

RECONSTRUCTING THE BUDDHIST'S MONASTIC SOCIETY IN HAZARA FROM THE 3RD CENTURY BC TO 5TH CENTURY CE: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL APPROACH

Muhammad Zahoor* & Shakirullah**

Abstract

The great difficulty in reconstructing the origin and development of Buddhism in the Hazara region is due to the absence of Buddhist literature and limited archaeological explorations. Many scholars believe that Ashoka was responsible for the spread of Buddhist activities both in and outside the Indian subcontinent. There is no doubt that Buddhism was not spread to the north-western part of the sub-continent including the Hazara, during the lifetime of Buddha. The Hazara also did not escape the notice of the Mauryan emperor Asoka (3rd century BCE) who not only installed his proclamations, the Mansehra Rock Edicts but also built 200ft high stupa at Machikot Abbottabad that is still intact. The present research aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the Buddhist monastic society that emerged in the Hazara, the northernmost region of Pakistan from the 3rd century BC to the 5th century CE based on archaeological and textual evidence. Archaeological evidence such as inscriptions, stupas, and monastic remains from this period provided insights into the early establishment of Buddhist monastic society.

Keywords: Hazara, Buddhist Monastic society, Asoka Rock Edicts

Introduction

The basic goal of archaeology and history is to reconstruct or re-write the history of past human societies by utilizing different sources of information. Historians get information about the social, economic, and technological history of a particular society from literary sources, but it is impressionistic and constrained by the context. Whereas archaeology provides more precise

* Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Archaeology, Hazara University, Mansehra 21300, Pakistan. Email: zahoorarch@gmail.com

** Associate Professor, Department of Archaeology, Hazara University, Mansehra 21300, Pakistan. Email: shakirkhan04@yahoo.com

evidence for the same aspects of past human society by having primary context and as a result, a deeper understanding of the socioeconomic condition of past society can be obtained.¹

The Hazara region of the present Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces of Pakistan are known for their rich cultural and natural resources. The region was much known to Buddhist civilization in the past.² The presence of Asoka Rock sculptures at Mansehra lends credibility to the assumption that the Hazara region was prominent and important even before Asoka the Great chose this location for engraving important inscriptions. Because of its geographical placement on the crossroads to and from Central Asia, Afghanistan, China, mainland India, Kashmir, Ancient Gandhara, and Uddhyna, the area's prominence must have grown through time.³ The region has been receiving and transmitting cultural flows from many directions since the Mesolithic era and remained a junction connecting China, Southeast Asia and Central Asia.⁴ The religion Buddhism reached to central Asia and China through this region. In ancient times, Buddhism expanded over the Silk Road, and one of the primary roads of the Great Silk Route passed through Hazara, connecting Kashgar with Kashmir and Gandhara. The Archaeological field investigations conducted in the region revealed human material remains belonging to different phases of human history ranging from Mesolithic to 21st century CE. The earlier archaeological investigations and research had provided a great helping hand in order to reconstruct the historical time scale of this area. Among the explored sites, Buddhist remains are the most extensive in terms of numbers, mostly belonging to the 3rd century BC to 5th Century CE. But despite this evidence, many aspects of the Buddhist society in the region are still subject to questions. The present research is thus an attempt to get a clear picture of Buddhist monastic society based on Archaeological and textual evidence.

Problem Statement

In the 7th century CE, Xuan Zang mentions at least seventy-one Buddhist countries in the territory covered by the Indian subcontinent including the country of Urusa modern Hazara. He does not name the capital but mentions the existence of a stupa and monastery 4 or 5 li (1km) to the south of it built by Ashoka Raja. The name of Urusa is also recorded by several ancient

¹Thakuria, Tilok. Society and Economy during Early Historic Period in Maharashtra: An Archaeological Perspective. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology*, 5(2017),169-190

²Muhammad Zahir,. The status, conservation and management of Buddhist heritage in Pakistan. *Conserving the Sacred*, (2017):85-90.

³Azeem, Abdul. Antique discovered from Zar Dheri (Shinkiyari Hazara), Comparative Study of Sculptures” Museum.*Journal National Museum of Pakistan*, 3(2002), 66-67

⁴Junaid Shakirullah, and Haq Nawaz, Contextualizing Buddhism: Exploring the Limits of Buddhist Survivability in High Altitude Valleys in District Mansehra, *Pakistan Heritage*, 11, (2016), 45-87.

writers including Pāṇini (c.4th century BCE), Ptolemy (2nd century CE), Xuan Zang (7th century CE), Kalhaṇa (12th century CE) and Mahābhārata (4th century BCE to 4th century CE). Much has been written about the surrounding countries of Ta-Cha-Shi-Lo modern Taxila⁵, Sang-Ho-Pu-Lo-Simhapura modern Salt range region of Punjab,⁶ and the kingdom of Kia-Shi-Mi-Lo modern Kashmir⁷ but rare attempts found so far on the location, society, and religion of the kingdom of Urasa and the name of Urasa also disappeared from historical records. Thus, the purpose of the present study is to bring Urasa into the written record and shed light on the origin and development of the Buddhist monastic society that flourished between the 3rd century BC to the 5th century CE in the region concerned.

Hazara Region

The ancient Urasa, modern Hazara is among the seventy-one countries mentioned by the famous pilgrim Xuan Zang in the 7th century CE. To relocate the capital of the ancient state of Urasa based on the textual evidence of ancient writers including Pāṇini (c.4th century BC), Ptolemy (2nd century CE), Xuan Zang (7th century CE), Kalhaṇa (12th century CE) and *Mahābhārata* (4th century BCE to 4th century CE) are very important. As mentioned, that the Pāṇini places the ancient *Janapada* (state) of Uraśa on the left bank of the Sindhu.⁸ Ptolemy mentions a country called 'Arsa' and its towns 'Ithagouros and Taxila', placing it between the upper waters of the Bidaspes and the Indus that is, in the Hazāra country.⁹ Lassen was the first to recognize in Urasa the territory of Ptolemy's 'Arsa' and 'Uragā' mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* (ii, 1027) as the name of a country lying between Abhisāri (Kashmīr) and Simhapura (salt Range), a slightly corrupted form of the same name. Xuan Zang¹⁰ records *Wu-la-shi* (Uraśa) as the name of the country situated to the northwest of Kashmir and dependent upon it. Hiuen Tsang's does not name the capital but mentions the existence of a stupa and monastery 4 or 5 *li* (1km) to the south of it. A recent survey conducted by a researcher confirms the truthfulness of this statement.

