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SHAIKHAN DHERI EXVAVATIONS: A REVIEW

JAVED HUSAIN
Department of General History
University of Karachi, Karachi-75270, Pakistan

The Archaeological site of Shaikhan Dheri is situated in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan, approximately twenty-two miles to the north-east of the provincial capital Peshawar. Archaeologically the entire region has great significance and the area in the immediate vicinity of Shaikhan Dheri is of utmost importance because of three settlements, namely, Bala Hassar, Shaikhan Dheri, and Mirabad-Rajar-Mirziyarat Dheris. The area is generally identified with PUSHKALAVATI- the ancient capital of Gandhara. The above referred three mounds represent, respectively, the first, second, and third phases of ancient Puhkalavati.

The excavations at Shaikhan Dheri were conducted jointly by the University of Cambridge and Peshawar in 1963, and solely by the University of Peshawar in 1964. The published excavation report is inconclusive and has many drawbacks. The present author has conducted an indepth study of the excavated material and has gone through published as well as unpublished field data.

In the present paper the Physiography of the region, followed by an account of the immediate environment of Shaikhan Dheri, its two season's excavation results and finally the correlation of layers and the overall chronology of the site is described.

The Archaeological site of Shaikhan Dheri is situated in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan, approximately twenty-two miles to the north-east of the provincial capital Peshawar. The excavations at the site were conducted jointly by the University of Cambridge and Peshawar in 1963 and solely by the University of Peshawar in 1964. The published report (Dani, 1966) is inconclusive and has many short comings. The author had an opportunity to conduct an in-depth study of the unpublished field notes, catalogues and drawings prepared by Dr. F.R. Allchin of Cambridge University during the 1963 season's excavation. He also studied published and

unpublished excavated material from the site, which isnow preserved in the Archaeological museum of the Department of Archaeology. University of Peshawar. In the light of all this source material, a review of Shaikhan Dheri excavations is almost essential. In the paper we will discuss briefly the physiography of the NWFP, followed by an account of the environment of Shaikhan Dheri, its two season's excavation results and finally the correlation of layers and the chronology of the site.

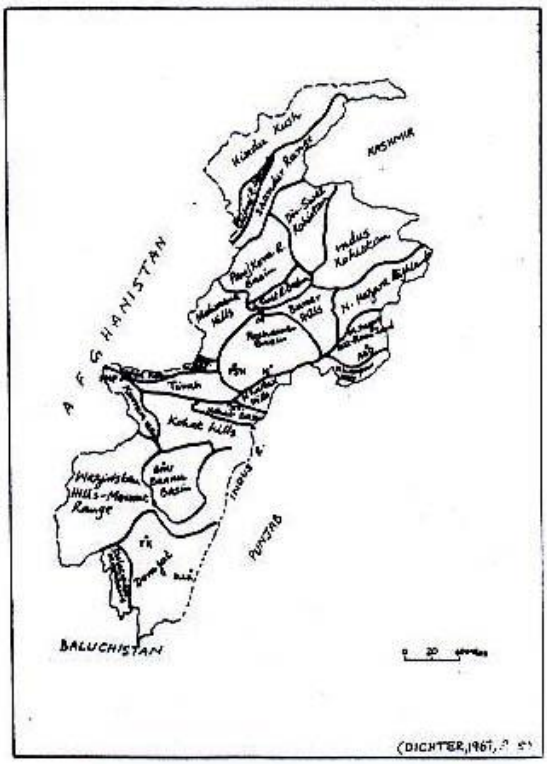
1. Physiography, River Systems and General Environment of the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan

The North-West frontier province of Pakistan (N.W.F.P) is situated between the highlands of Afghanistan and the vast plains of the Punjab. The Hindu-Kush and Sulaiman mountains bound it on the north and west, while the river Indus marks the extent of the entire eastern arm, and the Province of Baluchistan is to its south. According to Dichter (1967), the region can be physiographically divided into twenty-three different parts (Map-1). Apart from the hilly regions of the north and west, four well-defined basins can be identified on the eastern side along the Indus, each fromed by a separate river system (Map-2). Starting from north to south, the first in the series is the Peshawar basin, formed by the rivers kabul and swat: then the Kohat basin, formed by the Kohat-toi river; third is the Bannu basin, formed by the Kurram and Tochi-Gambela rivers; and last is the Dera Ismail Khan basin, formed by the Gomal and Tankzam Rivers.

