

Archaeological Heritage of Hazara: A Potential source for Multi-Religious Tourism in Pakistan

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Abstract— The nature has bestowed Pakistan with natural and cultural heritage. The four provinces are famous for a unique historic and cultural identity with high mountains, plains, deserts, fertile soils, rivers and oceans naturally and with a large number of ancient sites and historic structures culturally. The country has several World Heritage sites as well as countless sites of national and local importance. These historic assets link us with our past as the custodians and attract thousands of tourists from all around the world. It is an obligatory for all Pakistanis to conserve and preserve them so that they could survive for many centuries more. This paper presents the cultural potential of Hazara region, one of the most attractive regions by national and international tourists. It is also one of the richest regions of the country having Archaeological remains of Buddhist, Hindus, Christian, Sikhs and Muslims period.

Keywords— **Archaeological Heritage, Hazara Region, Religious Tourism**

Introduction

Pakistan was born as a modern nation on August 14, 1947. However, its history stretches back thousands of years. With the land having housed Paleolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age settlements, the earliest remains dating to Lower Paleolithic (ca. 700,000 to 400,000 BC) (Rendell & Dennell, 1985) and having been part of the Persian, Macedonian, Afghan, Turkic, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Mughal and British Empires, its history and heritage consists of some extremely diverse sites that have contributed to the identity of the region. The four provinces are famous for a unique historic and cultural identity with high mountains, plains, deserts, fertile soils, rivers and oceans naturally and with a large number of ancient sites and historic structures culturally. The country has several World Heritage sites as well as countless sites of national and local importance. These historic assets link us with our past as the custodians and attract thousands of tourists from all around the world.

Archaeological Heritage and Promotion of Tourism

Tourism is a growing industry in Pakistan due to its diverse culture, people and landscape. There are number of varieties of attraction that ranges from the ruins of ancient civilization such as Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa and Taxila, to the Himalayan hill stations that attract those interested in field and winter sports. Historical places that can yield huge foreign exchange if properly and methodically exploited. The present Pakistani Government has focus of its economic and financial capabilities towards tourism as well. Heritage tourism has been overlooked for managerial, economic and political reasons (Haq & Medhekar, 2019). Heritage tourism has been observed to be a pre-historic form of travel, recently accepted as a type of tourism associated with culture, religion, historical customs and social traditions (Balmer & Chen, 2016; Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003).

The ancient Urasha (Modern Hazara)

According to Cunningham, (1990) the area between Kashmir and Taxila is known as Hazara. The ancient Urasha (Modern Hazara) is the land between the rivers Indus and Jehlum located at northernmost division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. It lies between 33.44 latitude and 72.33 longitudes. In 1970, the Hazara region along with two tribal agencies was merged to form a new Hazara Division on the dissolution of West Pakistan. Hazara remained a district until its conversion into a division in 1976 (Watson, 1907: 225-226). Initially the only two districts Abbottabad and Mansehra were included in Hazara division but after few years two another districts were created, the district Haripur in July 1991 and district Battagram was spun off from Mansehra 1976 District. Later on, the Northern part also included in Hazara region and given the status of district Kohistan which is presently further divided into three districts i.e. Upper Kohistan, Lower Kohistan and Kolahi Palas. Each of the districts preserves the hidden and explored Archaeological remains that represent the historical importance of this region. Most of the archaeological remains of Hazara region are not known due to limited explorations and excavations ever conducted in the region.