⁵ John Marshall, *Taxila, An Illustrated Account of Archaeological Excavations carried out at Taxila under the orders of the Government of India between the years 1913 and 1934*, Vol. II, London: Cambridge University Press.1951.

⁶ Saifur Dar, and Zakirullah Jan, Three seasons of excavations at Pir Manakrai, Haripur: Preliminary report. *Ancient Pakistan*, 26(2015),1-44

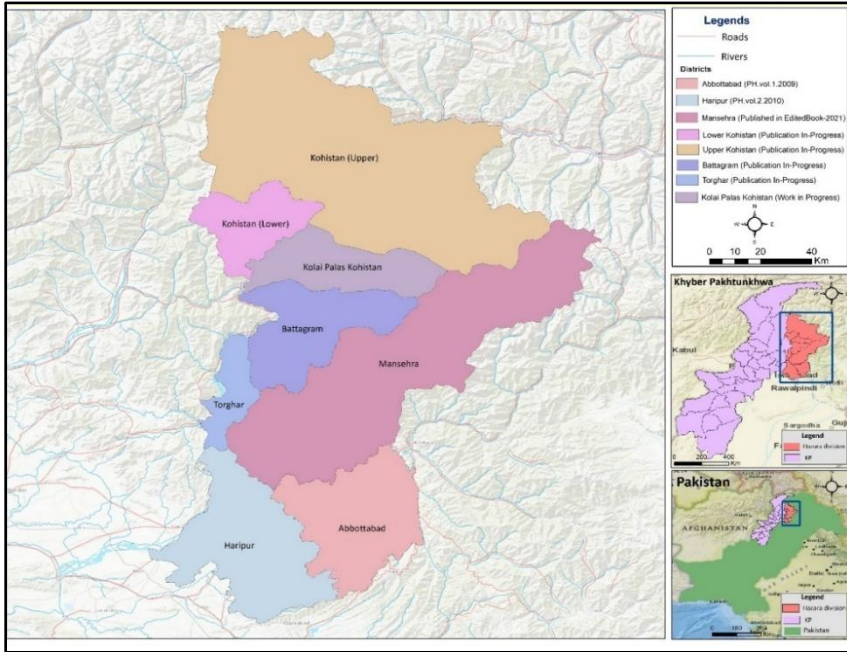
⁷ Aurel Stein, *Report of archaeological survey work in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan for the period from 2nd 1904 to March 31st 1905*, (Peshawar, 1905), 204-228

⁸ Agrawala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, 2nd ed. (Varanasi, 1963), 255-315

⁹ Majumdar, *The classical accounts of India*, (Calcutta, 1960), 245-262

¹⁰ Samuel Beal, Si-yu-Ki: *Buddhist records of the western world: Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen Tsiang, AD 629*, (London: Kegan Paul, 1884), 145-175

Much dilapidated remains of a Buddhist establishment at the site of Mochikot (Pl.Ia,b) were seen at about the same distance from Mangal, the probable capital of Rash/Urasa/Hazara.



Origin and Development of the Stupa cult in Hazara

In the Hazara, the exact date of the introduction of the stupa cult is not known. Buddhism, as we have seen, reached the boundaries of North-Western India by the second quarter of the 3rd century BC. So, we cannot trace the introduction of the stupa cult in our area before that period (i.e., the second quarter of the 3rd century BC.). It is a well-known fact that Aśoka gave great impetus to the cult of relic stupa. According to a legend preserved in the Divyavadana, Aśoka erected some 84,000 stupas on the relics of the Buddha throughout the empire on the advice of Yasa, the venerable monk. The Hazara also did not escape the notice of the Mauryan emperor Aśoka (3rd century BCE) who not only installed his proclamations, the Mansehra Rock Edicts but also built 200ft high stupa at Machikot Abbottabad that is still intact.¹¹

Based on this archaeological evidence we can assume that the cult of relic stupa was developed in the Hazara from the time of Asoka (273-236 BC). This can be confirmed by the Rock Edicts of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka,

¹¹Samuel Beal, Si-yu-Ki: *Buddhist records of the Western world: Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen Tsiang, AD 629*. Vol. I, (London: Kegan Paul, 1884), 145-175

inscribed on rocks in Mansehra of Hazara. The edicts are cut into three boulders and date back to the 3rd century BC and they are written in the ancient Indic script of Gandhara culture, Kharosthi.¹²

In that case, we can assume that the cult of relic stupa was developed in the Hazara from the time of Asoka. Since then, the erection or building of a stupa was considered a work of religious merit. As a result of this, we find many stūpas i.e. stupa and monastery at Bhamala Haripur, Zar Dheri stupa at Mansehra, etc. were established. Some of them were placed in the apses of chapels, where they could be worshipped under cover; others big and small, were chiseled in relief or painted in colors on the walls of the chapels, gateways, and balustrades, or even on the faces of the great stūpas. Later on, centering around the stupas, some ritualistic development in the form of worship also took place in our region.

