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REVISED DATES FOR THE DEPOSITION OF THE BEGRAM HOARD AND OCCUPATION AT THE NEW ROYAL CITY

LAUREN MORRIS^{*}

ABSTRACT

This paper offers two major revisions to the chronology of the archaeological site of Begram (Afghanistan). The first revision pertains to when the Begram hoard was deposited (i.e. not when the objects were produced). Based on the new identification of three coins from room 10 as belonging to the post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull series, as well as an analysis of the distribution of the hoard objects and the degradation of the surrounding structure, a terminus post quem for this event is fixed at c. 260 AD. The second revision relates to the occupation of Site II and other areas of the New Royal City. Drawing on architectural, ceramic, and numismatic evidence, it is argued that both Ghirshman's attribution of the Site II structure to Niveau II only, and his attribution of the Qala to Niveau III, are incorrect. Rather, it seems that the Site II structure was renovated and continued to be occupied through Niveau III, and was occupied at the same time as the upper occupation layers at Site B, Site I, and the city entrance. The hoard was likely deposited with the abandonment of the New Royal City at the end of Niveau III.

KEYWORDS: Begram, hoard, archives, Musée Guimet, Vasudeva imitation, Kushano-Sasanian.

THE SITE, DATA, AND UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Begram is the modern name for an urban site (34°59'42"N, 69°18'39"E) ca. 60 km north of Kabul in the Parwan province, located on a plain south of the confluence of the Ghorband and Panjshir Rivers. The site is comprised of a roughly triangular plateau (Fig. 1),[#] which includes a northern mound known as the Burj-i Abdullah, a southern rectangular mounded area, and a lower occupation area that connects the two mounds, transformed into farmland by later inhabitants. The site was discovered by Charles Masson in 1833, who undertook a series of coin-collecting campaigns on the plain between 1833-1838,¹ and was later visited in 1923 by Alfred Foucher of the newly-formed Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan (DAFA). Foucher identified the site with the capital of Kapiça visited by Xuanzang in the 7th century AD, referring to the Burj-i-Abdullah as the Old Royal City, and the southern mound

^{*} Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich (lauren.morris@campus.lmu.de)

[#] Highlighted figures not included in document.

¹ For an overview of Masson's work at Begram, and preliminary findings of research pertaining to his collections undertaken through the Masson Project at the British Museum see ERRINGTON 2001. The final publication thereof is still in preparation.

as the New Royal City.² The lower intervening area – thoroughly disturbed under the plough – had evidently provided a major source for the coins and other artefacts gathered by Masson.³

The main DAFA excavations at Begram, executed between 1936 to 1946, focused primarily on the New Royal City. Here, under the directorship of Joseph Hackin, Jean Carl and Jacques Meunié worked at Site I (also known as the “Bazar”) in 1936-1937,⁴ which was a habitation and possibly commercial area on either side of the main street. Then, during 1937-1940, parts of an area to the east called Site II (also known as “Site R.”, for Ria Hackin, who opened the excavation there) were explored.⁵ This area featured a large structure of uncertain character whose limits were never established, with habitations in its western part.⁶ This was overlaid by a later rectangular structure with four circular bastions, referred to as a Qala.⁷ A similar structure was also explored in 1938 at Site III, some 400 m south of the New Royal City’s southern ramparts.⁸ After the premature deaths of Joseph Hackin, Ria Hackin, and Jean Carl in 1941,⁹ some work was continued at Site II by Roman Ghirshman in 1941-1942, who also opened Site B to the west of Site I, being a habitation area, as well as exploring part of the New Royal City’s south fortification wall, and the Burj-i Abdullah.¹⁰

Ghirshman’s major contribution was his concern with stratigraphy. His work established three layers of occupation at the New Royal City, which were given relative chronological attributions on the basis of coins he observed within each. Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek to “1st Kushan Dynasty” coins were found in Niveau I, spanning between Eucratides to Soter Megas, according to Ghirshman’s sequence.¹¹ Niveau II was attributed to the “2nd Kushan Dynasty”, Kanishka I to Vasudeva. Finally, Niveau III was dated to what Ghirshman called the “3rd and 4th Kushan Dynasties”, “the latter commonly called the dynasty of the ‘Kidarites’”. This attribution was made with reference to the two types of coins found without inscriptions in this occupation layer.¹²

The final excavation was undertaken in 1946 by Jacques Meunié at the city entrance south of Site I.¹³

Begram is best known for the work at Site II (Fig. 2) in 1937 and 1939-1940, which uncovered a hoard of artefacts that had been deliberately concealed in rooms 10 and 13 of the large structure there. The hoard is so remarkable because it comprises a collection of diverse and largely extravagant artefacts executed in a variety of mediums, including (but not limited to) ivory, bone, glass, plaster, bronze, lacquered wood, alabaster, porphyry, rock crystal, and ostrich egg. These objects famously derive, in the most part, from the far-flung production centres of the Mediterranean, China, and India.

² FOUCHER 1942, 140-141. By the publication of *Recherches archéologiques à Begram* in 1939, the bold appellation “New Royal City” was already given with prophylactic inverted commas (see e.g. HACKIN 1939, 7). It is retained here for consistency, but its speculative character should be kept in mind.

³ GHIRSHMAN 1946, 23.

⁴ HACKIN et alii 1959, 84-102.

⁵ HACKIN 1939; HACKIN et alii 1954; MEUNIE 1959, 103-105.

⁶ *Ibidem*, 105.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 103.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 105-106.

⁹ For further details, see OLIVIER-UTARD 1997, 124.

¹⁰ GHIRSHMAN 1946.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 43, 85-86. However, if the coins of Apollodotus mentioned by Ghirshman are of Apollodotus I (and not Apollodotus II), then the sequence should perhaps begin with Apollodotus I rather than Eucratides (as in BOPEARACHCHI 1991, 453, tab. 5). As Ghirshman did not publish photographs of the Greco-Bactrian or Indo-Greek coins, this cannot be confirmed. However, Wima Kadphises is clearly the final ruler in the sequence, rather than Soter Megas.

¹² GHIRSHMAN 1946, 43, 85-86.

¹³ MEUNIE 1959b.

The difficulty of interpreting this peculiar hoard is compounded by its incomplete publication, and what is published is not always easy to understand. The results of most of the first season at Site II, including the room 10 excavation, were published in 1939 as *Recherches archéologiques à Begram. Chantier n° 2, 1937*¹⁴ (RAB). RAB begins with a bronze coin (RAB 149 [1]) recorded on 13/5/37. The first catalogue number refers to all objects found in 1937, presumably at Site I, and the second would appear to indicate a new count for finds from Site II, with RAB 149 [1] being presumably the first from that area. However, archival research at the Musée Guimet has shown that this is not true.¹⁵ The preliminary catalogue of excavations from 1937 features an entirely unpublished portion, Nos. 1-148. These are mostly objects from Site I, but also include 9 entries from Site II, with the first object recorded from there on 19/4/37.¹⁶ Thus, the beginning of RAB is arbitrary.

Work at Site II during 1939-1940, including room 13, was published posthumously in 1954, with a team of contributors drawing on Joseph Hackin's preliminary catalogue and offering their own perspectives. The resulting volume is *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Begram (ancienne Kâpiçi) (1939-1940)*¹⁷ (NRAB). The deaths of the Hackins and Carl ensured not only the loss of the invaluable information preserved in their minds – sadly evident, for example, in the numerous unclear indications of excavation areas given in NRAB – but also certain documents, including Carl's plan of Site II as of 1940,¹⁸ as well as his excavation diary and report of work at Site I.¹⁹

RAB and NRAB are, in the most part, catalogues of the hoard objects, giving data such as descriptions, dimensions, dates of excavation, depths at which each object was found, and images of the more significant objects after conservation, which cater well to their clear art-historical appeal. Furthermore, as the objects were found erratically distributed and in poor state of preservation, it is impossible to quantify the exact number of complete objects excavated. The reports leave many questions unanswered; in particular, there is a scarcity of published data or photographs pertaining to the archaeological contexts and architectural features in question. We do not even know the precise apparatus utilised for the concealment of the hoard rooms, only that the passage to room 10 was masked with a “mur de briques crues, perpendiculaire au boyau.”²⁰ Likewise, there is not a final plan of this excavation area. The plan reproduced here (Fig. 2) was executed only in 1947 after years of unavoidable degradation of the site, and does not include the western extension of this area undertaken by Meunié in 1938.²¹ The situation is, however, remedied somewhat through three articles published by Pierre Hamelin in *Cahiers de Byrsa* in the 1950s,²² who participated in the excavations. Hamelin focuses mainly on the glass, but also provides invaluable comments on the architecture of the Site II structure, and plans indicating the location of the finds in rooms 10 and 13.

Yet, the identity of this structure remains ambiguous. While Hackin did not comment directly on the matter, Ghirshman and Hamelin both later referred to it as a palace.²³ With

¹⁴ HACKIN 1939.

¹⁵ I am grateful for authorization to undertake research on the Hackin Archives at the Musée Guimet, which is largely uncatalogued. I am especially indebted to Pierre Cambon for first advising me on the available material, as well as to Cristina Cramerotti and Rouhanna Kedjam-Kaly for their assistance.

¹⁶ Musée Guimet, Hackin Archives (Carnets), *Begram – Fouilles de 1937 – Catalogue*.

¹⁷ HACKIN et alii 1954.

¹⁸ MEUNIE 1954, 9.

¹⁹ HACKIN et alii 1959, 85.

²⁰ HACKIN 1939, 9.

²¹ MEUNIE 1959a, 104, fig. L 1.

²² HAMELIN 1952; IDEM 1953; IDEM 1954.

²³ GHIRSHMAN 1946, 28; HAMELIN 1953, 123.

regard to the paucity of the excavation data and the absence of excavated comparative structures, I hesitate to repeat this label, and refer to it as the Site II structure in this article.

Since the hoard was excavated, a substantial bibliography has amassed to address the many other difficulties and questions this assemblage begs of us, not least the matter of how it all ought to be dated. Ghirshman attributed the Site II structure to Niveau II, and proposed that this occupation level ended with an invasion of Shapur I, judged by him to have taken place between 241–250 AD.²⁴ However, the association of the hoard with this time period is not widely accepted, as some have pointed out that the archaeological and numismatic evidence for such an invasion at Begram is insufficient,²⁵ while others have observed that this date appears to be much later than most of the hoard objects (to be discussed below). Additionally, while 29 coins were reported within rooms 10 and 13, they were incompletely recorded, and their use for dating this assemblage has been a matter of controversy.

The aim of this article is to offer another contribution towards solving this chronology problem, representing some preliminary results of research undertaken for a forthcoming PhD thesis. I first review attempts to date the hoard through its objects, then consider the coins found in rooms 10 and 13, analyse the archaeological contexts of the hoard rooms and their post-depositional transformation, and point out some patterns regarding the relative sequence of coin types, artefacts, and architecture in the occupation layers of different areas of the New Royal City. Ultimately, it is argued that the deposition of the hoard did not take place in the 1st or 2nd centuries AD (i.e. the time frame favoured or implied by most recent scholarship), but after the beginning of Vasishka's reign. Furthermore, I propose that the Site II structure was at least initially constructed in Niveau II, but renovated and occupied throughout Niveau III. It is argued that the final renovation of the Site II structure is contemporary to the upper level of Site I, as well as with the city entrance, and that these all belong to Niveau III. Finally, I suggest that the deposition of the Begram hoard and the abandonment of Niveau III took place after c. 260 AD.

