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SECTION 2

AN IRON CHEEK-PIECE OF A SNAFFLE FOUND AT TIMARGARHA

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When the Italian Archaeological Mission dug for Buddhist antiquities in Swat in 1961, they detected a group of graves with a somewhat barbaric appearance and obviously belonging to an earlier period than that sought. Up to now, three cemeteries are known: Butkara II, Loebanr I and Katelai I. They have many features in common but also show differences on the other hand, so that they may belong to different periods of a long sequence. In some graves there were objects made from iron, in others none.¹

At Timargarha in Dir State a cemetery of the same kind was excavated by Professor Dani, University of Peshawar. Moreover, he discovered similar graves in Bajaur (Inayat Qila) and in the Talash Valley (Ziarat). It seems that we here have to do with a facies spread over a considerable part of what was once called Gandhara, hence Dani coined the term Gandhara Grave Complex.

Dani grouped the material belonging to this complex into three "cultural — and possibly chronological periods". Period I "should be dated sometime in the second half of the second millennium B.C.". To period II he assigned a duration of two centuries, i.e., the 10th and 9th centuries B.C. Period III according to him falls into the 8th — 7th centuries B.C.² The reason for the dating of the last period is that Dani observes distinct affinities with the material from Charsada (6th — 4th centuries B.C.), but he considers the grave goods from Timargarha to be more primitive and, therefore, a little earlier.

It is interesting to compare the statements made by Stacul.³ He, too, grouped the graves from Bulkara II, Loebanr I and Katelai I into three periods with all the graves containing iron objects assigned to period III, though in many other aspects there is a considerable difference. Stacul lays stress on the analogies with pottery recovered from the deepest levels at Charsada (6th — 4th centuries B.C.).

II.

My own opinion had been that the Dardic tribes settled in this area

before the coming of the Pashtuns included at least one component which had its home in Western Turkestan, i.e., in the area now called Kazakhstan and Middle Asia by Soviet scholars.⁴ In this respect I am perfectly in accord with Litvinskij⁵, and therefore have sought analogies between the Bronze Age cultures of Middle Asia and the Gandhara Grave Complex. I believe that these will be forthcoming in the next years. Here, only two examples may be mentioned.

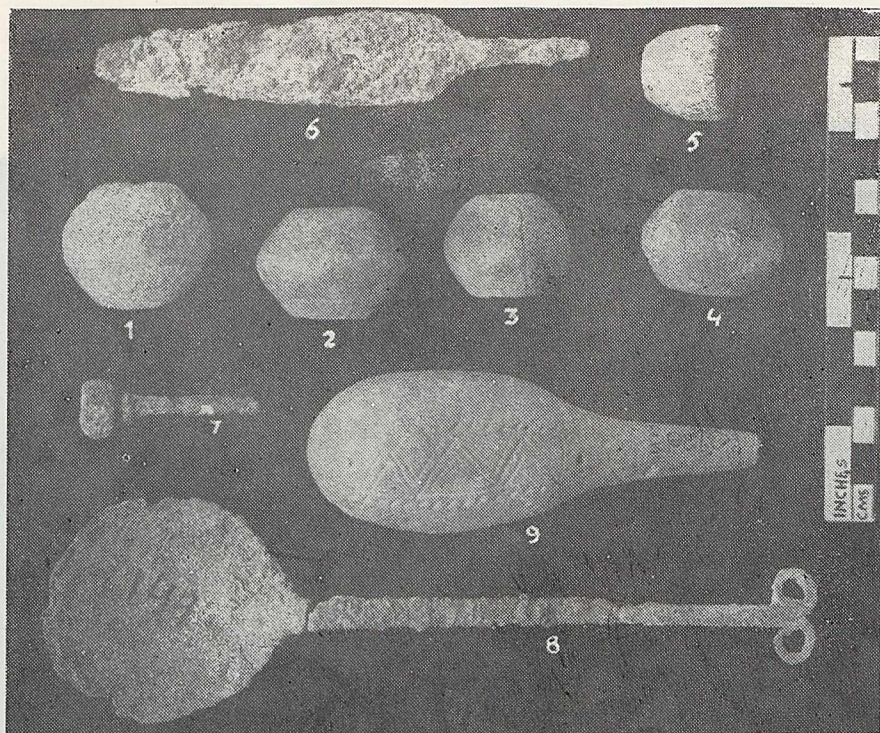
In the Gandhara Grave Complex we see that the graves have an upper hollow, rectangular in shape, and at the bottom a smaller pit covered with slabs. The lower pit is lined with dry rubble-stone masonry. Here the body of the dead person was placed in an empty chamber, whereas the upper cavity was filled with earth and stones.