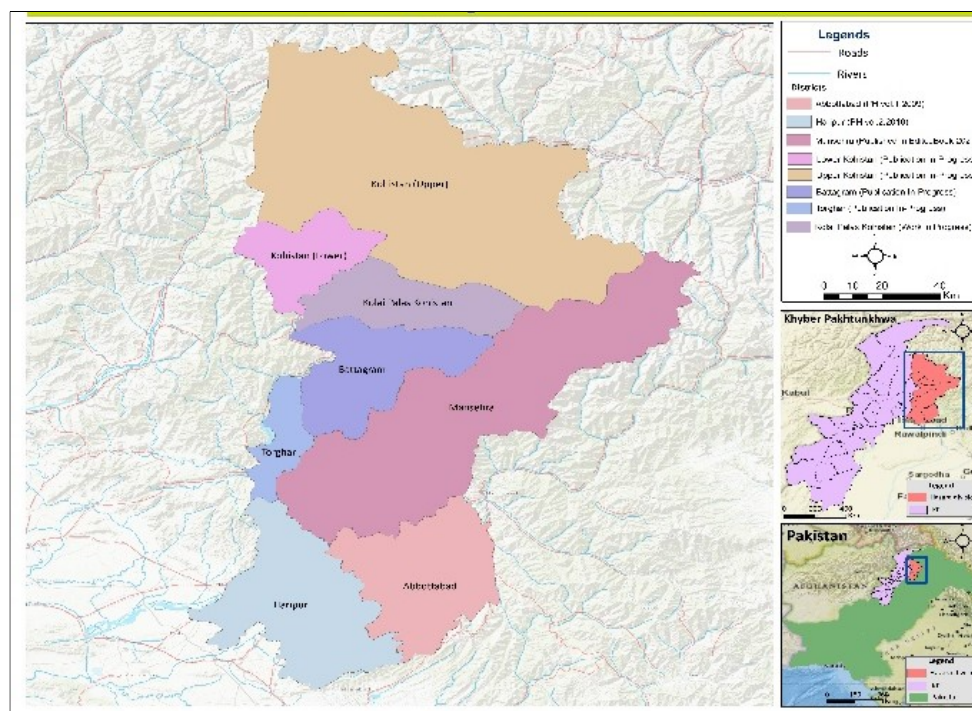


Figure 1: Geographical location of Hazara region

Historical Background

Based on Archaeological evidence, the history of Hazara can be terraced back to Achaemenid Persians who ruled from 558-327 BCE and replaced by Alexander the Great in 327 BCE. Ashokan rock edicts on the modern Karakoram highway (Ancient Silk Rout) in present district Mansehra of Hazara region are the most authentic source of Mauryan rule after Alexander the great. Hazara region remained a central point of the ancient Silk route that passed from all its districts and it was through this historically and culturally important highway that Buddhism reached China and Central Asia (Dani, 1999). The modern district of Haripur is one of the most ancient regions of Hazara division. The archaeological remains excavated by Eden Johnson in 1964 from Khanpur cave have pushed the cultural history of Hazara region back pre-historic period (Ali, 2009). Similarly, Department of Archaeology, Hazara University Mansehra discovered four new pre-historic sites during Archaeological exploration in 2007-08 (Ali, 2009). The Prehistoric zone is followed by the Gandhara Grave Culture sites in the region as we have no evidence of the Chalcolithic and Bronze Age cultures so far reported from the entire Hazara division.

A silver coin of Menander from Bedadi Mansehra (Ali, 2009) and pottery recovered from Pir Manakrai (Khan, 2003) and Panian in district Haripur (Qamar & Khan, 1998) having close similarity with that from Bhir Mound, Sirkap and other sites of ancient Gandhara provide great deal of information on the political ascendancy of the Indo-Greeks, Indo-Scythians and the Indo-Parthians. The Parthians were followed by the Kushans, and then the Kushano Sasanians till the invasion of the White Hunas in the fifth century CE. The Kushans have left cultural legacy in the form of Buddhist monuments (stupas and monastries) recorded from the entire Hazara division.

Objectives

- i. To Investigate hidden heritage of Hazara for development of multi-religious tourism in Pakistan
- ii. To provide review of remarkable discoveries made by national and International Archaeologist during 20th and 21st centuries from Hazara region.

Methodology

In Indian subcontinent, the discoveries of archaeological treasures mostly made by British Archaeologists in beginning of 20th century which continued till 1947 when subcontinent divided into two independent states, modern Pakistan and India. The Hazara region did not get much attraction due to mountainous area with lack roads and other facilities required for field expeditions. Only an attempt made during Archaeological survey of India 1922-23 by Mr. Hargreaves, than the superintendent of frontier circle and followed by John Marshall who excavated some of the sites in Taxila valley which are under domain of Hazara division presently. The Hazara region is comprised of modern five north-eastern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of Pakistan. It is one of the richest regions of the country having Archaeological remains of Buddhist, Hindus, Christian, Sikhs and Muslims period. Each of its districts preserves the hidden and explored Archaeological remains that represent the historical importance of this region. Most of the archaeological remains of Hazara region are not known due to limited explorations and excavations ever conducted. But some remarkable discoveries made by national and International Archaeologists during 20th and 21th centuries from the Hazara region are discussed in this paper.

