

Bamiyan 2006: The Fifth Excavation Campaign of Prof. Tarzi's Mission

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This was the fifth consecutive year that I led the French survey and excavation mission at Bamiyan. We have to excavate in unusual and difficult conditions due to the fact that we work on private property rented for the purpose of excavation but restored to its original cultivated state at the end of each archaeological season. Another significant reason why we may not be able to complete our plans is the necessity of often having to circumvent houses, walls, gardens and, most of the time, irrigation systems. Recognizing the incoherence shown in the drawings of the site, I decided in 2006 to excavate the monuments separately, even though I may later attempt to link their relationships to one another in a larger context. Amongst the monuments I chose are the chapel (sanctuary) found around Stupa no. 2 on the 'Eastern Monastery' site (MO in the text), and Stupa no. 1, which is the largest in Bamiyan and measures approximately 30 m on each side. We are just in the beginning phases of exploration of the other sites such as MR (Monastery of the ancient or former king), VR1 (Royal City site no. 1) and VR2 (Royal City site no. 2). The results will produce significant information on the history and archaeology of Bamiyan.

Choice of Sites

We have proceeded on the following sites, from West to East in the Bamiyan Valley, as part of a plan established in 2001:

*I. The Royal City site no. 1 = **VR1** (1st campaign of excavations) [Fig. 1, facing page]*

The site is located on the right side (north) of the Kabul-Band-e-Amir road where the Valley of Tchehelsotun emerges and more precisely at the western extremity of the ancient Bamiyan bazaar, today in ruins. As we anticipated, we could note how the cave architecture of the ancient city progressively gave way to built architecture. In 2006 we opened the site. In 2007 we will build on the success of the first season and continue our work there.

*II. The Royal City site no. 2 = **VR2** (1st campaign of excavations) [Fig. 2]*

The site is located to the west of the niche of the 55 m Buddha statue, almost at the foot of the cliff itself. There we unearthed a remarkable ensemble of glass-blowing or glazing workshops. Next year we will investigate this site further as well as sectors within the royal city or its neighboring sectors.

We owe to Alfred Foucher (1923, 1925, 1942-1947) the initial identification of the Bamiyan royal city, notwithstanding subsequent and unfounded contrary propositions made by M. L. Carter (1985). Furthermore, as indicated by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (Julien 1853, Beal 1983, Watters 1904 and Pelliot in Godard et al. 1928), the royal city, Bamiyan's capital, was built up against the cliff and crossed the valley. Its wall was 6-7 li long. Today the ruins indeed still abut the Great Cliff and spread east to west from Sorkh Qol (west of the

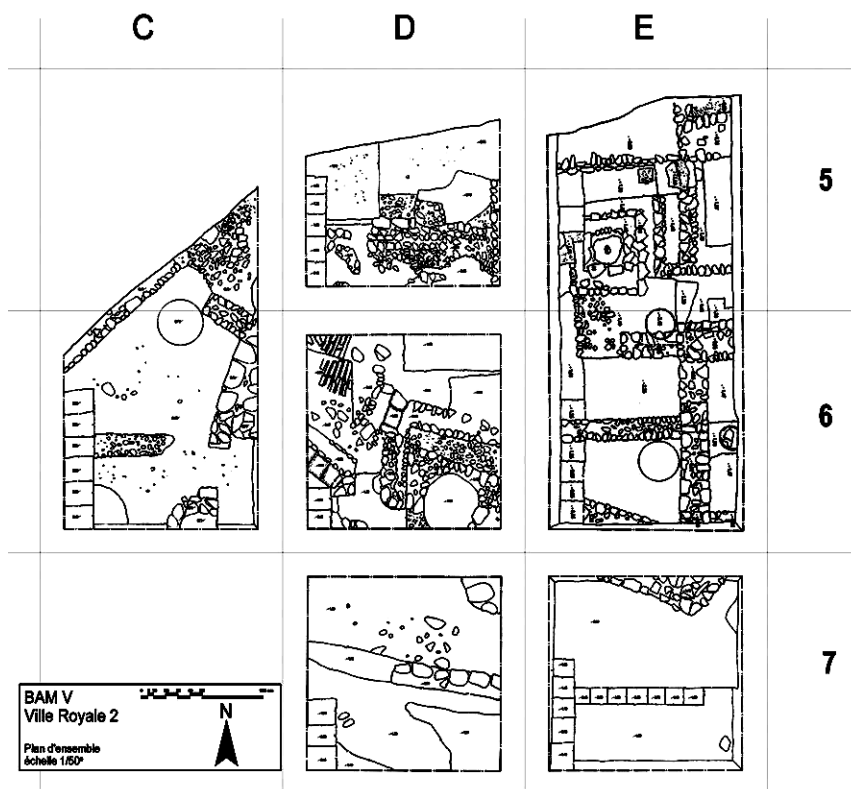


Fig. 2. Bamiyan VR2 = Royal City site no.2, excavation plan for the northern part of the site. Copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.