One can reasonably compare this structure (and the ritual behind it) with the graves of the Andronovo culture, which was an extensive culture flourishing in the western steppe-belt during the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C. It had however earlier beginnings continued in certain areas down to the 8th century B.C. Especially close to it are the grave types from Central Kazakhstan of which an example is here shown⁶.

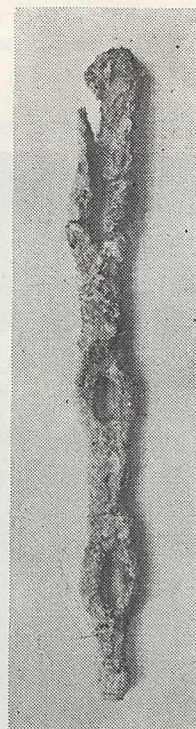
In Loebanr a laurel leaf shaped object with a central rib and a flat circular base-like support⁷ was found. I have seen this piece in the Swat Museum and I was permitted to photograph and publish it in "East and West". In fact there is more than one rib to be seen and patently the object was not "fit for common use",⁸ so there is a considerable similarity to the leaf-shaped blades from the Sukuluk Hoard found in Kirgizia which was tentatively dated about the turn of the 2nd to the 1st millennium B.C. (Pl. Lb, 1a, 1b)⁹.

III.

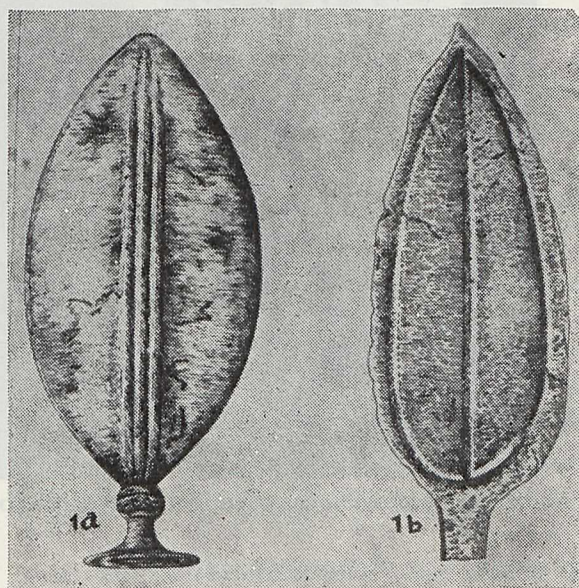
The structure of the Andronovo graves was the same for several centuries, so the dating of the Sukuluk Hoard is rather dubious, nor can other comparisons, which I omit here, be used for exact dating. More promising in this respect is an object found by Professor Dani at Timargarha (Grave No. 142) which was attributed to period III, simply because it is made of iron. Dani recognized it as being a piece of horsegear.¹⁰ The physical anthropologist working with him at Timargarha, Dr. Bernhard, drew my attention to this object, and I saw it myself later in Peshawar in the well exhibited university collection. Photographs were presented to me and I was granted permission to publish it, a task which was very welcome



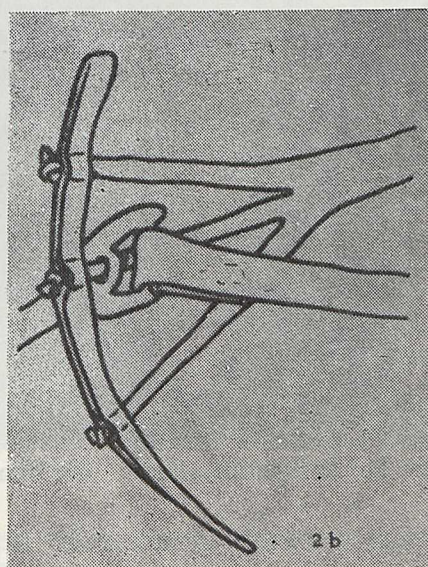
a. Nos. 1—4 terracotta net sinkers; No. 5 Schist net sinkers; No. 6 iron spear head; No. 7 iron nail; No. 8 iron spoon; No. 9 terracotta antimony phial



b 2a. Iron cheek piece, Grave 142



b 1a. Leaf-shaped object from Leobanr. (Museum Mingora, Swat). b 1b. Copper blade from Sukuluk hoard, Kirgisia (after Kuzmina 1966).



