

# The Pakistani Collection of Terracotta Figurines in the British Museum

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## Abstract

*In the early twentieth century of present India and Pakistan, Several British Army officers were also unprofessional archaeologists. Some of them, including Colonel D.H. Gordon and Colonel D.R. Martin, Calm human terracotta figurines in this collection of British Museum came from the north-west frontier province of Pakistan and presently called The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, mostly from surrounding Villages about Peshawar, Charssada and Mardan. They were bought from farmers or might be antiquity dealers. Thus, these figurines were illegally dug out and then sold or donated to the British Museum. There they were stored and display without Any Detailed Description and being studied or proper research. The purpose of this research Article is: To investigate and understand a collection of figurines That has not so far been published. This research will study and examine a collection of terracotta human figurines of two sites Sar Dheri and Sahri Bahlol in the British Museum. The study of these figurines, and understanding of their meanings and functions based on decorations and facial features. The Sar Dheri figurines with decorations may represent an unknown folk deity as the decorations are not the symbol of any deity that appears in Hindu, Jain or Buddhist mythology. The Sahri Bahlol figurines greatly bear a resemblance to those figurines identified as Rājghāt and Ahicchatrā excavation reports. The study of these figurines proposing further investigation in South Asian terracotta figurines that would lead to a comprehensive history of the evolution of figurines in South Asia from Mehrgarh to the present.*

**Keywords:** Terracotta figurines, British Museum, Sar Dheri, Sahri Bahlol, Pakistan

## Introduction

In south Asia, human terracotta figurines are an essential part of the local culture. They

play a significant part in Hindu religious practices, and there are many examples of figurines being accessible to religion. In addition to their ubiquity, they have a very ancient history. The first figurines ever found in this part of the world are from the first occupation of the Indus valley site known as Mehrgarh, Baluchistan Pakistan dated to 7000 B.C. Over the next 9,000 years, terracotta figurines would remain constant in Pakistani material culture. Utmost of excavations in all parts of South Asia have discovered figurines. This makes them a vital part of the archaeological record. Today their great significance shows no sign of narrowing. The British Museum's collection is huge, and the South Asia department alone includes an extensive variety of ceramics, lithics, sculptures and other objects. The problem is that many objects, including figurines, remain unpublished and unstudied. Museums always have more work than curators. This results in objects being acquired and put in storage where they have forgotten for years. When artefacts are not studied, no one benefits from the insights to be gained and no one outside the museum differentiates they exist. One case of this is a collection of terracotta figurines there they were stored and display without Any Detailed Description in the British Museum. This research is About less than 50 figurines from two sites Sar Dheri and Sahri Bahlol mostly from surrounding villages about Peshawar, Charssada and Mardan in The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. They are from a period that might span a thousand. They are specific instances of a craft that goes back 9,000 years. This research will review relevant excavation reports and previous work on the interpretation of figurines before providing new interpretations that build on the previous work. It will address, as much as possible, the following questions: What is the function of these figurines? What is the meaning of these figurines? What is their chronology? This enables the reader to have the map of Pakistan open while reading geographical references and have the catalogue open while reading the references to figurines (Smith 2015; Umer 2017).

## **Purpose and Scope**

This research will study and examine a collection of terracotta human figurines of two sites Sar Dheri and Sahri Bahlol in the British Museum. They are a surface collection, calm by collectors, antique dealers and farmers in the north-west frontier province of Pakistan when it was a Indian subcontinent. Excavation reports stretch the locations of

discovery, but an absence of main context and unanswered questions about that past make it hard to guess what the purpose of the figurines might be. A few of the figurines are identical to those found at Rājghāt and Ahicchatrā. They are referred to as the Sahri Bahlol figurines, to borrow the term from the British Museum's catalogue. But, the related reports also do not deliver information useful to chronology or function. Many of the figurines are identical to those excavated at and around Charrsada, and one group is of a sole style that is restricted to a small area and not found anywhere else. The British Museum calls them the Sar Dheri figurines. Those excavated at Charrsada were never found in any main context, thus determining function is not possible. But there is sufficient information to put their date at some time in the first millennium BC (Bailey 2005; Pal *et. al.* 2016)