While it is necessary to suggest an absolute date, it comes with a caveat. The fixing of absolute dates to the various eras relevant to Kushan chronology, as well as the relative sequence of Kushan kings have proven controversial tasks. In terms of absolute dates for eras, this paper follows Falk's well-known reading of the Yavanajātaka of Sphujiddhvaja, which gives a formula for converting a Kushan year into a Śaka era date, and thus fixing year 1 of Kanishka at 127 AD.²⁶ Also followed is the result of Falk and Bennett's re-examination of the so-called Traśaka reliquary, that the Azes era begins in 48/7 or 47/6 BC (i.e. not to be equated with the Vikrama era), also pushing the Yavana era back to 175/4 BC.²⁷ Regarding the sequence and approximate absolute dates of the Kushan rulers, for convenience and clarity I follow Cribb's work as iterated recently for the *ANS Catalogue of Kushan, Kushano-Sasanian, and Kidarite Coins*.²⁸ This runs: Kujula Kadphises (c. 50-90 AD), Wima Takto (c. 90-113 AD),²⁹ Wima Kadphises (c. 113-127 AD), Kanishka I (c. 127-151 AD), Huvishka (c. 151-190 AD), Vasudeva I (c. 190-230 AD), Kanishka II (c. 230-247 AD), Vasishka (c. 247-267 AD),

²⁴ GHIRSHMAN 1946, 100 ff.

²⁵ MARICQ 1968, 162-169; NARAIN 1968, 212-213; TOLSTOV 1968, 325-326.

²⁶ FALK 2001.

²⁷ FALK, BENNETT 2009.

²⁸ JONGEWARD et alii 2015, tab. 2.

²⁹ There is not universal agreement regarding the issuer of the Soter Megas coinage, and how this affects the reconstruction of early Kushan succession. After the publication of the Rabatak inscription, Cribb initially argued that Wima Takto was the issuer of this coinage, but has recently refined his position, finding that the issue of these coins began during the final years of the reign of Kujula Kadphises and continued through that of Wima Takto (CRIBB 2014). This still does not affect his reconstruction of early Kushan succession. For another perspective, see BOPEARACHCHI 2008, who notes the objections to Cribb's original position, and develops the usurper hypothesis proposed by Fussman, which would affect the reconstruction of early Kushan succession.

Kanishka III (c. 267-270 AD), Vasudeva II (c. 267-300 AD), Mahi (c. 300-305 AD), Shaka (c. 305-335 AD), and Kipunadha (c. 335-350 AD). This table is likewise followed for the - Kushano-Sasanian kings relevant to this study, being an unidentified king (c. 230 AD), Ardashir (c. 230-245 AD), Peroz I (c. 245-270 AD), Hormizd I (c. 270-300 AD), and Hormizd II (c. 300-303 AD). I reiterate that there is not universal consensus on the above, and it will perhaps never be reached.

APPROACHES TO DATING THE HOARD

Somewhat independently of Ghirshman's *terminus post quem* for Niveau II and the coins found in rooms 10 and 13, dates have been predominately ascribed to the hoard through its objects. This method involves referring to material analogous to the hoard objects – whether in typological, stylistic, iconographic or technical terms – found elsewhere. Due to the challengingly cross-cultural nature of the hoard objects, scholars tend to focus on certain classes of artefacts, but sometimes may also comment on the entire assemblage.

Arguments obtained from this dating method can be broadly characterised into two positions. The first position advocates for a late dating of at least some of the hoard objects, with the implication that the entirety of the objects may have been produced over an extended period of several centuries, namely the 1st – 3rd or even 4th centuries AD. This was the original assessment of the room 10 objects offered by Hackin in RAB, as he attributed the glass and bronze to between the 1st-4th centuries AD,³⁰ and the ivories from between the end of the 3rd century to the beginning of the 4th century AD.³¹ The position has since been supported with reference to certain glass vessel types (especially the vessels with enamelled decoration, and the Pharos beaker) in the hoard by Coarelli,³² Menninger,³³ and Rützi,³⁴ and later parallels for the carved ivory and bone plaques by Nehru,³⁵ and by Rosen Stone.³⁶

The second position, however, advocates for an earlier dating, placing the objects in a more limited time frame, most commonly given as the 1st century AD, or the 1st to early 2nd centuries AD. With the excavation of room 13, Hackin was in favour of this position,³⁷ which was also supported by the contributions regarding classes of objects in NRAB.³⁸ It has since been reiterated by Rowland,³⁹ Dwivedi,⁴⁰ Whitehouse,⁴¹ and Mehendale,⁴² as well as in the blockbuster travelling exhibition of artefacts from the National Museum of Afghanistan, on tour since 2006.⁴³ As such, this appears to constitute the mainstream position held in contemporary scholarship.

The purview of the present paper is not to evaluate the quality of the range of arguments mentioned above. Instead, I would like to point out that the very practice and objective of ascribing dates to the hoard objects have remained under-theorised in this scholarly discourse.

³⁰ HACKIN 1939, 10.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 22.

³² COARELLI 1962, 319; IDEM 2009, 97.

³³ MENNINGER 1996, 91.

³⁴ RÜTZI 1998, 196-200.

³⁵ NEHRU 2004, 124.

³⁶ ROSEN STONE 1994, 91-97; IDEM 2008, 48.

³⁷ HACKIN et alii 1954, 14.

³⁸ KURZ 1954, 108; ELISSÉEFF 1954, 155; STERN 1954, 54.

³⁹ ROWLAND 1966, 27-28.

⁴⁰ DWIVEDI 1976, 95.

⁴¹ WHITEHOUSE 1989a, 99; IDEM 1989b, 155 ff.; IDEM 2001, 444; IDEM 2012, 62-63.

⁴² MEHENDALE 1997, 5.5; EADEM 2001, 500; EADEM 2011, 143; EADEM 2012, 65.

⁴³ Beginning with CAMBON 2007. Exhibition catalogues, however, are perhaps not the most appropriate place to delve into the minutiae of chronological issues, and absolute dates simply must be offered.

It pays to disentangle exactly which time period these dates refer to, and why these dates are interesting to us.

It is helpful here to draw on the concepts developed in anthropology and archaeology of object biographies, life-cycles, and life stages (etc.), which all essentially advance the idea that artefacts have lives within which a number of separate events can be distinguished.⁴⁴ These stages may include, for example, the gathering of raw material, the production of the artefact, its distribution or exchange, its uses, repairs undergone, and its accidental loss or deliberate discard. The life may continue at a later point if the artefact is found again or excavated, conserved, studied, displayed, put into storage, and so forth. For the present discussion, this concept serves well to problematise the attribution of dates to artefacts. By posing the question “which date or moment or period of time is to be chosen?”, Shanks has emphasised the arbitrary nature of this practice.⁴⁵ He continues that a date is normally accepted to refer to when an artefact was made, or when it entered into the archaeological record, but other dates could be when the artefact was excavated, or when it was accessioned into a museum’s collection.⁴⁶ The relevant point for here is that the dates ascribed to the hoard objects should relate to certain life stages of these artefacts, and we should establish whether these dates and life stages are relevant to the questions we are asking.

Let us consider, by way of example, Whitehouse’s work on the glass found in the hoard, which – despite his scepticism regarding the ichthyomorphic glass and other glass with trailed decoration – remains generally accepted to have been made in the Roman empire. On four occasions, Whitehouse has argued that the glass objects were all made around roughly the same time, namely c. 50-125 AD.⁴⁷ Further, arguing that of the hoard objects seem to be roughly contemporary, he has proposed that the concealment of the hoard is to be dated to within a generation of 100 AD.⁴⁸

The key point here is that the dates Whitehouse ascribes to the Begram glass, however, are production dates,⁴⁹ which can necessarily only be inferred from the appearance of analogous artefacts in the archaeological record, and (in the case of the glass) most often within the physical limits of the Roman empire. Achieving precision with production dates is more complicated than it may appear. Glass is not usually excavated in workshops that were met with sudden tragedies, but more commonly appears in the archaeological record as the product of deliberate discard marking the end of the artefact’s life, thus reflecting a time technically later when that artefact was produced. In any case, working from the general rule that glass vessels should have a limited period of use, especially in light of their material fragility (but how many years is a judicious estimate?) it is not unreasonable to take deposition dates as being roughly indicative of a production period. It is also important to establish such timeframes, because it is then possible to recognise abnormal outliers when they are excavated, such as early glass found in much later burial contexts. This includes examples of Hellenistic and Roman glass that appear to have been kept and curated as heirlooms,⁵⁰ and Roman glass, either kept as heirlooms or found while disturbing earlier graves, re-used in 5th century Anglo-Saxon burials.⁵¹

⁴⁴ See e.g. APPADURAI 1986; SCHIFFER 1987, 13 ff.; GOSDEN, MARSHALL 1999.

⁴⁵ SHANKS 1998, 16.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 16.

⁴⁷ WHITEHOUSE 1989a, 99; IDEM 1989b, 155 ff.; IDEM 2001, 444; IDEM 2012, 62.

⁴⁸ WHITEHOUSE 1989a, 99; IDEM 2012, 63.

⁴⁹ WHITEHOUSE 2001, 487; IDEM 2012, 62.

⁵⁰ See e.g. a colourless glass hemispherical skyphos dated to the 3rd century BC found in a tomb of Neapolis in Thessaloniki dated to the first half of the 2nd century BC (IGNATIADOU 2002), 15 n. 18; A mould-blown ‘Mask Type’ hexagonal bottle with high relief dated to the mid 1st century AD found in a 3rd century AD sarcophagus in Heimersheim, Germany (STERN 1995, 83 n. 128).

⁵¹ WHITE 1988, 128-132, 136.

What do production dates, then, tell us about the hoard? If the glass hoard vessels were imported into South Asia rather soon after they were produced, then production dates are relevant for what appear to be the two essential topics of interest pertaining to the hoard, i.e. what it may indicate regarding the nature and time of certain trade connections, or to the availability of foreign artistic material to artisans working in the Northwest.

With all of the above in mind, however, it is clear that production dates do not say anything definitively about the hoard's deposition date, and we must be reminded that the latest produced artefact in the hoard can only securely serve as a *terminus post quem* for this event. And yet, Whitehouse was certainly not the first (nor the last) to pose that these two periods should be closely related, with others also calling Ghirshman's end for Niveau II into question for being so much later than the hoard objects. For example, in a review of NRAB, Will cited the 1st-2nd century AD dates offered by studies in this volume of the hoard objects, stating "La date de la constitution de la cachette avancée par R. Ghirshman, le sac de Bégram par Châpour Ier (entre 246 et 250), devient bien problématique dans ces conditions."⁵² Rowland likewise objected to a 241 AD date of deposition, because "this date ... is so late in relation to the age of the objects. All of them would already have been antiques, as much as one hundred to two hundred years old."⁵³ Mehendale, who has argued that the hoard was gathered in the early 2nd century AD and represents a merchant's stock, makes a similar objection by stating that "it seems inconceivable that it remained there for more than three-quarters of a century until the final destruction of the city".⁵⁴ Finally, Kuwayama has more recently stated that the early dates ascribed to the objects weaken Ghirshman's standpoint.⁵⁵

While these doubts appear reasonable at first glance, we cannot be confident that we understand all stages in the lives of the hoard objects; indeed, the picture may be far more complicated than we can imagine. Further, the assumption that production dates for the hoard objects should be closely connected to the deposition of the hoard itself reflects modern expectations rather than anything else. While, then, I have no difficulty in accepting that many of the hoard objects may have been produced during the 1st-2nd centuries AD, we cannot be sure that they entered into the archaeological record close to this time. It thus is imperative to take a step away from the hoard objects, and to focus explicitly on fixing the hoard's deposition date by other means.