Fig. 3. Bamiyan, MO = site of Eastern Monastery, excavation site 2005-2006.
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large 55 m Buddha) to the west of Sang Tchaspan. In this way the city was built on both slopes of the Tchehelsotun valley. Our excavations, although as yet limited in scope, have added significantly to our knowledge of the city.

*III. The Monastery of the preceding king = **MR** (The 2nd campaign of excavations did not take place because of landmines.)*

We ran a series of surveys in 2005 (1st campaign) while moving around without apparent danger. However in 2006 this site, located between the two dynamited Buddha statues, had been entirely and deliberately littered with landmines, as indicated by several hundred white and red rocks. Where did the mines suddenly come from? The question remains curiously unanswered. In 2007, we will excavate there (2nd campaign) according to our pre-established plan.

*IV. The Eastern Monastery = **MO** (5th campaign) [Figs. 3, 10]*

We have been excavating on this site since 2002 (Tarzi 2003, 2004 a-c, 2005). It is located to the south of the eastern part of the Great Cliff and to the southeast of the niche of the 38

m Buddha. In 2006 we opened four sites, extended our excavations around the chapel of Stupa no. 2, freed Stupa no. 4, unearthed the northern side of the Great Stupa no. 1, and began excavations in the 'clover field' to the northwest of Stupa no. 1, practically at the foot of the Great Cliff.



Fig. 4. Bamiyan Royal City site no. 1 (VR 1), excavations on the southern side of the site, view from the northwest towards the southeast. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

Site I. The Excavations of VR1

[Fig. 4, facing page]

Our goal was to excavate a pre-Islamic part of the Bamiyan royal city at the limit of the cave and open air built habitat. We had a very complicated negotiation with the owner of the chosen emplacement, an ancient *serail* (this word designates a caravan serail, not a Turkish palace reserved to women), located to the west of the ancient and now destroyed bazaar. Thanks to the support of the Bamiyan Government and of the national security we were able to come to an agreement. We excavated a dozen squares 4m x 4m. We began with square T15 by grotto A, to the north, and squares T16-T19 to the south. The site was enlarged to the west with squares R18, S18, R19, S19 and the beginning of squares S20 and T20.

From north to south, it was very interesting to observe in the ruins the transformation of cave habitats into built habitats. One can note that the *serail*, probably established around the first part of the 20th century, revealed a more or less level terrain of which the archaeological layers T15, T16 and T17 were in chaos. We found a broad mix of Turk pre-Islamic (6th-9th centuries) and Ghurid (12th-13th centuries) ceramics, and some Ghaznavid, Khwarazmshahi and modern ceramics. Further to the south the stratigraphy becomes more logical.

Without going into too much detail one can observe that there are three distinct periods. The first is Turk pre-Islamic, just prior to the Ghaznevid; the second period — of the Ghaznevids and the Khwarazmshahs — is short, and the site for a time was abandoned. The most flourishing Muslim period for this site followed, that of the Ghurids, who established their second capital at Bamiyan. Following the Mongol hiatus — the brutal passage of Chingis Khan and the near total destruction of all habitats, as seen in the layers



Fig. 5. Bamiyan Royal City site no. 2 (VR 2), view of the northern part of the excavations from the Great Cliff. Copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

of ashes in the excavations — Bamiyan became a township of no importance and was repeatedly occupied by invaders from all over. In squares S19, T18 and T19 we found the corner section of the base of a fortification. There is plenty of documentation for the study of this Muslim period of Bamiyan (Baker and Allchin 1991; Barthold 1913, 1977; Bosworth 1961, 1965, 1973, 1996; Elliot 1867-1877; Gardin 1957, etc). However more research in depth should be done. While our contribution has produced some satisfying results, the excavation of this site is not finished.

The excavated area may well encompass the Bamiyan ceramic studios, judging from the finds of a significant number of small clay rods used by potters in their kilns. Our knowledge of ceramics at Bamiyan had previously been limited to a series of ceramic shards, most found on the surface, with the exception of some found through the surveys on the sites of Zohak and Gholghola cities. The research undertaken prior to ours was the work of famous specialists, Gardin (1957), Gardin and Lyonnet (1987, and in Le Berre et al. 1987b) and finally Baker and Allchin (1991), but should, however, be confirmed now through excavations such as ours. We hope that our

excavations will shed more definitive light on the subject, in view of our discovery of a beautiful and significant series of ceramics. In addition, we found in the Muslim layers a large number of funerary pits (containing bones from bodies which had been left exposed to the air) that had been inserted in the constructions or against the walls. As Charles Masson had already noticed in the region of Jalalabad and as we had also noted in several of our excavations in Hadda, the practice of inhumation of bodies increasingly becomes the norm in Afghanistan following the Mongol period (15th and 16th centuries).