The British Museum's online catalogue has some information on these figurines, But the data is incomplete and some of the date ranges appear to be incorrect. Only a few subjects within the field of figurine studies will be treated in depth although as many subjects as possible will be acknowledged. ([http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=3370086&partId=1&searchText=figurines&page=2](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3370086&partId=1&searchText=figurines&page=2))

## **How the Artefacts Were Found and Stored**

Figurines in the collection were gathered in British India in the early 20th century. The figurines were found in the North-west Frontier Province/now, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, KPK Pakistan with specific sites including Sar Dheri, Sahri Bahlol, Peshawar, Charrsada (Map 1). The number of figurines from each site ranges from one to dozens. The military officers of that time and place were very interested in archaeology, and many gathered a great many artefacts. Their work was tremendously productive, as "The full debt of archaeology to military fieldwork may never be known" (Allchin, 1960). They would buy figurines from antiquity, dealers and farmers, and perhaps collect their own surface finds. This is how figurines in this research article were collected; none were excavated. Over decades of service in the subcontinent, the officers built great personal collections, which through donation and purchase made their way to various museums. Two of these officers, Colonel Gordon and Colonel Martin, donated and sold

hundreds of figurines to the British Museum. These figurines now sit in drawers in the basement, unexamined and unpublished. The purpose of this article is to rectify that deficiency by examining and publishing a collection of these human terracotta figurines collected by some of these British officers.

### **Trade and Distributions**

Objects can be made and consumed locally, or traded and used away from their point of origin. Studying this involves determining the source of the material, comparing the object with items in other areas, and determining how it moved (gift-giving, purchase, looting, etc.). Possible models include direct access to raw materials, reciprocal trade between two groups, down-the-line trading, redistribution by central authority, markets, contracts, freelance merchants and itinerant artisans (Caple, 2006: 142-143). This depends on the knowledge of both the source and distribution of figurines. The distribution is known somewhat from the excavation reports. With the Sar Dheri figurines, they appear to be heavily concentrated in Gandhāra, but a more specific origin cannot be determined. The Sahri Bahlol figurines are evenly distributed over a wide swath of northern India, and their origin could be anywhere from Gandhāra to Varanasi. However, due to the total lack of laboratory work the origin of the figurines is not known, and there is not enough information available to determine why they each have different distributions (Autiero, S., 2015; Kumar, *et. al.* 2016)

### **The Meanings in Figurines**

When archaeologists analyse the meaning of an artefact, they use things that are present as their data, such as decorations, body parts or paint. However, one can also do the opposite: study things that are not present, like Douglass Bailey did (Bailey, 2007). For Bailey, the key part of the process of miniaturization is the selection of what features to include and exclude. The absence of an expected feature focuses attention on the absence, and this compels the viewer to make inferences. Figurines are not models (which are accurate reproductions and have a single meaning) but abstract representations which are vague and create multiple meanings and reactions. When body parts are cropped or dismembered, the viewer is forced to reconstitute the body from

part present, and the post-fragmentation body may be very different from the pre-fragmentation body. Bailey uses psychoanalysis to argue that absence plays a key role, and then uses experimental psychology to argue that the brain is compelled to fill in absences until the representation is complete. As the brain is unable to complete it based on the available information, this creates the potential for new meanings. This is the opposite of rhetoric: it does not convince or persuade anybody, but instead forces people to create open-ended interpretations to fill in the gaps. The strongest part of Bailey's argument is the experimental psychology which says the brain, in its normal operation, will make absence very important, as absence is now an integral part of the analysis of meaning. In this research, most of the figurines are missing body parts, while some just have heads missing. This, however, is a result of breakage, which is more relevant to use and taphonomy than meaning (to be discussed below). The faces, however, vary greatly in their detail. In many cases important and expected facial features are not present (Bailey, 2005,2007; Lesure, 2017).

This also goes against the assumption that figurines have one meaning that is assigned by its creator. Instead, it is entirely possible that individuals are creating meanings. Instead, what is important are many meanings assigned by the creator and all those individuals who used the artefacts. This can be revealed by looking at any written records where people mentioned their beliefs regarding figurines.