COINS IN ROOMS 10 AND 13

The coins found at Site II given in RAB and NRAB were published in a very limited manner without images or illustrations. The information that is provided includes the area in which a coin was excavated, the depth at which it was found, a description, an indication of whether it was allocated to Paris or Kabul, and inventory date. This latter date seems to be an excavation date in most cases, but sometimes it is hard to be sure. Of the 20 coins noted in RAB, 8 were found in room 10, and of the 70 coins in NRAB, 21 were from room 13. The published data for these are given here in English (Table 1). These coins were mostly allocated a single catalogue number each, except for RAB 267 [121] and RAB 278 [128] which record two and three coins respectively, and are thus given in duplicate and triplicate in Table 1. All coins are to be understood as copper, except for 9 (NRAB 6, 11-16, 20-21) indicated as billon.

Catalogue No.	Room	Depth	Description	Allocated to	Date
RAB 238 [92]	10	1.50 m	Coin, oxidised bronze, unidentified	Kabul	5/6/37

⁵² WILL 1955, 359-360, n. 1.

⁵³ ROWLAND 1966, 28.

⁵⁴ MEHENDALE 1997, 6.4.

⁵⁵ KUWAYAMA 2010, 286.

RAB 267 [121]	10	2.60 m	Coin, very oxidised bronze, unidentified	Paris	13/6/37
RAB 267 [121]	10	2.60 m	Coin, very oxidised bronze, unidentified	Paris	13/6/37
RAB 274 [128]	10	2.60 m	Coin, very oxidised bronze, unidentified	Paris	14/6/37
RAB 274 [128]	10	2.60 m	Coin, very oxidised bronze, unidentified	Paris	14/6/37
RAB 274 [128]	10	2.60 m	Coin, very oxidised bronze, unidentified	Paris	14/6/37
RAB 275 [129]	10	2.60 m	Coin, bronze, obverse Kanishka, reverse unclear	Kabul	14/6/37
RAB 295 [149]	10	2.60 m	Coin, very oxidised bronze, unidentified	Paris	15/6/37
NRAB 006	13	2.10 m	Coin, billon, Kujula Kadphises	Kabul	24/5/39
NRAB 010	13	1.80 m	Coin, billon, marked oxidation	Kabul	24/5/39
NRAB 011	13	1.80 m	Coin, billon, Vasudeva	Kabul	24/5/39
NRAB 012	13	1.80 m	Coin, billon, Vasudeva	Kabul	24/5/39
NRAB 013	13	1.80 m	Coin, billon, Vasudeva	Kabul	24/5/39
NRAB 014	13	1.80 m	Coin, billon, Vasudeva	Kabul	24/5/39
NRAB 015	13	1.80 m	Coin, billon, Vasudeva	Kabul	24/5/39
NRAB 016	13	1.80 m	Coin, billon, Vasudeva	Kabul	24/5/39
NRAB 020	13	1.80 m	Coin, billon, very advanced oxidation, pierced in a circular hole in the central part.	Kabul	24/5/39
NRAB 021	13	1.80 m	Coin, billon, very advanced oxidation, pierced in a circular hole in the central part.	Kabul	24/5/39
NRAB 036	13	2.50 m	Coin, copper, pronounced oxidation. Kushana period.	Kabul	8/6/39
NRAB 045	13	1.80 m	Coin, copper, pronounced oxidation. Kushana period?	Kabul	10/6/39
NRAB 049	13	1.90 m	Coin, copper, pronounced oxidation.	Kabul	14/6/39
NRAB 050	13	1.90 m	Coin, copper, pronounced oxidation	Kabul	14/6/39
NRAB 115	13	2.55 m	Coin, copper, marked oxidation	Kabul	21/6/39
NRAB 116	13	2.55 m	Coin, copper, marked oxidation	Kabul	21/6/39
NRAB 117	13	0.70 m	Coin, copper, with likeness of a sar of Garjistan. Cf. de Morgan III, p. 453, fig. 598.	Kabul	24/6/39
NRAB 118	13	2.40 m	Coin, copper, marked oxidation	Kabul	25/6/39
NRAB 155	13	2.55 m	Coin, copper, Gondophares (north wall)	Kabul	2/7/39
NRAB 171	13	2.40 m	Coin, copper, oxidation marked (west wall)	Kabul	8/7/39
NRAB 208	13	2.50 m	Coin, copper, oxidation marked. Wima Kadphises	Kabul	23/7/39

TABLE 1. Coins reported in rooms 10 and 13.

Few identifications of these coins were offered in RAB and NRAB, as a specialist was not on hand to clean and categorise them. The issuing ruler of only 1 specimen from room 10 was identified, being Kanishka (RAB 275 [129]), at a depth of 2.60 m. Hackin noted in RAB that this coin “fut trouvée à côté d’un plat de bronze”, i.e. clearly associated with these hoard objects, and further that “deux monnaies Kuṣāṇa furent découvertes à l’intérieur du support creux de l’un de ces plats (n° 289 [143]).”⁵⁶ This refers to one bronze dish of a larger assemblage thereof found in the centre of room 10 (RAB 278 [132] – 294 [148]; 296 [150] – 310 [164]), all recorded on the 15/6/37 between the depths of 2.45-2.60 m, some clearly being stacked on top of the others. It is not clear which two other Kushan coins in the catalogue Hackin has referred to here. In Hackin’s draft manuscript held in the Musée Guimet, one may see that “trois monnaies” was originally written here, with “trois” then crossed out and replaced with “deux”.⁵⁷ If replacing “trois” with “deux” was in fact an error (which are certainly not unknown in these reports), the three coins mentioned together for RAB 274 [128] could be

⁵⁶ HACKIN 1939, 10.

⁵⁷ Musée Guimet, Hackin Archives (Manuscripts), 53, 12.

these coins, especially as they are recorded directly before the coin of Kanishka (RAB 275 [129]), but the two coins noted for RAB 267 [121] are also possible contenders.

The state of published data is better for the 21 coins in room 13, where the issuers of 10 were identified. In their ruling sequences, these include 1 of Gondophares (NRAB 115, at 2.55 m), 1 billon coin of Kujula Kadphises (NRAB 6, 2.10 m), 1 of Wima Kadphises (NRAB 208, 2.50 m), 6 billon coins of Vasudeva (NRAB 11-16, 1.80 m), and 1 with “the likeness of a sar of Garjistan” (NRAB 117, 0.70 m). A published image is cited only for this latter coin, which may then be tentatively identified as Göbl 238 or 239,⁵⁸ bearing the legend *Sri Shahi*, thus probably being an emission from the ruler with the title Shahi Tengin, which current research indicates cannot be earlier than c. 650 AD.⁵⁹ Two further coins, given as “Kushan” (NRAB 36, 2.50 m; NRAB 45, 1.80 m) are less helpful for our purposes.

While Hackin did comment on these coins, his conclusion regarding their association with the hoard is unclear. In a letter published in NRAB, he noted that none of the coins in the layer of hoard objects are later than Vasudeva,⁶⁰ presumably referring to NRAB 11-16 (all 1.80 m), or perhaps also to work at Site I. He then observes that the Sri Shahi coin (NRAB 117, 0.70 m) was above the coins found at the same level of the hoard objects, at depths between 2.40 and 2.60 m, being those of Gondophares (NRAB 155, 2.55 m), Kujula Kadphises (NRAB 6, 2.10 m) and Kanishka (RAB 275 [129], 2.60 m).⁶¹ So, while the Vasudeva and the Kujula Kadphises coins were above the hoard objects as Hackin places them, he still appears to have considered them as associated with the hoard. Regardless, these observations were fairly incidental to his stylistic dating of the hoard objects.

Subsequent scholars have also puzzled over the matter of which coins can be associated with the hoard for dating purposes. Whitehouse, for example, found that the billon coins of Vasudeva (NRAB 11-16, 1.80 m) and Kujula Kadphises (NRAB 6, 2.10 m) were separated from the hoard deposit proper, and thus the only coins that could be associated with the hoard were those of Gondophares (NRAB 155, 2.55 m), Wima Kadphises (NRAB 208, 2.50 m) and Kanishka (RAB 275 [129], 2.60 m).⁶² Then the Kanishka coin would be the latest coin in association, which does not conflict with his dating scheme. While Coarelli agrees that the Kanishka coin appears to be the latest in association with the hoard objects, he has emphasised that it can only serve as a *terminus post quem* for the deposition event.⁶³ Rather conversely, Rütli considers the Vasudeva coins (NRAB 11-16, 1.80 m) to also be in association with the hoard objects,⁶⁴ and in combination with ascription of some of the glass objects to the 3rd or 4th centuries AD, puts the deposition date at 356 AD or shortly afterwards.⁶⁵ However, Rütli follows Göbl’s reckoning of the absolute date for year 1 of Kanishka at 232 AD, which helps to clarify his late date for this event, as Vasudeva’s reign is thus understood as c. 290-355 AD.

An extensive consideration of these coins was presented by Mehendale in her PhD thesis about the Begram ivories, where she suggested that the coins found in proximity to the hoard objects may derive from disturbances, and thus that “the coins alone simply do not provide any particular leverage for one proposed date over another.”⁶⁶ The key points made by her are: 1) the coin of Kujula Kadphises (NRAB 6, 2.10 m) was found above that of his descendent Wima Kadphises (NRAB 208, 2.50 m), and thus the coins were “found seemingly in reverse chronological order.”; 2) coins are especially affected by post-depositional

⁵⁸ GÖBL 1967.

⁵⁹ VONDROVEC 2010, 183-184.

⁶⁰ HACKIN et alii 1954, 15.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, 15.

⁶² WHITEHOUSE 2001, 445-446.

⁶³ COARELLI 1962, 320; COARELLI 2009, 101-102.

⁶⁴ RÜTTI 1998, 194-195.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, 200.

⁶⁶ MEHENDALE 1997, 5.2.

transformation processes and may “filter” upwards and downwards;⁶⁷ and nonetheless, 3) the Gondophares, Kujula Kadphises and Kanishka coins were found near the to the hoard objects, but the Vasudeva coins were found above the hoard objects, and thus derive from a period later than Begram II.⁶⁸ An interesting footnote is also given: “In Room 10 ... seven other unidentified coins were found. If even one of these is determine to be from an era later than Kanishka’s rule, no conclusion at all could be drawn from these coins about the dates of the other objects nearby.”⁶⁹

The last point may be considered first. In 1987, Osmund Bopearachchi cleaned, identified, classified, and photographed the Musée Guimet’s holdings of coins collected and excavated by members of the DAFA. This included 107 coins from the 1936-1937 excavations at Site I, and 14 from the 1937 excavations at Site II from Begram, which he published later in 2001.⁷⁰ This study included 6 coins attributed to room 10, the published data for which are replicated in Table 2. For the Kushan coins, the classification proposed by Göbl has been followed, and Bopearachchi notes that he was assisted by Cribb in identifying a number of these.⁷¹

No.	Type	Weight	Findspot	Depth	Date
108	Kujula Kadphises, Bust / Heracles, Mitch. 1045	2.33 g	Ch. II, ch. R. 10	2.60 m	
111	Kanishka I, Sacrificing king / AΘPO, MAO or MIPO	2.56 g	Ch. I, ch. R. 10	2.60 m	13/6/37
117	Vasudeva I, Sacrificing king / Shiva nandi (late emissions)	5.73 g	Ch. I, R. 10	2.60 m	13/6/37
118	Vasudeva I, Sacrificing king / Shiva nandi (late emissions)	3.07 g	Ch. I, R. 10	1.0 m	21/4/37
119	Vasudeva I, Sacrificing king / Shiva nandi (late emissions)	2.39 g	Ch. I, ch. R. 10	2.60 m	13/6/37
120	Vasudeva I, Sacrificing king / Shiva nandi (late emissions)	2.57 g	Ch. I, ch. R. 10	2.60 m	13/6/37

TABLE 2. Coins attributed to room 10 in BOPEARACHCHI 2001.