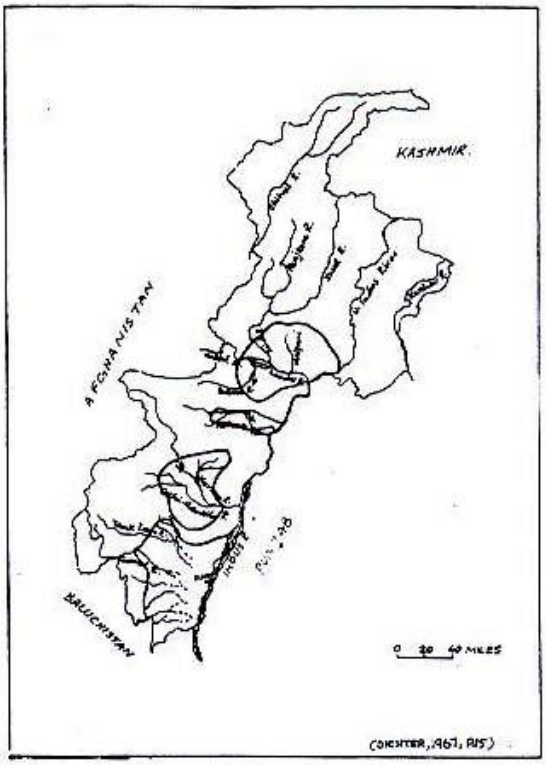
The semicircular basin of Peshawar, often reffered to as the 'Vale of Peshawar' is situated nearly in the centre of the province, surrounded on the north, west and south by the Swat-Bunner, Mohmand-Khyber and Tirah-khattak hills respectively, and to its east is the Indus. According to Spate (1967), the basin roughly covers an area of approximately 2,200 square miles.

The major part of the basin is irrigated by two main river systems-Swat and Kabul.The river Swat, together with the waters of the Panjkora river, enters the basin from the north at Abazai.Soon after entering, it divides itself into two branches: Abazai and Khiali (Map-3). The Abazai branch combines with the Jindai Khwar near the village of Umerzai and becomes locally known as Jindai. It is on the left bank of this river that all the eight towns of Charsada, from which the area acquires its name of 'Hasht Nagar' or 'Eight Towns' have been situated (map-3).

Further downstream, near Prang, these two branches of the River Swat



Map-1: Physiographic map of N.W.F.P.



Map-2: River systems of N.W.F.P.

Rajar-Mirziyarat are situated on the eastern bank of the same river. The area is generally identified with 'Pushkalavati' - the ancient capital of Gandhara. The mounds of Bala Hissar, Shaikhan and Mirabad-Rajar-Mirziyarat represent, respectively, the first, second, and third phases of ancient Pushkalavati.