Bailey's *Prehistoric Figurines* (2005) revolves around four theoretical topics with European case studies: miniaturism and dimensionality, anthropomorphism, visual rhetoric, and subverting and manipulating reality. For Bailey, the common theme is the psychological impact upon the viewer. The section on miniaturism and dimensionality discusses the impact of the size of a figurine on the viewer. Thinking in miniature creates contradictions and paradoxes that create a powerful response (Bailey 2005: 42-43). The kind of meaning he is interested in is not what the figurines were, but what effect they had on people. This is quite relevant to the study of meaning, as it incorporates the psychological factors that can influence the meanings people assign to artefacts.

Analyses of religious figurines tend to focus on what they symbolize externally and are not viewed as being important in and of themselves. The archaeologist works to identify

the deity or mythological character and the myths represented, and the attributes and qualities associated with them. Lynn Meskell, however, argues that religious figures do not point to the important thing; instead they are the important thing. She approaches figurines as a process rather than a thing. She suggests that the Near Eastern Neolithic might have seen a revolution in cultural concepts of sex and gender, and figurines were part of a process instead of being finished products (Meskell, 2007: 141). She also speculated the figurines were not static, but quite moveable as they were turned around, handled and moved around, something conventional sketches fail to capture (Meskell, 2007: 143).

The goal of this research is typically a clear-cut answer and not ambiguous remarks that could mean anything. Archaeologists tend to look for a clear, exact statement about the meaning of figurines. However, Susan Wise (2008) argues this is not how figurines work. Instead, the meaning is ambiguous and there are many meanings. In a study of Greek votive offerings, Wise (2002) said they were ubiquitous material objects packed with meaning that is often unclear to modern viewers, one must be careful in determining the meaning and function of a figurine. The most common context of these figurines is the preserves of childbirth deities so the most obvious assumption is they are childbirth votives. One figurine had an exaggerated abdomen, which looks like pregnancy, supporting the childbirth votive hypothesis. This, however, is an oversimplification of the culture's religious beliefs and practices, and Wise advocates a contextual and semiotic approach. While the exaggerated abdomen could look like pregnancy, there could be many other possible meanings associated with an exaggerated abdomen. Another point is that the ambiguity of the meaning is very important. The Greeks actively used ambiguity in their figurines. There were four types of figurines found, and the most ambiguous ones were the most common because they could take on multiple functions and be used more often. This draws in with one of the fundamental tenets of post-processual archaeology: the active individual who creates meaning.

Evangelos Kyriakidis also discusses ambiguous meanings but in a unique way: "And this is a common theme in modern art, whereby the beholder receives messages that may have never been intended by the author" (Kyriakidis, 2007: 304), and "... most, if not all, of the non-propositional aspects of representation may be perceived in diverse ways to

what was intended” (Kyriakidis, 2007: 205). Western archaeologists today are separated from the creators and users of the figurines by half a world and thousands of years. There is a possibility that the users of the figurines saw things that the creators never intended, and archaeologists see things the users and creators never would have imagined. Kyriakidis argues there is propositional and non- propositional content in representations. In his view, thoughts are propositions that all have truth value, and lower cognitive processes (such as feelings) are not propositional. Both are important to the study of representation. The study of function and meaning must include facts, moods and feelings evoked by the image. He says interpretations that do not match the intentions of the creator are not wrong, and the beauty of such study is it can alert people to different viewpoints in different circumstances. Kyriakidis also distinguishes between icons (identical to the object being represented), indexes (some similarity to the object being represented) and symbols (no similarity to the object being represented).

In earlier sections, it was argued the meaning of a figurine is multi-faceted and ambiguous, and different people can find different meanings. It should therefore be considered that the above interpretation could be both true and false, depending on the individual. The creator could have had one meaning in mind, and each viewer could have come up with other meanings. This creates a situation where everything is true and there is no one right answer. It is not an issue of lack of data either. Conducting further research will not lead to one single answer. If anything, more research will lead to more correct answers. This is what the interpretation of meaning consists of: finding many correct answers that vary between individuals, or even between situations for the same individual. Therefore, in the case of this figurine, it is possible that one person thought of sex and another did not; or one person associated it with reproduction while another did not. Or everyone gave the figurine the same meaning.