It should first be noted that some minor inconsistencies have slipped into the latter article (one example being “Ch. I” given instead of the correct “Ch. II”). Its preparation for publication was clearly rushed. However, as Bopearachchi has kindly discussed his work on these coins and shared his notes with me, it is now possible clarify some points and better represent his original work on the 6 coins listed above. Another significant aid was the draft catalogue of the 1937 excavations.

First, corresponding RAB catalogue numbers are only sporadically given in Bopearachchi’s published article. However, the coins were originally provided to him in their numbered excavation envelopes, with these numbers accordingly replicated in Bopearachchi’s notes. Significantly, Nos. 108, 111, 117, 119, and 120 appear to have been in a single envelope labelled “267 – 274”, with “5 pièces” added to the notes for No. 108. These numbers refer to RAB 267 [121] and RAB 274 [128], which give two and three coins respectively, all at 2.60 m, all allocated to Paris. Bopearachchi’s notes only differ slightly on the excavation dates. 13/6/37 is indicated for Nos. 108, 111, 117, 119, and while the same date is provided for RAB 267 [121], 14/6/37 is given for RAB 274 [128]. The difference is trivial, and these five coins clearly correspond to the two RAB catalogue numbers.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, 5.2.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, 5.2, n. 8; 6.4.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, 5.2, n. 7.

⁷⁰ BOPEARACHCHI 2001.

⁷¹ BOPEARACHCHI 2001, 413 n. 6.

According to RAB, 6 coins from room 10 were allocated to Paris, so the final coin would appear to be Bopearachchi's No. 118, corresponding to RAB 295 [149] (2.60 m, 15/6/37). However, the depth (1.0 m) given for No. 118 and date (21/4/37) do not support this. Bopearachchi's notes for this coin give a find envelope indication of "Env. 12 1937", which is not a RAB catalogue number. In fact, the provenience, depth, and date recorded for No. 118 correspond with No. 12 in the unpublished portion of the draft excavation catalogue for 1937. This is a "Monnaie bronze Vasudeva (ronde) oxidation avancée" found in "Chantier R. 1" (=Site II, room 1), with a red mark indicating it was allocated to Paris. Where, then, is the final coin from room 10, RAB 295 [149], allocated to Paris? The 1937 draft catalogue provides another clue. Here, "Monnaie bronze oxydé" and the red mark indicating it was allocated to Paris have both been crossed out. A note is added in blue pencil, "Annulé", followed with a mostly illegible comment in grey pencil "... .. effacé". For whatever reason, this amendment was not taken up for the manuscript version of the catalogue and its final publication. In sum, 5 coins from room 10 reached Paris, and they are Bopearachchi Nos. 108, 111, 117, 119 and 120, while No. 118 was found in room 1. These findings are summarised in Table 3.

No.	Type	Weight	Findspot	Cat. No.	Depth	Date
108	Kujula Kadphises, Bust / Heracles, Mitch. 1045	2.33 g	Site II, room 10	RAB 267 [121] or RAB 274 [128]	2.60 m	13/6/37
111	Kanishka I, Sacrificing king / AΘPO, MAO or MIPO	2.56 g	Site II, room 10	RAB 267 [121] or RAB 274 [128]	2.60 m	13/6/37
117	Vasudeva I, Sacrificing king / Shiva nandi (late emissions)	5.73 g	Site II, room 10	RAB 267 [121] or RAB 274 [128]	2.60 m	13/6/37
118	Vasudeva I, Sacrificing king / Shiva nandi (late emissions)	3.07 g	Site II, room 1	1937 Cat. 12	1.0 m	21/4/37
119	Vasudeva I, Sacrificing king / Shiva nandi (late emissions)	2.39 g	Site II, room 10	RAB 267 [121] or RAB 274 [128]	2.60 m	13/6/37
120	Vasudeva I, Sacrificing king / Shiva nandi (late emissions)	2.57 g	Site II, room 10	RAB 267 [121] or RAB 274 [128]	2.60 m	13/6/37

TABLE 3. Updated findspots, catalogue numbers, and excavations dates for Nos. 108, 111, 117-120 in BOPEARACHCHI 2001.

Despite these points of clarification, the results of Bopearachchi's article as published are still remarkable. Three coins described as late emissions of Vasudeva were identified from room 10 at the depth of 2.60 m (Nos. 117, 119, 120). If we were to follow the reasoning of all of the scholars mentioned above who have considered the coins from rooms 10 and 13 – namely, that coins found at the depth of 2.60 m are in unambiguous association with the hoard objects – then Vasudeva's reign must serve at least as a *terminus post quem* for the deposition of the hoard. Surprisingly, this point seems to have been overlooked in subsequent scholarship.

However, Bopearachchi's notes – which feature comments and corrections pencilled in by MacDowall – make it clear that these three coins were understood at an early stage to not be lifetime issues of Vasudeva. The ambiguous identifications "Post Vasudeva I", "Imit. of VD I (AD 270-280)", and "Vasudeva I imitation" are noted respectively.

The study of these such coins has developed in the intervening years, and it is thus possible to refine the above identifications. Both gold and copper coinage of the late Kushans (i.e. after Vasudeva) feature two main reverse types: Oesho with bull, and seated Ardoxsho. These are derived from types initiated by Vasudeva I and Kanishka II respectively. However, MacDowall has emphasised that many local imitations and contemporary forgeries of these coins are found in excavations,⁷² thus the late Kushan kings were evidently not the sole authority responsible for their production. Coin Nos. 117, 119, 120, and also 116 and 118 from Site II appear to belong to a particular series of post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull imitations, minted in both gold and copper, which is laid out in Cribb's work for the ANS catalogue.

⁷² MACDOWALL 2005, 192.

Recognising that the gold coinage of this imitation series serve as prototypes for official Kushano-Sasanian gold issues, it is hypothesised that the copper imitation series was likewise issued by the early Kushano-Sasanian kings ruling contemporarily to the late Kushans.⁷³

Arrangements and attributions of post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull copper coinage have varied, and their study is still developing. In 1984, Göbl divided the lifetime and post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull coins into sub-types based on design, symbols used, and treatment of legends, which were attributed to Vasudeva I, Vasishka, Vasudeva II, and regents and successors.⁷⁴

MacDowall, however, treated Oesho with bull and seated Ardoxsho coins together, with reference to Göbl's classification. These were divided them into 5 series with sub-varieties, and given a relative sequence based on their weights.⁷⁵ Series 1-3 were attributed to Vasudeva and most late Kushan kings, and it was suggested that Series 4 (Crude Ardoxšo) and 5 (Crude Śiva [= Oesho]) were 4th century local imitations produced after the fragmentation of the empire.⁷⁶

Khan's 2010 study of copper of Vasudeva I and his successors from Taxila is another productive step forwards. He notes that, while it is difficult to distinguish official issues of Vasudeva from imitations and those of his successors, differences can be observed. On early imitations, this includes the representation of the king which follows Kanishka II, the new use of swastika or triangle control marks on the obverse, the position of the *tamga* on the reverse (upper left field instead of right), and their much lower weight, dropping progressively from a unit of 7.00 g.⁷⁷ The main F* imitation series is divided by Khan into four varieties from the presence of symbols on the obverse, which vary in their position and execution.⁷⁸ F*4 is a substantial group characterised by increasingly crude and stylised figures until the reverse resembles only parallel lines. Khan states more generally that both gold and copper post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull imitations were issued by the later Kushans and the Kushano-Sasanians, and that the F* imitations in particular began to be issued in the later phase or after the reign of Kanishka II.⁷⁹ Close to the F* series are post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull types were attributed by Khan to Vasishka (H1). These can be distinguished through the depiction of the king and presence of Brahmi characters *chu* (H1a) or *tha* (H1b) corresponding with Vasishka's official gold issues. Imitations of both types without clear Brahmi characters are also noted (H*1a, H*1b). Unfortunately, a concordance to Göbl's classification is not provided.

The ANS catalogue of Kushan, Kushano-Sasanian, and Kidarite coins builds on Khan's work and similarly treats the post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull copper issues. As in Khan, one series is attributed to Vasishka (ANS 1618 = Khan H1b; ANS 1619-1622 = Khan H1a). Khan's Vasishka imitations (H*1a) appear to correspond to the ANS Vasishka King at altar, with illegible *chu* (1623-1639), which are not explicitly stated to be later imitations. The main copper series of post-Vasudeva I Oesho with bull imitations (Khan F*) are referred to generally as "Vasudeva Imitations" ascribed to the Kushano-Sasanians (ANS 1704-2101), and are subdivided into 6 types according to symbols used, diminishing weights (dropping from a unit of about 7 g) and increasingly stylised designs. The authors note that the particular authorities

⁷³ JONGEWARD et alii 2015, 179-180. I am indebted to Joe Cribb for initially suggesting this identification to me for the relevant Site II coins, and for graciously sharing his expertise on this complex series.

⁷⁴ 1000-1003 to Vasudeva I; 1004 to Vasudeva II; 1005-1007 to Vasudeva I or II; 1008-1009 to Regent?; 1010-1010A to Vasudeva II and successors; 1011-1011A to Vasishka?; 1012 to Vasudeva I; 1013 to Regent?; 1014 to Vasudeva I (Göbl 1984).

⁷⁵ MACDOWALL 2005, 193-198.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 194-197.

⁷⁷ KHAN 2010, 55.

⁷⁸ F*1 Standing king, swastika in field/Oesho with bull; F*2 Standing king, triangle in field/Oesho with bull; F*3 Standing king, circle in field/Oesho with bull; F*4 Standing king, no triangle/Oesho with bull (*Ibidem*, 55-57, 84.)

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 52, 55.

responsible for the gold version of this coinage appear to be Ardashir and Peroz I, seeming to end in the reign of Vasishka.⁸⁰ They also find that the copper imitations begin in the reign of Kanishka II and continue through to Shaka, giving an absolute date range of c. 255-310 AD, which coincides with the period of the Kushano-Sasanian invasion of Kushan territory. While they note that the copper series appear to begin under the same authorities as the gold series, it is admitted that the responsible party for the later varieties with highly debased designs is not so clear.⁸¹

Coins Nos. 116-120 from Site II are of a low weight, are poorly struck on a fragile copper alloy, have irregular flans, and are worn. Parts of the obverse fields that may feature important classificatory symbols are worn, have chipped off in antiquity, or are off flan. Another difficulty is in the tendency towards local production of imitations and contemporary forgeries in the relevant series. Khan's classification is clear and coherent, as it is based on types observed at the archaeological complex at Taxila. The ANS arrangement, however, includes specimens from multiple regions, thus must generalise and cannot give a full impression of the nuances visible in local imitations. Thus, it is not easy to attribute the Site II coins to any single class noted above, and the identifications offered below are tentative. With the kind cooperation of Pierre Cambon of the Musée Guimet, Osmund Bopearachchi and myself were able to access these 5 coins in May 2017. New photographs taken by Bopearachchi are published here (FIG. 3) to supplement the photographs of plaster casts of the coins published in 2001. I restrict myself to commenting on visible details.

No. 116

AE, 2.92 g; Site II, room T, 0.80 m, RAB 213 [67], 30/5/37

Obverse: Standing king, head to left. Wears garment with shallow curved lower hem. Visible belt. Right hand extended making sacrifice over altar, left arm bent down. Inverted triangle in lower right field under king's left arm

Reverse: Oesho standing facing, in front of bull standing to left. Oesho holds diadem in right hand, trident in left. Four-pronged *tamga* upper left field. Dotted border to left. No clear inscription.

Göbl 1008; Khan F*2b (Shallow curved hem; triangle); ANS 3A (Kushano-Sasanian Vasudeva imitations. Standing king, with small triangle).