1. ***Archaeological Survey of India (ASI-1922)***: The different superintendents were appointed on all circles of India during 1922-23 who carried out archaeological surveys and enlists the heritage of particular region. Mr. Hargreaves was appointed as a

superintendent for frontier circle, modern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The Hazara was a district during this survey and Mr. Hargreaves reported many archaeological sites i.e. Ashoka rock Edicts and Zar Dheri stupa in district Mansehra and the sites of Jaulian, Pipplan, Jandial, Badalpur monastery in district Haripur. He also took steps for the conservation and preservation of endangers sites by estimating and fixing expenditures for this work (Hargreaves, 1922).

2. **Archaeological Survey of District Abbottabad:** When the report of archaeological survey of India was published, further explorative work continued in Taxila valley which is partially under Hazara (part of Haripur district) division and partially exists in district Rawalpindi of Punjab province. But the northernmost districts of Hazara region i.e. Abbottabad, Mansehra, Battagram, Tor Ghar, and Kohistan were neglected. and After establishment of the department of Archaeology at Hazara University Mansehra, archaeological field activities begin in Hazara region. The district Abbottabad, headquarter of Hazara division was the first time detailed surveyed by the same department in 2006-07. The result of this survey revealed, 175 sites of the Buddhist period, 16 sites of Hindu Shahi Period, 08 sites of Islamic Period, 02 sites of Sikh Period, 78 sites of the British Period and 21 sites yet to be properly identified as shown in figure 2 (Ihsan Ali et al 2010).

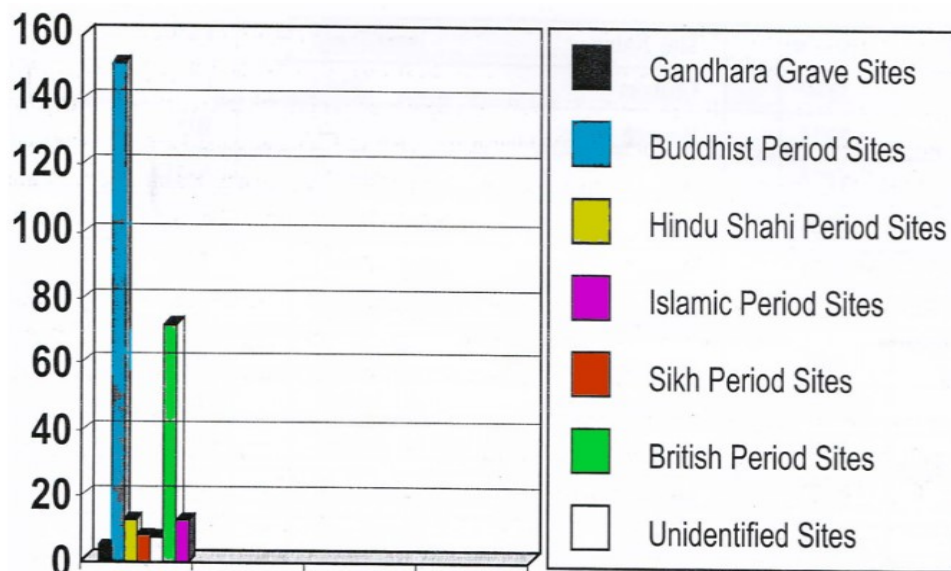


Figure 2 Multi-religious sites exposed during Archaeological Survey of District Abbottabad 2006-07

3. **Archaeological Survey of District Haripur 2007-08:** The archaeological field activity in district Haripur started by foreign archaeologists and pushed back its history to the prehistoric period due to the discovery of Khanpur cave in 1964 by Eden Johnson followed by Farid Khan later on. In 1988, department of Archaeology government of Pakistan discovered Buddhist complex at Garh Mauriyan near Sarai Saleh (Qamar, 1990). Recently, directorate of Archaeology government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa took initiative to survey tehsil Ghazi of district Haripur in 2003. The result of their exploration revealed 73 Buddhist, 3 Hindu Shahi, 3 prehistoric and 4 Islamic periods' sites. The remaining area of this district was surveyed by the department of Archaeology Hazara University Mansehra during 2007-08.

