

TO WHOM BELONG THE PRE-MUSLIM JAINA HERITAGE OF PAKISTAN AND THE QUESTION OF TAKING ITS OWNERSHIP?

Muhammad Hameed & Muzaffar Ahmad

ABSTRACT

Jaina historical sources are quite rich in presenting evidence of flourishing Jaina communities and their secular or religious built heritage in Punjab and Sindh before the arrival of Muslims in Valley of the river Sindh. These Jaina accounts confirm Jaina presence in Sindhusagara, Bhera, Taxila, parts of Chakwal and other areas of Punjab as early as in the life of Mahavira and generations of his early followers. These historical notices are supported by Chinese travel accounts and some archaeological evidence produced through excavation or exploration work conducted by Sir Aurel Stein, Sir John Marshall and the present authors. In this research paper, the authors will compare the textual evidence's footprint with the material evidence of Jaina presence in Pakistan produced so far. This paper will examine the authenticity and quality of this archaeological work related to Jainism in Pakistan. It will also discuss the current bias in Jainism scholarship to reject these archaeological discoveries as insufficient and unconvincing and its impact on preventing research, exploration, preservation and taking ownership of pre-Muslim Jaina archaeological heritage of Pakistan.

Keywords: Jainism, Pakistan, Chakwal, Muri, Temple, Taxila

INTRODUCTION

According to Jaina sources, Jainism took roots in the areas now under Pakistan's domain at a very early date. What fate Ashoka's conversion from Jainism to Buddhism and its resulting success brought to Jaina minority in areas now in Pakistan is unknown. There are no details available of Jaina existence in these areas during post-Kushan Hindu revival in Punjab and KPK. Literary evidence from Valley of Kashmir however demonstrate the evidence of a sizeable Jaina community in Kashmir, part of Kashmir Gandhara province. A handful of literary references in Jaina, Buddhist and historical texts and some archaeological evidence, though scarce, confirm an early presence of Jainism in a hypothetical Jaina belt consisted of areas of Rajasthan, Sindh, and Punjab, KPK and Pakistani controlled Jammu and Kashmir.

The neglected field of the Jaina heritage in Pakistan was revived in 2015-17 through a pilot study conducted by the CoJS of SOAS in collaboration with a research team of the Nusrat Jahan College (NJC) in Rabwah, with the additional help of local historians of Jainism in North India. The project focused on the documentation of the surviving infrastructure, Jaina temples, halls, community buildings, art and writings, along with a historical and demographic study of the Jaina sectarian traditions in the region. The present paper is an outcome of the author's engagement with migrant Jaina community, remnants of Jainism in Pakistan, academics, journalists, popular writers, heritage activists, experts of Jaina Studies, Awqaf officials and archaeologists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the excavations at the site of Murti in Chakwal by Aurel Stein back in 19th century (Stein 1937: 57) and the discovery of the so-called Jain *stupa* in Sirkap/Taxila by Sir John Marshall were exciting discoveries; no further steps were taken to rediscover the ancient archaeological Jain heritage in the area under study. Around 1892, Sayed Abdul Latif cited the *Murti* collection from Choa Sedan Shah (Latif 1892: 363). However, the colonial Gazetteers and ethnographical surveys (See for instance Rose 1911) contain a lot of useful, though scattered, information, as do the reports on manuscript searches (See for instance Kunte 1880? 1882). Older research articles on specific subjects are recorded in Chhotelal Jain's *Jaina Bibliography* (Jain 1982). A brief note was published by Klaus Fischer back in 1956 (Fischer 1956: 81- 84) with some photographs of Murti panels from Lahore Museum. The *Jaina Journal* 3, 4 1969 pp.190-198 has a chapter on "Jainism in Punjab." The *Dr Lakshman Sarup Memorial Volume*, pp. 238-247, is another source of information. A.N. Sinha wrote *Buddhism and Jainism in Punjab in Sikhism and Punjab's heritage* edited by Wazir Singh (Sinha 1990: 108-114). Waldemar C. Sailer published an article "A Note on a Jain Artifact in the Lahore National Museum" in the *Jain Journal* (Sailer 1994: 47-52). In 2004 Ashraf Khan of Quid-e-Azam University Islamabad published *Jain temples in Taxila Valley* (Khan 2004: 111-121). Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro published *The Jain Temples of Nangarparkar* in 2012 (Kalhoro 2012). Muzaffar Ahmad published a note on the discovery of a *caranapaduka* slab from Chel-abdal Chakwal (Ahmad 2015: 40-42). Recent general studies on the history of Jainism in Punjab, published in India, also contain some useful information on the ancient history of Jainism in the region (Jain & Jain 1974, Singh 2011). However, Jain studies have never started in Pakistan.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PRE-MUSLIM JAIN HISTORY IN PAKISTAN