Site II. The Excavations of VR2

[Fig. 5]

The location of this site is to the west of the niche of the 55 m Buddha by Sorkh Qol, practically at the foot of the cliff. We chose this location in the hope of finding the fortified walls of the pre-Islamic city of Bamiyan. We were close. Instead of finding the southern face of the fortified wall, we discovered constructions built against it. A careful study of our 1967 photographs shows that this area was used as a cultivated field, irrigated by a canal which is dry today. A few years later it became a pond or reservoir. The layer of



Fig. 6. Bamiyan Royal City site no. 2 (VR 2), general view of the glass or ceramics workshop. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

loess (pure clay) at the bottom of the pond is visible in our trenches. We excavated in two places: A, the first sector, to the north and at the immediate south of the fortified wall; B, the second sector to the southwest of the first emplacement of a tower also visible in our 1967 photograph.

A - Glass workshops (?) [Figs. 6, 7]

In this sector we excavated eight 4m x4m squares, C5-C7, D5-D7 and E5-E7. The chronology remains the same as for VR1. However the positioning of the structures does not change: they superimpose one another from the end of the Turk period until the end of the Ghurid period. Two large ensembles were excavated. Because all of the constructions have not yet been fully unearthed it is difficult to establish the relationship of one to the other. Nevertheless we are certain that here is an ensemble of workshops where the kilns (vertical), such as small size *tandoors*, most likely served as smithies or hearths

rather than ceramic kilns. We found a grinding device *in situ*, with a fixed (inferior) circular millstone and a mobile superior millstone. The floor with its remains of glass paste (*pâte de verre*) and glass shards originating from the making of vases suggest that these were workshops for glass manufacture. There were as well two ovens or smithies and two storage pits.

Until now no serious study has been done regarding the industry of glassmaking during the Muslim period in Afghanistan and specifically in Bamiyan. Readers may wish to refer to my research (Tarzi 2001, 97-99) concerning this craft in northwestern India and its relationship with China and the Muslim world.

B - The Sorkh Qol tower

Based on my own recollections and 1967 photographs, the two Sorkh Qol towers reminded me of sites in Chinese Turkestan. I thought then they might belong to the fortifications of the royal city, the pre-Islamic capital of Bamiyan. Since these two towers now have been destroyed, I wanted to find their locations in order to excavate their foundations and establish their relationship to the wall that connected them. Nothing is left of the first tower located to the northwest. Its materials were totally reprocessed for the construction of a house which is now inhabited. The site of the second tower, larger than the first and further to the southeast, remains unoccupied. We were told by the inhabitants that, prior to its final destruction, all

that was left were the west and south walls and the southwest corner of this tower, which had obviously been built on a square plan. In addition, during its long period of abandonment, it had been used to store hay and food for cattle; its plan had undergone such degradation that it had almost become circular. A further complication for this investigation is the fact Sorkh Qol is located in the path of streams which flow into the valley on the weather's whim. Thus, as we observed, a major storm of 2005 had devastated the irrigation channels in the area.

The raw bricks fallen from the two walls had the following dimensions: 38x20x6 cm, 33x20x6 cm, 31x19x6 cm, 27x20x6 cm. We discovered that the foundations of the tower were placed on a sandy ground in which we found many glazed shards dating from the Muslim period. Near the eastern part of the tower deeper excavations (1.40 m) unearthed only the foundation seat of a wall, aligned northeast to southwest, 0.70 m in width, cut in its center by the foundation seat of a second wall, itself positioned east-west and 0.40 m in width. The two walls formed angles of 25° and 65°. At the same level of these walls but further to the northwest of our excavation, we discovered a more or less rectangular tiled gutter. It is probable that we are in the courtyard of a large construction. Unfortunately, given



Fig. 7. Bamiyan Royal City site no. 2 (VR 2), glass workshop, detail, showing lower part of a millstone. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.



Fig. 8. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), Gallery A9. Clay molding with polychrome, representing a sitting Buddha in meditation. H 43 cm, W 29 cm at shoulder. Inv. no. BAM. V.06.1. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi

rapid erosion due to the streams, excavations in 2007 may bring only minor results.

Site IV. The Excavations at MO

Since 2002 we have been excavating the site of the Eastern Monastery referred to in our text as MO. At the end of each excavation campaign we re-bury the remains on site under several meters of soil. The first two weeks of excavations at MO were devoted to the costly and difficult task of reopening squares previously excavated. We enlarged Gallery A9 in which we had previously found many sculptures, largely composed of clay moldings with polychrome intact. Our discoveries this year however were more modest than in previous years: a clay statue representing a sitting Buddha in meditation [Fig. 8], the bottom part of a standing clay statue [Fig. 9] *in situ*, and many more fragments. Our efforts here were concentrated on the restoration of previously unearthed moldings too fragile to be moved. We asked the DAFA

(Délégation d'Archéologie Française en Afghanistan) to send us their restoration expert to demonstrate the use of new polymerized glass-based products for the consolidation of clay. In the same central sector of Massif A, we expanded our excavation squares around Stupa no. 2 in order to acquire a good and easy read of the chapel's plan that surrounds it. First we had to unearth the western side of the stupa and pursue excavations on the northwestern sides. During this series of excavations we discovered a clay votive stupa to the west (Stupa no. 5), two other clay votive stupas (Stupas nos. 6-7), and a series of benches on which presumably had stood 22 large clay Buddha statues. Of this number, 14 pairs of feet and 5



Fig. 9. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO). Bottom part of clay Buddha statue along W wall of Gallery A9. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

isolated feet are preserved *in situ*; some are preserved to the knees.