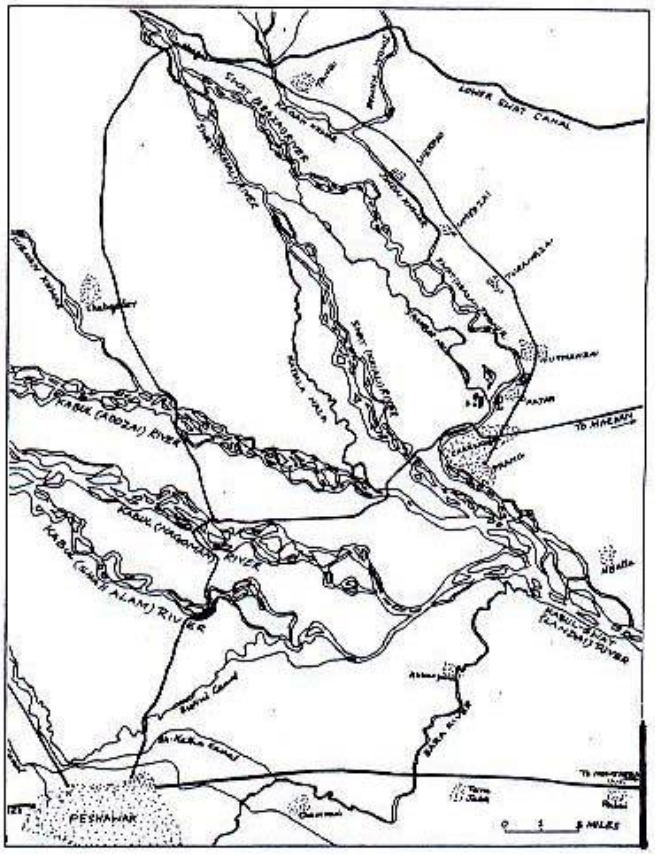
The remains of Pushkalavati were first noticed in 1826 by General Court (1836), who identified them with the Nysa of Alexander's campaigns. Later, in 1863, General Cunningham (1871) proposed their identification with 'Pushkalavati'. In 1883, his assistant Mr. Garrick prepared surface plans of Bala Hissar and Mir Ziyarat. About the same time, Lieutenant Martin conducted some haphazard excavations on Bala Hissar and Mir Ziyarat. The expedition lasted for only two weeks and was abandoned without achieving any results (Garrick; 1885). The task was again taken up by Sir John Marshal in 1903. like his predecessor, he aimed first at Bala Hissar and then at Mir Ziyarat (Marshall: 1903). The attempt was not fruitful and the results were not very much different from that of the earlier one. A renewed attempt was made in 1958 by Sir Mortimer Wheeler. He confined his aims to revealing a complete cross-section of the high mound of Bala Hissar (Wheeler: 1962). On the basis of stratification and pottery he proposed that the site was intensively occupied from the 6th century B.C. to the 1st century B.C. In the subsequent phases, the occupation of the site was on a much reduced scale and was probably 'no more than a monastic establishment'. According to him, the site continued to be occupied until the Sikh period, when it seems to have served as a 'fortress' or 'police station'.

Wheeler's excavation was a promising step towards dissolving the myths of Bala Hissar. He at least provided us with a conclusive chronological sequence of the site, but virtually, the task is still incomplete, because we know nothing about the civic life, layout of streets, house plans or material culture of the people who inhabited this site for such a long period of time.

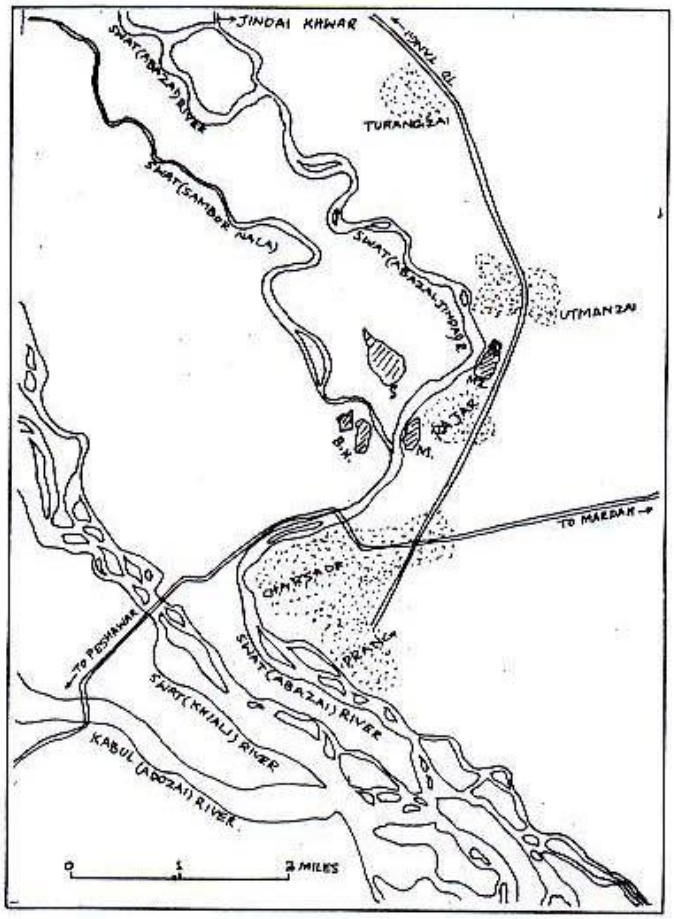
3: Shaikhan Dheri

About half a mile to the north-north-east of Bala Hissar, across the sambor Nala, is situated a vast low-lying mound, locally known as Shaikhan Dheri. It is roughly of pear shape, situated between a triangle formed by the confluence of River Jindai and Sambor Nala (Map-4).