Jain sources inform us that Jainism was present in the north-western region of South Asia and in Sindh already in early times of the development of this religion. *Bhagavatisutra* 132.6, a late-canonical text, tells us of a visit of Mahavira in the port of Sindhu-Sovira and about his consecration of King Udayana as a Jaina monk (Mehta and

Chandra 1972: 721; cf. Gehani 2008:48). Sindhu-Sovira was identified by Acarya Kalyanavijaya with Bhera, a town on the bank of Jhelum in the Saharanpur (Sargodha) district of Punjab. The best known ancient centre of Jainism in the region is Taxila (Takṣaśīlā). It has been associated with Bahubali in the Jaina Avasyaka literature and the *Vasudevahindi*. Many important monks visited the region and were instrumental in perpetuating the influence of the Jain religion. To name but a few: *Sthulabhadra* (ca. 3rd-century B.C.E) is also said to have visited “Sindh.” (Wiley 2004: 205). According to an ancient tradition, *ardhaphalaka* Jain mendicants were once also roaming Sindh (Wiley 2004: 39). It is also said that *Samantabhadra* (6th century C.E.) visited Thakka (Punjab) and Sindh (Glasenapp1999:62). Jinakusala Suri (1280-1332 C.E.), the third *dadaguru* of the Svetambara Kharatara Gaccha, was invited to Sindh by Jains. He revived Jainism there and died in Devarajapura in Sindh (Glasenapp1999: 109). In Nagarparkar the sculpture of *abidhana godia parsvanath* was erected in Vikram Samvat 1432 by Acarya Abhayadeva Suri. A temple was raised over it in Vikram Samvat 1494. Many Kutchi Jains, now mainly living in Mumbai, have a historical connection with the Tharparkar region. Some Jain clans even trace their descent from Meghasa, the builder of the Gori temple in Tharparkar with its unique paintings. Gori paintings are older than any other frescos in the Jain temples of North India, except Ellora. Gori paintings are also older than any other surviving frescos in Pakistan, with the possible exception of some Gandhara fragments.

There is no pre-Muslim Jaina site identified so far in Pakistani Jammu and Kashmir. The only bit of information we have is that according to *Prabhavakacarita*, a Jain historical work dated 1277–78, the Svetambara scholar *Hemacandra* requested grammatical texts preserved in Sharda temple in Azad Kashmir so he could compile his grammar, the *Siddhahema*.

THE OLDEST CENTRES OF JAINISM IN PAKISTAN

Ravinder Kumar Jain referring to Digambara Jaina sources takes Attock as *Arath*, Sherkot in Jhang (?) as *Unnikar* and counts Shapur, Gujrat and Jhelum districts as parts of ancient *Kekeya*. He considers Balhik the north-west areas beyond Sindh and between the Bias and Satluj and consider the territories beyond river Sindh, the ancient *Sindhu-Sovira*. He depending on the same sources considers *Vit-Bhavpattan* as modern Bhera (Jain 2014:55).

Jainism was present in the north-western region of South Asia and in Sindh already in early times. After Maurya and Gupta eras, Jainism’s area of influence shifted towards Rajasthan and South India (Jain 2014:56). AcaryaJinakusalasuri (1280-1332) was invited by the Jains of Sindh to rectify the problems within the community, and he brought about a revival there. He died at Devrajpur (Deraur) in Sindh (Wiley 109). He is said to have converted 50,000 new converts to Jainism (Wiley 109). Jinadatta Suri (1075-

1154) of svetambara sect has converted many and was given land for Jain purposes by Muslims of Sindh (Shah: Vol.1. p.53).

