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Survey Notes: Bajaur, Tirāt (Swat), Hund and Sāwal Dher

Abdur Rahman*

Former Professor, Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, Pakistan.

Abstract: Written towards the end of 1992, when a hurried survey of the sites mentioned below was completed, these notes were lying with me unattended. Shortly ago when I had the opportunity to read them again, I realised that part of the information vouchsafed in them could be helpful in decoding some knotty issues of the history of Apraca/Aprācha and Oḍis/Uḍis, the rulers of ancient Bajaur and Swat respectively. This realization prompted me to share this information with other scholars.

Except for brief notices of classical writers, the history of ancient Bajaur (correctly Ba+johaṛ meaning 'water-pond') and Swat mainly depends upon the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions found upon several relic caskets unearthed by plunderers. The precise location of the sites where from these were dug out has naturally gone unrecorded. The language of these dedicatory epigraphs is the normal north-western Prākṛit often referred to as Gāndhārī. The cursive nature of the writing, crowded at places, has caused difference of opinion among scholars regarding the reading and consequently the meaning of certain words. The survey provides further help in elucidating some of these controversial points. Throughout the surveys I was accompanied by (the late) Asad Ali, photographer of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar. His untimely death has deprived me of photographic back-up.

Keywords: Bajaur, Tirat, Hund, Sawal Dher, Gandhara, Apraca, Odis, Swat, Survey.

I

Bajaur

Bajaur has always been an unattractive territory for archaeological exploration because of security reasons. As this was not a problem for local antiquity robbers, they exploited the situation to their maximum benefit and plundered all that they could lay their hands upon. Towards the end of 1992, the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, decided to carry out a preliminary survey of archaeological sites for future planning with the help of the government agencies based in Bajaur. The team selected for this purpose, besides me, comprised (late) Professor Farid Khan, Asad Ali (photographer), Aziz Khan (driver) and Lutf-ur-Rahman (MPhil student who joined us in Bajaur).

29 Nov. 1992: Set out for Swat; overnight stay at Saidu Sharif.

30 Nov. 1992: Visited the Dir Museum Chakdara; and then passing through the Tālāsh valley reached Khār, the main city and administrative headquarters of Bajaur.

1st Dec: Met Col. Jamshed Khan, Commandant Bajaur Scouts, who assured us of all possible help. We then had a meeting with the PA (Political Agent) Bajaur Agency, Azmat Haneef Khan, who instructed the APA (Assistant Political Agent), Yusuf Khan to alert the *Tehsīldār* to arrange a full security guard for us.

Having settled all security matters to our satisfaction we were now poised to take up the actual work. We first decided to visit Shīn Koṭay ('Green Houses' not to be confused with 'Shīn Koṭ', Green Town) in the Māmūṇd territory. It is a much disturbed settlement site now represented by ancient walls showing diaper masonry reused by the present owner to raise the wall of his own house upon them. In the pile of debris lying near the house were found two

* waraich1934@hotmail.com

grinding stones, a stone mace head and a stone lamp.

From Shīn Koṭay an unmetalled road shoots off to Lar Zagae (lower place) and Bar Zagae near the boundary line of Afghanistan. On our way to Bar Zagae (upper place), we first reached a school near the roadside and then the actual village. Beyond this merely a track leads to the top of the nearby hill. Just below this top are the remains of a large Buddhist establishment regarding which the present owner informed us that in the course of turning the whole site into terraced fields a huge stupa along with a number of smaller ones came to light. Nearly 200 images were found and sold off for Rs. 30,000. Showing hospitality, the owner treated us with a delicious lunch. During the lunch I asked the host if he had found a *Katotai* (reliquary). His answer was: 'Yes, I did. But it was something useless and I just gave it away'. The construction of such a large Buddhist establishment suggests the hand of a royal patron.