The nature and importance of the city was first recognised from aerial photographs by wheeler in 1958, who rightly compared it with that of Sirkap-the second city of Taxila (Wheeler, 1962). Taking a clue form Wheeler's



Map-3: River systems in Hasht nagar area



Map-4: Charsada Environs

interpretation of the site, Dr Dani of Peshawar University and Dr Allchin of Cambridge University, jointly conducted a preliminary excavation in 1963. The results of this season's work were very promising, but unfortunately the collaboration did not last longer, and in the next season (1964), the excavation was solely carried out by Dr Dani. The results of the two seasons' work were published by Dani in Ancient Pakistan, Vol.11 (1965-66).

4. Excavation Plan

The main objectives of the excavators for the first two seasons' work at Shaikhan Dheri were:

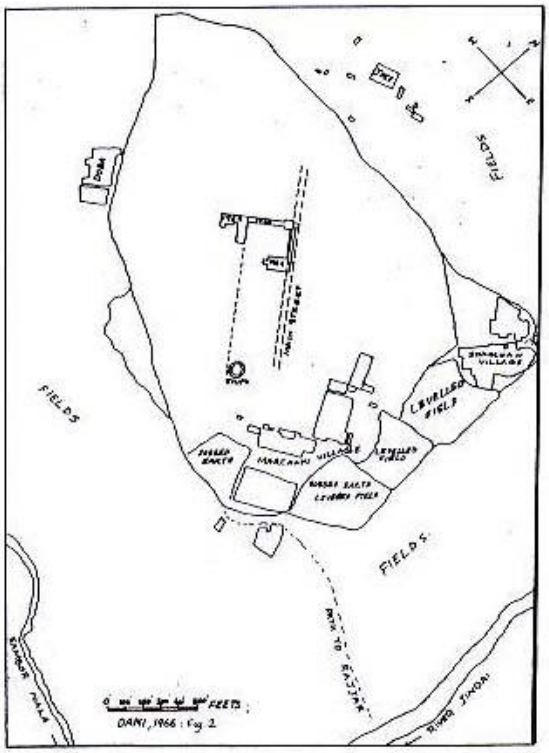
a) to establish the layout of streets, and
b) to excavate vertically at certain points in order to reveal the different occupational periods.

In pursuit of these objectives, the excavators selected a comparatively undisturbed area, measuring 200ft x 150ft in the northern half of the mound (Map 5).

> "In order to establish the trench system in the main area of excavation. a straight line was extended to the north from the supposed line of a street just west of the stupa ruins, already exposed by the villagers. This established the north-south line and formed the eastern arm of the rectangular area marked for excavation. Zero point was fixed on the north and this arm of 200 feet was divided into smaller sections of 20 feet each, marked A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H, etc. From the zero point the northern arm was drawn westward and similarly each section of 20 was demarcated and numbered 1,2,3,4,5, and 6. The entire area was thus reduced into a grid of trenches, each of 20'square.In 1964 the excavation was extended eastward in the same pattern right up to the lowest level in the middle of the mound with the primary aim to determine the main north-south street of the city. The extended line was marked 1', 2', 3', 4', 5', etc. Until the main street measuring 33' was discovered in trenches A10', All' and A12'," (Dani, 1966; pp.22-23)

5. Excavation Results:

Two seasons of work at Shaikhan Dheri revealed interesting results. Deep diggings at the site provided the evidence that the city was built on alluvial Soil. On the basis of numismatic evidence, Dani suggests that the city was founded by one of the early Bactrian Greek conquerors of this region,



Map-5: Shaikhan Dheri

most probably by Menander, in about the middle of the 2nd century B.C. The city continued to flourish during the rule of the Bactrain Greeks, Scytho-Parthians up to the time of Kanishka and Huvishka of the Kushan dynasty. Numismatic evidence reveals that the city was probably abandoned during the reign of Vasudeva. According to Dani, the cause of abandonment must have been the constant danger of flood.