Bhagavati sutra 13.6, a late-canonical text, tells us of a visit of *Mahavira* in the port of Sindh-Sovira, the *Sauviran Saha Sindhuvi* of Mahabharata (Chaudhuri 1955:122) and about his consecration of King Udayana (Keslnamamhottha. se namUdayaneraya *Sindhu-Sovira*-pamokkhanam (Woolner 1986:156) a powerful monarch who ruled over 16 Janapadas and 63 cities (Jain 1947:399), as a Jaina monk (Mehta & Chandra 1972: 721. Cf. Gehani 2008: 48) who converted to Jainism after listening to his sermon at *Viibhaya* or *Vitabhaya* (*Viyabhaya*(JAIN, Life p.356 and p.302 s.v.Kumbharapakkeva see Behera QIM 43 D/15/4 (T.I., p.209).

Other sources indicate that only in the time of *Samparati*, the son of *Kunala* and grandson of *Asoka* and the ruler of western provinces and Ujjain a devoted Jain (Marshall 2006:25), Jainism reached *Sindhu-Sovira* and the story of Mahavira's visit is doubtful (Mehkri 1989:279; Jain 1947:261; Jain 1947: 402). Mahavira's mother Trisala was a Licchavi Princess (Chand 1987:59). His sister, Prabhavati was married to King *Udayana* of *Vitabhaya*, which has been identified at various places in Jaina literature with a town in *Sindhu-Sauvira* country (Chand 1987:60). It could be the province of Multan and Jahravara" (Alberuni 1910:1.300), or "in Sindh or Sindh" (*Satrunjaya-Mahatmya*) (Chand 1987:60) It may be correct to identify Jharavar with the modern Jhavarian between Chota Sahiwal and Bhera. *Mahavira* proceeded to the province of Sindh Sauvira, where *Udayana* was ruling over *Vitabhaya*, from *Campa*. Another source indicates that he travelled through Maru-Desa (Rajasthan) to visit *Sindhu-Sauvira* (Jain 2014:56). The journey to *Sindhu-Sauvira* was very difficult, involving travel in desert areas and hard country. *Vimanavatthu* mentions this desert situated in *Sindhu-Sauvira* as *vannupathassamajjham*; the *Ja(va)napatha* of the book *mahaniddesa* (Chandra :137), but *Mahavira* went to the place to give to King *Udayana Diksa* as a 'Sramanopasaka'. Returning from *Sindhu-Sauvira*, he spent the rainy season at *Vaniyagrama* (Chand 1987:62). Pali sources may reflect that *Sindhu* and *Sovira* were two separate neighbouring lands on the eastern banks of lower Indus. Both were centres of Trade and commerce (Journal of the Oriental Institute, Volumes 1-3:363). Mention was made in Pali texts that *Sindhu* (*Sindhavarattha*) and *Sodhika* (*Sovira*) were visited by merchants of Anga and Magadha after passing great wildernesses (Malalasekera 1938:1137). They said:

When we have arrived in Sindh and sovira lands, needing wealth, seeking gain, with plenteous gifts as is proper, we will greatly honour to *Serissa* pay (Horner, Gehmanand, Jayawickrama 1974:147; Muller 1942:12.121-127).

Acarya Kalyanavijaya identified *Sindhu-Sovira* with Bhera, a town on the bank of Jhelum in the Sargodha district of Punjab (Deleu: 43). The name of the capital of *Sindhu-Sovira* is mentioned as *Vitibhaya* (Jain 1991:61; IA.XX.375; Chaudhuri 1955:122). *Sindhu-Sovira* can be easily identified as Sindh Sagar (lower Chach or IVD (Indus valley desert)