An archaeologist who looks for a clear, exact answer to questions of meaning in figurines is going to be led astray. The ambiguous answer that could mean anything is the correct answer, because in ancient cultures, figurines could have been given a wide range of meanings. Meaning is not an inherent property of an object; it is a person’s reaction to an object. People in a culture view an object the way their culture teaches them to, and people not of that culture have not been taught how to react to an object so

they make educated guesses (Molyneaux, 2013).

## **Typology and Classification**

In a collection as diverse as this, typology is an important part of the study. Less than 50 figurines represent a period of 4,000 years and come from two specific sites and an unspecified location within provinces, mostly around north-western Pakistan. They need to be divided into groups and are typically based on function, shape, decoration, colour, finish and material (based on Caple, 2006: 49). This section describes the typological groups, with the next section including tables of the frequency of basic traits in each group. This is because in a valid typology, the pattern will be apparent in the data. Typologies can incorporate culture change, showing the evolution of an object from simple to complex or from complex to simple. Diachronic stylistic analysis (Lesure 2011: 51) studies the form of an object by comparing it with previous objects of its type. With this collection, figurines would be placed in a sequence that shows the evolution of Pakistani terracotta figurines. This will not be done though; this change or lack of change can reflect the stability or instability of the time. Change is slow when the cultures of the area are stable, and change is fast when there is fabulous change (Caple, 2006: 50). The type of object is also important, functional objects change slowly and symbolic objects change quickly (Caple, 2006: 51). To carry out such an analysis, one needs a collection of figurines that spans an extended period. This collection is like that to a certain extent. The figurines most of the artefacts (82%) are from the first century B.C., according to the British Museum's online catalogue 17. While a one-time period has an extensive data set, the earliest and latest periods have next to no artefacts. That kind of historical narrative would require bringing in many figurines from other collections, which would increase scope of the research far beyond what it currently is.

Synchronic stylistic analysis (Lesure, 2011: 51) studies the form of an object by comparing it with contemporary objects.

This can be done here on a variety of scales: one of Codrington's (1931) suggestions is to compare figurines with sculptures. A figurine can be compared with other figurines within the same unit, within the same culture or across Pakistan and India. The typology



for this research is based on common characteristics and similarity with published figurines. The Sahri Bahlol figurines look like those recognised as Naigameśīs in excavation reports (Narain & Agrawala, 1978; Agrawala, 1947). Since the research collection figurines have no context of their own, they must be compared with ones that do have context (an idea that appears as early as Codrington in 1931). The Sar Dheri type was created to group those figurines that have one or more of the three recurring features: rosettes, lotus pods and circle slit eyes. These groups will be described in detail, The physical characteristics of the groups.

Ideally, the construction of a typology considers many factors. These include their place in the evolution of figurines, common and diverse cultural origins, function, the role in social organization, iconography and meaning. At the beginning of the analysis, the only thing known is their appearance. Therefore, the figurines will initially be grouped with figurines that happen to look similar. The purpose of the research, however, is to explore the methods and issues of figurine interpretation, and attempt to learn as much about them as possible. At that point their validity will be assessed, and either they will be accepted, or new groups will be proposed considering the findings of the research.

### **Sahri Bahlol Figurines**

Sahri Bahlol is a town in north-western Pakistan, and the British Museum identifies several figurines from that area as Sahri Bahlol figurines. It will also be used here to maintain consistency. These figurines (Figurines #5-18) are identical to those Naigameśa figurines identified in the excavation reports from Rājghāt and Ahicchatrā (Narain & Agrawala, 1978; Agrawala, 1947). Naigameśa and Naigameśī are ancient folk deities (figurines and descriptions see end of the article).

Rājghāt and Ahicchatrā are two sites that yielded large numbers of figurines very similar to the Sahri Bahlol type. In the report from Ahicchatrā, Naigameśa was described as a god of childbirth who was a form of Skanda, and Naigameśī a form of Śaśṭhī, the consort of Skanda (Agrawala, 1947: 135). The reports consistently identified the person depicted as Naigameśī, but no primary source is provided. This means the Sahri Bahlol figurines can only be identified as Naigameśī if the identification is accurate, which it might not

be. The figurines are dated to A.D. 450-650 based on their stratigraphy (Strata IIIc and IIIc) (Agrawala, 1947: 134). Stratum III is dated from A.D. 350-750, but no further details are provided (Agrawala, 1948: 106). Most of these figurines were found in unit III, between 47 and 39 ½ feet below datum. Two others were found in unit VII at 39 ½ feet below datum.

