

SHABAṚ GAṚH GHAR RUINS, DISTRICT KARAK, NWFP

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Introduction

The site occupies the top of a naturally fortified hill situated 5km to the east of Bānda Dāud Shāh and 18km to the south of Kaṛappa. The site was visited by the present author during a survey program of the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of the North West Frontier Province, under the supervision of Prof 'Abdur Rehman¹ in 1997. The hill is about 244m high from the surrounding fields and the top is about 25 acre known as ShabaṚ GaṚh Ghar (Pl. 1a and b). Su1tān Shāh Nika, a popular saint in the Khaṭṭak area, is buried at the foot of this hill. It is from this point that a wide footpath leads to the top of the hill.

Popular Local Legend Attributed to the Ruins

A popular story explaining the ruined condition of this place narrates that it was deserted because of a curse of Su1tān Shāh Nika. From the towering height of the hill, as the story goes, the local chief used to peep into private dwellings in the valley. The people got sick of him for they could not enjoy a moment of privacy. As complaints against this interference in the private life of the people reached Su1tān Shāh Nika, he cursed the ruler for his ignoble behaviour. As a result there was no rain for a long time and water at the hill become scarce, which compelled the ruler to abandon the place. How far the story is true is hard to say, the place certainly marks the site of a huge establishment.

Historical Background and Data

The Khaṭṭaks entered this area in the 16th century AD², first taking possession of the Chuntra Bahādur Khel and Ṭeri Valleys.³ This was the time when Malik Ako established himself at Akaṛa and was recognised as chief of all the Khaṭṭak tribes, from the Kabul River to the neighbourhood of Bannu, in AD 1581.⁴

Malik Ako's successors appear to have held their chieftainship under the confirmation of the Delhi Emperors. The celebrated Khushḥal Khān was the most notable among them. Later on Sādullah Khān, the great grandson of Khushḥal Khān, having fallen out with his father Āfdal Khān,⁵ established himself in the present town of Ṭeri. After this Ṭeri become the head quarters of western Khaṭṭaks.⁶

The ruins of ShabaṚ GaṚh Ghar represent a stronghold of the Khāns of Ṭeri. It is believed that this stronghold was established sometime in the third or last quarter of the 17th century AD. The destruction of monuments at this place is attributed to the first Sikh War.⁷ It was abandoned probably in the first or second quarter of the 19th century AD.

Archaeological Remains

The ruins comprise a residential area, offices, shops, a mosque and a water reservoir.

Residential area

The eastern side of the hill is occupied by a residential area which appears to have been planned on iron grid system, all the streets join the main street at right angle (Pls. 2 a, b and 3 a). The drains are connected with the main one, which presents a proper sewerage scheme. Residential area shows houses of three different categories: large houses like palaces for the upper class, normal house for the middle and the lowest category for servants and ordinary men.

The first category or palatial houses consisted of five to ten rooms with a veranda in front opening into a courtyard. In some cases a smaller house of two to three rooms was annexed to the bigger house. These houses had a separate water tank, also supplied water to a mosque, which was connected to the main reservoir by an under-ground channel. The second category meant for the middle class had four to five rooms, a veranda and a courtyard. The third category of the houses showed one to three rooms and a small courtyard. These houses were separated by lanes running at right angle to the main street.

Offices and Shops

Buildings separated from the residential area may be identified as an administration complex, which is also connected to the main street through a lane. Smaller cells opening directly into the main street could be a shopping area.

Mosque

The mosque, located in the southeast of the above-mentioned complex, is rectangular in plan and consists of a courtyard, an ablution place, front veranda and a prayer chamber of *zullah*.⁸ The 16x10m rectangular courtyard has the main entrance in the east and 10x1.22m area for ablution in its south.

In the veranda only one arch in the middle has survived, while the two side ones have fallen down (Pl. 3 b). This shows that it had three entrances, the middle one being larger in size. The surviving arch is stilted⁹ and has been placed in a recessed rectangular frame. The shoulders of arch are relieved by sunk small rectangular panels, all done in plaster. These panels are decorated with tempera¹⁰ mural painting in polychrome showing floral designs.¹¹ The parapet is completely disappeared. The veranda is 13m long and 3m wide and is connected with the prayer chamber by three entrances of the same shape and size just mentioned. The western wall accommodates the *mihrab* or prayer niche. The prayer chamber measures 13x3m as does the veranda (Pl. 4 a). All the three sides above the dado level have windows for light and ventilation. These walls are 0.9 to 1.22m wide and plastered with lime mortar. The ablution place and floor of the courtyard are paved with lime mortar. The stone used for construction of the mosque is locally quarried, while the arched and other openings are made of small *Waziri* bricks.

