

The Ceramic Sequence of the Citadel (Barama) of Mengjieli/Massaga: the Capital City of Uḍḍiyāna

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Questo articolo intende corroborare sulla base delle evidenze archeologiche il carattere urbano del sito di Butkara, noto nei testi con il nome di Mengjieli/Massaga, riprendendo il progetto di studio di Domenico Faccenna presso il sito di Barama, identificato dallo studioso come la cittadella del più grande centro urbano dello Swat.

Nella prima sezione di questo contributo, il materiale ceramico di Barama, qui pubblicato per la prima volta, sarà sequenziato secondo le macrofasi strutturali proposte dallo studioso e rivalutato cronologicamente sulla base di confronti con la ben datata sequenza ceramica di Barikot. Nella seconda sezione, risultati e ipotesi derivate da questo studio verranno integrati in più ampie considerazioni di carattere topografico e storico.

A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AND ITS LIMITS

The history of this study precedes me by far. It began in 1963 when, having acknowledged the crucial importance of the site that he had partially just uncovered, Domenico Faccenna exported the ceramic material of the site of Barama (Swat, Northern Pakistan) from the warehouse at the IsMEO headquarters in Saidu Sharif to the then Museo d'Arte Orientale in Rome (MAO).

Although the exporting of archaeological objects from Pakistan to Italy as such was covered by a mutual agreement between IsMEO and the Pakistani authorities (until 1976), moving non-inventoried ceramic artefacts for study purposes was quite unusual at the time, and, as far as I know, limited to Barama. This unusual decision aimed to ensure an in-depth study of the ceramic sequence of the site that Faccenna identified as the citadel of the most important city of Swat, Mengjieli, noted in history for the Mauryan stupa established on its outskirts. This study was entrusted to Pierfrancesco Callieri who started documenting the ceramics from Barama while completing the analysis of the pottery data from the monastery of Saidu Sharif (Callieri 1989). However, it was clear from the outset that the Barikot excavation, which had meanwhile begun under the direction of Callieri, would have to lead the creation of a reference ceramic sequence for Swat thanks to its stratigraphic features, urban complexity, and data collection methodology. The study of the Barama pottery was then temporarily paused, pending the completion of the Barikot ceramic sequence.

The story of the study presented here begins when the Barikot sequence was concluded. In 2016, when the work on Barikot's pottery was almost completed,¹ I was

¹ For the events that led to a delay in the data processing and publication see Callieri, Olivieri 2020: 14-15.