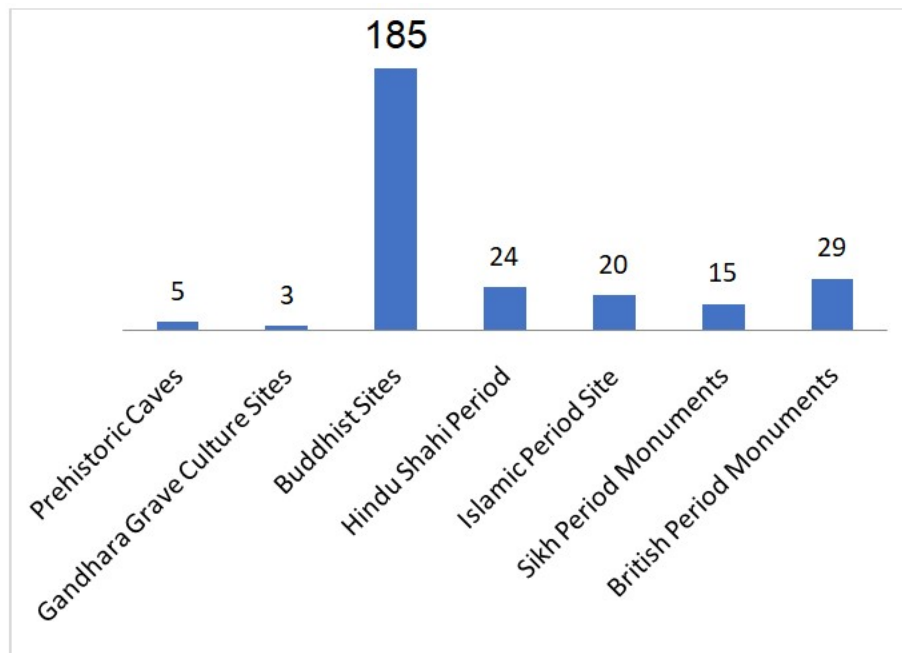


Figure 3 Multi-religious sites reported during Archaeological Survey of Haripur 2007-08

4. **Archaeological Survey of District Mansehra:** The first intensive archaeological field investigation was carried out in district Mansehra by the Department of Cultural Heritage and Tourism Management (now Archaeology) in Tehsil Balakot in 2006-07 in collaboration with UNESCO, Islamabad. The survey was later on extended to Tehsil Mansehra and Tanawal regions. Although these field investigations have unfolded hundreds of archaeological sites/ monuments, but due to limited funds, the Archaeological Survey in the remaining unexplored parts of Mansehra was initiated from Babu Sar Top, the highest residential area of the district occupied by the seasonal nomads

during the summer season. This area is inaccessible during the winter due to heavy snow fall and sever cold weather (Shakirullh, 2021).