Buddhist remains in Hazara from 3rd century BC to 5th century CE

As a result of many archaeological expeditions conducted by the Department of Archaeology, Hazara University Mansehra, large numbers of Buddhist ruins were reported throughout eight districts of the present Hazara. Among those, the high ratio was observed in the district Haripur, Abbottabad, and Mansehra as shown in the graph below.¹³

¹²Mukherjee. *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, (Calcutta, India.1988)

¹³Shakirullah; Abdul., Hameed Muhammad Zahoor, and Usman Naveed, *Archaeological excavations at Bādo Dheri, Zar Dheri, Guli Bāgh and Takiya Baṭagrām Baffa, District Mānsehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pākistān*. (Department of Archaeology Hazara University Mansehra, 2023), 1-123

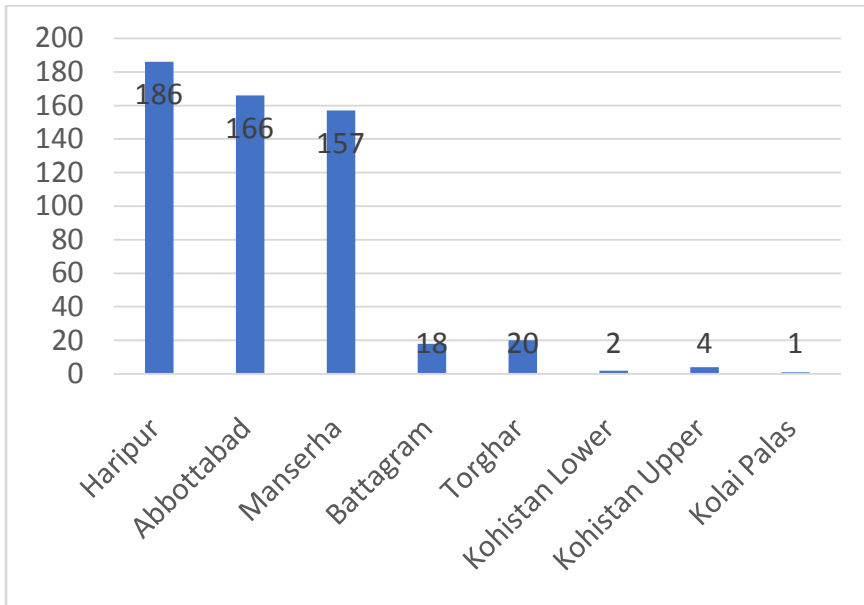
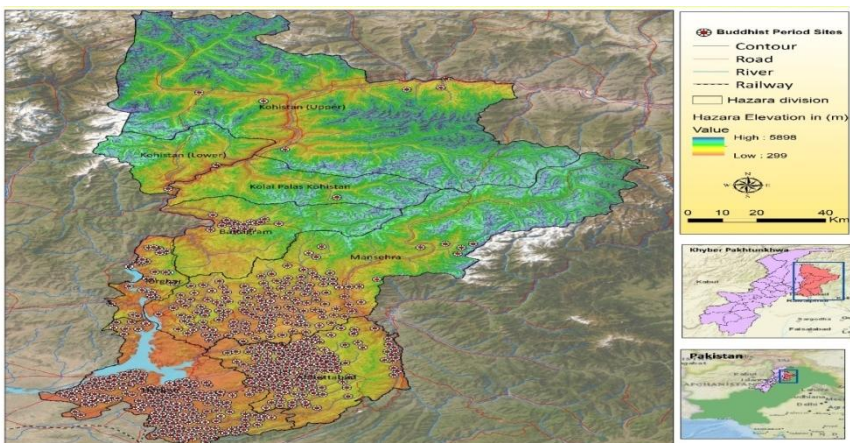


Figure.1 Graphical representation of Buddhist ruins found in Hazara
 Archaeological evidence are important markers that give clues about the existence of a past society in a particular region. In the case of Hazara, many archaeological sites ranging from the 3rd century BC to the 5th century CE provide solid evidence that a well-developed Buddhist society flourished in the region for 800 years. An overview of those sites is presented below in Table-1 and figure-2.



1 Figure.2 Geographical position of the Buddhist site found in Hazara

Table 1: Archaeological evidence of Buddhist society from 3rd century BC to 5th Century CE in Hazara

S. No.	Site Name	District	Date
1.	Ashoka Rock Edict	Mansehra	3 rd Century BC
2.	Khandar Bedadi	Mansehra	2 nd Century BC
3.	Pir Manakrai	Haripur	1 st century BC to 4 th century CE
4.	Bado Dheri Buddhist Stupa Mansehra	Mansehra	1 st century CE
5.	Zar Dheri Buddhist Complex	Mansehra	1 st to 2nd century CE
6.	Badalpur	Haripur	3 rd century CE
7.	Bhamala	Haripur	3 rd to 5 th century CE
8.	Jullian	Haripur	2 nd century CE
9.	Jinna Wali Dheri	Haripur	4th to 5th century CE

i. Ashoka Rock Edict Mansehra (3rd Century BC)

The third ruler of the Maurya dynasty, the great Emperor Ashoka, became a Buddhist after seeing the terrible consequences of battle in Kalinga. He embraced Buddhism and worked to disseminate Dhamma throughout his realm and beyond. He later became its defender and sponsor. To propagate the Buddha's message, he built pillars and issued decrees all over the Indian subcontinent, including in contemporary Afghanistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The Edicts of Ashoka are a collection of 33 inscriptions from the Mauryan Period, which covered India, Pakistan, and Nepal, that were carved on pillars, boulders, and cave walls during the reign of Emperor Ashok. Ashoka once felt enormous regret for the suffering he had caused a city in 260 BC when he was expanding his empire. He issued a number of edicts with instructions for his governors to post them in conspicuous locations as part of his promise to put an end to suffering in his empire. After 257 BC, seven different versions of the fourteen edicts were engraved on enormous boulders all around the empire. The two versions that have survived in their entirety are in Gandhara. One on two stones on the outskirts of Mansehra, east of the Indus River, 30 kilometers north of

Abbottabad, and the other on three boulders nearby Shahbazgarhi, 16 kilometres east of Mardan. On the side of a rocky outcrop not far from the city of Mansehra, three sizable boulders have the Mansehra rock edicts carved into their surfaces. They contain fourteen edicts issued by Asoka, the Mauryan monarch (272-235 BC), and they are the first concrete proof of writing in South Asia. They are written in the Kharosthi script and date to the middle of the third century BC. Kharosthi's existence indicates that Achaemenid power in this area, the province of Gandhara, continued after the brief Alexandrian occupation of the fourth century BC. The site's fourteen primary edicts include various facets of Asoka's dharma, or moral code. The edicts are situated next to one of the historic routes linking the Vale of Peshawar to the northern regions of Kashmir, Gilgit, and Central Asia as well as the southern part of the enormous metropolis of Taxila.