of modern day Pakistan. *Sindhavais* mentioned as a tribe in *apadana* (Ap.ii.359). *Sovira* was mentioned in *Mahagovinda Sutta* (D. ii. 235) and *Aditta Jataka* (J.iii. 470) as a country with Roruka as its capital. The compound Sindhu-Sovira suggests that it was situated between Indus and Jhelum (Malalasekera 1938:1312, Chaudhury 1969:192). *Sovira* on the east of Indus as far as Multan and *Sindhu*, the inland portion lying to the west of Indus (Political History of India. 6th ed. Calcutta 1953, pp.507 and 619 seqq). Abhayadeva informs that *Sovira* is called *Sovira Sindhu* since it lay on the bank of Indus but Buddhist sources claim them separate countries (Jain 1981:166). Vasudevahindi and Milinda Parana mention *Sovira* as a port on the mouth of Indus, maybe the port of Barbaricum (Chandra 133,137). Law identifies *Sindhu* with *Sindh* (Law 1941:70). Sources tell us that Jaina monks were allowed to use a cloth with frisks (*dasa*) in the region of *Sindhu Sovira* (BDCRI 1990: vol.49.126). Milindapanha identifies *Sovira* as a port comparable to Alexandria and Surat (Milinda-Panha vi.21; Rhys Davids, Milinda: II, p.269; Eggermont 1975:147). In Puranic literature, *Sindhu* and *Sovira* always come together or with *Madras* (*Sindhu, Sauvira-Madrakah*) (Eggermont 1975:145). Indo-Scythian Satrap Rudradaman, around 150 CE, mentioned *Sindhu – Sovira* in his inscription of Junagarh (Indian Epigraphy, viii, p.44). Jayadratha presents King of *Sindhu* and *Sovira* as a single person, but Mahabharata also presents them as sometime rivals as *Sovira Sanjaya* fought a war with the king of *Sindhus* (Mahabharata v.133,4; v.134,4). Hindus were the 20th satrapy of Achaemenid Empire paying 360 talents of gold-dust annually (Herodotus Historiae 3.94). Alexander's Indus Alia consisted of the lower Indus Valley from the conjunction of Indus and Chenab down to the coast. Bhagvat Purana present *Sovirias* and *Abhiras* as neighbours (BP. I, 10 33-35). Buddhist canon presents *Bharata* as king of *Sovira* with *Roruka* as its capital (Dighanikaya II, 235-236 (*Mahagovinda sutta*); Rhys Davids, Dialoguesp.270). The Mula-Sarvastivada source of *divyavadana* written in the third century CE tells the story of the destruction of *Roruka* in *Udrayanavadana* or the story of King *Udrayana* available in Chinese and Tibetan translations. Alberuni narrates *Sindhu, Sauvira, Pahlava, Gandhara* and *Yavana* in one list (Alberuni 1910:1.300).

If *Sindhu* and *Sovira* were regions in modern *Sindh Sagar Doab* and lower Indus valley, Old *Bhera*, a big port city was *Sovira's* capital and *Udayana* its King, who was the brother in law of *Mahavira*, we can easily guess why we are finding very ancient Jaina monuments in *Chakwal* and *Taxila*.

The best known ancient centre of Jainism in the region is *Taxila (Takṣaśīlā)*. Jaina traditions narrate that *Taxila* was visited by *Rishaba* or *Rsabhadeva*, the first of the Tirthankaras whose *caranapadukas* were consecrated by *Bahubali*, his younger son whose capital was *Taxila*, who erected over them a throne and *dharmacakara*, a wheel several miles in height and circumference (Avasyakaniryukti of *Haribhadra Suri*, leaf no.150; *Trishashthisalakapurushsa-charitra* of *Hemachandra Suri* (Gaikwad Oriental Series, Baroda, 1931), vol.LI, pp.183-86; *Darsanaratnaratnakara* of *Siddhantasara*, leaf nos.197-8.; Marshall 2006:1.11). It has been associated with *Bahubali* in the Jaina Avasyaka literature and the

