

## **The itinerary of O rgyan pa in Swat/Uddiyana (second half of 13th Century)**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper presents a detailed reconstruction of the itinerary of the Tibetan pilgrim O rgyan pa towards Uddiyana. The reconstruction is based on the translation of his travelog published by Giuseppe Tucci in 1940. The journey took place between 1260 and 1283. In light of the most recent archaeological research, some geographical benchmark of his itinerary can be defined. This paper focuses in particular on the whereabouts of the so-called “Indrabhuti Temple” in the vicinity of Manglawar, Swat.*

### **Introduction**

There is a general and strong consensus on the identification of Uddiyana with the valley of Swat and neighbouring territories despite some recent disagreements. The grounds for this identification can be summarized as follows (reproduced verbatim from Olivieri 2016: 39).

“1) Archaeological research in Swat has amply demonstrated the existence of a strong Vajrayanic background already in the 7th century CE<sup>1</sup>. 2) Textual evidences show that from 5th Century CE, Chinese and Tibetan travelers and pilgrims for more than thousand years visited the Swat valley believing that it was Uddiyana. 3) If the true Uddiyana, as physical realm, should have been searched elsewhere than in Swat, we ought to conclude that those venerated pilgrims and travelers were wrong”.

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<sup>1</sup> In particular we refer to the stela of a “Siddha” currently in the Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif (Olivieri 2016: figs. 7-8; Filigenzi 2015<sub>a</sub>: fig. 140, fig. on p. 162)

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Archaeological evidence in favor of the identification of the Swat valley with Uddiyana has been recently summarized in Olivieri 2016 and Filigenzi 2015<sub>a</sub> and 2015<sub>b</sub>, while textual evidence was thoroughly analyzed and studied by past scholars particularly by G. Tucci (1931, 1940<sup>1-4</sup>, 1958<sup>1-3</sup>, 1971<sup>1-3</sup>, 1977<sup>1-3</sup>).

The present note intends to present other elements of overlap between archaeology and texts, which may contribute to clarify the debate. These elements include the whereabouts of a temple associated to King Indrabhuti in the travelogue of O rgyan pa, a Tibetan pilgrim of the second half of the 13th century.

### **The travel of O rgyan pa (ca. 1230-1293)**

The travel of O rgyan pa to Uddiyana should have taken place between 1260 and 1283 according to the reconstruction of his biography (Tucci 1940<sup>3</sup>: 6)<sup>2</sup>. Tucci recovered and translated a large portion of O rgyan pa's travelogue, but focused mostly on the final part of his outbound trip, the one related to Swat. Very recently, the description of the previous stretch of his journey in Kulu-Lahul-Chamba valleys (Himachal Pradesh) was studied and published by V. Widorn in a very detailed study on the ancient geography of the area (Id. 2015).

It seems that the journey of O rgyan pa through the valleys of Lulu-Lahul-Chamba was a quite miraculous journey and extremely fast (ibid.: 207). Probably he reached the Punjab plain either through the Ravi or the Chenab valleys. The first route might have been the best way out of the Kulu-Lahul-Chamba according to the 13th century ancient geography (compare figs. 7.2 and 7.3 in Widorn 2015). Eventually we find O rgyan pa traveling towards WSW, crossing the Jhelum and heading to Malakote (the modern Malot) in the Salt Range (Tucci 1940<sup>3</sup>: 25). Then he moved in direction NW and, *before* crossing the Indus, he reached Rajahura/Rajapura, one of the four gateways to Uddiyana. The other three gates cannot be identified with certainty except for Nila that can be located on the upper Soan River (ibid.: 26, fn. 82)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Additional references to the most update works related to the topic of this paper can be found in Olivieri 2016, which is also accessible in the Internet.

See <http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/category/journal-of-bhutan-studies/>

<sup>3</sup> The toponym can be related to River Neelam, which flows from Kashmir to Jhelum. For the antiquities in Upper Neelam, see Ahmad and Samad 2015.

### **Approaching Uddiyana**

This point however demonstrates that the borders of the region that in antiquity was referred to as Uddiyana do not overlap exactly the geographical limits of the Swat Valley. Uddiyana was a large dominion that included the following modern districts of Pakistan: part of Abbottabad (if Nila is *that* Nila), Manshera (up to Besham), Swabi, Buner, Shangla and beyond (see also Widorn 2015: fn. 1). The core of Uddiyana should be found in Swat, or better at Dhumat ‘ala, as in O rgyan pa’s travelog is said that “no other place except Dhumat ‘ala is [specifically] called U rgyan” (ibid.: 27) (see below).