The existence of the Ashoka rock edicts in Mansehra offers a wealth of information on the expansion of the Buddhist society that Ashoka reigned over in the Hazara region in the third century BC during the Mauryan period.



Bedadi Mansehra (2nd century BC to 2nd century CE)

In Hazara, the Indus-Greeks conquered the area in 190 BC after the Mauryans. The entire region has reportedly produced coins from the Indo-Greek kings, attesting to their control. The Department of Archaeology at Hazara University has recently conducted investigations into the Indo-Greek ruins at Katehra in Lassan Nawab and Khandar Bedadi close to Shinkiari. In addition, a sizable collection of Indo-Greek coins, including silver coins of Antimachus-II (PM-10112) and Menander-I (PM-10055-62, 10065, 10067, and 10074), were found in Dhodial near (Mansehra) and are currently stored

in the Peshawar Museum's storeroom.¹⁴ The Kushans, who are renowned for actively supporting Buddhism, came after the Parthians in the first century CE. After defeating the Parthian ruler, this dynasty's Kajula Kadphises took control of Kabul. Later, his son Vima Taktu (Sotar Magas), who was subsequently succeeded by Vima Kadphises, came to power and expanded his kingdom to include Sindh, Punjab, Pakhli, and Kashmir. From Dhodial (Mansehra), copper coins of Vima Kadphises have been discovered. Recent excavations in Mansehra turned up more than a hundred Buddhist



sites, dating from the second or first century BC to the fifth century CE. Some of them are worth highlighting, including the Buddhist complex at Zar Dheri, northwest of Shinkiyari, Zaro Dheri, Pir Kot, Chitar Kot, Kharand Mera, Mor Baffa stepping wells, and Jabba Rock murals. Buddhism arrived in China and other central Asian nations via the Silk Road, which passed through Mansehra, claims Ahmad Hasan Dani (Dani, 1999). A copper ladle-bearing inscription was also found at Bedadi. The site is of considerable antiquity where the late Sir Aurel Stein found special numerous specimens of coinage of Azes and Hindu Shahi of Kabul, a fine silver coin of Augustus, and several coins of Soter Megasthenes, and early Kushan kings. The ladle is 9 inches in length and weighs 2.7 ounces. The bowl of the ladle is 1.4 inches high and has a diameter of 19 inches. There is 8.6 inches long handle joined at a right angle in the diameter of the bowl and terminates in an oval ring formed by bending it backward. The inscription runs around the bowl the letters consist of punched dots. The character employed is Kharosthi of the Kushan period, having an average size of 1/6 inches. The writing records the gift to one of the religious establishments of Bedadi by some zealous layman about the middle of the 2nd century CE. The text along with its translation follows.

Text: “*Samgharukshi (dasada) na samghe chadudise urasaraje acharya (ne) na Kashyaviyana*”

¹⁴Ihsan Ali, Ibrahim Shah, Abdul Hameed, Muhammad Ashfaq and Muhammad Tahir. *Archaeological Explorations in Balakot, District Mansehra (2006-07): A Preliminary Report* Pakistan Heritage 3(2009), 149-162

Translation: Gift of Samgharakshita to the congregation of the four quarters, in the Urasa kingdom of the Kasyapiya teachers.¹⁵ The inscription (see figure 3.11) was presented by Mr. T.B Copeland to the Peshawar Museum that certifies the presence of Kasyapia Buddhist sect in Hazara.

ii. Bado Dheri Buddhist Stupa Mansehra (1st century CE)

The Indo-Scythians succeeded the Indo Greeks in the area, and the ruins of this dynasty were discovered in Kandar Bedadi. Reer, which is near Atar Shisha and is on the Mansehra-Balakot route, has reported a huge quantity of silver Azes coins, including (PM-10228 -10247). From Dhodial, a silver Azes coin (PM-05752) was also recorded. In Mansehra, the Indo-Parthians took the place of the Indo-Scythians. Twelve sites that can be dated to the Parthian era were discovered during a recent archaeological study in the area. At Bado Dheri, one of the recently studied Buddhist sites, Pre-Parthian archaeological evidence was also discovered.¹⁶ Bado Dheri is situated on the left bank of Gandhian Stream between the Karakoram Highway and the recently built CPEC route in District Mansehra. It is located between 73°12'57.50" east longitude and 34°23'13.24" north latitude. Along with hundreds of other Buddhist ruins in the Mansehra region, the site was found in 2007–2008 by the Department of Archaeology at Hazara University in Mansehra. During the archaeological explorations in 2016–17, a group of archaeologists from the mentioned department went back and recorded the site.



The same department recently conducted a salvage excavation in 2019 to document whatever that the unlawful diggers' spade left untouched. Although the excavation turned up no priceless artifacts like coins or

¹⁵Shakur and Khan. *A handbook to the inscriptions gallery in the Peshawar Museum*. 1946.

¹⁶Shakirullah and Abdul Hameed, Bado Dheri Excavation 2019: A Preliminary Report. *Pakistan Heritage* 12(2020), 231-265

sculptures, the few structural fragments, such as the main stupa's core and the remains of its Kanjur face, provide us with ample information about its construction and later alterations. In terms of both the building method and the materials used, the stupa is extremely rare. Sandstones that have not been dressed form the stupa's main structure, and the sole material utilised to bind these stones together is mud. Large size dressed stones and remnants of the Kanjur facing on the northern side indicate that the structure was enclosed and altered in later eras. A sandstone unfinished human figure was discovered near to the exterior northern side wall of the main stupa and is one of the items of archaeological significance. On the unfinished head, there are no visible facial characteristics, but the band of the headpiece that surrounds it is clearly visible and almost consistently carved. The lime shards discovered along this incomplete head suggest that the thick lime plaster used to cover the sandstone core and that the facial features may have been molded in lime. The Gandhara painters chose to carve statues out of schist stone because it was smooth and glossy rather than sandstone because it was harsh and rough. The Bado Dheri site was dated to the pre-Parthian era based on the original construction of the main stupa and the masonry (i.e. rubble masonry) that made up it. Although the Kidarites are said to have made the last additions or alterations to the stupa, which include the use of dressed stone blocks in the stairs on the northern side and kanjur facing on the structure. The site was occupied well into the Kidarite period, as evidenced by coins from that time period that include a female figure (Ardoxsho) and Brahmi inscriptions that are currently housed in private collections.

