

TWO COLONIAL PERIOD HINDU TEMPLES AT HAZRO, DISTRICT ATTOCK, PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The paper deals with two significant Hindu temples in Hazro, district Attock, Punjab. Both the temples are well preserved. Presently the temple is occupied by local family. It has rich architectural elements. The temples belong to British colonial period and were not recorded nor studied by any scholar. The temples show the rich artistic approach of the local artists of that area. The shikars of the both of temples have false arches. The rich art and architecture of these temples shows the socio-economic condition of the local Hindu community before during the colonial period. The local Hindu artists very carefully work on these temples as shown in the cut bricks work. The bricks were cut and designed very artistically and then fixed it in proper place. The fresco painting inside and outside the temples are also worth mentioning.

Keywords: Temple, Attock, Hazro, Architecture, Hindu, British.

Pakistan has very rich tangible cultural heritage ranging from prehistoric period to British. The British period Hindu temples in Pakistan are significant component of the cultural heritage of this land, which never ever been ignored. A temple is generally mentioned as *devalaya*, *devatayatana* *devagriha*, *devakula*, *devavabhavanam*. (Hopkin,1968:70;Nath,1978:15; Shah,2014:48) all specifying the abode of god. Almost all important and major cities of Pakistan are dotted with Hindu and Sikh religious and secular buildings of pre-partition period. These Hindu and Sikh monuments in the major cities of Pakistan are mostly the property of Aukaf department of Pakistan and has been some time allotted with a lease on very minor amount or sometime illegally occupied by the local people living in the surrounding of the sites. Theses Hindu and Sikh monuments in major cities of Pakistan show the rich cultural legacy of that period. During the field work the authors have visited one of the important town Hazro located at North-West of Attock Distric the Punjab province of Pakistan, situated between Peshawar and Islamabad. This town is the capital of Hazro Tehsil, and organizational part of the district. It is about 19 km from Attock City and 36.3 km from Topi village of (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). Hazro is at a distance of about 7 km away from the Peshawar-Rawalpindi

GT road towards the north of Pakistan Chowk Hattian. It is situated at the border of Khyber Paktunkhwa and Punjab being a central town of the Chachh region (see figure 1). Hazro is associated with much of great interest in the history of subcontinent. This territory of Chhachh has been identified by General Cunningham in 1856 and Sir Aurel Stein in 1903.¹

According to Attock District Gazetteers, in 1930 Hazro was a little town of 8000 to 9000 inhabitants, half Pathan and half Hindu. It is in the chhachh valley near Campbellpur Known as Attock nowadays.