No. 117

AE, 5.73 g; Site II, room 10, 2.60 m, RAB 267 [121] or RAB 274 [128], 13/6/37

Obverse: King stands facing, head to left surrounded by halo. Wears garment with slightly curved hemline over trousers. Right hand extended making sacrifice over altar. Left arm bent down, flan chipped at edge. Any symbols in lower right field off flan.

Reverse: Oesho standing facing, in front of bull standing to left. Head and left arm off flan. Right arm extended. Surface of flan chipped from left to bottom.

Göbl 1010-1011? Khan F*3a (shallow curved hem; circle) or Khan H*1b (Vasishka Imitation, Short figure of Oesho & Bull)? ANS 1619-1622 (Vasishka, king at altar/Oesho, with Brahmi *chu*) or ANS 1623-1639 (Vasishka, King at altar, with illegible *chu*)?

No. 118

AE, 3.07 g; Site II, room 1, 1.0 m, 1937 Cat. 12, 21/04/37

Obverse: Standing king, head to left, wearing garment with shallow curved lower hem. Right arm extended sacrificing over altar, left arm bent down. Ribbed trident surmounts

⁸⁰ JONGEWARD et alii 2015, 179.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 179-180.

altar. Flan chipped at right field. Two circles in lower right field? (Not triangle, nor Brahmi *chu*).

Reverse: Oesho standing facing, partly off flan, in front of bull standing to left.

Khan F*3a (shallow curved hem; circle)?

No. 119

AE, 2.39 g; Site II, room 10, 2.60 m, RAB 267 [121] or RAB 274 [128], 13/6/37

Obverse: Standing king, head to left, wearing garment with belt. Left arm bent down with stylised loop of sleeve at elbow, holding staff or trident? Top half of circle in lower right field visible. Dotted border to right.

Reverse: Oesho standing facing, in front of bull standing to left.

Khan F*3a (Shallow curved hem; circle)?

No. 120

AE, 2.57 g; Site II, room 10, 2.60 m, RAB 267 [121] or RAB 274 [128], 13/6/37

Obverse: Standing king. Right arm extending down, left arm bent at elbow. Details unclear.

Reverse: Oesho standing facing, in front of bull standing to left.

Khan F*4a (Shallow curved hem; details disappear)?

In sum, these 5 coins belong generally to the main post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull series, i.e. Khan's F* or the Vasudeva imitations attributed to the Kushano-Sasanians in the ANS catalogue, if not also the series attributed to Vasishka or Imitations of Vasishka. They correspond more generally with MacDowall's Type 5. The difficulty of attributing firm identifications according to published classifications can probably be attributed to these coins being poor, late, locally made copies. When the coins collected by Masson are published in a final form, perhaps the series at Begram will be clarified.

Turning to the room 10 coins, Nos. 119 and 120 certainly do not belong to the beginning of Khan's or the ANS catalogue's main post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull series, due to their debased weights and stylised designs. Nor are their designs so stylised to suggest the end of the series. How should they be dated? If the absolute date range for the minting of this series given by the ANS catalogue is followed, i.e. c. 255-310 AD, these coins were issued sometime in the middle of this period. Certainly, they were minted after the reign of Kanishka II, and if it is correct to see affinities with types attributed to Vasishka or imitations thereof in No. 117, Vasishka's reign should serve as a suitable chronological marker. And still, MacDowall attributed these types of late imitations to the 4th century AD. Combining all of these observations, near the end of Vasishka's reign – let us say c. 260 AD – is a very conservative *terminus post quem* indicated by these coins.

Relying on the same principles adopted by others in dealing with the coins associated with the Begram hoard – i.e. that a find depth of 2.60 m indicates a clear association with the hoard – then the deposition of the hoard should have taken place after c. 260 AD. However, as Mehendale has raised questions regarding the association of these coins to the hoard, it is now necessary to show their relevance for dating purposes.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS OF ROOMS 10 AND 13

Assessing whether it is reasonable to suspect that coins ended up in a sealed deposit as a result of post-depositional disturbance should depend on an understanding of the archaeological contexts of the two hoard rooms. This necessarily requires some inference from the available data.

The central part of the Site II structure featured walls ranging from 1.5-2.5 m in thickness, (judging from Le Berre's plan) constructed in their foundations and first courses with a masonry of large stones acting as headers, interspersed with smaller stones, on which beds of pakhsa were laid, and covered with mud plaster on its faces.⁸² These walls had survived into modern times at a substantial height; exact measurements are not given, but excavation photographs (e.g. RAB Pl. 1-3) indicate that they survived to at least 2.0 m in some parts. The extensive use of stone in the masonry was probably not incidental to this. There are no indications regarding the structure's roof in the excavation reports, as it obviously would have been constructed from organic materials, long since decayed, presumably wood or branches sealed with mud. Further, while the Qala was erected over a southern part of the Site II structure, no traces of such a later structure were observed above rooms 10 and 13.

It appears that parts of the Site II Structure had also featured an upper floor. Hamelin first suggested this in 1953, noting that walls had been added alongside others in places, and that while these had been interpreted to serve to hide the walled-up entrances to rooms 10 and 13, they may have been actually built to support the upper floor.⁸³ Hamelin thus included an upper floor above rooms 10 and 13, T, X and Z in a recently published reconstruction of the structure.⁸⁴ Further, while they are never discussed in the reports, stairs appear to be indicated in two plans of the Site II structure. Access to an upper floor was perhaps at the south part of the corridor west of rooms 10 and 13, where Le Berre's plan indicates the line of a "mur de fondation (pierre)" annotated with the letter "E". This feature is elaborated with 7 horizontal dotted lines in Hamelin's plan, additionally marked with an "E", and a southwards pointing arrow. "E" is not an excavation area referred to in either RAB or NRAB, so it appears that it stands for "étage". Simpson has already observed that an upper floor would explain the source of the infilling of rooms 10 and 13,⁸⁵ and in support of this, a further hint might be seen in the state of preservation of the wall painting in room 13, which – judging from the sketch and photograph published only recently⁸⁶ – had survived to a height of around 1.50 m above the floor level. Rather a large amount of infill would be required to thus protect this painting from the elements, and an upper floor could have produced this.

The next question is how the hoard came to enter the archaeological record. Putting aside the issues with chronology and possible causal historical events, several observations can be made. First, as Simpson has already pointed out, rooms 10 and 13 were clearly originally designed for other purposes before they were used to conceal the hoard objects, probably being private reception or banqueting rooms.⁸⁷ Further, whatever the character of this structure, it is also clear that rooms 10 and 13 were not somehow concealed long before the Site II Structure was abandoned, with its inhabitants obviously (or deliberately) continuing their business around the hidden rooms in the centre of the building. This is evident from the recovery of a bronze artefacts in Room T in work during 1940,⁸⁸ then more work led by Ghirshman in 1941-1942.⁸⁹ This room, as Meunié stated in his contribution to NRAB, was emphatically not sealed, nor communicated directly with the hoard rooms.⁹⁰ The bronze artefacts recovered in Room T are not just of the same character to those found in Rooms 10 and 13 (being mostly figurines and/or decorative elements originally from larger objects, and of the Greco-Roman tradition)

⁸² HACKIN 1939, 8-9.

⁸³ HAMELIN 1953, 122, n. 1.

⁸⁴ CAMBON 2007, 101.

⁸⁵ AMBERS et alii. 2014, 8-9.

⁸⁶ CAMBON 2007, 101.

⁸⁷ AMBERS et alii 2014, 8.

⁸⁸ See NRAB 230, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 248, 249, 250, 254, 255, 256, 354.

⁸⁹ See GHIRSHMAN 1946, 67-69, pls. XII-XIII, XXXIV-XXXV.

⁹⁰ MEUNIE 1954, 8.

but even provide, in the case of a hollow bronze leg of a bovine reported by Ghirshman,⁹¹ an exact twin for two specimens found in Room 13 (NRAB 159 and 182). Thus, rooms 10 and 13 were clearly abandoned contemporarily with the remainder of the structure, and these two rooms clearly also do not represent, in light of the room T finds, the primary use context of these hoard objects.

While many of objects in rooms 10 and 13 appear to have been placed directly on the floor, prior to their concealment, some may have been organised with ephemeral devices that have since decayed and were thus not observable to the excavators; in a report dated to 1937, Hackin suggested that some of the glass in room 10 had originally been placed on shelves, which (when they finally decayed) led to them falling to the floor of the room to be found in a state of “indescribable disorder.”⁹² Simpson raises the possibility of boxes or sacks.⁹³ As is manifestly clear from the walls concealing the entrances to rooms 10 and 13, this was a deliberate action and most likely in anticipation that the structure was to be abandoned, presumably temporarily, with the responsible parties intending to recover the hoard objects at later point. This evidently did not occur, and at some point the structure decayed, placing the hoard into the archaeological record.

It is also possible to offer further observations about the taphonomy of the surrounding structure. As Hamelin notes that no traces of carbonised wood were recovered, a destructive fire is to be ruled out,⁹⁴ and as no major wall collapse was reported, dramatic seismic activity was probably not the primary instigator. Instead, a post-abandonment, gradual natural degradation process appears to have provided the infill of rooms 10 and 13. First, the hoard objects were surrounded by a fine clay which had not “crushed” most of the objects, but rather “buried” them.⁹⁵ Ethnoarchaeological studies of the taphonomy of earthen architecture highlight that in temperate environments, talus slopes will form on both sides of degrading walls through mud slurry movement and gravitational flows.⁹⁶ Similarly, in arid environments infill sediments of earthen architecture are mostly constituted from the degradation of the pakhsa or otherwise earthen wall elements, deposited by slurry gravitation flows, which accumulate in a characteristic talus formation, as well as wind-blown sediments.⁹⁷ Insights from both studies are relevant, as Begram today is located in a Köppen-Geiger Csa (Hot-summer Mediterranean) climate area, but directly next to a BSk (cold semi-arid) climate area.⁹⁸ To this equation may be added gradually degraded material from the hypothetical upper story, as well as the roof made of organic materials. The total wall collapses observed in the ethnoarchaeological studies cited appear to have not occurred for the ground floor walls of rooms 10 and 13, probably attributable to the extensive use of stone in their lower courses. From another such ethnoarchaeological study, it is clear that collapsed roofs practically seal activity remains on the floor below, but that one has to examine whether the floor deposit was disturbed in other ways, to be sure of the full picture.⁹⁹

To assess the integrity of the hoard’s archaeological context, it first must be more precisely reconstructed. The first port of call are the depth measurements recorded in RAB and NRAB. The documentation of RAB, appearing to be quite comprehensive, gives 207 catalogue entries for finds in room 10, 205 of which have a depth measurement given. However, the

⁹¹ GHIRSHMAN 1946, 68, pl. XIII.I, pl. XXXIV B.G.2.

⁹² Published in CAMBON 1986, 22.

⁹³ AMBERS et alii 2014, 5.

⁹⁴ HAMELIN 1953, 122.

⁹⁵ Discussed at the round table *Begram et les routes commerciales* by Francine Tissot and Rémy Boucharlat in Lyon in 2000, cited by BOPEARACHCHI 2001, 415.

⁹⁶ FRIESEM et alii 2014a, 564.

⁹⁷ FRIESEM et alii 2011, 1140 ff.

⁹⁸ According to the updated Köppen-Geiger world map produced by KOTTEK et alii 2006.