O rgyan pa crossed the Indus probably near Hund and from that point on he believed that he had entered in Uddiyana (ibid.: 27). First he stopped outside a town called Kalabur/Kalapur and then (at this point the text is unclear) in one day he reached town of Kaboko, whose chief Rajadeva was “the master of the greatest part of U rgyan”. It should be noted that O rgyan pa does not use the term king as he did for the queens of Malakote and Rukala. The term “master” can be explained in light of the statement he makes later in the account “At that time O rgyan had been just conquered by the Hor” i.e. by the Mongols (ibid. 27), or in any case was under Muslim rule (Tucci 1977<sup>2</sup>: 227) (see below). Rajadeva, certainly a Hindu aristocrat, was not the king of Kaboko, rather the administrator or the “master” of the territory. Kaboko should be searched about 15 km (= 1 walking day; Tucci 1940<sup>3</sup>: 14) N-NW of the area of Hund, i.e. in Swabi or lower Buner districts.

With the help of a guide bearing a letter signed by Rajadeva (certainly a *lassez-passaire* for the Hor), O rgyan pa crossed Bhonele (Buner) in direction NW and reached K‘a rag k ‘ar (Karakar) where was a boundary limit. Judging from the description that follows it seems that he had the Karakar top as a point of view.

From there (i.e. to the N) O rgyan pa sees the green and lavish valley of a River Kodambhar, which should be the ancient name of the Karakar River. To the E, there is the Ilo (Ilam) “the foremost of all mountains of Jambudvīpa”, with its richness of medical herbs, grapes, antelops, flowers, etc. (ibid.: 28). From Karakar top he reached Ra yi k ‘ar “which is said to have been the capital of King Indrabhote. Now it

is divided into two towns: in one there are about sixty houses, in the other about forty” (ibid.: 28). It is possible that Ra yi k ‘ar is Raja Gira, and the two towns were the nearby twin villages of Udegram and Gogdara (ibid.: 28, fn. 98; see also Bagnera 2015: 55-57). At the same time, it seems improbable that O rgyan pa walked down the Kodambhar, crossed Barikot and reached Udegram along the Swat River. And this for two reasons: neither he mentions Barikot, which in the 13th century was still an important military centre (Olivieri 2003<sub>a</sub>, 2003<sub>b</sub>, 2010), nor the Swat River. Therefore is possible that O rgyan pa followed the easy mountain track that reaches Raja Gira from Karakar via Sarbab/Ghalegai. From there he must have stepped down to the Saidu valley and Dhumat ‘ala, simply crossing the Raja Gira ridge in direction E. In fact, according to his travelog, after Ra yi k ‘ar, the pilgrim visited Dhumat ‘ala, the holiest place of Uddiyana, “the core of the miraculous country of U rgyan”, the real target of his trip. We infer that also from the particular that Dhumat ‘ala was have been specifically mentioned in the *lassez-passaire* of Rajadeva.

Dhumat ‘ala, 5-7 km NNE of Ra yi k ‘ar, has been identified by Tucci with T’a lo/ T’a lo (= d’ala, Dhara/Dara) i.e. Butkara I (Tucci 1940<sup>3</sup>: 29, fn. 103; Id. 1958<sup>2</sup>: 65, 78, fn. 12; Id. 1977<sup>2</sup>: 177, 227, fn. 19), the great Buddhist urban sanctuary excavated by D. Faccenna. Butkara I was founded in the 3rd century BCE, and its last living phase is dated to 10th century CE (Faccenna 1980-1981; Iori and Olivieri 2016).

If Dhumat ‘ala is Butkara, all the other sites visited by O rgyan pa can be located with a certain degree of certainty. The snow mountain of Ka ma ’on ka/Kamā ’oka/Kamadhoka might be Mt. Mankyal (5,710 m asl); Śrīparvata mountain can be identified with the Dwo-sare; Ka pa lo bho jon with its sacred tree and spring can be Tirat (Tucci 1940<sup>3</sup>: 30, fn. 110; Stein 1930: 56, fig. 41; Tucci 1958<sup>2</sup>: 86; Id. 1977<sup>2</sup>: 217-218, fn. 78; Filigenzi 2015<sub>a</sub>: 25)<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 3). The most interesting and