Figure 4 Chansoor Dheri-I: Um burial

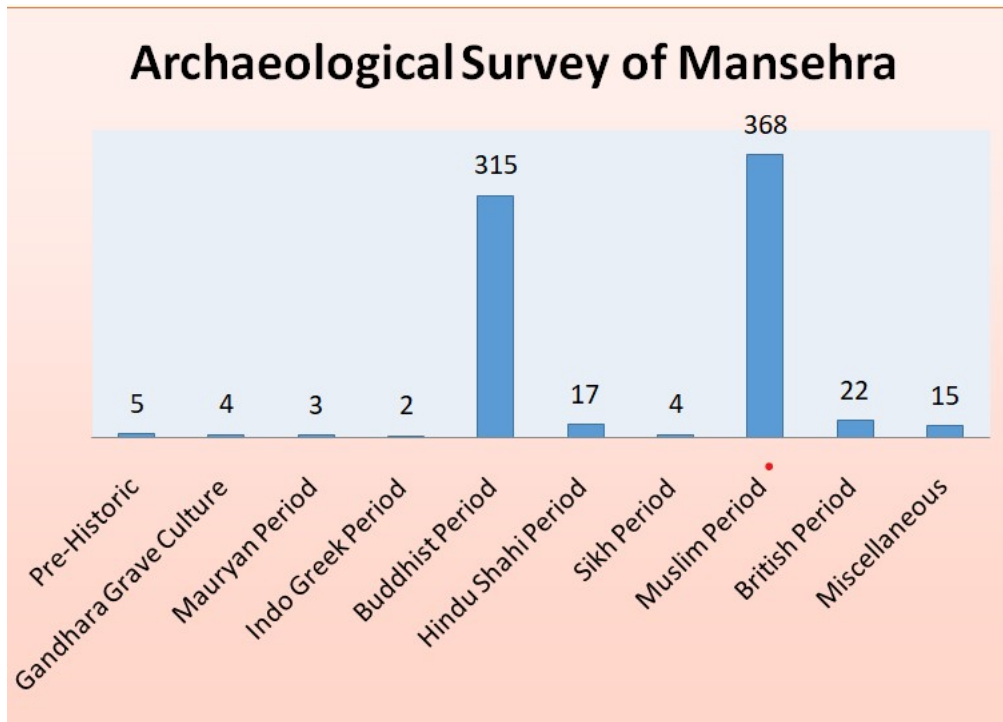


Figure 4 Discovery of Multi-religious sites from district Mansehra 2007-08, 2016-17

Others well-known Archaeological sites in Hazara

1. **Buddhist ruins at Bhamala:** Many Buddhist period sites have been exposed in the region during Archaeological explorations and excavations. The three districts of Hazara namely Haripur, Abbottabad and Mansehra were the major focused of both national and international Archaeologists and historians in the past which preserves well the legacy of Buddhist heritage. The district Haripur is famous for Buddhist ruins at Bhamala located on the right bank of the Haro River in the Khanpur district Haripur from where the largest death scene of Buddha discovered (Figure 5 a) *Arial View of Buddhist Complex Bhamala*, b) *Cross-Plan Stupa*, c) *Stucco Buddha image*, d) *largest Parinirvāṇa statue at Bhamala Haripur Hazara* and dated from 3rd to 5th century CE (Hameed, Samad & Kenoyer, 2018). Due to the unique discoveries, natural landscape, and water resort, Bhamala Buddhist complex attracts thousands of domestic tourists around the country and hundreds of international tourists throughout the globe every year. Buddhist community throughout the world loves to come to Pakistan to visit this remarkable discovery where they can perform their religious obligations.