⁹⁹ FRIESEM et alii, 2014b.

documentation for NRAB conveys a more uncertain picture, being an edited version of Hackin's original catalogue for the 1939-1940 excavation published posthumously. Of the 237 catalogue entries unquestionably ascribable to room 13,¹⁰⁰ 205 have recorded depth measurements. However, as two glass vessels appear beyond the range of entries indicated by the editors as belonging to room 13,¹⁰¹ it appears that some residue objects were noticed at the north wall of room 13 at the beginning of the 1940 season. Further, as numerous restored objects were located in the Kabul Museum, and noted in NRAB with roman numerals (I-LXXXVIII), as they could not be correlated precisely with Hackin's preliminary catalogue, several of these must obviously derive from room 13, if not also room 10, and as such, these constitute standard unavoidable issues with legacy data, which are examined extensively in the author's forthcoming dissertation. Nonetheless, as these extraneous objects clearly represent, in the most part, extremely fragmentary material which had been restored since the excavations, and that upon excavation it was evidently not deemed necessary to record their depth measurements, there is hardly cause to disregard the utility of the substantial body of data given in RAB and NRAB.

These data may first be represented with histograms to visualise the vertical distribution of objects in these rooms.¹⁰²

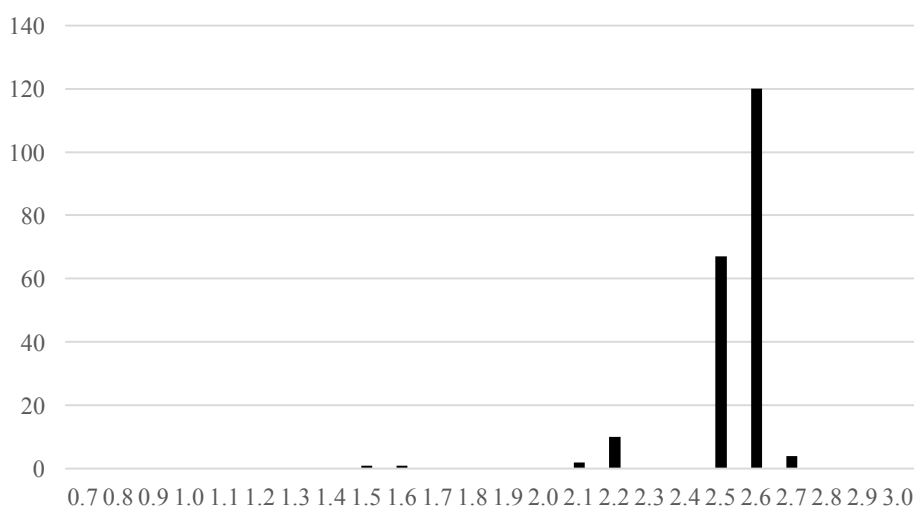


FIG. 4. Vertical distribution of finds in room 10. The horizontal axis indicates depth measurements in 10 cm increments, and the vertical axis indicates the number of catalogue entries recorded with any particular depth measurement.

¹⁰⁰ This count includes numbers repeated with a 'bis' indication, which tend to indicate separate artefacts, but not including those within the larger ivory ensembles, which indicate parts of whole panels from furniture

¹⁰¹ A note added to the NRAB catalogue clarifies that nos. 1-229 were found in room 13 (HACKIN et alii 1954, 276 n. 1).

¹⁰² For these histograms, the available depth data was normalised. Mostly, depth measurements were given in 10 cm increments in RAB and NRAB, i.e. 2.60 m, but sometimes 5 cm increments, i.e. 2.55 m, which were rounded up to the next 10 cm increment. Objects were sometimes allocated a depth range, i.e. 2.45-2.60 m for the bronze dishes found in the centre of room 10. In cases such as these, the average depth was calculated, i.e. 2.525 m, then rounded up or down to the closest 10 cm increment, which for these bronze dishes is 2.50 m.

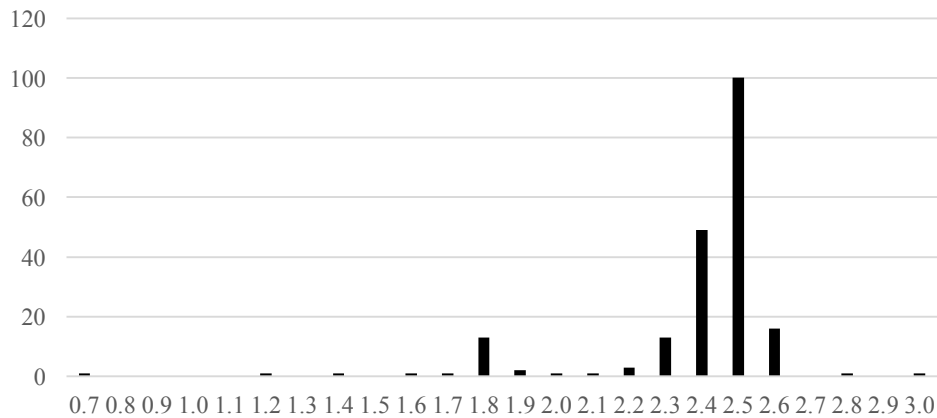


FIG. 5. Vertical distribution of finds in room 13.

The clustering evident in room 10 (FIG. 4) around 2.50-2.60 m constitutes the main hoard deposit in that room, while in room 13 (FIG. 5) there appears to be a wider distribution for the main deposit between 2.20-2.80 m, but it clearly occurs primarily between 2.40-2.50 m. Above these main depositions, artefacts lie above at various depths. The boundaries between the upper material and the main deposit in room 13 are especially not evident from this particular visualisation. To better understand the context in room 13, these data should be aligned with the plan published in 1954 of this room by Pierre Hamelin (FIG. 6).¹⁰³ This plan is reconstructive, being based on Hackin's manuscript and Hamelin's own memory of excavating the room in 1939,¹⁰⁴ so while it is full of valuable information (including the inventory numbers and representations of most objects found in the room, and information about their associations), it does not include all objects that were found in this room and exhibits a few inconsistencies, and thus represents more of a helpful starting point for the interpreter, rather than a final testament.

With these caveats firmly in mind, I have created a 3D representation of the distribution of the artefacts that can be positively aligned with Hamelin's plan of room 13, with reference to the depth measurements published in NRAB, using Blender. If either data point for an object was missing or unsure, it was not included. The objects are indicated by their rough forms and shaded according to their general material class. Two greyscale orthographic views of this model are published here, from the east looking west (FIG. 7) and from the south looking north (FIG. 8), but the full interactive version is available online.¹⁰⁵ The main hoard deposition in this room is quite clear. It is subject in some areas to upwards and downwards deviations (either to be explained by the decomposition of ephemeral organising devices, the surrounding architecture, or postdepositional bioturbation, i.e. insect burrowing), and the higher position of some objects are clearly due to the fact that they were stacked on others.

¹⁰³ HAMELIN 1954, pl. XV.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, 154.

¹⁰⁵ Accessible at Bactria.org, <http://www.bactria.org/begram-room-13.html>. I wish to thank Rachel Mairs for kindly hosting this model.

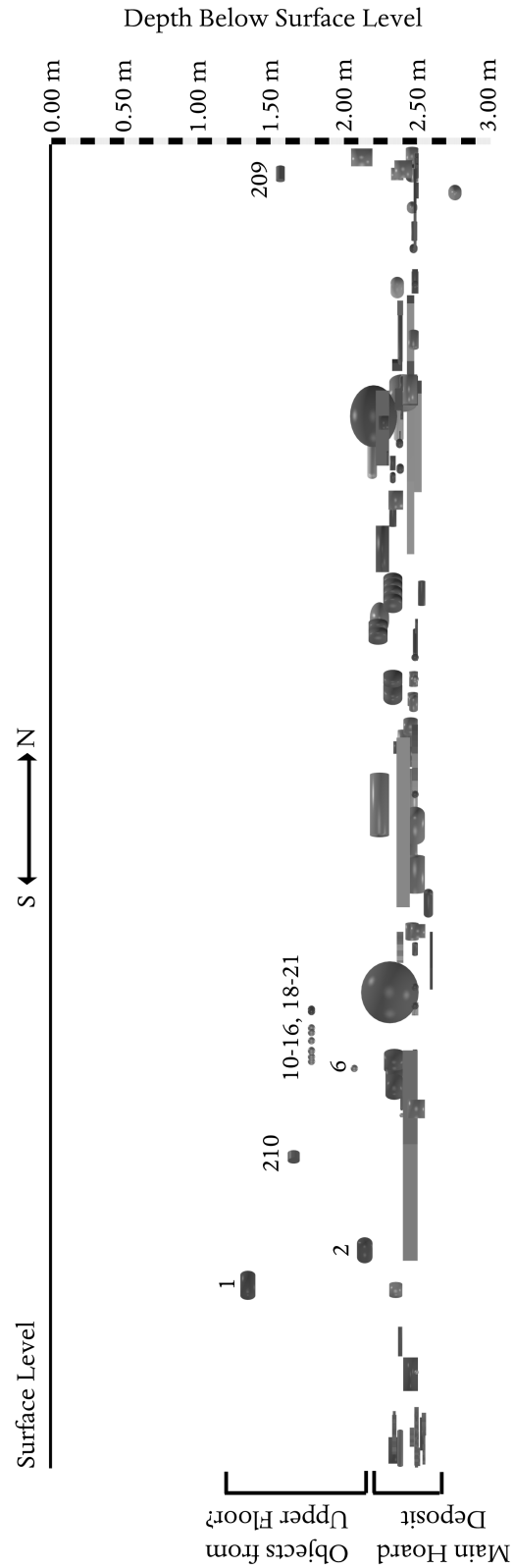


FIG. 7. View from east to west of model indicating distribution of objects in room 13. Objects are represented with shapes corresponding to their basic forms and dimensions. Indicated are the apparent main hoard deposit, and objects possibly deriving from an upper floor (i.e. NRAB 1-2, 6, 10-16, 18-21, 209-210).

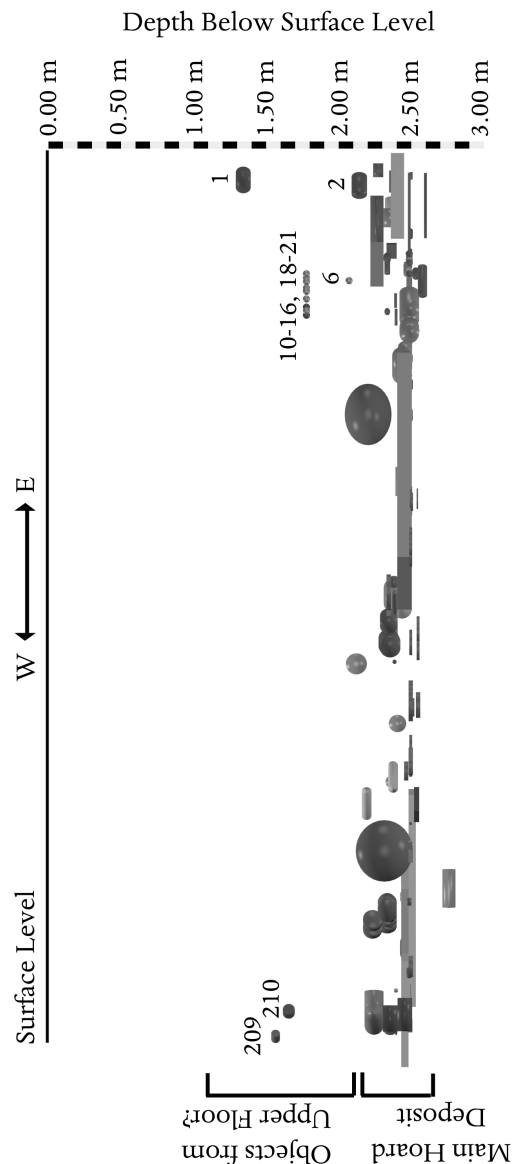


FIG. 8. View from south to north of model indicating distribution of objects in room 13, as in Fig. 7.