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<sup>4</sup> From Tirat comes the rock *Buddhapada* now in the Swat Museum (Tucci 1958). Again on Tirat, it is interesting to note that just opposite it, on the left bank of River Swat, at Jare, lies a colossal rock-relief representing Avalokitesvara/Padmāpaṇi (Olivieri 2016: fig. 5) carved in a crude flat style, which is completely different from the one of the other rock-reliefs of the Swat region (Filigenzi 2015<sub>a</sub>: 25, 218, fig. 108), while recalls very closely the style of the 11th century rock-reliefs of Kardang in the Kulu-Lahul-Chamba region (Widorn 2015: fig. 7.10).

furthermost place visited by O rgyan pa in Swat/Uddiyana was Maṅgalaor, (Manglaor/Manglawar) to the N of Ra yi k ‘ar “[where] is a temple founded by king Indraboti [and] where there are various stone images of Buddha (Munīndra), Tārā and Lokeśvara” (Tucci 1940<sup>3</sup>: 28).

### **The temple and the stone images at Maṅgalaor**

#### *Manglawar/Mingora*

Tucci was convinced that the ancient city of Mengjeli (Mêng chie li = Maṅgalapura) mentioned in the Chinese sources had to be located in Mingora rather than at Manglawar as it was thought before. He was certainly right in supposing the existence of a major ancient urban centre in the Mingora area, as proved by archaeological research (see a reassessment of the problem in Iori and Olivieri 2015). Tough, he was wrong in stating that “[my] doubt of the accuracy of the identification of Mêng chie li with Manglaor was only strenghtened by a careful examination of the ground around Mangalaor [*sic*], bare as it is of ruins and archaeologically very poor compared to the many places in Swat” (Tucci 1958<sup>2</sup>: 76-77). The survey carried out by A. Stein in 1926, that Tucci knew very well, gives a vivid and illustrated description of the rich archaeological evidence of the area of Manglawar (Stein 1930: 47-51, figs. 35-37). Moreover the statement is contradicted by Tucci’s own narrative, where he largely describes the archaeology of the Manglawar area (Tucci 1958<sup>2</sup>: 87-88).

The evidence on the ground (updated to 2016) can be so far listed as follows:

- 1) A colossal stupa complex in the SE outskirts of Manglawar at Shakorai, identified by Tucci as the Adbhuta-stūpa of the Chinese sources (the site is completely destroyed and nowadays only traces of the gigantic complex can be noticed) (Tucci 1958<sup>2</sup>: 87; Filigenzi 2015<sub>a</sub>: 213) (Fig. 6);
- 2) A large boulder with a rock-relief representing Avalokitesvara/Padmāpaṇi (destroyed by the Talibans and now reconstructed in Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif);
- 3) A flight of carved steps leading from (2) to (8) (i.e. from E to W);
- 4-6) Three large Buddhist rock inscriptions well-known since British

India times and then published by G. Bühler and H. Lüders (see references in Tucci 1958<sup>2</sup>: 87; Filigenzi 2015<sub>a</sub>: 213);

7) A boulder looking like a sort of stone stūpa mentioned as miraculous by the Chinese sources (Tucci 1958<sup>2</sup>: 88);

8) A colossal rock-relief representing Buddha in *padmāsana* (defaced by the Taliban in 2007 and recently restored by the Italian-Pakistani project ACT);

9) A monumental staircase leading to the cliff where (8) is carved (i.e. from N to S);

10) Large number of walls and structures terracing the steep slope leading to the cliff and surrounding a natural water spring; around the structures a great quantity of fired bricks has been reported;

11) Deep natural cavities open on the E side of the same cliff, that could have been used as hermitage places (traces of red paintings has been documented in some of them).

12) Poor remains of a large stūpa on the top of the cliff where (8) is carved.

Note: Evidence nos. 2-12 are located in an area E of (1) and of approximately 1 ha., on the three sides of the cliff (i.e. N, W and E). Evidence (2) and (8) are dated to 7th century CE (Alam and Olivieri 2011; Filigenzi 2015<sub>a</sub>), a chronology, which is confirmed by the late relative chronology of the fired brick-structures. The early chronology of the inscriptions (4)-(6) (Stein 1930: 50), while might be prove of an early establishment of a cultic complex on the spot, has never been revised.