We then moved to Bar Kalay (upper village) to see a certain Mumtāz, a notorious antiquity dealer. He showed us some brass and copper hand-made utensils – all quite plain with no calligraphic writing or any other decorative feature. Many of the objects appeared to be quite recent and did not fall in the definition of an antiquity. Taking us for potential buyers, he demanded Rs. 150,000 for the whole lot. In Bar Kalay again we met with two cloth merchant brothers Afsar and Mumtāz (if I correctly remember the names) whose collection consisted of some grave goods and a fairly large number of coins of which the most prominent were copper coins of the Kushan and Indo-Parthian dynasties, mix gold Kushano-Sasanian coins and some Hindu Shahi billon issues – mostly of Sāmantadeva. A few silver coins of the Mughal emperor Bahādur Shāh and of the *amīr* 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān of Afghanistan were also seen in the collection. An interesting piece was a square copper coin of the Indo-Greek ruler Hippostratos, with Apollo carrying arrow in both hands and the Greek legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ (Basileus Soteros) on the obverse; tripod-lebes and Kharoṣṭhī legend, *Maharajasa trata* .. on the reverse. As we had been warned to complete the day's work before sunset for security reasons, we decided to beat a hasty retreat.

2 Dec: At about 9 am we set out for Shīn Koṭ (green town) – a long awaited and much cherished visit. The road to Ināyat Qala is not very bad, but beyond that up to Shīn Koṭ it is horrible – pits and ditches then a deep *Khwaṛ* (seasonal stream) are the distinctive features. A small *Khwaṛ* called Shālimār joins the main stream near Shīn Koṭ. Both sides of this *Khwaṛ* show much disturbed ancient remains. Across this *Khwaṛ* is the place where Shīn Koṭ reliquary bearing Menander's name was found. The place is now occupied by a house.

At Shīn Koṭ village we met Sardār Ḥusain, son of 'Abd ar-Ṛahīm, the *Khān* of that place. Sardār Ḥusain is a young man who did not hide anything from us and took us to all the places he had been trying to find sculptures. But luck did not smile on him.

From Shīn Koṭ we went to Mānesha (Apple Tree Side) about six miles to the north. We found the site well preserved till then. About three miles to the east of Shīn Koṭ is the great Buddhist site called Tūtsha (Mulberry Side) right in the shadow of Bābā Picket of the Bajaur Scouts. It was plundered, as we were informed, by a certain Col. Kareem, who found many sculptures more than 200 in number. Whether Col. Kareem found a relic casket or not, our informer had no knowledge.

However, the number of sculptures unearthed shows that it was the site of a large and well furnished stupa suggesting the contribution of a royal patron. If this is so, the existence of a reliquary may also be visualized.

3 Dec: Today we proceeded to visit the Jarando Kamar site situated on the Loe Sam Khār–Nāwagai road. It is a vast settlement site spreading on the left bank of the Khaṭo Khwaṛ (Muddy stream), also called Siko Rūd. The finds included well baked thin potsherds (redware) decorated with black painted pīpal leaf and peacock motifs. Similar pottery datable to the Kushan period was found at Damkot near Chakdara bridge (Rahman 1968-69: 103-250). Not far from it is the site called Gurgaro Khatko showing the remains of a completely plundered stupa. The person responsible for digging this site informed us that except for one piece all the sculptures were made of lime (stucco). Presently, the stupa site is occupied by Afghan refugees. As the result of an unfortunate happening, we lost much of our time – our vehicle got stuck in the bed of the above mentioned *Khwaṛ*.

4 Dec: Today we went to see ʻAbd ar-Raḥīm, the *Khān* of Shīn Koṭ, who was an eyewitness to the plundering of the celebrated stupa site of Shīn Koṭ. The *Khān* informed us that Professor A.H. Dani came to visit the stupa site in 1964 but, as the site had already been occupied by a modern house, he went back rather disappointed. The actual site, he said, was a conical mound dug in the centre by an unknown antiquity robber who by chance hit upon a *Katotai* (relic casket). This he took into his possession and vanished for ever. Having learnt about the discovery of a relic casket, a certain Miān Ṣāhib (actually the *Khān*'s son-in-law) who knew what it was worth, rushed to the site and opened it up. Miān Ṣāhib found several sculptures but no reliquary. Some of the sculptures he left behind in the courtyard of the house of ʻAbd ar-Raḥīm, the rest were transported to Mālākand where he sold them off. After a year or so, the Miān Ṣāhib returned to Shīn Koṭ to fetch all that he had left behind. But it was a little too late as the Khān, thoroughly disgusted with the presence of unholy objects in his house, had them broken into pieces. Instead of getting dismayed at what he had lost, the Miān Ṣāhib went straight back to the same site and once again found a good number of stone images. Amply instructed by the earlier misfortune, this time he took no chances and transported the whole lot to Mālākand. Once again Miān Ṣāhib found no relic casket. In the same vicinity was found a Soter Megas coin during our survey showing king on horseback with corrupt Greek legend .. WN CWTHP M.. on the obverse; and Zeus with long sceptre and Kharoṣṭhī legend *Maharajasa rajatira* … on the reverse.