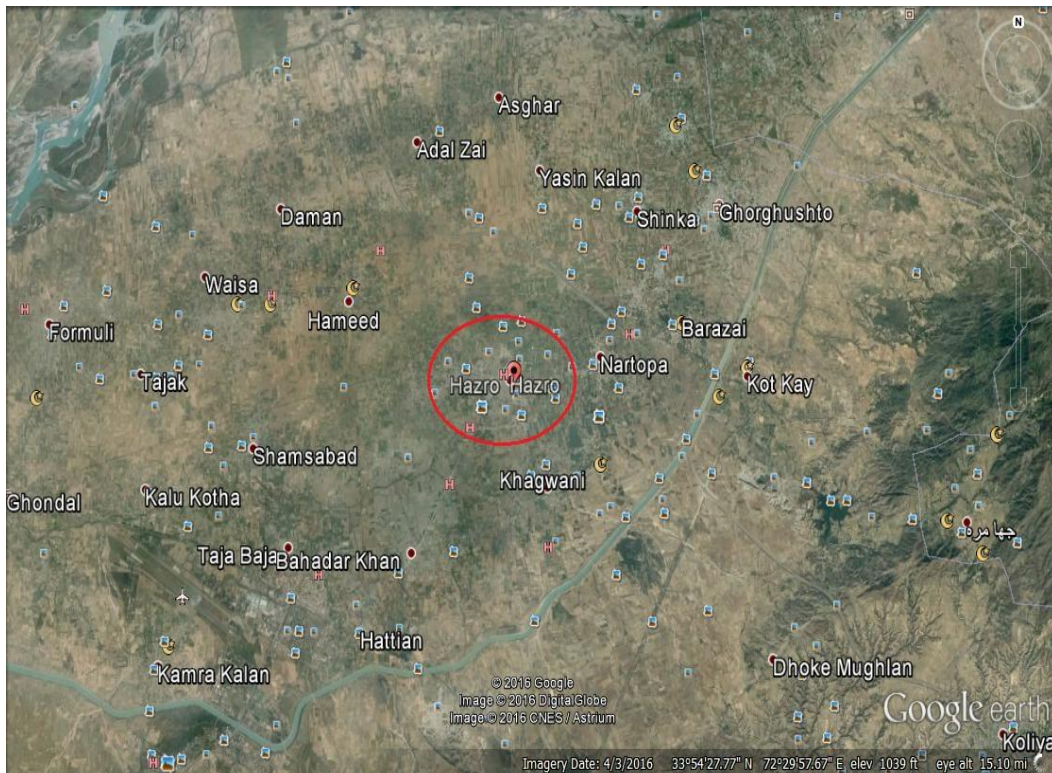


Figure 2 Hazro Attock, Punjab (Google earth map 30/06/2016) plain².

Present Hazro city is the Hub for trade activities of the Chhachh regions comprising of eighty-two villages situated at the northern coast of River Indus³. According to district gazetteer Attock “The Chhachh plain lies to the north-west, centering about Hazro and it is the most fertile and richest portion of the district, having many archaeological sites and monuments. The Buddhist sites of stupa and monastery were illegally excavated by antiques smugglers in the past revealed by locals. In 2010 survey team of Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad recorded many archaeological sites in the area. The authors recorded two significant Hindu temples in Hazro. These two temples are well preserved and have rich architectural elements. The details of the art and architecture have been described as under.

HARI MANDIR (TEMPLE)

A small metttled road approaches the site of the temple, while passing through the main bazaar of Hazro city. The street is famous on the name of Mandar Mohalla while, Jamiya masjid is situated adjacent to the temple.

Hari Mandir is a double storeys complex and is the property of *Auqaf* Department of the Federal Govt. of Pakistan. The Mandir (temple) is spread over an area of one and half *kanals*. Three entrances have been provided to the Mandir(temple) on north, east and south directions. Each entrance is a meter wide and two meters high. The two parts of the temple are connected through overhead bridge supported by iron rods. According to locals there are fresco paintings of Hindu mythology on the walls of the temple. Around the temple one can observe many houses of Hindus who have vacated it after partition in 1947. One of the magnificent residential building is still standing in Hazro Bazar now converted into vegetable market. There is another temple named as Hari Mandir, situated in an area called as Hari Mohalla but afterwards renamed as Mohalla Jamia Masjid. Some engravings were found just above the porch area of temple and from there it was concluded that the temple was built as memorial building for Bhagat Bishandas Vekanth by Swami Diyanand of the Sarswati Sabhapati Harri Mandir committee of Hazro in Vikram Samvat 1989 that is approximately in 1928AD. This temple is enormous & having much space. The principal front of building is adorned with overhanging enclosed balconies of Rajasthani architecture(Jharokhas) & terraces. The main entrance gate is decorated with flowers while the inside of the temple is decorated with certain paintings. The temple has connection with Haveli through a bridge located in the eastern corner. A local resident, Mr. Sohail Dar, recounted that every room of temple was embellished with paintings which were later removed by painting the walls by the occupants.

TEMPLE

There is a small temple as compared to Hari temple complex. It is located to southwest of Hari Mandir just five minute walking distance near to the Sait Sardar house in Shehbaz Mohalla. The Shikara of the temple has wavy lines which represent life. This temple has been spread over an area of one 70X30 meters. The covered area of the temple area is 10x8 ½ m. The *antrala* of the temple has three arch entrances each measure 1x2 m. Inside the temple there are six rooms measuring 5x4m always been used for preaching and teaching purpose. The main temple is square in plan having each side 3 meters. Open courtyard has been provided on the front of the main prayer chamber. The internal wall of the temple has still some sign of fresco painting. The glazed tile inside the temple show Hindu god Krishna (as a child called Balkrishna) standing by his (foster) mother Yashoda, who is milking a cow. The wall painting seems to have been executed in the last decades of 19th century or early decades of 20th century. As it shows the influence of European (British Academic) realism. To reach the upper portion stairs have been

provided on the south side inside the temple complex. The Auqaf department rented the temple to the local resident named Rafiiq Dar on Rs.1500 per month for cattle.