iii. Zar Dheri Buddhist Complex Mansehra (1st to 2nd Century CE)

A well-known Buddhist structure called Zar Dheri is situated near Tambah, a small village in District Mansehra, on the right side of the Shinkiari-Dadar road. The Archaeological Survey of India's then-Superintendent, Mr. Harold Hargraves, originally documented and published this significant Buddhist complex between 1922 and 1923. The Pak-Japan expedition team chose Zar Dheri for long-term excavation. The earliest cruciform stupa with a monastic complex was found as a result of an excavation expedition that ran from 1995 to 1999. The initial dig also turned up a number of significant artifacts, like as copper coins, stone sculptures, and architectural components, as well as iron and stucco things. However, even after these significant discoveries, the site was not adequately safeguarded and promoted for tourists; instead, the uncovered buildings, like as the cruciform stupa, were left open to dangers from both the natural and man-made worlds, leading to irreparable damage. Modern homes already

cover the entire monastic complex to the north of the great stupa. The eastern and western sides likewise exhibit this quick building. And if this encroachment persists for another ten years, this significant site will vanish entirely. With funding from the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC), the Department of Archaeology at Hazara University Mansehra has conducted excavations. Although the scope of this field investigation at Zar Dheri was constrained to a smaller area, it still turned up significant material remains, such as ceramics, bones, and stone walls as well as stone inscriptions and sculpture fragments, which will not only shed light on the archaeological significance of the site but also help to confirm its chronology.¹⁷ The site has been dated to the second century CE based on numismatic data and Kharosthi aksharasts.¹⁸



146 stone sculptures, largely composed of schist but also incorporating stucco and stone architectural elements, were found in a 3x3-meter monastic cell in 1999 by the Japanese mission while clearing the monastery. They were found in the north, south, and west blocks, which are three different stacks of fragments. Japanese academics claim that these sculptures share artistic similarities with those found in Swat. The Japanese team undertook a comparative research of the sculptures found at Zar Dheri, at several locations in Swat and Butkara I, and at the stupa of Saidu Sharif I in

¹⁷Shakirullah, Hameed Abdul, and Zahoor, Muhammad. Excavation at the Buddhist Site of Zar Dheri 2021: A Preliminary Report. *Pakistan Heritage*, 13(2021):137-143

¹⁸Yoshihide. *The Finds from Zar Dheri'' Gandhara The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan, Legends, Monasteries, and Paradise*, (2010), 308-313

particular due to the paucity of pertinent information available from the Hazara Division. But in the Taxila Valley and Hazara region, no schist quarries for carving Gandharan Buddhist sculptures have yet been discovered. Additionally, Sir John Marshall noted that the Taxila Valley lacked schist stone; instead, the majority of stone sculptures were imported from the Northwest Frontier Province, or what is now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where schist stone was easily accessible¹⁹

An attempt was made²⁰ to confirm the source of the raw material used to create the stone sculptures at Zar Dheri and to determine whether the sculptures were produced locally in a style similar to that of ancient Uddiyana or whether they were imported from other regions. The outcome of this research demonstrates that the material, particularly the schist, employed in the creation of decorative and structural features at the Zar Dheri site, was not brought from Buner but rather came from a local source in the neighbouring mountain known as Kally Pa.

iv. Bhamala (3rd to 5th century CE)

A important Buddhist site called Bhamala is situated on the right bank of the Haro River, which flows from the Murree and Nathiagali Hills before emptying into the Indus and irrigating a huge area that stretches from Khanpur up to Attock. Since prehistoric times, the river has continued to be the primary source of water for irrigation and drinking. The archaeological remains found on each side of the river's stated course attest to its significance in preserving cultural practises dating back to the Mesolithic. Bhamala is one of the Buddhist monasteries built along the Haro and occupies a unique site. Mountains covered in rich greenery surround the site on its eastern, northern, and southern sides. While offering a panoramic view on its western side, the Khanpur Reservoir extends from Khanpur town to the base of the hill.

After Sir John Marshall's original examination of the Buddhist site in Bhamala, it remained uninteresting to researchers for about eighty years. In collaboration with the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Department of Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin Madison in the USA, excavations at the site were finally resumed in 2012 and continued through 2016. The monastery building with a stone platform for senior monks in the middle of the water tank and two sturdy corner bastions were among the numerous extraordinary findings made during the archaeological investigations at the location.

¹⁹ Ahmed Hassan Dani, *The Historic City of Taxila*, (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1986), 45-275

²⁰Shakirullah, Muhammad Zahoor, Adil and Khan Shah Owais, Mineralogical analysis of schist stone from the Buddhist Complex of Zar Dheri (Mansehra, Pakistan), *Journal of Asian Civilizations*, 45(2022), 39-58

While the latter was discovered by Marshall in 1930–1931, the platform was exposed during the excavation in 2015–2016. The cruciform stupa in the centre of the monastic complex and the lengthy chamber housing the earliest massive Parinirvana statue of Buddha are two other noteworthy aspects of Bhamala. The two major stupas, which are encircled by cOther important discoveries at the site include 3rd century CE terracotta sculptures and double-halo stucco Buddha statues that were taken from the eastern chapels of Main Stupa 2. We can re-establish the chorology of the site from the 3rd to 5th century CE, which was previously proposed by Marshall from the fourth to fifth century CE, based on analyses of the copper coins and the radiocarbon dates of the charred wood and charcoals collected from different stratigraphic units.²¹

v. Jullian (2nd Century CE)

Jaulian is 100 metres above the surrounding contemporary settlement of Jaulian on a hill. The cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad are close to Khanpur Taxila road, a picnic area close to Khanpur Dam, and are situated around 35 and 45 km to the southeast, respectively. The Mohra Muradu Monastery and the historic Taxilan city of Sirsukh are both close to Jaulian. Additionally, Jinnah Wali Dheri Stupa, Badalpur Stupa, and Piplan Remains are close by.