> "The cause of abandonment is writ large in the accumulation of layers during the Kushana period particularly after the time of Kanishka 1. In this last stage of occupation the city shrank, the greater part being affected by flood. Residence was restricted to a smaller area which rose higher and higher, and the houses were built on the higher parts by taking away the building materials form the earlier city. This precarious situation continued until the vagaries of the river (probably of Zinde) made it impossible for the people to live here and the population completely shifted during the reign of Vasudeva to the neighbouring city (Rajar mound) on the other side of the river. Thus the end of the city came towards the close of the 2nd century A D. or in the middle of the 3rd century A.D. (depending upon the exact dating of Vasudeva I)" (Ibid., pp. 23-24)

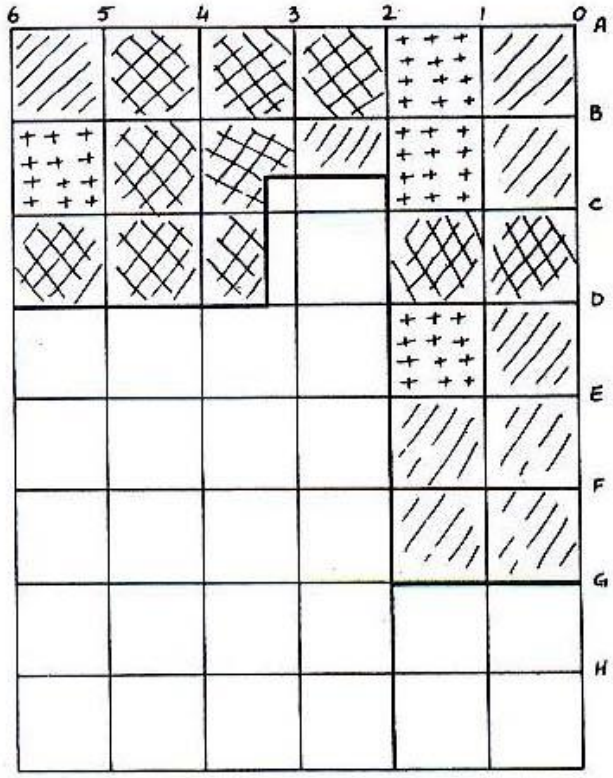


Fig.1: Excavation Plan for 1963 Excavation
a) Square excavated upto the Indo-Greek Levels:
b) Squares excavated upto the Schytho-Parthian levels:
c) Squares excavated upto the Kushan levels:

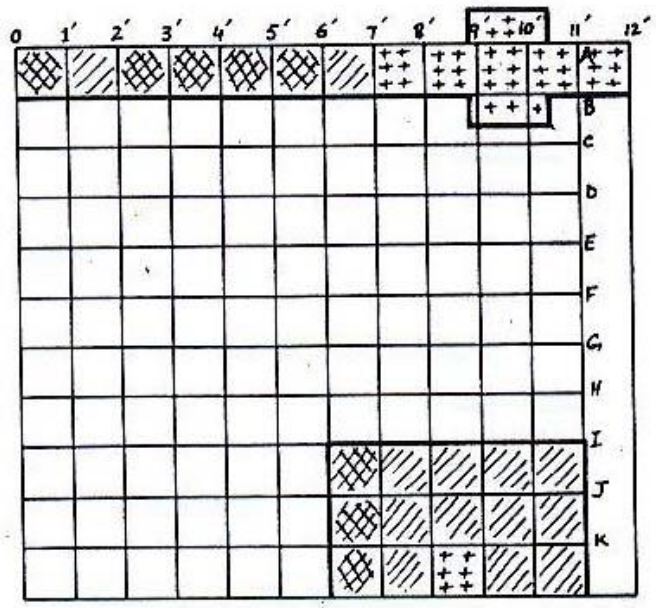


Fig.2: Excavation Plan for 1964 Excavation
a) Square excavated upto the Indo-Greek Levels:
b) Squares excavated upto the Schytho-Parthian levels:
c) Squares excavated upto the Kushan levels:

We may partially agree with Dani's argument about the abandonment of the city, but much further geomorphological and environmental observation is called for before the proposed hypothesis may be said to be confirmed.