CONCLUSION

The two Hindu temples in Hazro, district Attock, Punjab are very significant in respect of art and architecture. The fresco paintings and various architectural elements in these temples were common in the later period Hindu temples in Punjab but these two temples are very spacious as compare to other temples in Punjab. The rich architectural tradition of these temples of Punjab particularly the Hazro temples show the artistic mind of the artists as well as the religious attachment of the people of that area. Presently the temples were occupied by the locals and using it for accommodation. The temple must be vacated from locals and preservation and restoration work may be carried out on urgent basis.

FIGURES

Fig.1 Hari Mandir



Fig. 2 Decorated capital of Hari Mandir



Fig.3 Depiction of Om



Fig.4 Shikara having Wavy line

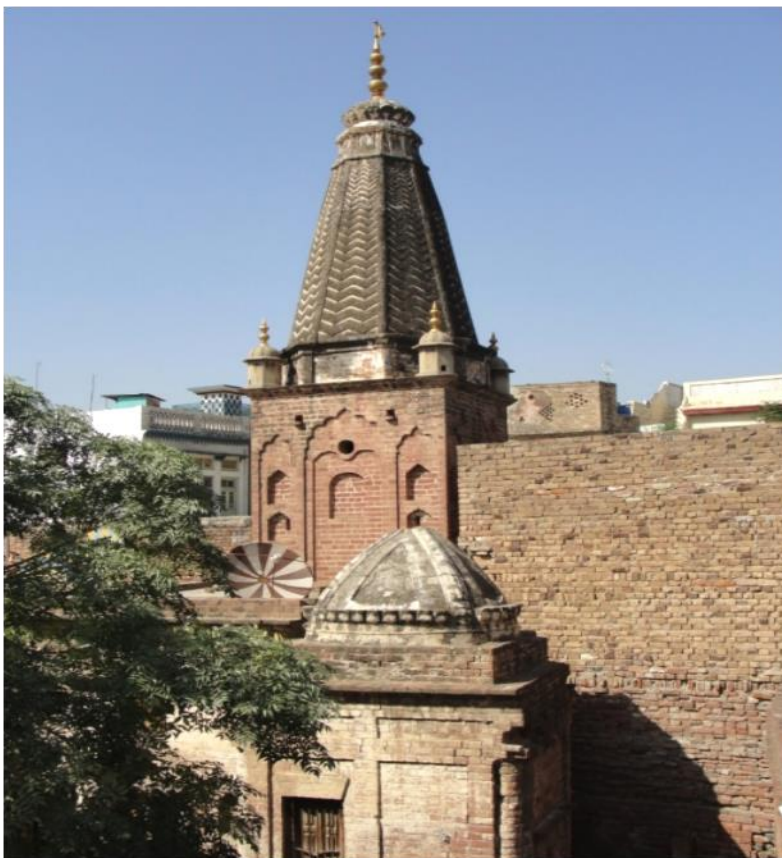


Fig.5 An entrance of the temple



Fig.6 Shikra having false arches



Fig.7 Hindu god Krishna standing by his mother



Fig.8 Close view of the Shikara

NOTES

¹ Indian Antiquary, (1896), p. 174

²Extracts from the District & States Gazetteers of the Punjab (Pakistan), Vol. I, rep. By Research Society of Pakistan, University of the Punjab Lahore, 1976, p.57.

3. On the north-west it is bounded by the River Indus, and on the east by the Gandgarh hills running down almost due south from Hazara. In the south it is shut in by a steep slope, the edge of a bank of Indus (for detail see Extracts from the District & States Gazetteers of the Punjab (Pakistan), Vol. I, Research Society of Pakistan, University of the Punjab Lahore, 1976. pp.6-7)

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