Jaulian, along with the other parts of Ancient Taxila, was destroyed in the 450s CE during the invasion of the White Huns and thereafter abandoned. Jaulian was constructed in the second century CE at about the same time as the neighbouring Mohra Muradu. Buddhists in the area were persecuted by

²¹Abdul Hameed, Abdul Samad, and Mark Kenoyer Jonathan, Bhamala Excavations 2015-16: A Preliminary Report, *Ancient Pakistan*, 29 (2018), 171-184

later kings, like the Hun King Mihirakula, and the site never fully recovered. The remains at Jaulian are on a hilltop and include a big central stupa, 27 auxiliary lesser stupas, 59 mini chapels with scenes from Buddha's life, and two quadrangles with residential rooms for monks. Jaulian's shape and construction are reminiscent of the adjacent Mohra Muradu²²

The main stupa at Jaulian is severely damaged and significantly smaller than Mohra Muradu or the Dharmarajika Stupa. It, like nearly all the sculptures and architectural features, was heavily plastered in stucco. Jaulian's decoration is thought to be of lower quality than Mohra Muradu's, despite the use of a material that is easily moulded. In certain locations, the original plaster has been retained. 21 smaller "votive stupas" that included religious iconography surround the main stupa. However, others claim that some of the votive stupas were actually constructed as revered monks' tombs. Though some have been removed and are now placed in museums, the statues that were once within the votive stupas have largely been preserved. The original structure of the major stupa, which is located in the upper court's centre. The "Healing Buddha" was a statue of Buddha in a votive stupa with a navel hole. In order to pray for healing of various ailments, pilgrims would place their fingers in the icon's navel. A 5th century inscription that has been preserved beneath the statue reveals that a Franciscan named Budhamitra Dharmanandin donated it. Jaulian's monastery is comparable to that of Mohra Muradu, which is also nearby. The Jaulian monastery was a two-story structure with 28 student quarters on the first floor and another 28 on the second. Stone staircases that have been restored connect the two levels. Buddha statues in good condition can be found in a few of the rooms. Each room had a lamp niche and a window that let in fresh air and natural light. To prevent wild animals from entering, the windows were made to be wider on the inside and narrower on the outside. Plasterwork and paintings were used to embellish the plastered rooms. A portion of the monastery was designated especially for the creation of Buddhist manuscripts, generally on birch bark, a highly perishable material, as was characteristic at other sizable monasteries in the Gandhara region, such as Takht-i-Bahi and Dharmarajika. The monastery also included a kitchen and a sizable pool for washing. The location has two stone mills that were used to process grains, as well as a stone for grinding spices.

vi. Jinna Wali Dheri (5th century CE)

The Buddhist site of Jinnan Wali Dheri (The mound of evil spirits) is situated about 10 km north-east of Taxila Museum and 2.5 km northwest

²² John Marshall, *Excavations at Taxila: The Stupas and Monasteries at Jauliān* (No. 7), (Government printing, India, 1921)

of Jullian village in District Haripur. In the very beginning, this site is robbed by illegal diggers for antiquities. The Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan (hereafter DoAM) excavated in 2002–2008.



During this campaign, first the monastery area and its water tank were exposed whereas the main stupa was buried under a road at that time. Later, the main stupa, votive stupas and an enclosure around the stupa were exposed; the enclosure consisted of chapels facing towards the main stupa. But, above all, the important discovery was the finding of the Buddhist mural paintings which depict Buddha and Bodhisattva dated to the 5th century CE. The entire network of structures at the site of Jinna Wali Dheri was explored during the excavation including the main stūpa court, votive stūpas, monastery and water tank made of semi ashlar and diaper masonry, which are dated to 4th to 5th century CE. The most remarkable discovery from Jinna wali Dheri is the Buddhist mural paintings. Fragments of painting were found on the floor of the main entrance of the monastery. The paintings depict images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas in different attitudes and figures of worshipper. The paintings were executed on the thick mud plaster of the entrance wall. Black, red, sepia and blue Colours were used on white surface of a fine layer of stucco. This type of mural paintings have not yet been discovered in any Buddhist sanctuary of Gandhara.

vii. Badalpur Buddhist Monestry Haripur (3rd century CE)

Since 1930, the Government has acquired and protected the site of the Badalpur stupa and monastery. It extends across 2.9 acres in total. About 10 kilometres northeast of Taxila Museum and 2.5 kilometres northwest of Julian Village, it is located next to Behra Village in the wide valley of the

Haro River. A large stupa and a monastic complex can be found at the location. The Stupa complex proper measures 71 metres north-south and 60 metres east-west, while the monastery is 81 metres north-south by 78 metres east-west. One of the most significant centres of cultural exchange is ancient Takshasila. Numerous historic ruins that are dispersed around the region serve as a testament to its magnificence. Taxila is a well-known place in the Buddhist world from a history and cultural perspective. Buddhism flourished in this area from the reign of the Mauryan king Asoka (272–232 BC) until the reign of the Kushan king of Kanishka (2nd century CE), who is regarded as the true founder of the vast Kushana empire and a significant supporter of Buddhism. Chinese and Greek travellers like Arrian, Strabo, Plutarch, and Huien Tsang provided detailed descriptions of Taxila.