Vasudevahindi. According to Jaina traditions, births of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth Tirthankaras, *Kunthunatha*, *Arahanatha* and *Santhinatha* took place at Taxila (Jain 2014:56). Many important monks visited the region and were instrumental in perpetuating the influence of the Jain religion. Three years before the 60 CEs Kushan conquest of Taxila, Manadevi Suri, a Jaina mendicant, visited Taxila on the request of its Jaina sangha, from *Naddulapura* (Nodol) in Rajputana to cure the city of a ravaging plague. At this time, there were 500 Jaina chaityas in Taxila and many others in the country around it. These events are reported in *Hirasabhagya* of Devavimalagani (pp.163-4) and *Prabhavakacharita* of *Prabhachandra Suri* (edited by *Hirananda*, pp.192-5). We read:

“And a pestilence came from somewhere among the people. The Turushkas demolished that great city when three years had passed. Even up to this day there are images of brass and stone in the underground houses, as heard from old people” (A.S.R. 1914-15, pp.36-41; Marshall 1945 (2006): 65).

Kalhana records Jaina presence in Kashmir. He presents Ashoka as a great-grandson of Shakuni who declared Jainism as the state religion of Kashmir. He erected Jaina temples all over his kingdom. Lalitaditya also played an essential part in the spread of Jainism.

The oldest extant reference of Jaina political sway in Pakistan came from an inscription in the Khandgiri cave in Orissa. According to this source, King Kharvel conquered the *Uttrapatha* region between Mathura and Kandhar in second century BCE (Jain 2014:56). Jain quotes local legends that Mahavira is also believed to have visited Shwaitambika, the capital of Ardheke, modern Sankal or Sialkot (Jain 2014:56).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

MURTI

Heun Tsang found a Jaina Community living in the vicinity of Simhapura or modern day Dulmial (Heun Tsang 1884: 145). According to his description of the Jain community living here, the people were identifiable through the way they treated their hair, the white clothes which they were wearing and some were also without clothes. When Samuel Beal translated accounts of Heun Tsang, he expressed his doubts that Heun Tsang misunderstood the difference between life styles of the two main Jain sects and its followers. Sir Aurel Stein explored the remains of a Jain stupa here. He in his report described ruins of the Murti site near Jhelum. From his exploration and documentation of the area, Stein made comparative analysis of the archaeological remains of the area with accounts of Heun Tsang according to which Lord Mahavir visited the region for preaching philosophy of his doctrine. Stein further added:

“At Murti, I discovered Hsuan Tsang’s site of the white-robed Heretics & located the ancient capital of Simhapura he had visited near the present pilgrimage place of Ketas (Mirsky 1977: 472).

Considerable amount of antiquities in the form of stone sculptures and architectural objects were collected from the Murti site. From records of Stein, we get information that he sent all the finds to the Lahore Museum (Gazetteer. Jhelum 1904: 45). These, majority were sculptures and architectural ornaments, were loaded on as many as thirty camels. The sculptures were mostly made of sandstone. Subject matter of these includes depiction of traditional naked males and partially clothed females (Gazetteer. Jhelum 1904: 45). This again testified description of Huen Tsang that tells us about such life style of Jain artefacts from the site. Presence of such kind of Jain artefacts and sculptures indicate Digambara tradition prevailing in the region. Furthermore, account of Stein also mentioned temple at Murti, which was constructed by some Jain noble. Establishment of sacred edifices such as Murti Temple related to Jainism and Ketas Temples associated with Hinduism, are prominent examples of religious significance of the entire region.

2. TAXILA

Marshall identified two small stupas in the north of Jandial temple as Buddhist or Jain Stupas (Marshall 2006:1.6). He identified the well known Jain stupa between second and third street at Sirkap but he added a question mark there (Marshall 2006:1.140). Marshall stated that due to availability of ample historical as well as archaeological evidences, existence of Jainism in Taxila and its surrounding indicate that Jain community had been living here. Some of the buildings and structures unearthed in Taxila show remnants of Jain architectural traditions. However, if there is some uncertainty in announcing these as Jain buildings that is only due to lack of inscriptions and proofs from the site (Marshall 2006: 145).