Chapel A (= Caitya A), around Stupa no. 2 [Figs. 10; 11, 12 next page]

In order for us to acquire a better understanding of the architecture



Fig. 10. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO). Detail of excavation plan, showing Caitya A. Copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.



Fig. 11. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), Gallery A9. View of chapel (caitya) from E with Stupa no.2 in its center. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.



Fig. 12. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), NE corner of courtyard of Stupa no.2, with pairs of feet on benches. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

of the site and ensembles in the Bamiyan Valley, we first studied this monastic complex — a caitya, a sort of a large cruciform chapel placed in a square plan — separately from its surrounding context of the other constructions of the MO. This large caitya was communicating with Gallery A9 to the east, which in turn gave access to a similar yet probably smaller complex that had in its center Stupa no. 4 (see below). To the north, it communicated with other galleries and corridors. To the south, it was delimited by an attached portico where we found significant traces of fire (cf. 2005 report). Excavation of the MO1 square gave us more precise information on the western wall of this ensemble.

Caitya A is surrounded by four walls, 2.15 m thick. At each of the

four corners is a cell 3,50m x 3,50m square (cells N, NE, SW, SE). A corridor parallel to the 'enclosing' wall joined each cell to the next one. These four corner cells and their communicating corridors had their inner sides defined by enormous blocks of masonry similar to the double towers of the corners of the Tall-i Takht fortifications (Stronach 1978) and the Nee Royal city (Ghirshman 1946). These double massifs were also reinforced by the corners of the caitya's central courtyard. The

width of the corridor was reduced at the level of the masonry blocks, thus creating large pilasters against the enclosing wall. We did not find any traces of fire or a significant amount of compacted clay on the floor of the corridor(s) or of the four corner cells, which brings us to conclude that their covering was not made out of wood. In this case one can suppose that each of the four corner cells was roofed by a cupola resting on squinches and the corridors by barrel vaults.

The nearly square central courtyard measured 9.50 m on a side. In its center is Stupa no. 2, also with a square plan and measuring 5.25 m. Therefore the circumambulation path (*pradak-sinaptha*) did not exceed 2.20 m in width.

In the middle of each side of the courtyards each arm of the 'cross' is a structure like an 'iwan' opening on Stupa no. 2 (iwan N, S, E and W). Logic would suggest that each of these iwans be covered with a barrel vault. However signs of fire at the level where there were niches to support beams and joists prove that each iwan was covered with a wooden roof and had an attached portico. The Pradak-sinapatha around Stupa no. 2 initially had a schist or slated limestone tiled floor, which subsequently was covered with a



Fig. 13. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), Stupa no. 2 from SW. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

layer of lime stucco, as also was Stupa no. 2. Finally, probably between the 6th and 9th centuries CE, the floor was completely covered by a layer of clay which has retained the traces of fire.

Stupa no. 2 [Fig. 13, facing page]

In 2005 we excavated three sides of this stupa. Two (east and south) were unearthed completely and the north partially. In 2006 we completed excavation of the monument. Its form and its stucco coating links it to the stupas of Gandhara and more specifically of Hadda, the location of the first stupa to be found to the north of the Hindu Kush. It consists of a platform on a plinth, a torus, scotia or cavetto of the 'classical' type of Hadda, and on each side, seven pilasters, two of which are located at the corners. Each pilaster is on a molded base composed of a plinth, a torus, and cavetto or hollow molding. The shafts of the pilasters are without any decoration. The capitals are of the Corinthian type with a row of polylobed acanthus leaves hanging on the abacus [Fig. 14].



Fig. 14. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), one of the pilasters of stupa no. 2. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

In the lower levels then, there is no difference from the Gandhara

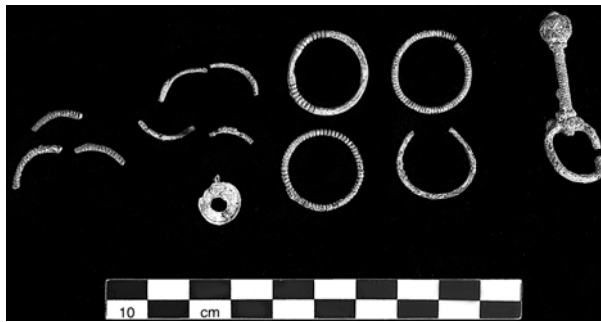


Fig. 15. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), a part of the excavated relics from Stupa no. 2. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

stupas. At the upper level though, there is something new: on each side of the stupa are three relatively deep niches on top of molded bases, flanked by pilasters or columns whose circular, molded bases are like ionic bases. The few architectonic elements still left on this row are very interesting indeed, but will require further investigation in order to give a complete description.