Particular attention should be drawn to the 21 catalogue entries indicated clearly above the main hoard deposit, 16 of which are indicated on Hamelin's plan around the perimeter of the room. This includes three bronze ewers with handles of the same type (NRAB 1, eastern wall, 1.40 m; NRAB 2, eastern wall, 2.20 m; NRAB 209, western wall, 1.60 m), a bronze bowl (NRAB 210, western wall, 1.70 m), ten billon coins indicated in a group near the eastern wall (Kujula Kadphises, NRAB 6, 2.10 m; one unidentified NRAB 10, 1.80 m) Vasudeva NRAB 11-16, 1.80 m; two with central holes NRAB 20-21, 1.80 m), and two beads, cornelian and glass paste, directly adjacent (NRAB 18, 1.80 m; NRAB 19, 1.80 m). Again, noting the deficiencies of Hamelin's plan, the upper part of a steatite male head (NRAB 17, 2.00 m) and a ceramic vessel (NRAB 22, 1.80 m) appear to be associated on the eastern wall, based on their numbering, and three copper coins appear to have been found closer to the centre of the eastern wall (NRAB 45, 1.80 m; NRAB 49, 1.90 m; NRAB 50, 1.90 m). The position of these objects on the perimeter of room 13 appears to indicate that they derive from the upper floor above room 13, which is contemporary to the hoard. If any objects were placed in the centre of this

upper room, they may be closer to the depth of the hoard deposit proper. Thus it remains impossible to definitively delineate between the main and upper deposits in that area.

This has some interesting implications for the coins in particular, namely that the ten billon coins (NRAB 6, 10-16, 20-21) appear to have been found in horizontal association. Perhaps, they were originally held together in a cloth bag. The Kujula Kadphises billon coin may have belonged to this group, but was separated from the others during the degradation of the upper storey (and the hypothetical bag holding the coins). This explains why this coin was found above the hoard deposit proper and that of his descendent Wima Kadphises (NRAB 208, 2.50 m), which Mehendale had perceived to challenge the significance of these coins for dating purposes.

Turning to room 10, a ground plan was also published by Hamelin (FIG. 9) in 1953 based on Carl's sketch (C. C. 140),¹⁰⁶ but it is extremely schematic, without indications of inventory numbers, noting only some groups of objects and dates for excavated areas. Therefore, a 3D representation like the one created for room 13 would be unacceptably hypothetical. However, it is certainly possible to offer some observations about this archaeological context, as the objects depths were so consistently recorded in RAB. First, the depth of the hoard objects here are extremely consistent, with almost all being found between 2.45-2.70 m.

Exceptions are the two entries recorded at 2.10 m and the 10 at 2.20 m. The latter are a group of glass vessels and a plain bronze ring (RAB 155 [6] to RAB 161 [13]; RAB 163 [15] and 179 [22]), which were the first finds reported in this room, all excavated in sequence between 17-19/5/37 in the northwest corner. Their higher position is confirmed in a description from Ella Maillart who visited the site in 1939: "In the tenth they had reached a layer of decomposed glass; and lower still Ria found a collection of cut vases and bowls as good as Murano's".¹⁰⁷ Perhaps, if these vessels were originally placed on some kind of shelf, a large amount of sediment from the decaying walls may have already formed in a talus deposition in this corner, forming a platform underneath the shelf by the time it gave way. It is impossible to be sure.

The two entries recorded at 2.10 m are indicated as two small terracotta lamps without decoration (RAB 170 [23] bis; RAB 171 [24]), which – judging by their humble character and their position closer to the wall – may derive from the upper floor that otherwise appears to have been rather empty in this area. One coin (RAB 238 [92], 1.50 m) may also derive from there. On the other hand, the catalogue entry RAB 254 [108], at 1.60 m constitutes an entire male skeleton and 24 iron objects, oriented from N-S in the south part of the room. While images thereof were not published in RAB, a recently published photograph¹⁰⁸ shows the skeleton is still fully articulated and laid horizontally, and thus this clearly constitutes a later burial cut into the mound of the long-decayed structure.

Observing the dates noted on Hamelin's room 10 plan, and keeping in mind the excavation dates for the three coins from room 10 published by Bopearachchi (Nos. 117, 119, and 120 at a depth of 2.60 m), 13/6/37 or 14/6/37, it is clear that these coins were found in the central area of room 10, surrounded by other objects of a similar depth. Acknowledging that there is a very good case for a contemporary upper floor, and that if these three coins did happen to have come from this upper floor and had all managed to worm their way down to the floor level to accompany the hoard objects through the decomposition of the upper floor, they are still perfectly relevant for ascribing a *terminus post quem* for the hoard's deposition as the whole structure appears to have been abandoned at the same time. In light of the evidence

¹⁰⁶ HAMELIN 1953, pl. II.

¹⁰⁷ MAILLART 1947, 191.

¹⁰⁸ CAMBON 2007, 87

presented above, it is difficult to maintain that they may somehow derive from a later occupation period entirely, as there is no evidence in support of this.

In sum, as the deposition of the hoard and the abandonment of the Site II structure appear to have occurred after c. 260 AD, this does not correspond with Ghirshman's ascription of this structure to Niveau II. It is thus necessary to take a step towards revising the chronological framework for occupation at the New Royal City.

OCCUPATION AT THE NEW ROYAL CITY

The following information regarding layers of occupation at the different excavation areas in the New Royal City is provided in the published reports. The brief accounts of work at Site I during 1936-1937 noted that two phases of occupation were observed in certain areas,¹⁰⁹ and based on identifiable coins in these layers, the lower was dated from Hermaeus to "Kadphisès II" (i.e. Wima Kadphises), and the upper from Kanishka to Vasudeva.¹¹⁰ In 1938, Meunié extended the excavation of Site II to the west, stating that the Qala comes from a later period than the Site II structure, when the fortifications were no longer in use.¹¹¹ He also excavated a series of rooms further to the west, which he judged to be of the same period as the area excavated in 1937 due to their orientation and depth.¹¹² During his excavations at Site B in 1941-1942, Ghirshman recognised three occupation phases, Niveaux I-III, dated with the coins found in each layer. Niveau I spans from Eucratides to Wima Kadphises, Niveau II from Kanishka I to Vasudeva I, and Niveau III to the "3rd and 4th Kushan Dynasties".¹¹³ Ghirshman excavated an imprecisely indicated part of Site II, and then attributed the Site II Structure to Niveau II. This was mainly in regard to its masonry (foundations and first courses of irregular stone, beds of pakhsa above, such as in Niveau II) and that coins found during his excavation were only from the "2nd Kushan Dynasty", namely Huvishka.¹¹⁴ Ghirshman ascribed the Qala to Niveau III, "judged from its architecture and the coins found there".¹¹⁵ Meunié's excavations at the city entrance in 1946 revealed three layers of construction, the first judged to be anterior to the Kushans, and the second and third being Kushan. Most of the 127 coins found in this area span from Apollodotus to Vasudeva, with 65 of the latter king in a hoard associated with the last occupation period. Two coins of Hormizd II were also recovered outside of the south wall of room A1.¹¹⁶

It is possible to clarify what constitutes Ghirshman's "3rd and 4th Kushan Dynasties". Under this label in his numismatic chapter, he references two types of coins, noted as "exclusivement en bronze et anépigraphes": Type I, Siva et boeuf; and Type II, Ardokhsho trônant.¹¹⁷ Thankfully some characteristic photos were published. Type I, with two published specimens,¹¹⁸ and Type II, with a single published specimen,¹¹⁹ are late Kushan or Kushano-Sasanian post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull imitations, and late Kushan seated Ardoxsho types respectively, either minted by Kanishka II or a successor. We have no clue how the rest of these coins looked, so more detail is not possible.

¹⁰⁹ While "See Plan K" is indicated (HACKIN et alii 1959, 85), the concerned areas are not clear at all.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 85, and 101 for a preliminary list of coins.

¹¹¹ MEUNIE 1959a, 104-105.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, 105.

¹¹³ See n. 11 and n. 12 supra.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 28.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 28.

¹¹⁶ IDEM 1959b, 111-112.

¹¹⁷ GHIRSHMAN 1946, 86; 97.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, pl. XXII, 9 and 10.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pl. XXII, 11.

The historical difficulty of identifying such coins has evidently caused a blind spot in understanding the chronology of Begram. The profundity of this problem for the published data is made clear as 91 of 142 coins mentioned in the Site I report for 1936 were not identified, likewise 58 of the 66 coins mentioned for 1937.¹²⁰

It would appear that this blind spot has handicapped other scholarship too. Kuwayama, for example, observed that the upper level of Site I must be contemporary to Ghirshman's Niveau III at Site B, in that they share the same variety of ceramics with stamped decoration, some executed with the exact same dies.¹²¹ Without the benefit of the coins published in 2001 by Bopearachchi, Kuwayama's first two articles on this chronological problem come to argue that Niveau III, including Site I and the Qala, should be dated much later. In 1974, he placed this after the 5th century, with it still existing in the 7th century.¹²² In 1991, the beginning was argued to be the middle of the 6th century and continuing until the middle of the 8th.¹²³ Kuwayama reiterated the argument in 2010, stating that Niveau III certainly cannot predate the 6th century.¹²⁴

First, Kuwayama is certainly correct that Site I – at least the upper layer – is contemporary to Ghirshman's Niveau III at Site B. This is also borne out by the coins. Bopearachchi 2001 includes at least 3 post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull issues (Nos. 65-67), and 9 seated Ardoxsho types (Nos. 68-69, 89-95). The correlation is also supported by the plans and orientation of construction in both areas. The angle of the east-west street (Ruelle B (Site B)=Ruelle Mediane (Site I)) changed between Niveau I-II and Niveau III at Site B,¹²⁵ and the lower and upper layer at Site I.¹²⁶ When these plans are aligned to the north, this street at Niveau III proves to be of the same orientation as that of the Site I upper layer. Further, looking to Plan K, three rooms on the east side of Site I exhibit the earthen benches along interior walls that Ghirshman observed exclusively in some of the houses at Site B Niveau III.¹²⁷ Finally, ceramics other than those with stamped decoration recovered in Site I (we cannot be sure of the upper or lower layer, but presumably the upper) match with types characteristic of Site B Niveau III excavated by Ghirshman, most obviously in the terracotta figurines unique to this level. For example, three incomplete, small terracotta figurines representing elephants were published by Ghirshman,¹²⁸ the first with the remains of a base of a bowl formed onto its back. Two more complete versions of this type were found in Site I in 1936.¹²⁹ Likewise, an incomplete terracotta quadruped with two small apertures on the top and side published by Ghirshman from Site B Niveau III¹³⁰ is clarified by a complete specimen excavated at Site I,¹³¹ and one more fragmentary.¹³² A similar object was also excavated at Site I in the form of a bird.¹³³ Finally, two crude and incomplete figurines representing a figure on horseback were

¹²⁰ HACKIN et alii 1959, 102-103.

¹²¹ KUWAYAMA 1974, 59.

¹²² *Ibidem*, 76-77.

¹²³ KUWAYAMA 1991, 112, 117-118.

¹²⁴ KUWAYAMA 2010, 291.

¹²⁵ See GHIRSHMAN 1946, fig. 12.

¹²⁶ See HACKIN et alii 1959, room 13 in Plan K.

¹²⁷ GHIRSHMAN 1946, 33 ff.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, pl. XLVI B.G. 168, 208, 248.

¹²⁹ HACKIN et alii 1959, No. 30, fig. 239; No. 31. The unpublished report for work at Site I in 1937 notes three further specimens: 1937 Cat. 8, 26, 33.

¹³⁰ GHIRSHMAN 1946, pl. XLVI, B.G. 345.

¹³¹ HACKIN et alii 1959, No. 28, fig. 235 left.