Rājghāt is in Vārāṇasī, which would put it on the Ganges toward the east of India. In the report from Rājghāt, figurines classified as Type 11 subtype 2 are referred to as a goat-headed Naigameśīs (Narain & Agrawala, 1978: 44). A figurine of this type was reported in the city of Saridkel in the province of Jharkand (Archaeological Survey of India 2011: 120), suggesting a wide distribution if it was found in both Vārāṇasī and the Northwest Frontier Province. The site dates from 800 B.C. to post-A.D. 1200. The 12 stratified Rājghāt figurines were from Period 4 (A.D. 300 to 700) which would suggest these are from the Gupta period. Period 4 also included gold coins depicting Gupta rulers (Narain and Agrawala 1978, Part 3: 15). Rājghāt also had 43 unstratified figurines (Narain & Agrawala 1978: 56, 60) which may be from other periods. No information on associated artefacts was mentioned. A Naigameśī figurine of this type is found in Kala (1980: #165) from Kauśambi and identified as a goat-headed female. Since some Naigameśās are goat-headed, this figurine is probably a Naigameśī.

The Naigameśī figurines are primarily female, along with some sexless and indeterminate figurines. The incomplete nature of some of them means they may have had obvious sexual characteristics that are not currently available for viewing. The same applies to figurines in Narain and Agrawala (1978) that these have been compared to. According to this method, ear lobes are female characteristics because they always occur on female figurines and never on male figurines (because there are no male figurines). It is possible to extrapolate that the sexless figurines are probably female (though this is not proof of anything). In Plate 18 (Narain & Agrawala, 1978), the only major difference between figurines identified as Naigameśā and Naigameśī are the breasts (or lack of). In every other way they are identical. Therefore, anatomical characteristics are the only features that can distinguish them as male or female.

## Sar Dheri Figurines

The Sar Dheri type is named after a mound between Peshawar and Mardan where Colonel Gordon found figurines of this type. This type is primarily based on the Baroque Ladies of Mortimer Wheeler's excavation report from Charrsada (Wheeler, 1962) and can be dated to around the first millennium B.C. These can be found in the collections of the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, where they are referred to as the Sar Dheri type. Figurines in this collection come from many sites in the area, including Sar Dheri, Bala Hissar, Spina Warai, Peshawar, Charrsada, Sahri Bahlol and Kpk. This type of figurine has a wide distribution within Gandhāra, but has never been found outside Gandhāra.

There are similarities between the decorations on Sar Dheri types and decorations on other figurines. Poster (1986: 18, 19) has examples of figurines from Mathura in the Mauryan period that show decorations like the rosettes and lotus pods. They are circular with wide incised lines radiating out from a circle in the middle. They are not identical to Sar Dheri rosettes, as the circle in the middle is not a bump and the grooves are wider. However, they are similar enough that the Sar Dheri rosettes may represent a regional variation on a widespread symbol. If this is true, then that would suggest the Sar Dheri types are from the Mauryan period. A head decoration like the lotus pods is on a figurine from Mathura (Poster 1986: 19, 90, 91). The circle slit eyes also appear on a figurine from Ahicchatrā (Kala 1980: #1) and one from Kauśambi (Kala 1980: #7). Many figurines have a groove at the waist. In her chapter on Neolithic Anatolian figurines, Meskell (2007: 143) said, "A closer examination of the carving, abrasion and surface patterning may reveal differences in wear around areas such as grooved 'waists'". This has important implications for this research collection, as many figurines have a groove at the waist. This opens the possibility that something was worn around that waist that has long since decayed. No one has ever reported seeing such a thing, though, and if there are remains they would consist of microscopic fibres.

A comparable situation exists for the Sar Dheri figurines. The ones with lotus pods and rosettes are almost all female, so the indeterminate one is probably (but not definitely) the female. This sample also makes it seem that lotus pods and rosettes are female

characteristics in some unknown way. Unfortunately, the Sar Dheri figurines are not as common as the Naigameśas/Naigameśīs, thus there is less data to draw on.

