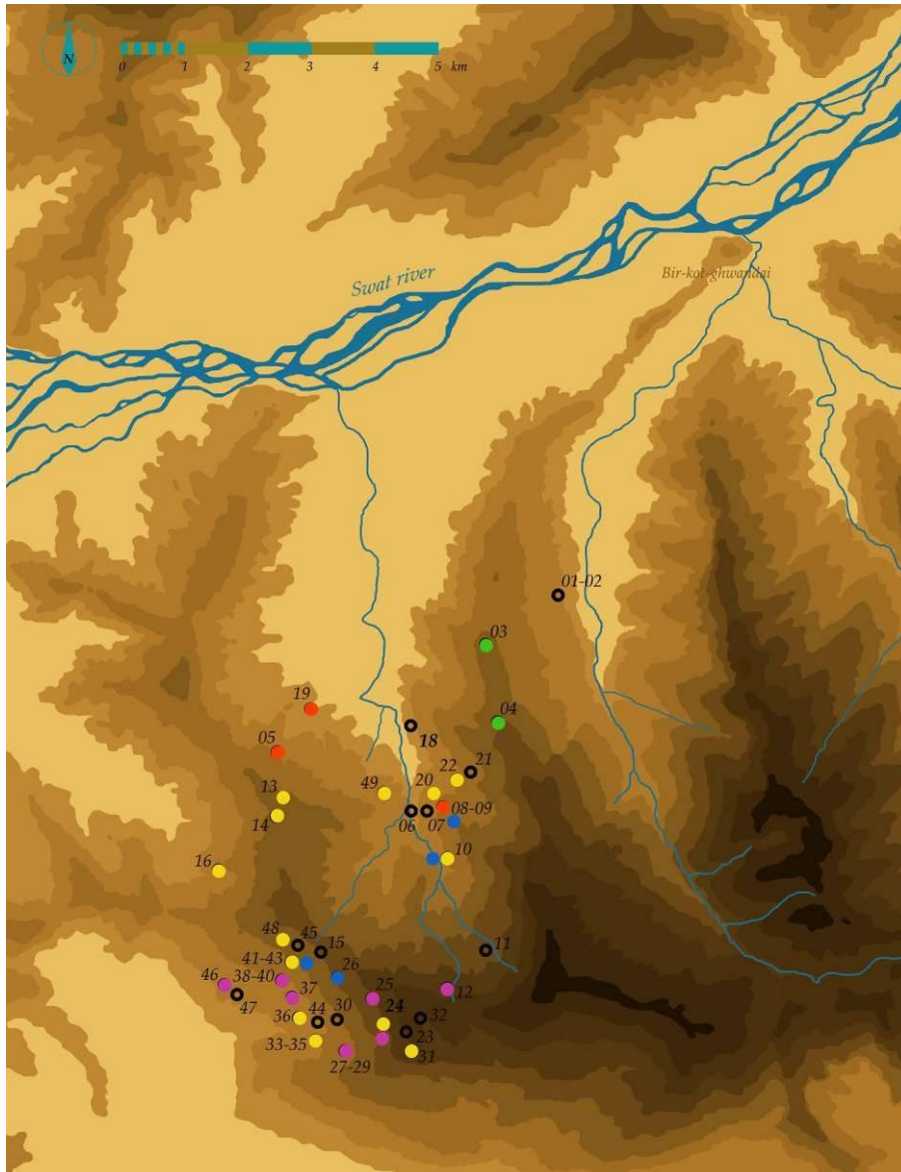
Pl. 2.2
Gujari settlement in the S slopes of the study area.



Pl. 3.1

(Key: ★ wine-presses; ☆ vats; white ○: main high-mountain Buddhist sites)

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Pl. 4.1

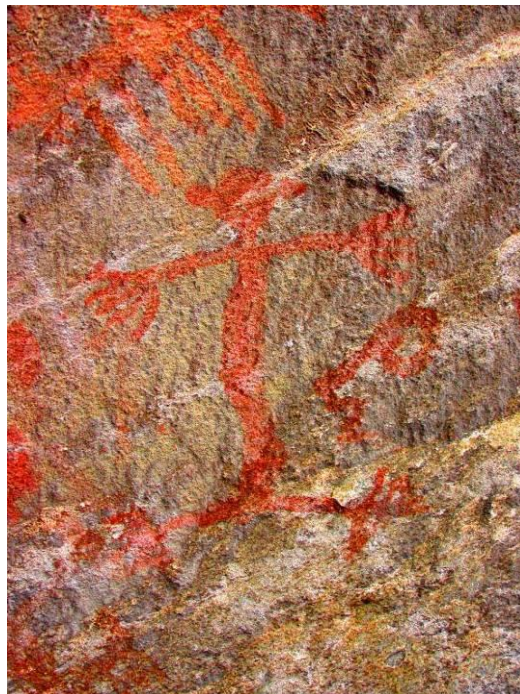
(Green: Agriculturalist icons; Red: Protohistoric horsemanship icons; Yellow: Buddhist Architectures; Blue: Brahmanical symbols; Violet: Pastoralist icons)



Pl. 5.1
Two typologies of wine-presses from Kotah.



Pl. 5.2



Pl. 5.3
A possible shamanic representation. Lal-kamar site: no 27.

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Pl. 6

The anthropomorphic shelter of Sargha-sar: a 'talking stone' (site no. 04).
The paintings are clustered inside the 'mouth'.



Pl. 7

Zoomorphic rock on the top of the W Topialai ridge: approx. 2200 m asl.