He strongly suggested that there were grounds for believing that two votive or ritual tanks in the courtyards in Block K were Jain rather than Buddhist structures (Marshall 2006:463). 15 ritual tanks were discovered from block A and the Parthian palace. Muhammad Ashraf Khan and his team discovered a terra cotta ritual tank in the stupa in block A (N: 42, E: 20-21), (Khan 2004: 114). Muhammad Ashraf Khan further claimed to discover a Jain cave “Khel Patt Thejan” or Shish Pheri, some 30 km west of Tehsil Sharda and 20 km south west of Athmuqam in Kishan Ganga valley. He fails to provide any evidence to prove it is a Jain site (Khan 2016: 38).

3. BASHARAT

Chel-Abdal near Bisharat (now spelt as Basharat) (N32.75987 E 73.06309) is the highest point in the District Chakwal (3500 ft. above sea level). At Basharat, Carana Padukas of a Jain saint is recently found and recorded. These remains belong to an era

starching from 1st century CE to 12th century CE and show the first phase of Jaina presence between Indus and Hydaspes or Jhelum river. These remains show a slim Jaina presence in Chaj Doab. Local Patwari revealed that the shrine was constructed on remains of an old temple. Around 1971 Jaina sculptures were discovered here which were sent to the Lahore Museum. The red sandstone slab with footprints on it was found at Chel-Abdal, about some time ago, about 100 yards below the peak of Chel-Abdal.

All these archaeological finds were made in the areas mentioned in the above-mentioned Jaina accounts. This could be claimed as the material evidence for the confirmation of the authenticity of Jaina accounts but it is not as simple. The great similarity in artifacts of religious significance in Buddhism and Jainism makes it impossible to assign an artifact or feature to one of them if not reinforced by epigraphic evidence. Unfortunately, in none of the above-mentioned archaeological discoveries any inscription was found. In absence of any written material conforming the Jaina origin of the finds or any distinctive Jaina religious motif, it is not possible to declare an artifact, feature of site, of a Jaina origin.

RESPONSE OF JAINISM EXPERTS

During the Heritage mapping project, I had thoroughly discussed the merits of all these allegedly Jaina sites and artifacts with Dr Peter Flugel. In almost every case, he rejected the archaeologist's claim of a Jaina background of all these discoveries. His strong arguments were based on the lack of acceptable evidence according to a Sanskrit and Jaina expert's standard.

ARCHAEOLOGISTS

On the other hand, on bases of Chinese travel account of Heun Tsang, Aurel Stein declared the Murti Stupa, a Jaina archaeological site while Sir John Marshall, on the authority of Jaina texts and the difference the so called Jaina sites of Sirkap showed from Buddhist surroundings declared the sites and artifacts as Jain. In the case of Basharat Foot Prints, they were identified by me as Jaina artifacts, confirmed by Dr Flugel and the article was printed in Jaina Studies news letter SOAS.

MIGRATED JAINA COMMUNITY

Jain communities of Pakistan, before or after their migration in 1947, showed little interest in investigating pre- Muslim Jaina past of the country. What they care most is their Mughal, Sik and British past. From 1947 onwards, Jain migrants from Pakistani areas showed very little interest in what remained behind of their British Colonial memories. The archaeological evidence of a Pre-Muslim Jaina past was never an attractive topic for them.

JAINA REMNANTS IN PAKISTAN

The last few households in Islamkot and Mitthi and maybe some scattered groups in Cholistan and Thar have lost a sense of identity and a pre Muslim Jaina past of Thar or Punjab is beyond their imagination.

Among the above-mentioned stakeholders, experts with command on Jaina historical sources and Pakistani archaeologists are capable of exploring the archaeological evidence within the foot print identifiable from Jaina sources. However, there exists a great deal of mistrust between the two. An altogether rejection of archaeological evidence as insufficient and non-conclusive is not the right step forward.

It is proposed here that the material discovered so far by archaeologists as well as the quasi-historical evidence in Jaina literature about ancient Jaina communities of *Gandhara*, *Sindhu-Savira*, Bhera, Taxila, *Udabhandapura* and *Darvabhisara* from Mauryan to Gupta periods should be reexamined. This reexamination of sources and recovered material evidence will pave way for a much more comprehensive approach for drawing a strategy to explore and survey the obscure history of very ancient Jaina presence in areas well described in Jaina literature.

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