## **Conclusions**

The reconstruction of the itinerary of O rgyan pa proposed in this paper, although following what already proposed by Tucci, introduces important new elements. The reconstruction strongly supports the evidence that, following the Tibetan and earlier traditions, O rgyan pa's Uddiyana was located in an area now located in North-West Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa<sup>5</sup>. Even if the location of the "temple of Indrabhuti" remains still elusive, the level of detail present in the description of O rgyan pa is extremely precise. The "various stone images of Buddha (Munīndra), Tārā and Lokeśvara" are still visible in Maṅgalaor, (Manglaor/Manglawar), a major cultic centre at least from the 7th century (i.e. from the times of Indrabhuti) as suggested also by the presence of large stupas, caves, inscribed rocks, and gigantic rock-sculptures.

I would like to refer here to a local folktale relating that the entire Pashtun settlement of Manglawar was built with bricks and stones taken from a single colossal *gumbat*<sup>6</sup>. One cannot but fancy that such wonderful and colossal building (a stupa? a shrine?) may have been the "temple of Indrabhuti" which was still visible at Manglawar in late 13th Century.

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<sup>5</sup> This tradition remained alive until 20th Century. The last documented Tibetan pilgrim who visited Swat before the Partition was Khyung Sprul. According to his biography he should have visited Swat before 1935, which is the year when he met Tucci in Tibet (see references in Olivieri 2016: 30).

<sup>6</sup> *Gumbat* is a Pashto term, which is generally associated to stupas, but more generally to any Buddhist architecture featuring a prominent dome, like the Great Building at Gumbat-Balo Khale, which is not a stupa but a chapel.

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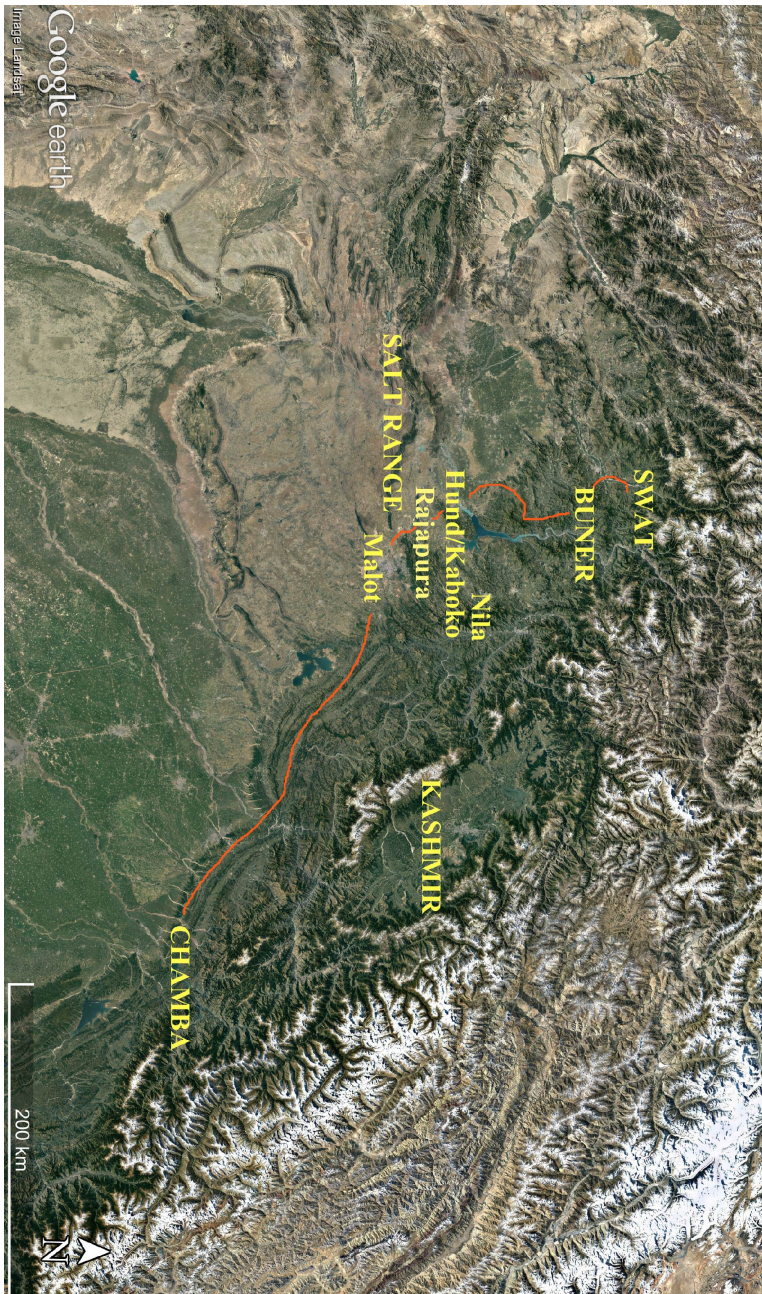


Fig. 1 - The track before Uddiyana (Source: Google Earth, elaborated by the Author).