b 2b. Method of connecting a three-hole cheek piece to the bridle straps.



a. Terracotta human figurine, Grave 183, front view



b. Terracotta human figurine, Grave 183, back view

Pl: LI. Timargarha

to me because of my previous studies on the cultures of the Steppes. The object is in fact the cheekpiece of a bit, or, in German, "Trensenknebel". (Pl. Lb, 2a). Reviewing all metal types from the Bronze and Early Iron Age it is impossible to arrive at any different conclusion. Indeed, we have a rather clear survey of the development of the bridle and the bit in the Steppes, from Europe to the borders of China.¹¹ Smirnov¹² has demonstrated the evolution which took place in some parts of the Asiatic Steppes, especially in the Volga-Ural area, in the late 2nd and early 1st millennium B.C. Jessen showed what had happened in the European part of the Soviet Union between the 9th and 7th centuries B.C.¹³ and from Kossack we have a valuable review correcting the chronology.¹⁴ The following period is also well documented in a general survey by Liberov.¹⁵

The definitive study, however, showing the common trend in the Steppe-belt of Asia was written by Grjaznov¹⁶. In a short article, in fact, he gives much more than a characteristic of the Majemir culture in the Altai. We learn that after the introduction of bits made of metal but still before the end of the 6th century B.C., the construction of the snaffle was rather uniform in the Steppes¹⁷. At each side of the horse's head the leather cheekstraps were split into three strands to be affixed to three holes in the cheekpiece. Previously, the middle strand had to pass the rein-ring on the end of the bit (Pl. Lb, 2b).

The cheek-piece might have been made from bronze or bone (perhaps also from wood, but no pieces of this kind were preserved). Very seldom cheek-pieces¹⁸ with three openings were made of iron, but they existed in areas where iron was available earlier than elsewhere, e.g. in Pontic Scythia¹⁹ (early 6th century B.C.). The shape of these iron cheek-pieces is evidently taken from cheek-pieces made of bronze.

Starting with the 5th century B.C. or a little earlier, we meet a different system. The cheek-piece now has only two openings. It is itself passed through the ring on the end of the bit like a toggle. The cheek-strap has only two strands to be connected with the two holes of the cheek-piece. Iron is more and more used for both the bit and the "Trensenknebel".

So in the Steppes²⁰ we know quite well when cheek-pieces with three openings went out of fashion. It is more difficult to say that this type started at an exact date. We do not know where to put the limit.

From the very beginning, beside round or elongated cheek-plates we see more slender rods with three holes, the central one, however, put at a

right angle to the outer ones. Often the central opening is considerably larger and is sometimes divided into two parts. Evidently the bit, made of plaited leather straps, passed through it. The first artifacts of this kind can be dated to the middle of 2nd millennium B.C.²¹. At the beginning of the 1st millennium a wide diffusion can be observed, reaching from Europe to Transbaikalia²².

The next step in the development of the bridle was perhaps taken in the 10th century B.C. Then the type of cheek-piece appears which we already know: three holes, all in the same plane²³. They were still used together with a bit made of leather straps or some other perishable material²⁴. Most such cheek-pieces were made of bone, but we know some specimens made from bronze as well, in early (Karasuk: Irmen's I) as in late levels (7th-6th centuries B.C.)²⁵.

Gradually the leather bits were replaced by jointed mouth-pieces made of metal, a type already in use for a considerable time in the South, e.g., in Caucasia. Evidently this change did not necessitate any fundamental change in the system of straps for the horse's head-gear. Doubts have been expressed²⁶ about the practicability of such apparatus, but, in fact, since the end of the 8th century B.C., bits made of leather or ropes came out of use. The system of the Steppes, which combined a pair of cheek-pieces with a metal bit, without firm joint, even expanded to the South, in areas where it replaced more rigid constructions, as we may assume from Assyrian reliefs²⁷.