Despite the deterioration of its exterior, Stupa no. 2 had not been disturbed by illegal excavation in the past. So we excavated its center vertically, in the hope of discovering a reliquary and its relics. We were absolutely surprised at the finds. In the southeastern corner of the stupa, within the compact masonry, about 0.50 cm from the top of the edifice, we found a bronze bell, a bronze earring with screw and chiseled rings and a thin gold circular plaque in the shape of a ring [Fig. 15]. At the same depth towards the northwest, we discovered ivory beads, fine stones and gems, and further to the west we found 5 more bronze rings, one of which seems to be a ring with a bulge for a bezel, a small bronze coin, etc. Our discoveries ceased at about 1.60 cm, almost at the ground level of Stupa no. 2. At that level we also found several fragments of very small gold petals and a small and very thin bronze coin broken into several

unidentifiable fragments. We might interpret these findings in the following way. It may be that the persons in charge of the restoration of this stupa, between the 6th and 9th century CE, left the relics in disarray. Such has been noted previously, for example in Butkara (Facenna 1980-1981), where relics were divided and placed behind the niches of a monument instead of inside a reliquary. This was exactly the case with our Stupa no. 4 to which we shall return later. In conclusion I should note that, while we attempted to reach a deeper floor such as that attained in A6 in 2003, we excavated Stupa no. 2 only to a depth of 550 cm. As our workers became increasingly endangered in the narrowing trench of the excavation, we had to cease our activities.

Stupas nos. 3, 5-7, around Stupa no. 2

Stupa no. 3 [Fig. 16]

Stupa no. 3 was partially unearthed last year in the eastern



Fig. 16. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), NW corner of votive Stupa no. 3, detail. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

'iwan' or arm of the cross of Chapel A. In 2006 we unearthed its eastern side and its eastern and northern stairs. It is a miniaturized clay votive stupa, preserved on two levels only, since it was partially crushed due to the collapse of the walls and the roof. Its plan is square, but with its four stairs and their landings it has a cruciform shape. In some places it preserves its entire painted relief decoration, little columns, modillions etc. Its north-south length measures 196 cm and its east-west length measures 199 cm. Our stupa resembles the clay votive stupas of Tape Sardar at Ghazni (Taddei 1985). There is a difference, however, in that the stupa in Bamiyan is not placed in a lotus flower as is the stupa at Ghazni. Stupa no. 3 of Bamiyan is similar to the stupas of the kind represented on the baked clay plaques of Kashmir (Kak 1933) and the painted murals of the Bamiyan grottos. Prof. Taddei had dated the second period of Tape Sardar from the 6th to the 7th century CE (Taddei 1968). The destruction of Bamiyan in the 9th century CE is historically attested. It is therefore reasonable to date the construction of Stupa no. 3 of the MO of Bamiyan between the 6th and 9th century CE.

Stupa no. 5 [Fig. 17]

This stupa is the twin of Stupa no. 3, almost of the same dimensions, better preserved in its form but less so in its miniaturized relief decoration. It is to be noted that some panels on the façade were adorned with images: seated figures in a nimbus at the lower level and standing figures in a nimbus at the upper level, possibly images of the Buddha in miniature and made in the pure tradition of the Bamiyan artistic school.

Stupas nos. 6 and 7 [Fig. 18]

These two clay votive stupas were built on an irregular square plan. One side of the square measures approximately 115 cm. Two levels



Fig. 17. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), clay votive Stupa No. 5, located W of Stupa no. 2. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.



Fig. 18. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), clay votive Stupas nos. 6 and 7, located N of Stupa no. 2. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

were preserved; the higher levels, as with Stupas nos. 3 and 5, were completely crushed by the collapse of the walls and roofs. Their lower levels consist of a platform on a plinth and an unadorned scotia. Their upper levels have the beginning of a square body adorned by pilasters which have disintegrated. This type of stupa is often found in Hadda where it is usually stuccoed.

Stupa no. 4 [Fig. 19]

We anticipated we would find a stupa in this location (squares NE B20 and NE C20). In order to reach it we had to demolish a wall separating two fields. With the consent of the fields' owners, MM. Bahauddin and Khan Mohammad we proceeded without damaging a very old poplar tree. We were disappointed with the results of the excavation because the stupa had been extensively plundered in the past. Was this act of vandalism, dating probably from the Ghurid period, due to the salvaging of the construction stone or the limestone coating, or was this systematic destruction aimed at recovering the reliquary hidden



Fig. 19. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), Stupa no. 4. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.



