

Archeology and Heritage in Skardu and the threats to it

Thus, the entire Baltistan is rich in natural beauty and the natural beauty here dazzles the eyes of the beholder, and captivates them so much that the vision, insight, and vision go deep and feast on the manifestations of nature, but along with this, the history and traditions here also invite those who know the secrets and mysteries of human life to think and force those who are interested in it to explore the pages of history. There are many places among them, including the ancient religions here, including Bonism (which is called Bon-Chos in the local language), Buddhism (which is called Badud-Chos in the local language), Zoroastrianism (which is called Mah-Chos in the local language), Hinduism (which is called Bod-Chos in the local language) and Islam (which is called xlahakhma Chos in the local language). Where chos is religion in balti Language.

In addition, when talking about culture and religion, Tibetan culture, Egyptian culture, Indus civilization, Traces of Mesopotamian civilization, Turkish civilization, Greek civilization, Kashmiri civilization, Aryan civilization, Chinese civilization, Indian civilization, Arabic civilization, and Persian civilization can be found everywhere. In this sense, Baltistan is the only region that has civilizations from all over the world within its borders, and is a library from which one can study the great civilizations of the world. We may not be able to find archaeological evidence for many of these cultures because no major excavation activities not done yet as archaeological research purpose, but we hear stories similar to these civilizations here too. For example, the story of Bong kang Ragilfo (meaning the king with donkey feet) of the district of Baltistan, Shigar bong kang, symbol on a mountain site is famous, and a similar story is also found in Greek history, while its ancient artifacts have also been found in the civilization of Mesopotamia. Similarly, the stories of the giants in major civilizations around the world are also found in this area, another example of which is the story of Ragailfo Caesar, meaning the king Caesar(the Son of God), which is known as Gaser in Mongolian and Chinese history, while similar stories are heard in Europe and other major ancient civilizations of the world, which reflects how important the civilization and history here are and how ancient they are and this is also estimated from the archaeological evidence found in the latitudes of Baltistan, some of which are pre-historic, which is the beginning of human settlement on earth. It is not possible to mention the archaeological sites of the entire Baltistan region in one column, so we will only mention a few archaeological sites in Skardu city and its surroundings, many of which have now disappeared, but a few still exist, but they are in danger of disappearing. We will mention them in this column. Let's explore some of these archaeological and heritage sites of Skardu City.

Rock Carving

When we talk about rock carvings in Skardu city, we immediately think of the Mindhal Buddha Rock. Why not? This is a very important place and this rock tells us the history of both the Bon and Buddhist periods. Which period and which religion's sacred place is it? This is a matter of



debate. However, many researchers consider it a symbol of Buddhism. However, many researchers consider it a symbol of Bon. According to our research and study, this is a religious sacred place of Bon religion and shows their sacred figures. However, more research is needed on this. There are also rock carvings in Skardu city. One of them is behind the staff colony of Radio Pakistan Skardu. Where a Tibetan chorten (Stupa) symbol is built on a large stone. It is carved larger on one part and smaller on the other.

Similarly, at Kharpocho, there are many places. Markhor and other signs are carved on stones. Rock carvings are also found in the Ragayol, a short distance from Skardu city. If we talk about Sadpara village, there are also rock carvings there. So if we go towards Kachora, we find many rock carvings there, and some of them have ancient Balti rituals and inscriptions in Devanagari. Similarly, if we go towards Qamrah and Kwardo, we also find rock carvings there, which tell us historical stories of different periods and the lifestyle of the people of that period. Similarly, if

we go towards Bagardo above the Kachora bridge, we find a whole cluster of rock carvings, on which various signs are carved, including signs of ancient Tibetan stupas, which reflect the fact that the remains of ancient Bonism and Buddhism are found in these areas. Thus, if we travel towards Hussainabad, we find such carved stones in the famous tourist spot of Hussainabad, which are different from the carvings found so far in Baltistan, and these carvings are telling us the stories of the gods and goddesses here along with the Egyptian



Buddha. (The picture of the note was shared in the previous episode) While on other stones, we also find impressions of the sacred lotus flower of Buddhism or the sacred saffron flower of

Bonism. Similarly, if we travel towards Thorgo, we also find carvings on stones describing ancient traditions and religions. Similarly, if we travel towards Gole Village, we find the signs of stupas on large and small stones telling the stories of religions and the signs of animals carved on stones telling the living conditions of the animals living here. These are just a few of the carving sites, apart from this, there are many more places, which we will write about later.