¹³² *Ibidem*, No. 32.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, No. 29, fig. 236 left.

found by Ghirshman in Site B Niveau III,¹³⁴ a more complete and well-executed version of which was found in Site I.¹³⁵

It should be clarified whether Ghirshman was correct to attribute the Qala to Niveau III with regard to “its architecture and the coins found there”.¹³⁶ Interestingly, Ghirshman states that the Qala featured masonry entirely different to that observed in Niveau III (or other periods at Begram), i.e. beds of paksha alternating with beds of mudbrick, which he compared (in general spirit) to Roman opus mixtum.¹³⁷ Further, despite referring to “coins found there”, he does not mention any in association with this feature. Ghirshman attribution of the Qala to Niveau III appears to essentially come down to the fact that it was superimposed over the Site II structure, which he had attributed to Niveau II.

Ghirshman, of course, did not excavate the Qala himself, and Meunié’s report of work done there in 1938 was only published in 1959. Here, Meunié states that the structure was “desperately empty”, except for a walled-in double cache against the east wall of room 18. Here were found two extremely oxidised and unidentifiable bronze coins, a ceramic jug with one handle, a gilded painted plaster face, which appears to derive from Buddhist sculpture, and “some fragments of stamped pottery (bird passing to right) (fig. 246).”¹³⁸ Kuwayama takes the latter point as evidence for the association between this type of decorative device and structures with round bastions.¹³⁹ However, Meunié mentions only this single design (which is also represented by only “some fragments”, i.e. not a whole vessel), and the design itself is curiously not mentioned by Kuwayama, nor any other objects found in the Qala. Perhaps then it would have already been noticed that the ceramic jug bears no correspondence to other forms excavated at the New Royal City.

Kuwayama’s argument for such a late Niveau III relies on three tenets: 1. Coins should be ignored for dating purposes at Begram; 2. There is a correlation between ceramics with stamped decorations and round bastions; and 3. that Begram must be the Kapisi visited by Xuanzang in the 7th century AD.

The first point is made clear when Bopearachchi’s 2001 publication is mentioned in a footnote in Kuwayama’s most recent article on the topic. Here, issue is taken with the late 3rd century date Bopearachchi proposed for the end of the New Royal City, as judged by the latest coins recovered there from the DAFA excavations. Simply, Kuwayama states “I am afraid to accept his date ... insofar as I believe that the date of the coins cannot be the same as that of the site”.¹⁴⁰ It is difficult to respond to such a method of treating numismatic evidence. There are no known coins from the excavations at the New Royal City that reflect Kuwayama’s date for Begram III – the single Sri Shahi coin (NRAB 117) being clearly a chance find – and while it is not good practice to rely on an *argumentum ex silentio*, the silence in this case is deafening.

Regarding the second point, Kuwayama’s sophisticated sequence of these two features is reconstructed from archaeological excavations with complex chronological issues. The simplest explanation could be that both stamped decorations and round bastions have a long history of use. The single stamp type attested at the Qala may well be a late development in the history of this decorative device. Both features and their chronology deserve a lengthy consideration that is unfortunately not possible for the present article.

Regarding the Kapisi question, for now it can be said that, if Begram must be the same location visited by Xuanzang, the occupation area of the 7th century town may have been

¹³⁴ GHIRSHMAN 1946, pl. XLVI, B.G. 83, 541.

¹³⁵ HACKIN et alii 1959, No. 29, fig. 235 right.

¹³⁶ GHIRSHMAN 1946, 28.

¹³⁷ Ibidem, 38-39.

¹³⁸ MEUNIE 1959a, 104.

¹³⁹ KUWAYAMA 1974, 59-60; IDEM 1991, 108.

¹⁴⁰ IDEM 2010, 283, n. 4.

centred on the lower intervening area between the Burj-i-Abdullah and the New Royal City, with its surface traces destroyed by land cultivation. The history of occupation at the plain of Begram will be clarified when Masson's coins collected from there are published in their final form. Perhaps the Qala belongs to the 7th century or later, but it does not belong to Niveau III.

The next question is whether Ghirshman's attribution of the Site II structure to only Niveau II is correct. While he excavated only part of this structure, the association was drawn on the grounds of its masonry (foundations and first courses of irregular stone, beds of pakhsa above, such as in Niveau II) and the coins found in his part of the excavation being only from the "2nd Kushan Dynasty", namely Huvishka, and that the coins found during the Hackin excavations were "Kushan".¹⁴¹ However, as is clear from Le Berre's plan (FIG. 2), the structure had undergone renovations. The remains of stone foundations of an earlier iteration are visible at several points, which were taken by Rapin to indicate a possible earlier Indo-Greek structure.¹⁴² Hamelin likewise presents a ground plan of the structure's supposed original, Kushan period form.¹⁴³ Additionally, looking again to Le Berre's plan, the western part of the structure appears to have undergone significant later renovation into habitations with similar organisation and orientation to those observed in Site B Niveau III by Ghirshman. Note that, despite their shifted orientation, the western habitations still meet the boundaries of Court U. Part of this area was also excavated by Meunié in 1938,¹⁴⁴ not included in Le Berre's plan, and ceramic finds from here are of the same types reported by Ghirshman in Site B Niveau III, including a terracotta elephant with a cup on its back in room 37,¹⁴⁵ and a large open vessel in room 35,¹⁴⁶ with the "la langue ondulée et les 'virgules'" decoration described by Ghirshman as being unique to this layer.¹⁴⁷

A few interesting pieces of evidence, considered together, indicate that the eastern part of the Site II structure likewise continued to be occupied during this period. One late Kushan Ardoxsho type coin is reported in Bopearachchi 2001 (No. 121, 2.50 m) to come from room 6 of this building. Further, a bronze ewer with a handle found in Site I,¹⁴⁸ belongs to the same class as the three found above the hoard deposit in room 13 (NRAB 1, 2, 209). Likewise, a bone comb featuring an incised depiction of a bird found on the eastern side of Site I,¹⁴⁹ has obvious correspondences with the ivory and bone carvings from the hoard. More clues are found in the ceramics described but not photographed in NRAB. Precise excavation areas are not indicated for most. A figurine representing a horse rider is mentioned (NRAB 323), two zoomorphic vessels with two small openings referred to here as "sifflet à eau" (i.e. 'water whistle'), one complete in the form of a horse (NRAB 301), and another fragmentary (NRAB 304), as well as fragments of a vessel with two stamped medallion decorations (NRAB 319), the description of which corresponds with design *k* observed at Site I.¹⁵⁰

Most interesting, however, is NRAB 53: "Éléphant, poterie commune rougeâtre, servait de support à un récipient (lampe?)", at a depth of 3.0 m, recorded on 14/6/39. We can recognise this from analogous specimens already noted from Ghirshman's Niveau III, Site I, and the western extension of Site II. Unlike the majority of the ceramics in NRAB, the findspot of this object is indicated. A note on its page of the catalogue refers to another note on page 276,

¹⁴¹ GHIRSHMAN 1946, 28.

¹⁴² RAPIN 1992, 383-385.

¹⁴³ HAMELIN 1953, pl. I.

¹⁴⁴ MEUNIE 1959a, fig. 244.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, fig. 247.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, fig. 252.

¹⁴⁷ GHIRSHMAN 1946, 71. See pl. LI B.G. 330, B.G. 530, B.G. 570 a and b.

¹⁴⁸ HACKIN et alii 1959, No. 164, fig. 229.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 102, No. 68; HACKIN et alii 1954, fig. 237.

¹⁵⁰ HACKIN et alii 1959, pl. VII.

which states that numbers 1-229 in this catalogue were found in room 13.¹⁵¹ Occasionally exceptions to this rule are noted (i.e. NRAB 43, a ceramic cup indicated from “Chantier de la ruelle”), but as the surrounding excavation numbers (NRAB 49-52, and 53 bis and 54) all obviously belong to room 13, and all (excluding NRAB 54, which was highly fragmented and indicated as excavated in “June”) have the same excavation date and the depth of 2.50 m, it is reasonable to suspect that the elephant belongs to this area. Like several objects from room 13, it is not indicated on Hamelin’s plan. Perhaps he chose not to include it, as it was found at such a low depth (perhaps from an earlier floor?), and quite clearly did not belong to the hoard deposit proper. Looking to the sequence of objects indicated in the central part along the east wall (including 51, 52, 54), it appears that the elephant was found there, well below the surrounding hoard objects.

In sum, architectural, ceramic and numismatic evidence indicates that, while the Site II structure may have been constructed in Niveau II, it was renovated extensively with parts in its western side transformed into a habitation area, and it continued to be occupied through Niveau III. This corresponds well with the testament of the 5 post-Vasudeva Oesho with bull coins from Site II analysed earlier. This structure, then, joins the upper level of Site I, Niveau III of Site B, and also the upper level of the city entrance. The hoard of 65 coins associated with latest layer of occupation there, included two types attributed then to Vasudeva “a. D. Roi à l’autel – R. Siva au taureau. b. D. Roi à l’autel – R. Divinité de face, assise sur un trône”¹⁵². These are obviously the general late Kushan period types observed also in Site B, Site I, and Site II. Without photographs it is impossible to be more precise.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has addressed the difficulties of the chronology of the Begram hoard and the New Royal City in a number of ways. First, it was argued that, while the hoard objects may well have been produced in the most part during the 1st-2nd centuries AD, this does not exclude the possibility that they were deposited and concealed at a later date in rooms 10 and 13, and that the latest artefact in this assemblage only serves as a *terminus post quem* for this event. After, three copper coins from room 10 published by Bopearachchi in 2001 were discussed as late Kushan Oesho with bull types, minted either under the Kushano-Sasanians, Vasishka, or some minor local authority at this time. I suggested that c. 260 AD serves as a conservative *terminus post quem* for the production of these coins. In the next section, the archaeological contexts of rooms 10 and 13 were reconstructed, and it was argued that the three late coins are in clear association with the hoard and can be used to date the deposition event, being either buried with the hoard on the same floor, or (less likely) coming from the centre of an upper floor. Next, the chronology of the New Royal City was considered, and an examination of the site plans, architecture, coins, ceramics and other small finds of this area indicate that the upper level of Site I is contemporary to Niveau III at Site B, that Ghirshman was not correct in ascribing the Qala above the Site II Structure to Niveau III, and that Ghirshman was likewise not correct to consider the Site II structure as belonging to only Niveau II. While this structure was constructed during Niveau II (or possibly earlier), it was also renovated and occupied throughout Niveau III. Thus, the upper levels of Site B, Site I, the city entrance, and Site II appear to be contemporary to each other.

The end result is that a conservative *terminus post quem* for the deposition of the Begram hoard has been offered at c. 260 AD, with the abandonment of Niveau III appearing to be contemporary to this event. While I hesitate to lean too heavily on possible instigating

¹⁵¹ HACKIN et al 1954, 276, n. 1.

¹⁵² MEUNIE 1959b, 112.

historical events, the general absence of official Kushano-Sasanian coins from the New Royal City excavations may indicate that the abandonment of Niveau III is associated with the third Kushano-Sasanian king Peroz I's conquest of the Begram and Kabul regions around this time.¹⁵³ However, it is not clear whether the two coins of Hormizd II found in the upper layer of the city entrance outside of room A 1 are in association with this layer of occupation proper, and the coins providing the basis for the c. 260 AD *terminus post quem* may have continued to circulate for some time. The focus of this article has necessarily been to consider the internal logic of the occupation levels at the New Royal City, but comparative architectural and ceramic evidence from outside of Begram should certainly clarify the picture presented here.

Finally, the deposition date for the Begram hoard reached here will have interesting implications for our understanding of the character and significance of this assemblage, but these must be addressed in future research.

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¹⁵³ JONGEWARD et alii 2015, 197 ff.

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