Fig. 20. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), Stupa no. 4. Reliquary in the shape of a small globular pot. H 5.7 cm, Dia. 5.5 cm. Inv. no. BAM, V.06-187. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

behind the niches of the monument? Indeed, in confirmation of our second hypothesis, we found at 200 cm a reliquary [Fig. 20]. This little reliquary — a small globular pot, 7 cm high with a 5.5 cm maximum

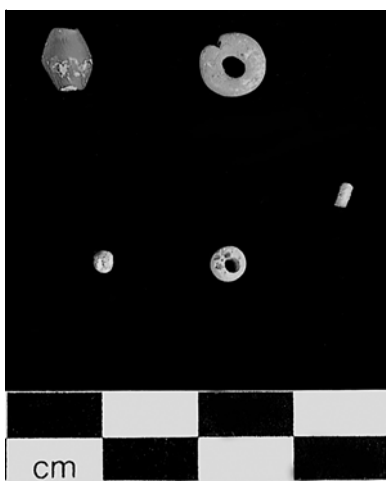


Fig. 21. Contents of the reliquary BAM, V.06-187: beads, agate, ivory and two small pearls. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

diameter — contained 5 beads, 2 of which were totally decomposed marine pearls and one of which was an ochre-orange soft stone in a disk shape with a hole in its center [Fig. 21]. The lid sealing the relics was made of a type of decomposed mastic; we will know more about

its origin when the results come back from the laboratory.

Stupa no. 1 (western survey)

This survey was done differently from our usual square pattern. The goal was to find the north-west corner of the Great Stupa no. 1 in order to get the exact measurement of one side of the square plan for this monument. We established that the northern side measures 29-30 m. This very large survey of more than 10 m in length improves our understanding of this monument and the site of MO [Fig. 22]. In addition the excavation revealed the western landing of the northern stairs of the stupa [Fig. 23]. Two other discoveries should be noted:

- It looks as though in its first state of decoration the stupa had a stucco coating.
- It is also important to explain why around the base of the stupa there is a considerable thickness in the layer left by the fire. This layer is composed of burnt clay fragments, burnt wood and many iron or bronze

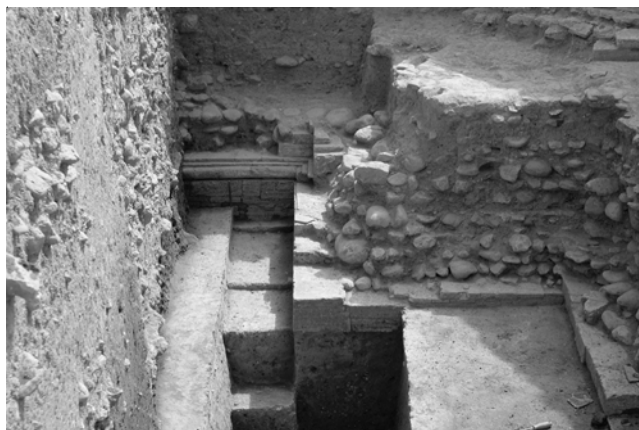


Fig. 23. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), Stupa no.1, the west landing of the northern stairs of the stupa. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

Fig. 22. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), Stupa no. 1, large survey to the northwest of the monument. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.



Fig. 24. Bamiyan Eastern Monastery (MO), Stupa no.1: traces of fire, 9th century CE. Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

fragments [Fig. 24]. It is quite possible that Stupa no. 1 was encircled by a wooden railing (*vedika* or *pado-vedika*) supported in some places by clay masonry.

Northwest Sector (excavations in the clover field)

For several years I wanted to open a site that would extend the northern limits of the MO to the north and at the foot of the Great Cliff. Reaching an agreement with the owners took a long time, but we eventually were able to open the site on August 13th. Our guest of honor, Roland Bezenval, Director of the DAFA, broke the ground with the first shovelful of dirt. It became a very large survey, 25m x 2.5m, that crossed the field south to north. Due to the collapse of the cliff in the northern part of the survey, there one has to go at least 7 m deep to obtain results. Given the size of the task we will have to pursue the operation in 2007.

The Chronology

The pre-Islamic period

In 2003 and 2004 we discovered the two great periods of Bamiyan around Stupa no. 1 (BN, BS, BW and A6 and A8). I had initially estimated the first period to be of the 3rd century CE. However, thanks to the discovery in 2004 of ceramics and of an Indian coin

date corresponded to that of the construction of the 55 m Buddha statue and with the restoration of the ensemble of the 38 m Buddha statue. It is to this second period that I attribute the realization and extension of the 'Eastern Monastery' (MO), in which we hope to find the 1000-foot-long reclining Buddha statue mentioned by Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang. The carbon 14 analysis of vegetal and animal fibers from the coating of the 38 m Buddha statue done by the German team in charge of the protection of the fragments of the two large statues supports my proposed dating, viz.: the second great period of Bamiyan begins in the middle of the 6th century CE. When we reach the level of the fire of the 9th century CE, I will ask the Germans for more analysis. What is certain is that the moldings unearthed in Gallery A9 date from before the 6th century CE. I have carried out a careful comparison with the clay moldings of Hadda on the site of Tape Shotor (Tarzi 1976) and of Tape Sardar in Ghazni — excavated by my colleagues and friends Profs. Maurizio Taddei (1968, 1981, 1985) and Giovanni Verardi (1981, 1989). Based on stylistic and technical criteria in the analysis of the pre-molded clay curls, I am able to date these to the 3rd - 5th century CE.