### **Reports from Rājghāt and Ahicchatrā**

The sites of Rājghāt and Ahicchatrā are of great relevance because they have excavated examples of the Sahri Bahlol figurines which are very similar to the Sahri Bahlol type. Few of the description and figurines in this research collection. Rājghāt is a site within Varanasi where the remains span from the Late Vedic period to the Late Medieval period. This report (Narain & Agrawala, 1978) includes two entire volumes devoted to terracotta figurines. Part 4 A provides textual descriptions and Part 4B provides black and white photographs. Part 2 describes pottery while Part 3 describes other small finds. The report describes the period in which each figurine was found and provides what might be a unit. However, the small finds section does not provide the same information, which makes it impossible to figure out which artefacts were found together. There are summaries for each period, which provide little bits of useful information.

Rājghāt is divided into six periods, which are defined based on ceramics, coins, seals, terracotta figurines and other objects. The detailed summaries of each period focus on ceramics, structures and figurines. Pottery is described as important evidence for the differentiation of time periods. For example, the report mentions finding a Gupta sealing and Northern Black Polished Ware as its basis for dating. The conclusions on dating are also supported by comparing the finds with their counterparts in other sites. Comparisons are made with pottery in Hastinapura, and in one period carbon dates are discussed. However, carbon dates are provided only for one period and no calibration is mentioned. The figurines are assigned to periods based on their stratigraphy (Narain & Agrawala, 1978: 19-39).

This report has more figurines that are comparable to the figurines in the research collection than most other reports. Plate 18 is very similar to most of the Sahri Bahlol types. They are sufficiently similar that in this article they may be of the same type. The decorations in Plates 4 and 5 bear some resemblance to decorations in the Sar Dheri types. The ears in Plate 8 are like the Sahri Bahlol type. 1880.3134.4 is like some

figurines in Plate 9. Comparisons between the Rājghāt figurines and the figurines in this research article collection.

Ahicchatrā is an historic city in Uttar Pradesh. The site has produced Naigamesha figurines which, along with their counterparts in Rajghat, greatly resemble the Sahri Bahlol type (Agrawala, 1947: Plate 48). The figurines were all excavated, but the report consists only of a figurine catalogue. No context or information about the site is provided, and the dating is provided but not explained. The report is divided into sections, such as Mother Goddess, Riders, Foreign types and Cult-images. In *Indian Archaeology: A Review 2003-04* (Archaeological Survey of India 2011: 281), there is a high-quality colour photograph of a figurine whose decorations are not found in this collection. Structures are mentioned, but the only ones identified by type are fortifications.

While both sites have figurines identical to one of the groups in the collection, these two reports do not provide information about where the figurines were found or what they were found with. The only information they provide is geographic distribution. They make it clear that the Sahri Bahlol type is one instance of a phenomenon that spans northern South Asia, but they do not provide any of the needed contextual information.

## **Conclusion**

In the Asian collections of the British Museum, there lies a collection of 170 South Asian terracotta human figurines. The items were acquired from various amateur collectors over the mid-twentieth century and then put in storage. In that time no one ever took a close look at them. The purpose of this research is to correct that by performing a close study of the figurines. What can be learned from that study?

First, this is not a comprehensible collection. There is no common thread uniting all the figurines. Instead, the collection needs to be separated, and some figurines need to be assigned to other collections. The collection represents a vast span of time and there are no links between the groups within the collection. The Sahri Bahlol group should become one collection. The Sar Dheri group should become another collection, and grouped with identical figurines in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The remaining figurines should be group with similar South Asian figurines in other collections in the British Museum.

Second, a few things can be said about the relationships between these figurines and other South Asian figurines. The Sar Dheri figurines are a unique style localized in the area around Charrsada, and are not found in any other area. The Sahri Bahlol figurines are identical to figurines found across northern South Asia at Ahicchatrā and Rājghāt (Agrawala, 1947 and Narain & Agrawala, 1978 respectively).

There are still many unanswered questions. First, the figurines do not have absolute dates. When they can be dated, it is only in relation to other finds. This can be rectified easily by using thermoluminescence dating on the figurines and carbon dating on associated organic finds.

Second, it is still not known with certainty what the figurines were used for or the role they played in their cultures, social organization. This will not be so simple to rectify, as several excavation reports provide context information on the figurines. This will therefore require a considerable amount of research.