Water Reservoir

A huge 55.5x36m reservoir with high walls is located to the west at a distance from the residential area. The entire southern and south-western part of the hill with a gentle slope towards the reservoir was reserved for collecting rain water. Other than the reservoir, it has no buildings whatsoever. The walls of the reservoir are more the 50cm wide and have been plastered with 3.8cm thick lime mortar. In arched outlets are made of small *Waziri* bricks but for the remaining structures locally available undressed stone blocks have been used. The eastern and western sides of the reservoir are provided with more than 30m long channels connected with the sub-channels to convey water to different parts (Pl. 4 b) of the residential area. The 2.44m high walls of the reservoir show different phases of construction seen on their surface and section (Pl. 5 b).

Pottery collection

Potsherds collected from the surface, mostly red ware, belong to Islamic period.¹² Some of the potsherds are glazed in blue, white and yellow with floral designs.¹³ All of them are locally known as *pina*.

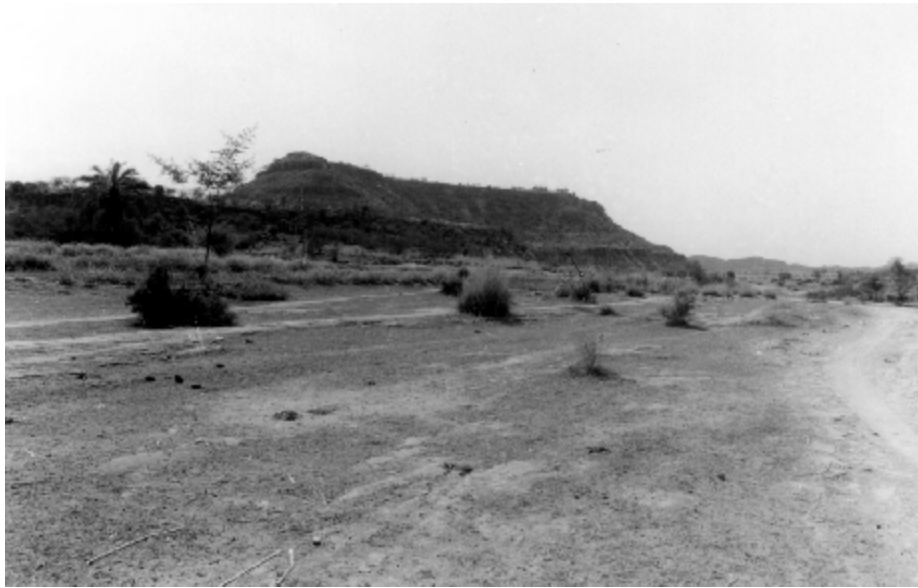
The ruins of the Shabar Garh Ghar datable to the late Mughal period are in a very poor state of preservation. They need attention of the Government and donor agencies for protection and preservation.

References and Notes

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Pl. 1a. Karak (Sultan Shāh Nika): A view of Shabar Garh Ghar from the east.



Pl. 1b. Karak (Sultan Shāh Nika): A view of Shabar Garh Ghar from the north.



Pl. 2a. Karak (Sultan Shāh Nika): Residential area with broken walls and wild shrubs.



Pl. 2b. Karak (Sultan Shāh Nika): A Kanjur stones wall in the residential area.



Pl. 3a. Karak (Sultan Shāh Nika): A long wall in residential area built of local stones and lime mortar.



Pl. 3b. Karak (Sultan Shāh Nika): Façade of the Mosque.



Pl. 4a. Karak (Sultan Shāh Nika): Interior of the Mosque veranda and Zullah.



Pl. 4b. Karak (Sultan Shāh Nika): Main reservoir with a long channel.



Pl. 5a. Karak (Sultan Shāh Nika): An eight feet high wall of the reservoir showing different phases of construction.



Pl. 5b. Karak (Sultan Shāh Nika): Reservoir broken wall section showing different phases of construction.