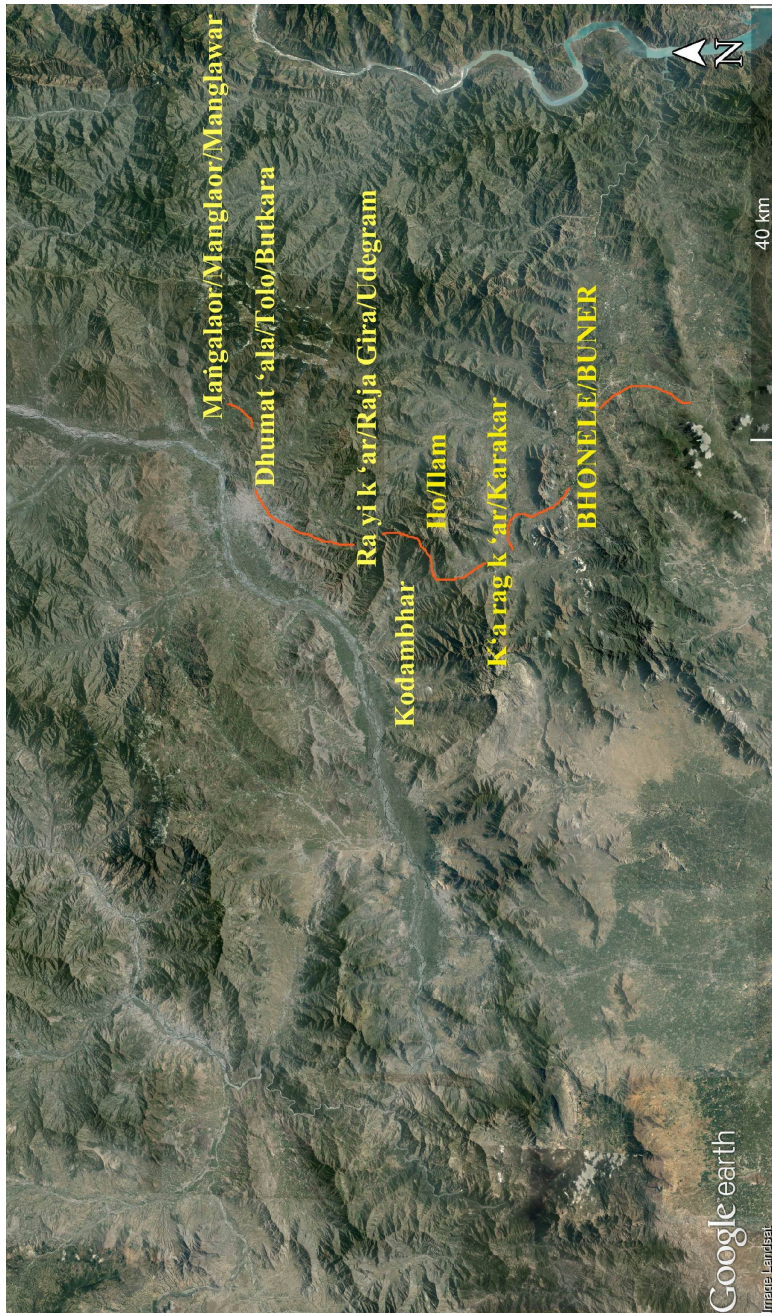


Fig. 2 - The track in Uddiyana (Source: Google Earth, elaborated by the Author).

