

Report of Field Visit to Talu Rondu

Story of the Cave and the Castle

Dr. Zakir Hussain Zakir

Upon reports of a deep cave and an ancient castle/ fort, we visited to Talu Rondu. The host reporting person Muhammad Khan with a field guide who has good exposure of such sites accompanied with us. There were several caves. One was used for hiding precious items and as reported by the locals, few guns were found from that cave. We went looking for the other larger cave and after exploring few smaller ones we reached at the entrance of the larger cave. The local guide confirmed that it was the main one. He started entering and we found that the entrance was very narrow that one person can enter by crawling, just after crossing around 8-10 feet, the spacious cave was opened up. Our guide went inside and said it is spacious enough that we can walk inside. I followed him, and yes, after the narrow entrance it was high enough that we could walt inside deeper for around 30 – 40 meters (100 to 150 feet). Then again there were few narrow openings which could lead to next compartments. I could see a bat flying inside. We found few bones as well. It was reported that this cave was used for mass hide out when enemy forces or army attack the village. The space inside was sufficient for 50 to 70 person easily accommodate, sleep and walk. It was also told that when we set fire inside, the smoke is released from the top opening of the rock and cave somewhere 1200 feet above the base. Once there was a serious sectarian conflict in the region and outsider elements attached the region, the elder trained and guided youngster to hide out in this cave. By structure it was not a fully man-made, rather it was natural that was being restructured by removing smaller boulders and making pathways inside. We used torch light inside, perhaps there were some opennings so we could not feel suffocation, however it was completely dark inside so that no possibility of light inside. I had a UV torch for safety in case if any wild animal was inside, could not carry big camera, managed to take photos in UV light from mobile camera. In the same region at high altitude, there was another smaller cave which was known as home of the Jinn. Two of our fellows entered from the base of a huge boulder rock and after 5 minutes they came out from the top opening. They said that the underground storey which is the real home of jinn is somehow narrowed and blocked due to dust and soil debris.

I felt that the caves in this mountainous region played a key role for safety and security purposes fo the old population.

The Castle or Fort

There were two major sites known as being ancient castles. One of them has been demolished and as reported people found millions worth antiques from the debris. Another castle has ruins and remains on the top of a huge rock boulder surrounded by beautiful and nicely constructed wooden houses, most of them again deserted. The small villages surrounded the castle rock consist of 62 house holds and as I

observed this is the only village with largest population of oldest wooden houses, with small 8x8 fully wooden cubical rooms or cells in each house. As reported by the local guide, it was the castle of the queen or princess. The princess was unmarried and a king or a prince from another land wanted to get her. The king or prince hired an old clever lady wanted for this task. The old lady went to that village, got information of details then one day placed fire in the pits of the rock. There are several big pits on the rock that one person can sit in. The spacious pits were perhaps sitting places of the royal guards who could see around from the rock sides. The fire was meant to guide the prince or king to attack the castle and abduct the princess. Remains of two storeys of the castle were present till early last decade of 20th century. I had a chance to discuss with one of the owners of the rock/castle site. According to him the building was demolished to get log and building wood around 20 years earlier. On my query and request I could get a photo of the castle that reflects its construction and architecture.

During this two days visit I also availed the chance to visit a spring water fall at high altitude near glaciers. There were several fairy tales and mythological stories associated with this spring water fall outrushing from the core of a bare mountain rock. The sites were really an example of mythical and magical fairy land with lush green pastures and flowers, series of springling springs, tallest evergreen trees (around 80 to 100 feet with 9 to 12 feet circumference).

Here are the photo galleries of the cave and the castle:



