Evidence on the period we are concerned with in this paper—namely the Pre-Kuṣāṇa period—was yielded by excavation on the Buddhist sacred area of Butkara I, and is associated with further excavations at Pāṇḍ I and Saidu Sharif I carried out by the IsIAO Italian Archaeological Mission. Here we shall be considering a number of points in the hope that they may help to settle some of the doubts raised, although the remaining doubts surely will outnumber the likely answers. The evidence is in part already common knowledge, thanks also to a number of studies addressing it in various ways by eminent scholars.

Here we shall confine our attention to two aspects of the period, namely the architecture—particularly the sacred architecture (stūpa, vihāra, column)—for which we have the fullest documentation over the longest time-span, and the sculpture. Indeed the two aspects are closely and structurally connected.

We shall begin with the architectural component.

**Butkara I Great Stūpa**

The spiritual center of the sacred area at Butkara I is the Great Stūpa (GSt.). It shows five successive extensions reflecting the habitational periods in the sacred area, from the third century B.C. to the tenth century A.D. In this paper we consider the major data for the three periods that interest us, marked respectively by GSt. 1, GSt. 2 and GSt. 3.¹

¹ We refer readers to Domenico Faccenna, *Butkara I (Śvāt, Pakistan) 1956–1962* (Rome, 1980–1981), cited *Butkara I*, for further details, and to the two volumes of
GST.1 consists of a large dome (diameter c. 11.00) in blocks of dark phyllite on tall foundations against which abuts a mound of stones, the whole being coated with plaster (Fig. 7.1). This construction encloses a cylindrical structure with the reliquary recess, which constitutes the center of the monument throughout. In the core of the mound, a 'local' coin was found with a crescent on arches and symbols, which Göbl attributed to the “time of Chandragupta Maurya, early third century B.C.” Errington recently ascribed the coin to the late third-early second century B.C., making reference to the publication by Gupta and Hardaker, which is subsequent to the study by Göbl. I agree with Errington, although the dating (early second century) is too late and leaves no reasonable margin of time for the later fortunes of GST. This is indicated in the name of Dhammarājikā in two later inscriptions.

The mound was subsequently cut through by a circular wall, which brings us to GST.2 with Period 2 (Fig. 7.2). We now find a dome on a cylindrical storey (diameter 13.44), in accordance with the Indian scheme; there is no molding, and the floor is F5. The cylindrical storey underwent various changes, with the opening of niches at the four compass points, and the subsequent closure of three of them. One exception is the south niche, which was equipped with a projecting structure, and was reconstructed in the form of a podium or flight of steps, the floor being raised to produce F5R (Fig. 7.3).

Dating of this closing stage of GST.2 to the late second-early first century B.C. is afforded by a Menander coin; found between the first and second structures in a place that seems quite deliberate, possibly an act of consecration. The construction of GST.2 with the original floor, F5, therefore must be placed somewhere between this date and the date of the coin in GST.1, namely the second century B.C.

plates in Domenico Faccenna, Sculptures from the sacred area of Butkara I (Swat, Pakistan) (Rome, 1962 and 1964), cited hereafter as Sculptures.

2 Robert Göbl, A Catalogue of coins from Butkara I (Swat, Pakistan) (Rome, 1976), no. 3.


5 Göbl 1976, no. 13, drachm with elephant’s head and club.