Third, it is not known how the figurines in this collection fit into the evolution of South Asian figurines in general. It is not known what styles they evolved from or into, and if they are an evolution of previous styles or spontaneous creations. This would require a comprehensive comparative study of all known South Asian figurines.

Fourth, the meaning of the figurines is not known. It is difficult to extract ideology from the objects themselves. A lot of information is needed from written records and associated finds, in addition to the objects themselves, to determine meaning with certainty.

It was said earlier that an ideal typology is based on many factors, including function, role in social organization, cultural origin, the place in the evolution of figurines, iconography and meaning. Due to the lack of firm information regarding any of those factors, the current categories still stand. However, it is entirely possible they will be modified or replaced if additional information is found.

This means the original purpose of the research (to survey a never-before-studied museum collection) has been accomplished. It is now known the figurines in the collection are from a variety of find spots in north-western South Asia, and they span thousands of years. It is also known at a basic level how they fit into South Asian figurines generally. The Sar Dheri type figurines are unique to a small area, and the Sahri Bahlol type figurines are found across northern South Asia. There is also much that remains unknown, and many opportunities for further research are available to study these figurines.

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## Figures



Map 1 Location of Mardan and Charrsada, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan (Source: Google maps @ 2017)

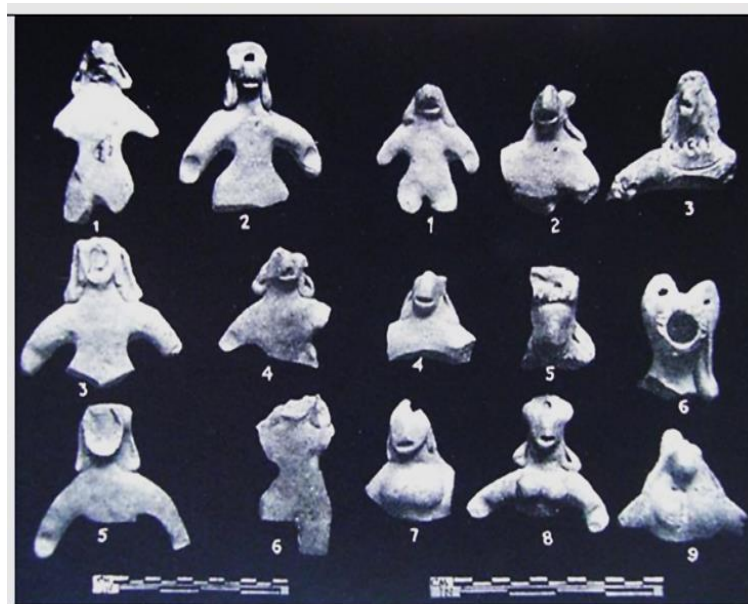


Figure 1. From Narain 1978 Plate XVIII (source: Narain & Agrawala 1978: 19-39)