Comments

The steatite broken casket from Shīn Koṭ is probably the one found by the unnamed plunderer mentioned above. It has been suggested that the Kharoṣṭhī inscription upon it consists of two parts: the line relating to Menander palaeographically appears to be older than the other part (Falk 1998: 85). 'Some relics of Śakyamuni Buddha', remarks Majumdar (1980: 115) 'are said to have been installed in the casket for worship first by a prince named Viyākamitra, apparently a feudatory of Menander, and afterwards by a chief named Vijayamitra who may have been the son or grandson of Viyakamitra'. If this is so, the stupa would have been reopened sometime after its consecration, the relic casket taken out, inscribed once again and reburied. But Salomon's (1984: 113 and n.9) suggestion that Vijayamitra and Viyakamitra are variant spellings of the same name leaves no scope for reopening the stupa.

Of the 'eight' reliquary inscriptions of the Apraca dynasty now available, we know the actual findspot of only one namely, the above-mentioned inscription of Vijayamitra (Salomon 1995: 30). A little further on Salomon remarks: 'it is likely that given their similarities in form, function and date some or perhaps even all the Apraca reliquaries come from one and the same site'. But no such 'major' site containing the remains of eight great stupas as required by the eight reliquaries came to light in our survey, neither at Shīn Koṭ nor at any other great archaeological site. Even internal evidence of the inscriptions revealed in such

expressions as 'relics established in a secure, deep, previously unestablished place' or 'stupa built by Uttarā in the great forest', does not favour the grouping of eight stupas at one point. In a rare example the place called Tvamaṇospa, selected for the erection of a stupa, is mentioned by name. It is not unlikely that each of the plundered stupas mentioned above had an inscribed reliquary and that some of the reliquaries of which the find spot is not known might have come from them.

5 Dec: Early in the morning we set out for the Sālārzai territory and met the *malik*, Shāh Maḥmūd. To the left of the road are the remains of a ruined stupa called Khazāno Dheri (Treasure Mound). No sculptures are reported from this site probably because it had been stripped off long ago. In the relic chamber, we were told, was found a pottery lamp. But in the space between the road and this stupa a relic casket was found in another stupa. No further details of the relic casket our informer could recall.

From Khazāno Dheri, we proceeded to Mina Kurachae – a settlement site of which the highest part is known as Mina and the lowest, spreading on the bank of a *Khwaṛ*, is called Kurachae. The site is still undisturbed. From Mina we wanted to take the road to Nāwagae but our vehicle, suddenly jumping upon a high speed breaker, broke down. Leaving the vehicle in a workshop we marched on foot to visit a Mughal period mosque. It consists of a rectangular prayer-hall covered by three domes of which the middle one is taller than those on the flanks. The hall is fronted by a spacious *verandeh*. An inscription fixed just above the *mihrāb* (alcove) records that this work (probably repair) was executed by the Nawāb 'Abd al-Subḥān in 1966.

Behind the Degree College Khār, we were told, sculptures are often found at Radesha site.

6 Dec: Proceeding from Khār, we first reached Loe Sam Chowki. Turning right, an unmetalled road shoots off to a market in which all the shops have mud wall. At a short distance from the market is a tank. Beyond this point there is no road. A track instead winds up the hillside to a point marked by huge boulders known as Bāchā Gat (King Boulder). Two such boulders bear engravings showing the figure of an ox. From Bāchā Gat the entire valley of Chārmung is visible. Beyond this is Afghān territory. The last village in this valley on the Pakistan side of the border is Hāshim, also the name of a notorious plunderer of cultural heritage of Bajaur. On the hillside there are numerous Buddhist remains – all searched by Hāshim who has been at work since 1970. Another village in the same vicinity is Bhābṛa. On the way back from Bācha Gat we reached Loe Sam and then turned to Inzrae–a small village where we met another plunderer named Pahalwān. A little above this village a new road is being built. Adjoining this road are Buddhist remains known under a modern name, Kamāl Khān. While digging for the construction of his house, Kamāl Khān is said to have hit upon sculptures stacked in rooms. Close to this Buddhist monastic establishment is a spring of which the water is collected in a tank. Some sculptures were found in the tank as well.