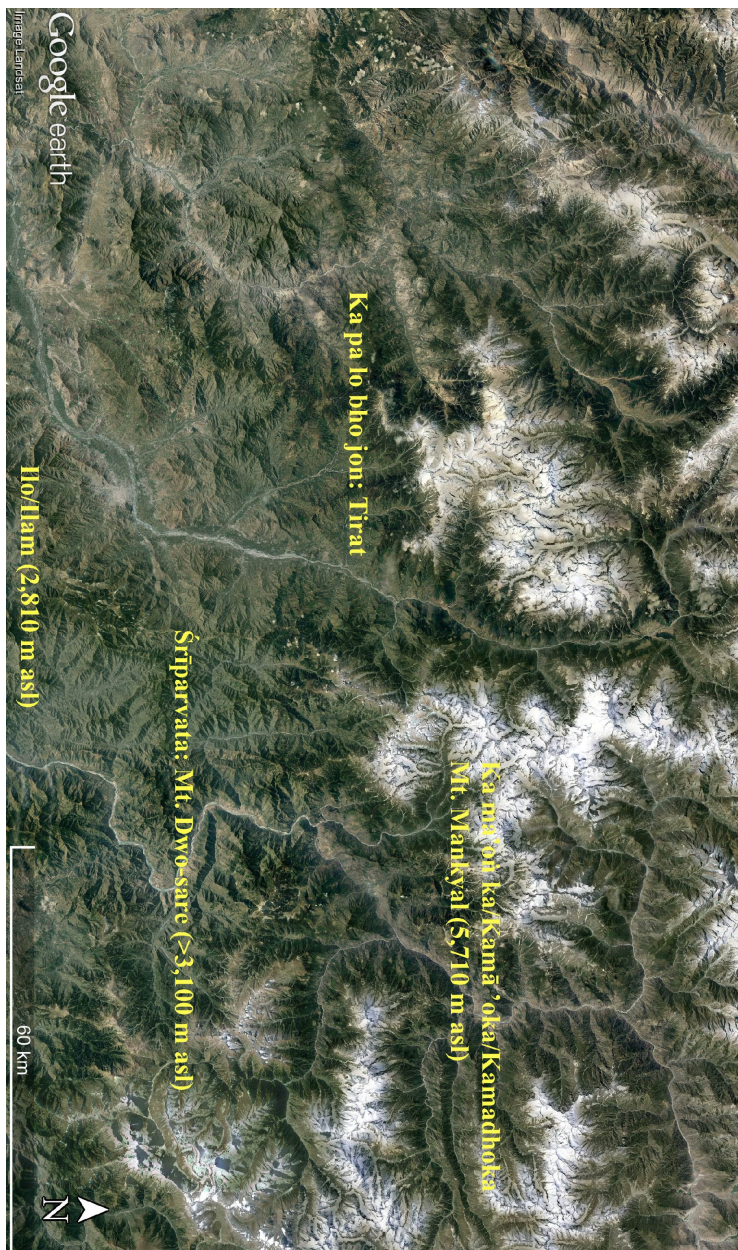


Fig. 3 - The major orographical reference points in Uddiyana  
(Source: Google Earth, elaborated by the Author).