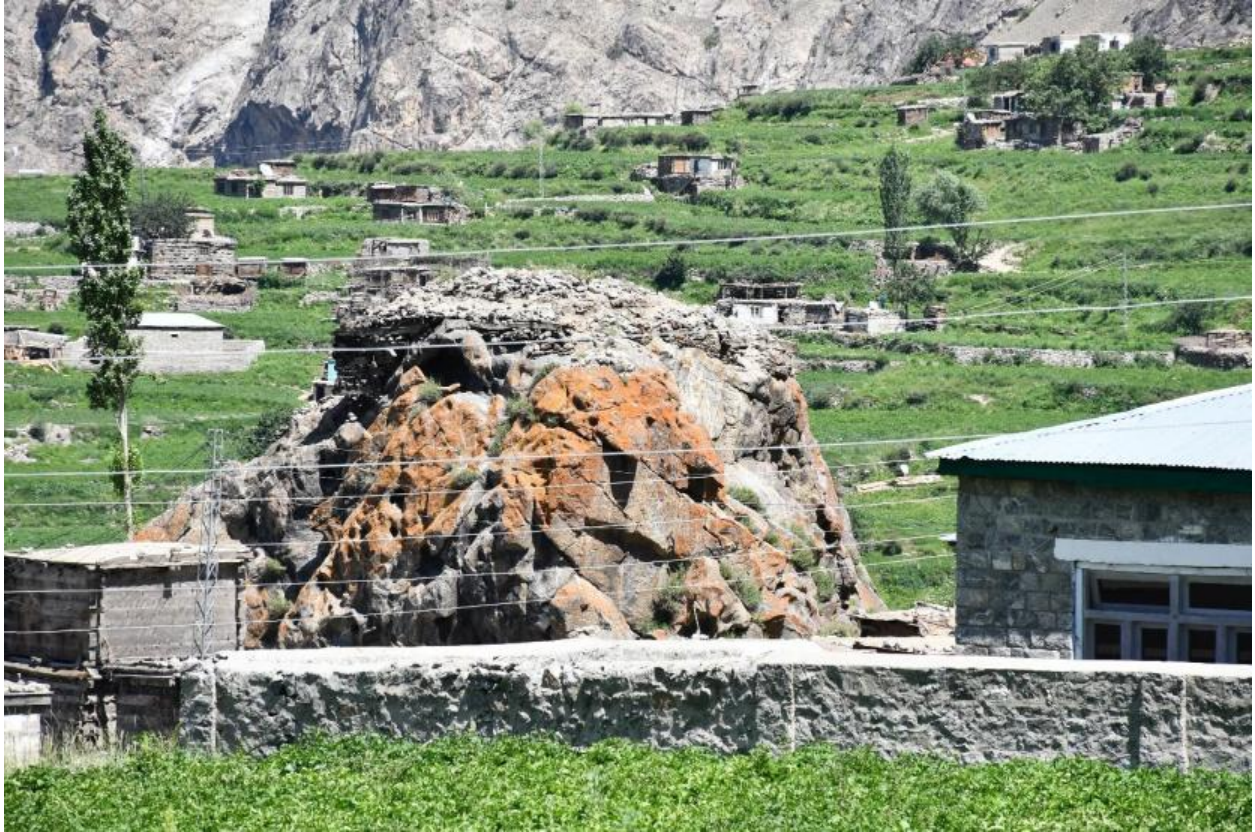
Getting inside the Cave



Outer entrance of the Cave



Experiencing cool wind at the entrance of the cave



Remains of the Queen's castle in Talu Broq on the top of a stand alone rock surrounded by houses and fields on three side while one side is sheer rock steep



An old typical pure wooden hut, room of house like a cell with traditional lock system near the castle



View of immediate neighbor houses from the top of the castle rock



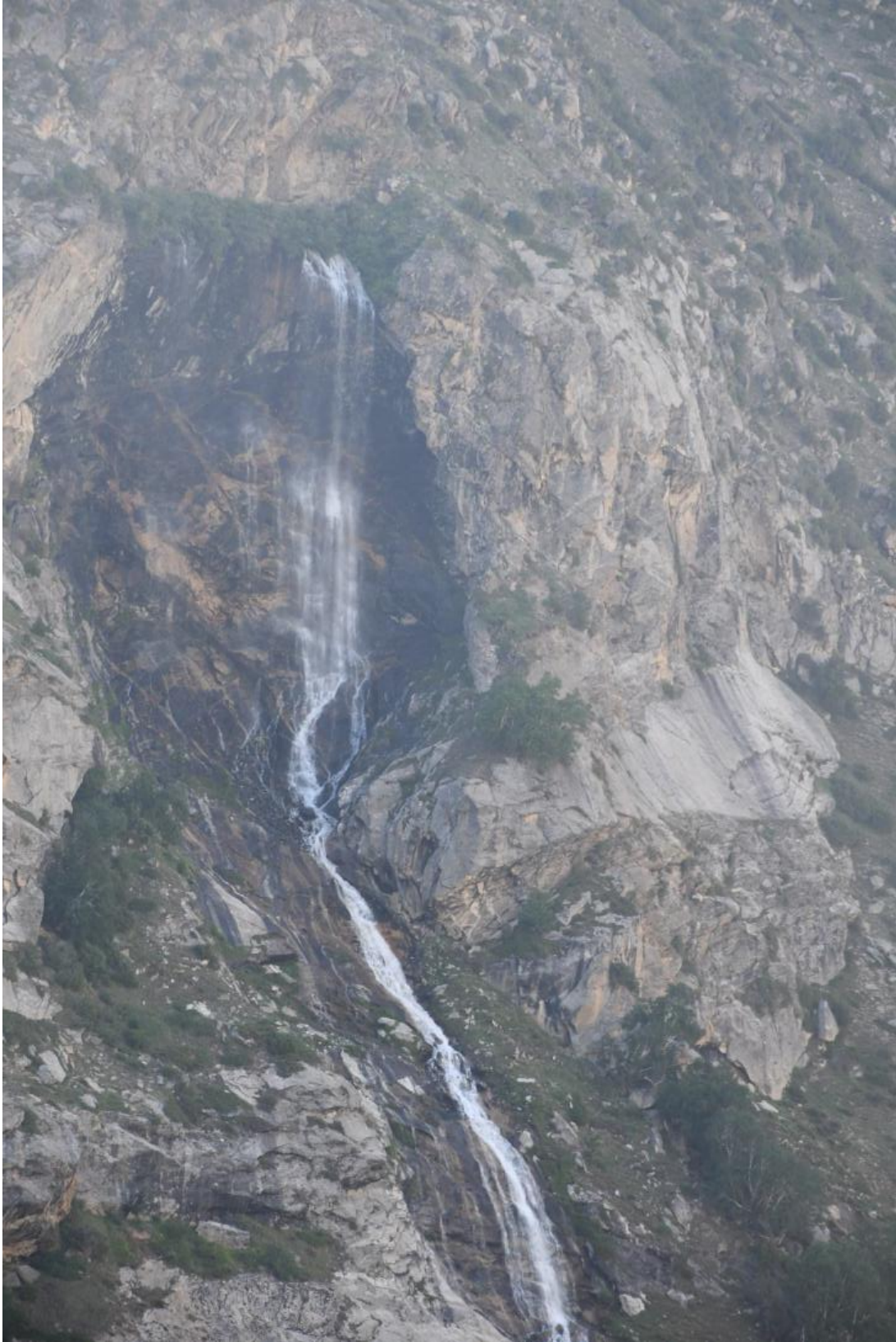
The entrance street towards the castle rock, thick and highly stable wooden wall structures



A series of wooden huts, houses in green fields neighboring the castle rock, roofs are covered with modern steel sheets now



Old ever green trees of around 250 years



The magical or supernatural spring outrushing from five concurrent holes born by human five figures