6. Chronology and Correlation of Layers:

As we understand form the field notes of Allchin (1963) and the published report by Dani (1966), the area selected for the 1963 season's excavation lay on the north of the main east-west axis. A grid system was applied and the whole rectangular area was reduced into 20' square grids. The excavated plan for the first season is shown in Figure-1. The deep digging were carried out at four places, A1, B1, B5, and D1. The published cross-section (Dani, 1966: Fig.5) of the deep diggings provides us with the following chronology.

Table-1

Chronology derived from the published cross-Section of the deep diggings

Periods	Kushan		Scytho-Parthian			Greek
Squares	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
A1	1	2-3	4-5	6-10	11-14	15-17
B1	1	2-3	4-5	6-10	11-14	15-17
B5		1-3	4	5-7	8-12	13-15
D1	1-3	4-5	5a-6	7-10	11-15	16-17

In the published correlation chart (Ibid, chart 1) the correlation of layers was presented in a slightly altered form, particularly for the Greek levels (Dani's published chart in slightly different arrangement is presented here as chart-1) Allchin's field correlation chart (chart-2) was slightly different from Dani's published chart, but was closer to the published cross-section of the deep diggings. We therefore prefer to rely upon the published cross-section of the deep diggings by Dani, and Allchin's field chart. On their basis, and verbal discussions with Allchin, we have formulated a new correlation chart (Chart-3) which not only confirms Allchin's field chart and deep diggings cross-section but is also very close to Dani's published chart. One thing is obvious in all the charts; they agree on the resulting periodization. The

differences are of a comparatively minor nature, although sometimes significant for our purposes.

For the second season's work we have to rely mainly upon Dani's account. The excavated plan for 1964 is represented in Figure-2, and the correlation of layers in different squares and the general periodization is shown in chart-4. The overall chronology of the site for both seasons' work may be summarized as follows:

Phase A: Kushan:

Period I: Late Kushans: i) comprised of stratum I -IIIa of 1963 only, absent in 1964, ii) produced coins of later Kushans including Vasudeva.

Period II: Middle Kushans i) comprised of stratum IIIb -IV of 1963 and layer 1-3 of 1964, ii) produced coins of Kanishka and Huvishka.

Period III Early Kushans: i) comprised of stratum V-VI of 1963, and layers 4-5 in A2' -A6' and layer 4 only in the rest of the excavated squares of 1964, ii) produced coins of Kujula Kadphises, Wima Kadhises and Soter Megas.

Chart-1

Dani's published correlation chart for 1963 excavation

Phase	Kushan			Scytho-Parthian			Greek	
Period / Square	I	II	III	IVA	IVB	VA	VB	VI
AO		1-3	4-5	6-9	10			
A1		1-3	4-5	6-8	9-10	11-14	15-17	18
A2		1-3	4-5					
A3		1-3	4					
A4		1-3	4					
A5		1-3	4					
BO	1	2-3	4-5	6-7	10			
B1	1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-10	11-14	15-17	
B2	1	2-3	4-5	6-7				
B3	1	2-3	4					
B4	1	2-3	4					
B5	1	2-3	4-5	5	6-7	8-10	11-12	13-15

Phase	Kushan			Scytho-Parthian				Greek
Period / Square	I	II	III	IVA	IVB	VA	VB	VI
CO	1-2	3-4	5					
C1	1-2	3-4	5					
C3	1-2	3	4					
C4	1-2	3	4					
C5		1-3	4					
DO	1-3	4-5	6	7-8	9-10			
D1	1-3	4-5	6	7-8	9-10	11-15	16	17-18
EO	1-3	4-5	6	7-8	9-10			
E1	1-3	4-5	6	7-8	9-10			
FO	1-3	4-5	5a-6	7-8	9-10			
F1	1-3	4-5	5a-6	7-8	9-10			

Chart-2

Allchin's field correlation chart for 1963 excavation

Period	I			II			III		IV	V		VI
Stratum / Square	I	II	IIA	III	IVA	IVB	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
AO				2	2a	3	4	5	6-8				
A1				2	3	4	5	6	7-10	11-14	15-17	18	
A2				2	3	4	5						
A3				2	3	4							
A4				2	3-4	5							
A5				2	3	4	5	6					
B0			2	3	4	5	6						
B1			2	3	4	5	6	7	8-9	10-12	13-16	17	
B2				3	4	5	6		10				
B3				2	3								
B4				2									
B5							4	5	6	7-10	11-13	14	15

continued ...