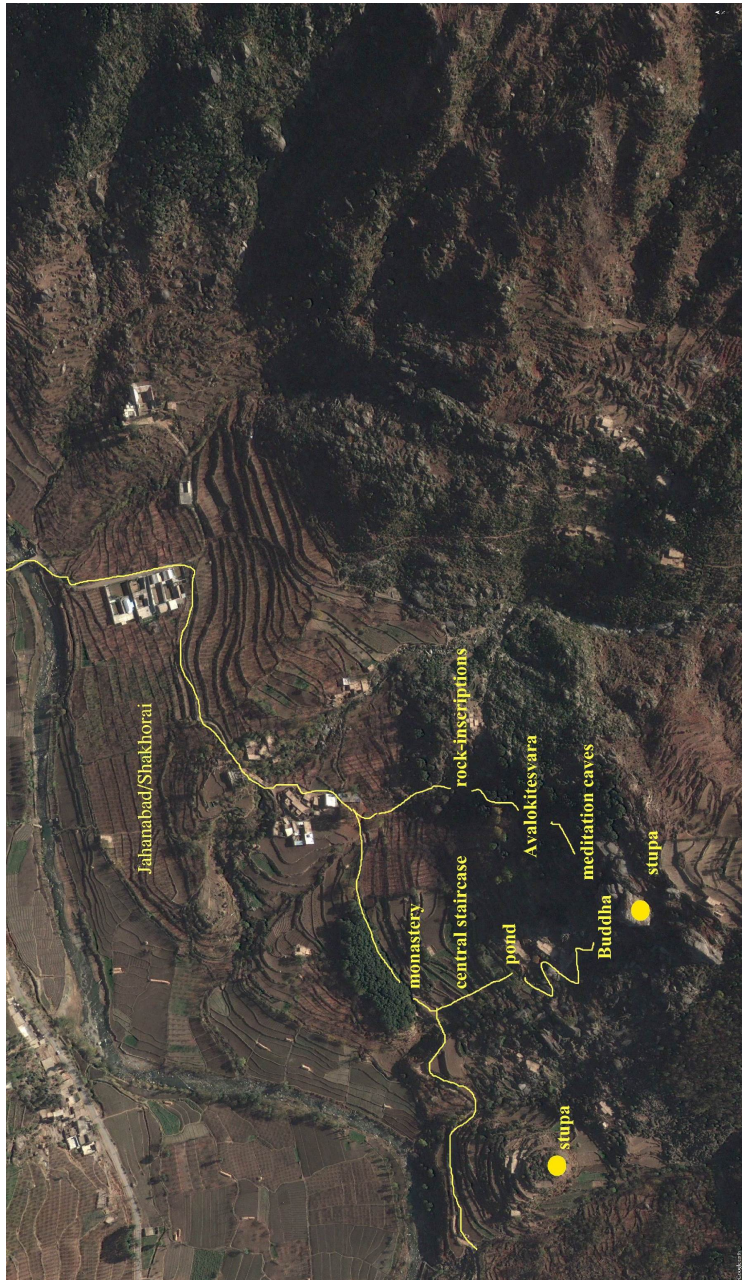


Fig. 4 - The evidence on the ground at Jahanabad/Manglawar  
(Source: Google Earth, elaborated by the Author).

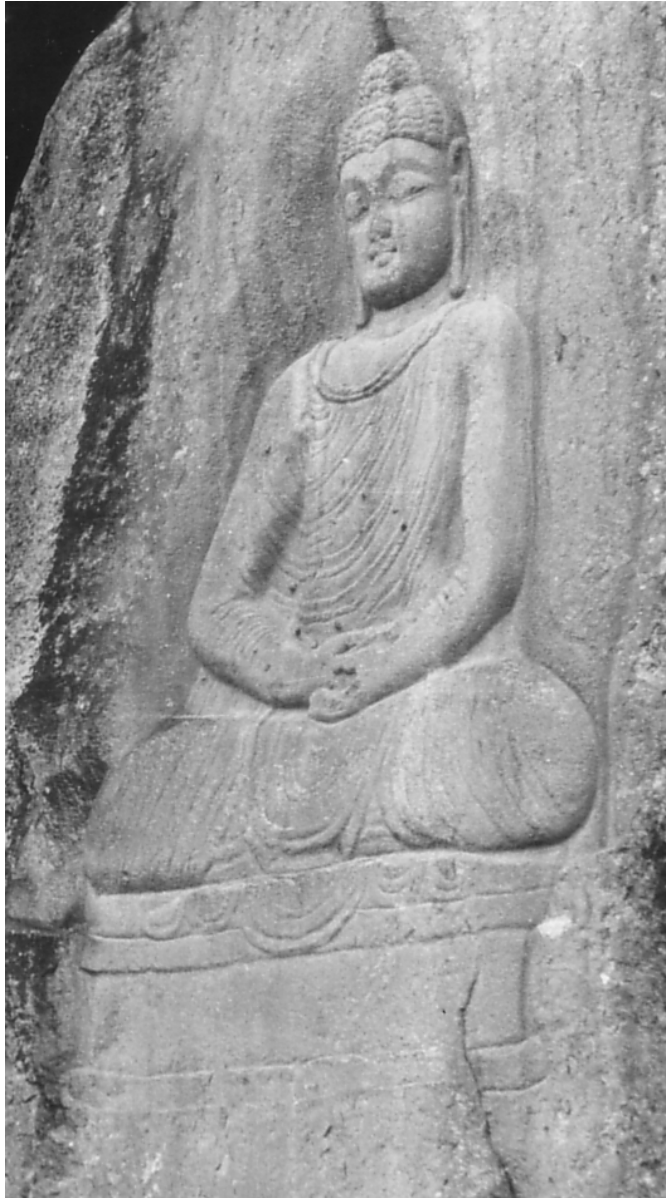


Fig. 5.1 - The Jahanabad Buddha in 1996 (Photo by the Author).



Figs. 5.2-3 – The Jahanabad Buddha in 2007 and 2016 (Photos by the Author).