Facing the Pahlawān's house is a Khwaṛ, which cuts through a huge deposit of compact soil. This deposit was anciently used for digging underground chambers of which at least thirteen were exposed by the Pahalwān. Their entrances, except for one, are blocked by recent landslides. In the evening, we met the PA and thanked him for his cooperation.

7 Dec: Departure for Peshawar.

II

Tirāt

Tirāt (Pashtu form of Tīrath: 'place of pilgrimage') is the name of a hamlet situated on the right bank of the river Swat some thirty miles above Saidu Sharif in upper Swat. It is almost equidistant from Mata in the south and Khwāzakhela in the north. The existence of Buddha's footprints at Tirāt

gave it lasting fame till the decline of Buddhism. An earlier name of the site, before it became famous as the place of pilgrimage, according to Xuanzang (Beal 1969: 124), was Mo-Su or Mo-su-la identified with *Masūra*, a kind of lentils widely used in South Asia for making curry. Apparently, the climate of Tirāt was suitable for growing *Masūra*. Hence the name of the Buddhist *vihāra* Mo-su Saṅghārāma' (see Beal, op. cit.). Tirāt formed part of the Swat Kohistan before it was conquered by the Akhūnd, Karīmdād – a descendant of the more famous Akhūnd Darweza Bābā (1549-1638).

At the time of Xuanzang's visit in CE 640, a huge stupa 'about 100 feet or so in height' existed by the side of the stone bearing Buddha's footprints (Beal 1969: 124). Sir Aurel Stein visited Tirāt in 1928 and saw 'two ruined mounds' close by the big fragment of rock showing Buddha's footprints with a line of Kharoṣṭhī characters. One of the mounds measured forty feet across its flat top and was of unusual shape. This, Stein remarks 'doubtless hides the remains of the shrine that our saintly Chinese guide mentions as having been erected over the miraculous footprints' (Stein 1975: 88). Professor G. Tucci (1958: 302) mentioning Tirāt in his 'Preliminary report on an archaeological survey in Swat', records that 'the boulder on which the footprints are engraved is still in its place'. It is now displayed in the front hall of the Swat Museum. The Kharoṣṭhī label accompanying the foot marks was first published by G. Buhler and then by Sten Konow (1929: 8). It reads *Bodhasa Śakamuṇisa padaṇi* (Footprints of the Buddha Śākyamuni).

In 1980, I was working in Swat when I heard the rumour that a 'gold book' had been found at Tirāt. It was merely a rumour to which I did not give much importance. But somehow the rumour stuck into my mind, and I kept looking for an opportunity to visit Tirāt. Five years after his when I went to Tirāt for a brief visit no structural remains were visible on the surface and it appeared that the site had long ago been turned into terraced fields.

In Nov. 1990 when I was working at Shnaisha, I took some time off to test the archaeological potential of Tirāt and for about ten days lodged in the yet unoccupied building of the Tirat Medical Dispensary. Three trenches, each measuring 15'x15', were opened close to the point where Buddha's footprints had been in the past. In the trench laid against the eastern side of the nearby terrace which appeared to be Stein's 'big mound measuring forty feet across its flat top' came to light a nicely built stone wall showing diaper masonry. It is unfortunate that I could not stay longer to trace out the outline of Stein's 'two mounds' or Xuanzang's 'tall stupa' because of my more compelling engagements in the Department of Archaeology (University of Peshawar).

Comments

At Tirāt my contacts with the local people bore fruitful results. Some of them who worked probably as hired labourer in earlier plunderings knew that only two inscribed 'gold leaves' were found rather than a 'gold book'. This appeared to be quite convincing as it fully conformed to the fact that only two gold leaf inscriptions – one each of Ajitasena and his son Senaverma, the Oḍi kings – are known. In a similar way it tallies with Stein's two mounds representing perhaps two ruined stupas – one built by Ajitasena and the other after sometime by Senavarma – in honour of the *Buddha Pāda*s. Thus, Stein's two mounds, two gold leave inscriptions and two Oḍi kings – all mutually confirmatory evidence – point to Tirāt as the place to which the two Oḍi inscriptions must be attributed. If it is still not enough to inspire our confidence, we have the indisputable evidence of the toponym Tirae (Tīrath/Tirāt) mentioned in the Ajitasena inscription. It is a rare example indeed in which the inscription itself mentions the name of the place where it was installed. Fussman's identification of Tirae with Tīra, a vast territory to the south of the Khyber Pass, was rightly repudiated by Salomon (1995: 31) who pointed to one of the ancient mounds of Tirāt mentioned by Stein as the likely place from which the reliquary containing Ajitasena's inscription was dug out. But then at the time of winding up his argument, he himself unfortunately falls into the same error: 'It is not at all likely' he remarks 'that it (Ajitasena's inscription) did in fact come from somewhere in the Swat valley, i.e. from Tirāt'. But the evidence

adduced above clearly shows that Salomon's view needs serious reconsideration.