Period		I			II		III		IV		V		VI
Stratum Square	I	II	IIA	III	IVA	IVB	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
CO			2	3	4	5	6						
DO			4	4a		5a,b	6						
D1			4	4a		5a,b	6	7-8	9-10	11-14	15-16	17	
EO			4	5			6	7-8	9-10				
E1			4	5			6	7-8	9-10				
FO			4	5			6	7-8	9-10				
F1			4	5			6	7-8	9-10				

Our modified correlation chart is as follows. In this overall strata serve as a medium of correlation of layers in different squares.

Chart-3: Proposed correlation chart for 1963 excavtion.

Phase		Kushan					Scyto-Parthian				Greek	
Period	1			2		3		4		5		6
Stratum Square	I	II	IIIa	IIIb	IVa	IVb	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
AO		1	2		3	4	5	6-7	8-10				
A1		1	2		3	4	5	6-7	8-0	11-14	15-17	18	
A2		1	2		3	4	5						
A3		1	2		3	4							
A4		1	2		3	4							
A5		1	2		3	4	5	6-7					
BO		1	2	3	4	5	6	7					
B1		1	2	3	4	5	6	7-8	9-10	11- 14	15-16	17	
B2		1	2	3	4	5	6	7					
B3		1	2		3	4							
B4		1	2		3	4							
B5		1	2		3		4	5	6	7-10	11-13	14-15	
CO		1	2	3	4	5	6						
C1		1	2	3	4	5							
C2		1	2	3	4	5							

continued ....

Phase			Kushan					Scyto-Parthian				Greek	
Period		1			2		3	4		5		6	
Stratum / Square	I	II	IIIa	IIIb	IVa	IVb	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
C3		1	2	3	4	5							
C4		1	2	3	4	5							
C5		1	2	3	4	5							
DO 1	2	3	4		4a-5	5a,b	6	7-8	9-10				
D1 1	2	3	4		4a-5	5a,b	6	7-8	9-10	11-14	15-16	17	
EO 1	2	3	4		5	5a	6	7-8	9-10				
E1 1	2	3	4		5	5a	6	7-8	9-10				
FO 1	2	3	4		5	6	7-8	9-10					
F1 1	2	3	4		5	6	7-8	9-10					

Chart-4: Dani's published correlation chart for 1964 excavation

Phase	Kushan			Scytho-Parthian	Greek
Period / Square	I	II	III	IV	V
A1'		1-3	4-5		
A2'		1-3	4-5	6-7	
A3'		1-3	4-5		
A4'		1-3	4-5		
A5'		1-3	4-5		
A6'		1-3	4-5		
A7'		1-3	4	5-6	
A8'		1-3	4	5-6	7-15
A9'		1-3	4	5-6	7-15
A10'		1-3	4	5-6	7-15
A11'		1-3	4	5-6	7-15
A12'		1-3	4	5-6	7-15

Phase	Kushan			Scytho-Parthian	Greek
Period Square	I	II	III	IV	V
17'		1-3	4		
18'		1-3	4	5-6	
19'		1-3	4	5-6	
110'		1-3	4	5-6	
111'		1-3	4	5-6	
J7'	1-3	4			
J8'	1-3	4	5-6		
J9'	1-3	4	5-6		
J10'	1-3	4	5-6		
J11'	1-3	4	5-6		
K7'	1-3	4			
K8'	1-3	4	5-6		
K9'	1-3	4	5-6	7-11	
K10'	1-3	4	5-6		
K11'	1-3	4	5-6		

Phase B: Scrtho-Parthian

Period IV: Scytho-Parthians: comprised of stratum VII - VIII of 1963 and Layers 6 - 7 in A2' and 5-6 in the rest of the excavated squares of 1964; ii) produced a hoard of coins of Azes II.

Phase C: Greeks:

Period V: Late Greeks: i) comprised of stratum IX of 1963 and layers 7 -11 in K9' and 7 -15 in the rest of the excavated squares of 1964; ii) produced coins of late Indo-Greek rulers including Antialkidas, Heliocles and Philoxenus

Period VI: Early Greeks; i) comprised of stratum X-XI of 1963 only, absent in 1964; ii) produced coins of Menander, Apollodotus and Agathocles.

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