Heritage sites

Just as the rock carvings in Skardu remind us of the Manthal Buddha Rock, when we talk about cultural heritage, we immediately think of the Kharpocho Fort (Kharpocho Fort). This is because the Kharpocho Fort also tells us a great history and the stories of the rulers of different periods in the area. But there are also a few heritage sites in Skardu, one of which is the remains of the



fort behind Kharpocho. The fort does not exist anymore, but its remains are found. Similarly, there was a factory near my house in Newrangah that made an idol of the Buddhist or Hindu era, where Buddha idols or Hindu idols were made, and many of the locals here, who are still alive, testify that they themselves have taken out the idols made of clay from there. Similarly, people also testify that ancient coins have been found in the mounds around Newrangah. Similarly,

there are monasteries in the city of Skardu, which are considered one of the most important cultural heritages, and there are also considerable discrepancies between their architectural style and the known history of their construction. According to known history, the monasteries were built after the advent of Islam, while their architectural style seems to us to be from the Buddhist period, which is itself a cause for concern for researchers. And if we talk about Chandah Valley, then there too, we find ancient cultural heritage everywhere, one of which is the Cheng Ruda (binding stone, a anchor stone for boats), which tells us the story of the journey of water in Skardu city as well as the stories of the floods in the Baltistan region. In Chandah Valley, in front of the Multaro pasture, we also find signs of an ancient city-dwelling. In addition, graves of Buddhist and Bon periods are also found in Chandah Valley. Thus, this journey of cultural heritage continues with its traces from the inhabited areas of Hutto, Shagri Bala, Shagri Kalan, Dhagyul, Astana, Nianiyur. The crosses discovered in Kowardu in the region

tell about the innovation of local stone technology, but they also invite research about the arrival of Christianity here. The Bun Thang Bun in Kowardu valley is full of relics of the religious periods. I am mentioning here a few places about which we have heard from reliable sources or we have visited the places ourselves as students of archaeology and cultural heritage. There is no space in this article to list the details, so the names of the villages where the archaeological sites are located have been written and a few famous places have also been mentioned. However, a book should be compiled about all these places for which efforts can be made, so that each archaeological site can be written in detail.



At the end of this article, we are mentioning the threats that are posed to these archaeological sites and some of the recommendations that we, as students of archaeology and cultural heritage, submit to the service of responsible individuals and institutions, and we can give this the title of “the threats to archaeological sites and cultural heritage and our responsibilities”.

Thus, the archaeological specimens and cultural heritages in the Baltistan region are facing various threats, the most important of which are climate change and natural disasters, which this region has been a victim of in the past. However, in the current situation, there are unnecessary and illegal excavations carried out here, which are carried out by people out of greed and unemployment, and an even greater threat is that there is no institution to monitor them, or there are but they are inactive. Selling these archaeological specimens to unrelated people at low prices is the second most important threat, along with the construction of new buildings in place of old buildings and the tendency to demolish old structures is also dangerous. Above all, the lack of sensitivity and seriousness among the local people about archaeological and cultural heritages and their ignorance of its importance is also dangerous.

Dear readers!

Ancient monuments and cultural heritage are always important in the history of nations, because on the one hand, they are describing the history and traditions of nations, and on the other hand, they are also describing important aspects of human history. Thus, these archaeological and cultural heritage samples are the guardians of the way of life of humans on earth and tell today's humans about human evolution and reveal the secrets of the progress and decline of nations. In this regard, I personally consider it the human and moral responsibility of all of us to understand the condition in which these archaeological and cultural heritages have reached us and pass them on to future generations in a better condition,

because the people before us carved stones and built buildings, and then passed these monuments and heritages on to us in the form of stories and events so that we can learn about their living conditions and pass them on to future generations, which was the best way for them to care about us and establish contact with us, because In that era, technology was not as advanced as it is today, so they could preserve it for us in the form of a book or a picture or through the internet. It is easy for us to preserve all this for our future generations in a better way by using technology. These rock carvings and these old buildings are screaming to us, telling us about the hardworking and skilled workers of that era, their skills and the difficulties they faced, and it is demanding from us that we appreciate them and value their hard work and skills and preserve them and keep them alive in human history. In this regard, the government and non-government organizations here, which are aware of the importance and usefulness of archaeological and cultural heritage, need to play their role, that they take steps to raise awareness and consciousness among the local people here. Along with this, there is a dire need for the students of this field, including me, to come out of the classrooms and go among the people, take the local people into their confidence and make efforts to protect them. Along with this, a museum should be built here in Baltistan where arrangements should be made to keep the archaeological specimens found during excavations. In addition, since this area is a poor area and this poverty forces people here to illegally sell these artifacts and archaeological specimens to support their families, the international community also needs to consider this and help the people here so that they can help and assist in preserving the ancient human history here and can also play an important role as a global community.

Some picture glimpse as evidence of archaeological sites endangers as below.