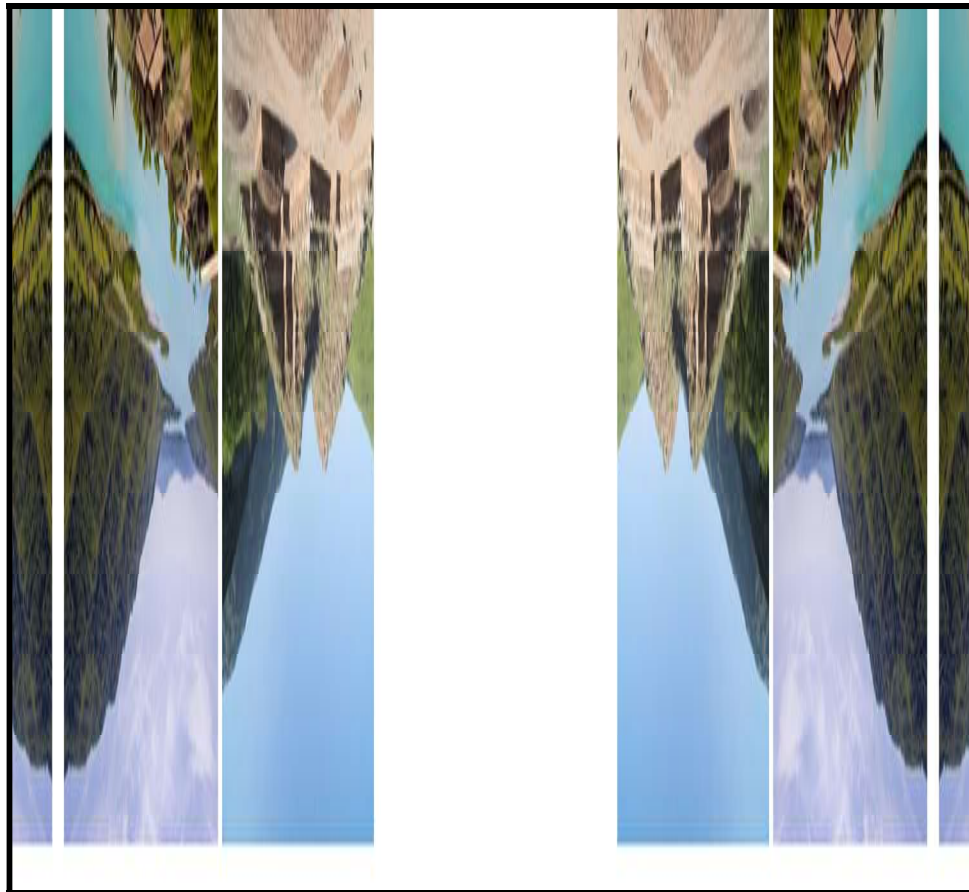


Figure 5 a) Arial View of Buddhist Complex Bhamala, b) Cross-Plan Stupa, c) Stucco Buddha image, d) largest Parinirvāna statue at Bhamala Haripur Hazara

2. **Monastic Complex at Badalpur:** The Buddhist monastic complex at Badalpur in Haripur district of Hazara region is considered as one of the largest complex in Taxilla valley covering the area of 81m north-south and 78m east-west while the stupa complex properly measures 71m north-south and 60m east-west. The site is located close to Junnan Wali Dheri, another Buddhist complex about 12kms from Taxila toward Khanpur. The name of this site for the first time enlisted by Sir Alexander Cunningham in his survey report (1863-64) and the site was first excavated by Natesa Aiyar, the superintendent of frontier circle in 1916-17 (Shah, 2016). Large numbers of antiquities including, coins, potsherd and clay sealing have been reported during the said excavation and based on 43 clay seals and coins the site was dated back to Kushan period i.e. 3rd century CE (Arif, & Khattak, 2006).

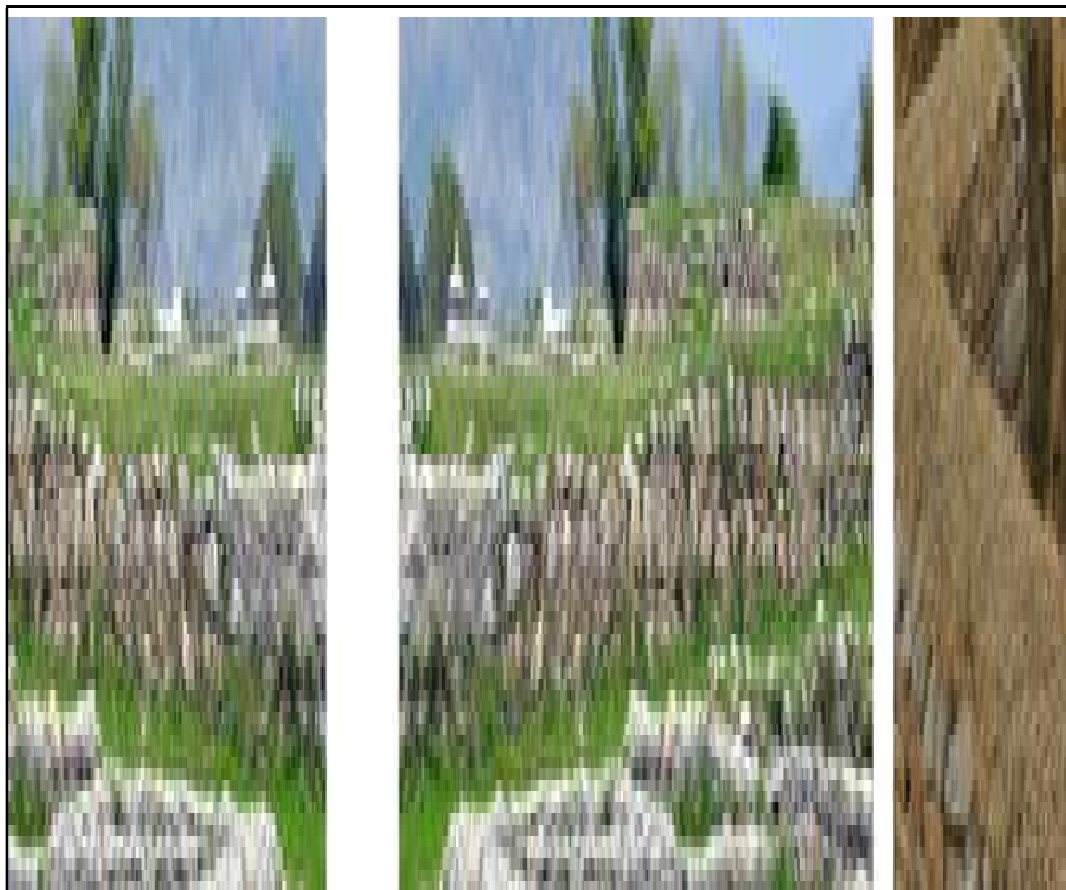


Figure 6 a) Overview of Badalpur Monastery, b) row of chapels c) Main stupa d) Buddha in meditation pose