Prior to the first excavation in the Stupa Court in 1916–17, which was carried out by V. Natesa Aiyar, the former Superintendent of the Frontier Circle while Sir John Marshall was the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India; the site was noted by Sir Alexander Cunningham in his report. He described how the stupa had completely lost all of its face stone and that nothing was left. Ten copper coins, 43 sealings, and ceramics from the stupa court area were among the items he found. He uncovered the chapels on the north and south of the stupa and revealed the stupa's ruins from all angles. The rectangular stupa's base dimensions were

81 feet 9 inches by 74 feet 3 inches. With kanjur let in for mouldings and pilasters, the stupa's limestone masonry is constructed in semi-ashlar and semi-diaper styles. He claims that the drum of the stupa rises to a height of around 20 feet above the plinth. Around the drum, there were also signs of a paved procession path paved with lime concrete. The dome is not there. The chapels and prisons received significant damage. The enormous size of some of the stone slabs utilised in the base's facing was the Stupa's most notable feature. The block was 4 feet, 11 inches by 11 inches, and it was located at the northwest corner. He put the monument's construction in the latter third of the first century CE.

viii Pir Manakrai Abbottabad (1st century BC to 4th century CE)

The Pir Manakrai, which is situated at roughly 73 degrees East and 34 degrees North, is roughly 5 kilometers northeast of Haripur City (Hazara) and 20 miles / 32 km northeast of the historic city of Taxila (Figure 1). On the right bank of the River Daur, which empties into the Tarbela Reservoir Lake around 7 km west of Haripur, it is prominently located. On the Haripur-Abbottabad Road, the site can be reached via the village of Pir Manakrai or by crossing the river Daur from either the town of Sarai Saleh or the small hamlet of Ali Khan. This historic town was situated along the route that connected Taxila and Kashmir in the past, passing through Pannian, Pir Manakrai, Pind Hasham Khan, Sarai Naimat, Sherwan, Damtaur, Mansehra, Pakhli, etc. Kagbattian is the name of a group of medium-sized hills that are located to the north of the site. The actual site is dispersed across three promontories with the names Kattian, Sattian, and Mattian (or Mathian)—named after the three daughters of Pir Manakrai, or some claim Raja Chitar, the fabled founder of the city bearing the same name and the Raja of Chitar Nagar, whose capital was the city of Pir Manakrai. Nobody is aware of the origins of the names given to the location and the nearby village, Pir Manakrai's identity, or the details of his life and final resting place. The name, however, appears to be much older since it dates back to the oldest mention of Muslim habitation of the area, when Manakrai was designated as the head village of the Turkish-occupied strip of territory and given the name Turkpattior Turk Manakrai. Before the town of Haripur was established in the 19th century, it was unquestionably the largest town in the valley. The current town of Pir Manakrai was established in the 18th century when the former town at the present location was abandoned, according to all local history book authors. Which area of the Manakrai site was last inhabited is unknown, though.

At the Pir Makrai site, excavations lasted for three seasons. The findings from these excavations include coins that have been provisionally dated to the first century BC (coins from Azes), the fourth century CE (coins from

Vasudeva), and lastly the ninth century CE (coin from Sri Vekka Deva)²³. Six settlement periods and 12 layers have been found over the three seasons of excavations. However, for all intents and purposes, the settlement region, which spans from the third century BC to the fourth century CE, has four major building phases. As a result, the site appears to have been established during the Mauryan era in the fourth century BC, reached its pinnacle under Indo-Greeks' control in the third and second century BC, and culminated during the Scytho-Parthian era from the first century BC to the first century CE. The Kushan fall (2nd–4th century CE) marked the beginning of the anti-climax, which was finally abandoned during the Hindu Shahiyas' control (9th century CE).

Early Buddhist Schools of thoughts in the Region

The nature of Buddhism introduced in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent including the Hazara region was undoubtedly Hinayana Buddhism. The early history of the Buddhist Sangha or community/society in the region concerned was disturbed, slowly and gradually the Sangha was losing its unity. The available evidence of an early period of Asoka shows that he made every possible attempt to check schism in the Sangha. He held the third council just to check corruption and schism in the Sangha. Asoka appointed Dhamma-Mahamatras for looking after and preserve of Sangha's unity. He also issued Sasana or orders aiming at the preservation of the unity of the Sangha by eliminating schism among it. These Sasana or orders are engraved on pillars at different places, Sarnath, Sanchi and Allahabad. The pillar at Sarnath which is addressed to the Mahamatras says; whoever so ever breaks up the Church, be it monk or non, shall be clad in white raiment and compelled to live in what is not a residence. This order was to be respectfully communicated to the congregation or group of Monks and the society²⁴It is clear from the Sarnath pillar that during the Asokan period Buddhist community was threatened with disruption. But due to a lack of evidence that how far Asoka was successful in preserving the unity of the society. According to the Chinese translation of Hsuan-Tsang of Vasumitra, Bhavya, and Vinitadeva, The *Sarvastivada*, all schools of thought that were born out of the *Sthaviravadas* that were threatened with schism during the time of Asoka. The schism among the *Sthaviravadas* School took place in the beginning of the 3rd century BC just after the death of Buddha while some scholars placed it towards the end of the region of Asoka.²⁵

²³ Saifur Rehman Dar and Zakir Jan, Three seasons of excavations at Pir Manakrai, Haripur: Preliminary report. *Ancient Pakistan*, 26 (2015),1-44

²⁴Bhandarkar. *Asoka*. (University of Calcutta,1969), 125-165

²⁵ Edward Thomas, *The History of Buddhist thought, are London*, (1933), 174-180

As a result of this schism, two schools have appeared namely the Sarvastivada and Sthaviravadas which changed its name into the Haimavat school. No evidence seems to be available indicating the precise date of the emergence of other schools in the period concerned. But on the basis of the literacy source discussed above, one can say that a number of schools originated during the 3rd century BC. At first, the Vastiputriya sect was issued from the Sarvastivada School. The four new schools called Dharmottariya, Bhadraniya, Sammattiya, and Sannagarika emerged from the Vastiputriya sect. On the basis of the above literary fact, it is clear that as many as seven or eight subjects originated during the 3rd century BC and among these schools special mention should be made of five sects that flourished in the north-western part of Indian subcontinents are;

- i. Mahāsamghkā
- ii. Sārvāsivāda
- iii. Bahūsrūtiyā
- iv. Kāsyāpiyā
- v. Dharmāgūptākā