III

Hund

Hund is presently the name of a village situated on the right bank of the river Indus some fifteen miles above Attock. It is located within a fort built by the Mughal emperor Jalāl ad-Dīn Akbar (1556-1605) upon an ancient mound, strategically positioned to control the Indus crossing. Prior to the construction of the fort, Akbar's celebrated historian, Abu al-Fazl, who visited the site in 1586, remarks: 'Ohand (Hund)… was one of the great cities of old times, concerning which a mound of earth speaks eloquently' (Beveridge 1939: III, 736). Both Maqdisi (1906: 479-80) and the *Ḥudūd al-'Ālam* (1962: 37) writing in 985 and 982 respectively, extol Hund for the general prosperity of its people. The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang who passed through Hund in CE 640 is more precise: 'This town is about 20 li (about 4 miles) in circuit; on the south it borders on the river Sindh (*Sin-to*). The inhabitants are rich and prosperous. Here is amassed supply of valuable merchandise, and mixed goods from all quarters' (Beal 1969: 114). This prosperity evidently depended largely upon its location on the high-road linking Central Asia with South Asia. The permanent diversion of the high-road to Attock, remarks Cunningham (1871: 45-46) 'must have seriously affected its prosperity, and its general decay since then has been hastened by the constant encroachment of the Indus, which has now carried away at least one-half of the old town'. The Mongols, writes Rashīd ad-Dīn (quoted in Cunningham, *op.cit*) call it Kārajāng. Waihand and Ohand are other variant forms of this name. written in Arabic script without vowel marks it is often incorrectly transliterated as Waihind and Ohind. In an attempt to bring this name closer to 'Ora' of classical writers, General James Abbot (quoted in Cunningham, *op.cit*), 'calls the place 'Oond', and says that it was formerly called 'Oora'. As a matter of fact, nobody in Hund or the Peshawar valley has the slightest awareness of such a pronunciation. When I asked an elderly person at Hund whether that place was known as 'Oond' in the past, he steered into my eyes suspecting as if I were trying to make a fool of him.

The most ancient name of Hund of which Waihand and Ohand are disfigured derivative forms resulting from the inability of foreign writers to comprehend it properly, was Udabhāṇḍapura, first mentioned in Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇi* (see Stein 1979: I, 206, 207) and now confirmed by an inscription of the time of the Hindu Śāhi ruler Jayapāla found at Hund (Rahman 1979: 312). Stein (1979: II, 338) considers Udabhāṇḍapura a half-Sanskritized Apabhraṁsa form meaning 'Town of Udabhāṇḍa literally meaning 'water-pot'. But with due respect to Stein's learned views on the subject, it needs to be pointed out that with the addition of the last part of the name i.e. *pura*, to it, it would give the meaning 'water-pot-town'– a strange agglomeration of unrelated parts hardly suitable for the name of a city. The first part of the name i.e. *Uda* (Pushtu *Obo*; Persian *Āb*; English *wat*) meaning 'water' and the middle part 'bhāṇḍa' means 'vessel, pot, goods, dish, ornament, the bed of a river, treasure etc (Monier-Williams 1970: 183, 752). Now, it is easy to understand that all the three parts put together would clearly give the meaning 'River (side) Town', or if the word 'treasure' symbolically refers to 'treasure of water' in the sense of a 'lake', Udabhāṇḍapura would mean 'Lake-Town' or 'Lakeside Town'.

The following eight inscriptions have so far been reported from Hund:

1. White marble slab, much damaged showing a Śāradā inscription in 13 lines. It was collected by Sir Alexander Burnes through the good offices of General Court and despatched to Calcutta for the care of James Prinsep (Burnes 1961: 92).