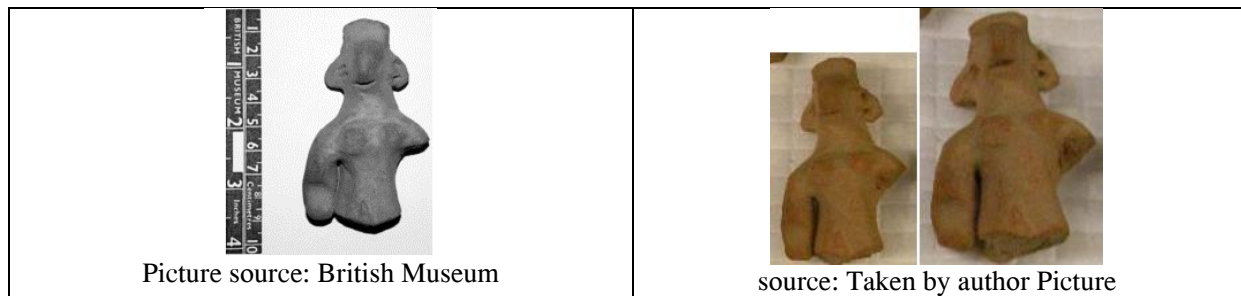


Collector: Col. Martin	Donor: Purchased from Brooke Sewell Permanent Fund	Find spot: Purchased from Northwest Frontier Province Colour:	Date: 4th -7th century AD
Height: 9.0 cm	Firing conditions: Core and part of the surface are both a very light brown. This indicates good oxidation. Part of the surface is red, which may be slip.	Red (lower chest) Beige (Upper chest and head) Light brown and red may be from iron at hot temperatures.	Manufacturing/assembly: Possibly hand-modelled.
Sex Female	Sex markers: Breasts	Leg division: No legs	Arms: Angled
Similar figurines: This type of arm is also found at Dhavalikar 1988:585. Narain 1978: Plate XVIII	Coatings: Assorted colours may be coatings	Deposits: Different coatings may be deposits	
 <p>Picture source: British Museum.</p>		 <p>Picture source: Taken by author</p>	

Figure 2 Figurine, Sahri Bahlol type (Source: British Museum #1880.3144.1)

Collector: Col. Martin	Donor: Purchased from Brooke Sewell Permanent Fund	Find spot: Purchased from North-west Frontier Province	Date: 4th -7th century AD
Height: 8.5 cm	Firing conditions: Light Brown indicates good oxidation.	Manufacturing/assembly: Possibly hand-modelled	Colours: Light Brown and Red may be from iron at elevated temperature.
sex Female	Sex markers: Breasts	Leg division: No legs	Arms: Parallel
Facial features: Nose Groove mouth Ears	Decoration: Headdress	Completion: +Head +Chest +RightArms -Lift Arm- Abdomen -Legs	Decay: Assorted colours may be from decay. The soil could have removed part of a slip or paint.



**Figure 3 Figurine, Sahri Bahlol type (Source: British Museum #1880.3144)**

Collector: Col. Martin	Donor: Purchased from Brooke Sewell Permanent Fund	Find spot: Purchased from North-west Frontier Province	Date: 4th -7th century AD
Height: 9.5 cm	Firing conditions: Light Brown and Red may be from iron at elevated temperature.	Manufacturing/assembly: Possibly hand-modelled	Colours: Light Brown indicates good oxidation.
sex Female	Sex markers: Breasts	Leg division: No legs	Arms: Parallel Fragment of right arm is consistent with complete parallel arms
Decoration: Headdress	Facial features: Nose Groove mouth Ears	Completion: +Head +Chest +Abdomen +Upper right arm -Lower right arm -Left arm - Legs	Decay: Assorted colours may be from decay. The soil could have removed part of a slip or paint.
Similar figurines: Narain 1978: Plate XVIII.	Coatings: Assorted colours may indicate coatings	Deposits: Assorted colours may indicate deposits	
			
Picture source: British Museum		source: Taken by author Picture	

**Figure 4. Figurine, Sahri Bahlol type (Source: British Museum #1880.3144.4)**

# Buddhist Ivory Diptych from Kashmir: Re- Interpretations of a few Scenes and Some New Thoughts about its Iconography, Function and Date

MUHAMMAD HAMEED

## Abstract

*After death of the Buddha, his body was cremated and the relics were distributed among existing eight tribes. Numerous Gandharan reliefs depict transpiration of the relics. Most often the event is represented in the form of a well guarded procession. The narrative was also repeatedly depicted on diptych type miniature portable shrines of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptychs. This paper is about an ivory diptych of the similar type. It has carving on both sides. Its exteriors portray transportation of the relics while on the interior complete life story of the Buddha is depicted. Main purpose of the present research is to reinterpret a couple of scenes depicted inside the ivory diptych. These narratives have not been correctly interpreted by the previous scholarship. Attempt has also been made to understand narrative scheme applied inside the ivory diptych. The present author also intends to investigate aspects related to significance, manufacturing date and function of the object.*

**Keywords:** *Ivory. Diptych. Buddha, Iconography, Gandhara. Gandhara Art, Miniature Portable Shrines*

## The Ivory Diptych

This is the only available Buddhist ivory diptych, preserved in its complete shape. It was discovered in the Chinese province of Kansu and belongs to the Committee for the Administration of Cultural properties of the Kansu province. The diptych was handed over to the Museum of Chinese History (now known as National Museum of China) in Beijing (Barrett 1967: 11).

Soper (1965: Figs. 1-6) published first account of its discovery and iconography.