We now incline to date the necropolis of Sialk B in the 8th century B.C.²⁸, i.e., somewhat later than proposed by Ghirshman. This means that snaffles of the kind found in the Necropolis (e.g. in tomb 15) do not indicate that the origin of the whole type was here in the South. It is rather a hint that the horsemen buried in such graves used horsegear of northern provenance such as like Timargarha.

For three-holed cheek-pieces of this kind several different shapes are possible. A cheek-piece may be short or long, straight or curved, with studs on one or both ends, etc. For south-eastern Europe we have a typologically consistent system²⁹. It shows that straight and simple pieces mainly occur late, e.g., in the 6th century B.C.³⁰ But in many cases the reason is that the blacksmiths had difficulties in forging in iron the complicated shapes which could be easily produced in bronze foundries.

In the Asiatic Steppes a typology of the various possible shapes of the cheek-piece is rather sketchy³¹. A certain parallel to Europe is assumed.

It may be mentioned that in some cases only one cheek-piece or a fragment of it was found in graves where no horse-bones could be observed³². Evidently in this case the object was used as *pars pro toto*.

IV.

Let us return to our piece from Timargarha. It is clear that it belongs typologically to those groups which played a great role in the Steppe-belt between the 10th and the 6th centuries B.C. Its shape is rather similar to late pieces in Eastern Europe (6th century B.C.), also in iron, but this could be due to a parallel evolution, i.e., a simplification caused by the use of the new metal. So a more exact dating depends still upon the question when iron arrived in the Indian subcontinent. Today the trend is to assume that it came earlier than in the Steppes.

We must, however, ask whether cheek-pieces with three holes did not persist much longer south of the Hindukush than elsewhere. Once more we are without answer, because we have no systematic typology of the snaffles etc. for the Indian subcontinent. In my opinion most relevant pieces are still unidentified in the stores of the museums.

With attention to all the other objects in the Steppes, a dating in the 7th or 6th centuries B.C. could be tentatively proposed, and this agrees quite well with the dating of period III as proposed by Dani (without, however, discouraging a later dating, which Stacul evidently has in his mind³³).

The real importance of the piece lies in the fact that it once more points to the Steppes as one of the several sources of the Gandhara Grave Complex, and that it encourages us to look for other articles of horsegear in the material from sites in the subcontinent.

1. Antonini 1963; Alciati and Fedeli 1965; Cenna 1965; Stacul 1966; cf. also Tucci 1963.
2. Dani 1966a, b, c.
3. cf. Stacul 1966, pp. 66 and 78.
4. Jettmar 1966, pp. 47-48.
5. Litvinskij 1964, pp. 143-151.
6. Margulan 1966, pp. 71-196.
7. Stacul 1966, p. 58.
8. cf. Antonini 1963, p. 22.
9. Kuz'mina 1966, p. 52, Fig. VIII/13 and 16.
10. MS 1966 (?), p. 8.
11. The book written by Potratz in 1966 is of no use to us here. Only a small part of Soviet archaeologists' studies are known to him, so that his typological ordering of objects from the Asian Steppes is far from the reality.
12. Smirnov 1961.
13. Jessen 1953, 1954.

14. Kossack 1954.
15. Liberov 1954.
16. Grjaznov 1947.
17. But there are areas which do not follow the general trend, e.g., the eastern part of Central Asia. Cf. Tolstov and Itina 1966.
18. Soviet authors instead permanently use the term "psalion", but this is not correct. Cf. Anderson 1961, pp. 60—61.
19. Liberov 1954, p. 151.
20. In China, however, since the Middle Chou Period in about 950 B.C., the second system (psalion passed through the ring of the bit) prevailed. Cf. Dewall 1966.
21. Mozsolics 1954, 1960.
22. Smirnov 1961, pp. 64—65.
23. Smirnov 1961, pp. 66—67.
24. As we know from undisturbed graves, the horse was equipped with cheek-pieces though no bit was found.
25. Grjaznov 1956, p. 74. Kuz'mina 1966, Pl. XV/40.
26. Potratz 1966, pp. 92—94.
27. Barnett, Pl. 68 (time of Assurbanipal).
28. cf. Calmeyer 1964, pp. 40—42.
29. cf. Kossack 1954/55 pp. 146—147.
30. Liberov 1954, Pl. I/23—25.
31. Grisin 1960, p. 129.
32. Sosnovskij 1941, pp. 288—289. Sorokin 1966, p. 45.
33. Stacul 1966, p. 78.

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