All these sects played an important role in the history of Buddhism in the Hazara and Taxila regions. These sects are testified in the accounts left by foreign travelers like, Fa-hsien, Hsuan Tasang, and I-tsing.

i. **The Kasyapiyas (Buddhist sect found in Hazara)**

The Kasyapiya school was a sub-sect of the Sarvāstivāda sect. This school was, according to Vasumitra seceded from the Sarvāstivāda at the end of the third century (after the death of the Buddha). Several Kharoshti inscriptions indicate its existence in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent. In this connection, we can refer to the Taxila Copper Ladle inscription and the Bedadi Copper Ladle inscription from Mansehra. Pālāṭu Dheri jar inscriptions and a Casket inscription of the time of Vijayamitra, the ruler of Avacha.²⁶

All these Kharoshti inscriptions indicate that the Kasyapiyas had settlements in Taxila, in Hazara, in Palatu Dheri (half a mile from Rajar) and in Northern Pakistan. In Udyana (modern Swat) Hsuan- tsang found the Vinaya rules of the Kasyapiyas and of the other schools were in force. I-tsing found some followers of this school in Udyana. The above testimonies of the foreign travelers show that the adherents of the Kasyapiya School were found even in the 7th century CE.²⁷ This school (Kasyapiya) was also known by two other names, Saddharmavarshaka or Suvarshaka.

Very little is known about the doctrine of the Kasyapiyas. Vasumitra in his treatise attributes the following doctrines to the Kasyapiyas:

²⁶Mukherjee. *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, (Calcutta, 1988)

²⁷Sukumar Dutta, *Buddhist monks and monasteries of India*, reprint, (Delhi, 1988), 1-78

- (i) Arhats have both Kshayajñāna and anutpadajñāna and are not subject to passions; (ii) Samskaras perish every moment;
- (iii) The past which has not produced its fruit exists, the present exists and some of the future exists. The opinion is discussed in the Kathavatthu and is the only doctrine attributed in this text to the Kasyapiyas.

Conclusion

The origin and development of Buddhist monastic society in Hazara, a region located in present-day Pakistan, can be reconstructed through a combination of archaeological and historical approaches. Hazara was well-connected to other Buddhist centers in South Asia, such as Taxila and Gandhara. Studying trade routes, pilgrim accounts, and the exchange of ideas can reveal how Hazara's monastic society interacted with these centers. The region played a significant role in the spread and evolution of Buddhism, and the period from the 3rd century BC to the 5th century CE is particularly crucial for understanding its development. The 3rd century BC marks the beginning of Buddhism in the Hazara region, which was then part of the Mauryan Empire. Emperor Ashoka, a prominent patron of Buddhism, is believed to have sent missionaries to this area to propagate the religion. The archaeological evidences are important markers that give clues about the existence of a past society in a particular region. In the case of Hazara, many archaeological sites ranging from the 3rd century BC to the 5th century CE provide solid evidence that a well-developed Buddhist society flourished in the region for about 800 years. The Kushan Empire, which ruled parts of modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, played a pivotal role in the promotion of Buddhism. This period saw the construction of grand stupas and monastic complexes. Historical records and art from this era can illustrate the extent of Kushan influence on Buddhist monasticism in Hazara.

References

- Agrawala. *India as Known to Pāṇini*, 2nd ed. Varanasi, 1963, 255-315
- Ali, I., Shah, I., Hameed, A., Ashfaq, M. and Muhammad, T. Archaeological Explorations in Balakot, District Mansehra (2006-07): A Preliminary Report. *Pakistan Heritage* (3), 2009, 149-162
- Azeem, A. "Antique discovered from Zar Dheri (Shinkhari Hazara), Comparative Study of Sculptures" *Museum Journal National Museum of Pakistan*, 3, 2002, 66-67
- Bhandarkar, *Asoka*. University of Calcutta, 1969, 125-165
- Dani, A.H. *The Historic City of Taxila*. Tokyo, Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1986, 45-275

-
- Dani, A.H. *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Pakistan*. Paris: UNESCO, 1988, 44-85
- Dar, S.R. and Jan, Z. Three seasons of excavations at Pir Manakrai, Haripur: Preliminary report. *Ancient Pakistan*, 26 (2015),1-44
- Dutta, S. *Buddhist monks and monasteries of India*, reprint, Delhi, 1988
- Majumdar. *The classical accounts of India*, Calcutta. 1960, 245-262.
- Marshall, J. *Excavations at Taxila: The Stupas and Monasteries at Jauliāñ* (No. 7). India: Government printing, 1921
- Marshall, J. *Taxila, An Illustrated Account of Archaeological Excavations carried out at Taxila under the orders of the Government of India between the years 1913 and 1934*, Vol. II, London: Cambridge University Press,1951
- Shakirullah. *Archaeological Survey Report*. District Mansehra and Haripur (Partial) Hazara Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, Department of Archaeology Hazara University Mansehra, 2021, 50-215
- Shakirullah, Hameed, A. and Zahoor, M. Excavation at the Buddhist Site of Zar Dheri: A Preliminary Report. *Pakistan Heritage*, 13, 2021
- Shakirullah, H., Abdul, Z., Muhammad., & Naveed, U. *Archaeological excavations at Bādo Dheri, Zar Dheri, Guli Bāgh and Takiya Baṭagrām Baffa, District Mānsehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pākistān*. Department of Archaeology Hazara University Mansehra, 2023, 1-123
- Shakirullah, Z., Muhammad, S.A., and Khan, O. Mineralogical analysis of schist stone from the Buddhist Complex of Zar Dheri (Mansehra, Pakistan). *Journal of Asian Civilizations*, 45(2022), 39-58
- Stein, Aurel. *Report of archaeological survey work in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan for the period from 2nd 1904 to March 31st 1905*. Peshawar. (1905):204-228.
- Thakuria, T. Society and Economy during Early Historic Period in Maharashtra: An Archaeological Perspective. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology* 5, 2017
- Zahir, M. The status, conservation and management of Buddhist heritage in Pakistan. *Conserving the Sacred*, 2017, 85-90