3. ***Buddhist complex at Jinan Wali Dheri:*** The Buddhist monastery and stupa at Jinan Wali Dheri dated to the 5th century CE (Khan, 2008) lies in district Haripur.



Figure 7 Buddhist complex at Jinan Wali Dheri

4. ***Buddhist Monastery at Jullian:*** The Buddhist monastery at Jullian dated to 2nd century CE (Marshal, 1921)



Figure 8 Buddhist Monastery at Jullian

5. **Monastery at Piplan:** Monastery at Piplan with diaper masonry and fallen near 4th-5th centuries CE (Marshall 1945: 366) also located in district Haripur.



Figure 9 Monastery at Piplan

6. **Ashokan Rock Edicts at Mansehra:** The availability of Ashoka edicts inscribed on large boulder along the ancient silk rout in district mansehra pushed the history of Hazara region back to 3rd century B.C. The Ashokan Rock Edicts at Mansehra are of utmost importance as they provide a great deal of information on the extension of the Mauryan Empire rule and mark the north western limits where Ashoka caused the introduction of his cultural, religious and social reforms for the welfare of his subjects in the far-flung areas of his empire (Habib 2001: 88).



Figure 10 Ashokan Rock Edicts at Mansehra

7. ***Buddhist establishment at Zar Dheri:*** Zar Dheri, a well-known Buddhist complex is located in Tambah, a small village on the right side of Shinkhari-Dadar road in District Mansehra. This important Buddhist complex was for the first time recorded and published by Mr. Harold Hargraves, the then Superintendent, Archaeological Survey of India in 1922-23. The site had remained at the mercy of the plunderers till it was revisited by a joint team of archaeologists from the Department of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan and Tokyo National Museum Japan during their collaborative field research carried out in Hazara region in 1990s.



Figure 11 Buddhist Establishment at Zar Dheri

Discussion and Conclusion

Hazara as an ancient route attracted people in the past as well as continue to do it in the present due to its environmental and cultural importance. The archaeological discoveries by national and international archaeologists testified the potential richness of the area in terms of Archaeological wealth. The presence of Asoka Rock carvings at Mansehra gives credence to the idea that Hazara region being on the main artery of the Silk routes had prominence and importance much before Asoka the Great selected this site for engraving the important inscriptions. The importance of the area must have enhanced with the passage of time due to its geographical location being on the crossroads to and from Central Asia, Afghanistan, China, mainland India, Kashmir, Ancient Gandhara and Uddhyana. We know that Hargreaves visited this area during 1921 and only had random reference to the Zar Dheri site (Hargreaves 1921:pp.34-36). Sir John Marshall spent considerable period at Taxila, spanning over a period from 1912 to 1936, explored and excavated many important Buddhist sites including those falling in district Haripur, which have been inscribed on the World Heritage list (Marshall, 1951). These include Sirsukh, an important city of the Kushan Dynasty, Mohra Moradu, Pippla, Bhamala and Jauilian. However, Marshall could not expand and extend his researches to have mapped up the true potential of Hazara region. Then we known of the little efforts of Eden Johnson during 1964 (Dani, 1999) for his initial probe at Khanpur Cave followed by similar efforts by Farid Khan (Dani, 1999). Mian Said Qamar of the Federal Department of Archaeology had conducted excavations at Panian and Gar Morian (Qamar et al:1998) during the late 1980's and 1990's followed by archaeological excavations at Jinnah Wali Dheri (Khan, 2004 & Khan 2005) and Badalpur (Azeem et al 2015). Peshawar University under Prof. Durrani excavated the site of Pir Manak Rai (Khan, 2003). This huge wealth no doubt makes us believe that Hazara division was by no means behind in advancements in different phases of our historic period beginning in the first millennium BCE. Furthermore, Hazara region due to its cultural importance provides historical destinations for the promotion and development of religious tourism in Pakistan.

Aknowlegment

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