Because the history of Central Asia is yet inadequately known and no dates are absolutely

with a hill and three arches, the date can be pushed back to the 2nd century CE (Rapson 1908; Allan 1936; Mitchiner 1976). I dated the second period to the 6th century CE in my first thesis on Bamiyan (Tarzi 1977). This

certain we have to proceed with caution when attempting to explain a chronological hypothesis. The only written information available to us is in the Chinese and Muslim sources that shed some light on the second great period of Bamiyan. It is our excavation data which enable us to determine the first great period and place it between the 3rd and the 5th century CE, with the possibility that we can extend this period back to the 2nd century CE. Of particular interest in this chronology is to learn what caused a general degradation involving the profanation of many statues. One could attribute this destruction to the Sasanians in the time of Shapur or to the Hephthalites.

We know for certain that the hiatus between the first and second periods is rather large and translates into an accumulation of soil and embankment 1 m – 1.5 m thick. Also certain is that the second great period of Bamiyan corresponds to its seizure by the western Turks. Indeed whether the central power at Bamiyan is Hephthalite or local (Tajik), politics of Central Asia at the time were governed by the Western Turks, the same ones who asked Xuanzang to go through Balkh and Bamiyan, two cities that were not on the initial itinerary of the Chinese pilgrim.

The ceramics and chronological precision

The study of the ceramics we excavated remains to be done. Yet the discovery of shards found in the site of MO along its long wall V, in survey N (north), has already produced valuable information (Tarzi 2005). These pre-Islamic ceramics, which we will detail later, consist of two lots: one from the 2nd – 5th century CE and another from the 6th – 9th century CE. Indeed it is to Ya'qub bin Laith as-Saffar in 871 CE that I attribute the end of life at the MO, the destruction of Bamiyan in general

and of the statues and their temples. Further study of the first group of ceramics needs to be done. The second lot is composed of shards generally similar to the ones found by Le Berre in the fortified castles of the Hindukush and published by Jean-Claude Gardin and Bertille Lyonnet (in Le Berre 1987a, b) and Piers Baker (1991).

It is with too much caution that these ceramics are termed 'turco-hephthalite' and attributed both to the Hephthalites and the Turks. Hephthalite ceramics, generally made in the Kushan tradition, are difficult to identify. In some regions they seem to be inspired by the Kushano-Sasanids, and in some cases can be included in the Begram III group (Kuwayama 1991). In Hadda, for example, nothing allows us to distinguish between the Kushan and Hephthalite ceramics. On the other hand, there the Turk ceramics are obvious and specific. These hand-made ceramics have been very well analyzed by Gardin and Lyonnet, both from the standpoint of techniques of shaping and polishing and the use of under-glazes, and from the standpoint of the symbols and motifs in the painted designs, which reflect a connection with the peoples of the steppes. These ceramics appear at a later date (second half of the 6th century CE) at a time when the Hephthalites



Fig. 25. Bamiyan Royal City site no. 2 (VR 2), Turk ceramic (BAM.V.06. "tower"—140 cm). Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

had been politically undermined by the fleeting coalition of the Sasanians and Western Turks [Fig. 25]. However, in our research regarding Bamiyan in particular and more generally Central Asia to the northwest of India, we find a discrepancy between the hand-made Turk ceramics and the dozen or so surviving issues of Hephthalite coinage.

We do not yet have definitive answers regarding the Hephthalites and their art. However, there is no reason to doubt the well founded hypotheses of my colleagues Roman Ghirshman (1948), Robert Göbl (1967) and Shoshin Kuwayama (1989, 2002). We should continue to study closely the Hephthalites taking into consideration the Tape Sardar (Ghazni) Italian excavations, the 2004 and 2005 Afghan excavations at Khwadjia Safa and Tape Narendj in Kabul, and my own excavations in Hadda. To these we should add the DAFA excavations at Tape Alghata near the village of Dadal (Myadan-Wardak province) and my excavations in Bamiyan. Sadly there has also been a series of illegal excavation in Khawar, Messe Aynak of Logar or Khord in Kabul, and many other sites. Our duty is to provide documentation so that specialists will be able to study and interpret our database objectively. Until our future excavations uncover Hephthalite coins we will continue to attribute the pre-Islamic art of Bamiyan to the post-Kushan period, including the Kidarites, Hephthalites and Turks.

The Islamic Period

The ceramic and numismatic evidence

A. Ceramics

The transition between the pre-Islamic and Islamic period is representative of the history of the Bamiyan Valley. One should take into account the writings of

historians such as Yaqubi and Tabari, who describe the gradual shift from one religion to another among the local population. Such study is necessary to understand why we find in our excavations Turk ceramics of the early Islamic period. Despite attacks by the Samanids and the Ghaznevids, several Sardars (Sar = lords, wrongly labeled by the Arabs as Sher) managed to stand up to them and remain loyal to their religion, Buddhism, until 987 CE. This is probably why the ceramics of Bamiyan during the Samanid and Ghaznevid periods occupy a modest place [Fig. 26] among our finds. On the other hand the Ghurid period is amply represented in its ceramic forms



Fig. 26. Bamiyan Royal City site no. 1 (VR 1), ceramic with painted geometric and vegetal decoration in relief in the Muslim layers (12th century CE?) (BAM.V.06.MS18). Photograph copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

and their new decorations, all of which are very important regarding the history of the region [Figs. 27-29, next page]. Once more thanks to historical texts, especially the *Tabakat-i Nasiri* of Dzuzdjani (Dzuzdjani 1963-1964; Raverty 1881), and studies by Bosworth (1961) and Barthold (1977), we learn that Bamiyan served as a capital for the Shansabani kings of Ghur, starting with Fakhr al-Din Mas'ud (1163 CE) and ending with Djalal al-Din 'Ali (1213 CE) and 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad. We know that the city of Gholghola also served as capital. The royal Ghurid city extended over a kilometer from the south where today's Bamiyan



Fig. 27. BAM.V.06.MS20-160 cm.

Bamiyan Royal City site no. 1 (VR 1), ceramics with polychrome of the Muslim period. Photographs copyright © 2006 DAFA; Zemaryalai Tarzi.

Fig. 28. BAM.V.06.MS20-160 cm (12th century CE?).



airport is to the edge of the plateau on the north and was called Tape Almas. Gholghola was its citadel. This city and its citadel were taken first by the Khwarazmshahs (1215 CE) and later by Chingis Khan.

According to Gardin (1957), the Khwarazmshahi and Ghurid ceramics originating from Gholghola city were the product of an imported Iranian workshop, whose brief duration lasted from approximately 1175 into the 13th century CE. As Gardin also noted, these ceramics were not limited

probably from the Ghaznevid period, a few Ghurid coins, and even a few from the modern period such as the reign of the former king of Afghanistan Mohammad Zaher Shah al Motawakelellalah.

Conclusion

It is a challenge to draw a conclusion from this scientific patchwork without being able to include carbon 14 analysis or other laboratory test results. Thanks to the discovery of ceramics and

to the city of Gholghola. We have to investigate further why there is such an abundance of Muslim ceramics in Bamiyan on several levels and in many places in the valley. Once we finish our photo processing for the excavations of 2006, we will be able to tackle this question more seriously.

B. Numismatic evidence

To date we have not cleaned the coins we found. In 2006 we found no Greek or Kushan coins. We found several thin Muslim bronze coins

coins in our excavations of 2003-2005, we know that the beginning of Bamiyan was around the 2nd or 3rd century CE. The discovery of a bronze coin depicting the image of a Greco-Bactrian king (first half of the 2nd century CE) is very important despite the fact that it was not found in the earliest layers of Bamiyan. Further investigations will be necessary. Our excavations, especially of the Turk ceramics, have shed light on the end of the Buddhist period of the valley around the 9th century and on the relationship between this pre-Islamic period and the beginning of the Islamic period. One can say that this phase of archaeological uncertainty concerning the transition between the two great periods is a reflection of the history of Bamiyan, when its Buddhist sovereigns converted to Islam and its monuments devoted to the cult of Sakyamuni were brutally destroyed by Ya'qub bin Laith as-Saffar in the 9th century CE. Nonetheless, Buddhism would last still until the Ghaznevid period.

Further study of the Muslim ceramics and the study of the numismatic evidence will enable us to establish more precise dates. We have found so far Ghaznevid, Khwarazmshahi and Ghurid coins dating from the 10th-13th centuries CE right up to the abandonment and destruction of the site by Chingis Khan. Once we have cleaned these coins it will be possible to date with more



Fig. 29. BAM.V.06.MS20-160 cm (12th century CE?).

precision the stratigraphy, which will then make possible the use of the glazed ceramics as an indispensable tool in identifying the archaeological layers we encounter in Bamiyan.

About the Author

Born in 1939 in Kabul, Professor **Zemaryalai Tarzi** completed his studies under the supervision of Professor Daniel Schlumberger, in the process obtaining three PhDs. From 1973 to 1979, he was Director General of Archaeology and Preservation of Historical Monuments of Afghanistan. He later directed the excavations in Bamiyan and Hadda on the sites of Tape Shotor and Tape Tope Kalan. Exiled to France in 1979, he is currently Professor of Eastern Archaeology at the Marc Bloch II University of Strasbourg, France, and will go to Kabul University in early March 2007 to teach their archaeology Master's students in Farsi. He is Director for the French Archaeological Missions for the Surveys and Excavations of Bamiyan, the mission having been co-funded by the National Geographic Society since 2004. Prof. Tarzi is the author of some seventy-five articles and books. He is also President for the Association for the Protection of Afghan Archaeology, Inc. (San Francisco, California), whose managing director and founder is his daughter Nadia Tarzi. For more information please contact info@apaa.info and/or visit <http://www.apaa.info>.

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