2. Image Inscription in five lines of Śāradā characters. Above the inscribed area are four human feet (Burnes 1961: 92).

3. Marble slab Inscription of the Time of Jayapāla. It is the most important record of the Hindu Śāhi period. The Śāradā text of the epigraph runs in 24 lines, all in a good state of preservation. It records the

construction of a temple in the year 146 (Rahman 1979: 309-13)

4. A much-damaged fragment bearing a few nearly illegible lines in Śāradā. It was picked up by Stein from the wall of a ruined mosque at Hund and deposited in the Lahore Museum (Stein 1979: II, 337, n.2).

5. A marble slab Inscription, presented by the *Khān* of Hund. It comprises 10 lines of Śāradā writing, damaged in the centre. The words like *Kritaṃ Kirtti* in line 8 indicate that it is a Śaiva inscription recording the construction of a temple (Hargreaves 1923-24: 69). Peshawar Museum Inscription No. 8.

6. A Śāradā Inscription from Hund. It was found by E.H. Cobb who presented it to the Peshawar Museum. It consists of 8 lines of Śāradā writing and records the construction of a temple by Mahārājñī Śrī Kāmeśvarīdevī in the year 159 (Sahni 1933-34: 97; Shakur 1946: 12)

7. A Proto-Śāradā Inscription from Hund. It lies in a private collection at Peshawar. The marble slab bearing this inscription is damaged. The extant portion shows 12 lines of Śāradā writing. In line 2 is found the name of a certain Narendrāditya (Nasim Khan 1998-99: 77-81).

8. An Arabic Inscription from Hund. The inscribed tablet was found fixed in the wall of a well. It consists of 6 lines of Kufic writing. The language is Arabic and mentions a certain Abu Ja'afar Muḥammad Jūzjāni who laid the foundation of the well (Shakur 1946: 10).

Surprisingly, inscriptions are there but the temples of which they were the foundation stones are non-existent. Apparently, the structural remains of temples were dismantled and the building material such as stone blocks reused in modern buildings. In 2009, the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) launched a small-scale excavation under my supervision with the dual purpose of finding out: (1) the cultural depth of the mound within the perimeter wall of the Museum compound and (2) to understand the 'pile' of stratified stones which from the riverside looked like the bastion of an ancient fort.

The area selected for this purpose was marked out to the north of the 'pile' mentioned above. Only at one point we could reach the virgin soil because of the obstruction created by the structural remains of different walls. In the top layer was found a copper coin of queen Didda of Kashmir (980/1003). In the underlying strata several corroded billon coins of the Hindu Śāhi period came to light. In the trench adjacent to the 'pile' appeared fragments of lime plaster. Their number increased as we approached it. This excited my curiosity, and I began to wonder where these fragments could have come from. The only nearby structure was the 'pile'. About a metre-wide trench, around or whatever had survived of the pile, was opened in which several *Kanjur* blocks showing *cyma recta* moulding and Candraśālā designs together with a copper coin of Queen Victoria and numerous fragments of lime-plaster were found in the disturbed debris suggesting that it had already been searched long ago by robbers. This undoubtedly was the base of a temple of which the greater part had been carried away by the river. The extant part shows that the building was externally coated with lime plaster. If any of the inscriptions mentioned above were found here it would remain a guess until the discovery of a more decisive piece of evidence. The coin of the Queen Victoria suggests that the place was robbed during the British period.

IV

Sāwal Dher

Situated about four miles to the east of Jamāl Gaṛhi. Sāwal Dher (Sāwal's Mound), a modern village, occupies the site of an ancient settlement. The mound is three to four metres higher than the surrounding area. This apparently was a citadel of which a patch of the defensive wall made of stones, showing diaper masonry of Kushan period, has been exposed by rain water. The fine finish of the exposed wall, writes Gopāl Dās (1871: 264-65), our only source of information

for this period of time, suggests the existence of a fort here in the times past. Gopāl Dās further remarks: 'when Sāwal Dher was in the possession of the Dilazāk tribe (*Qaum*), it prospered under the same name (i.e. Sāwal Dher). With the expulsion of the Dilazāks (about 1525) after the battle of Kātlang (correctly *Kāṭh liṅga* meaning 'Wooden Liṅga') it went into ruins and came to be known simply as a *dheri* (mound). Fifty years (counting from 1871) have elapsed since the time when a certain Ḥātim Awān Sodherwāl, and Nūr Gul Afghān Khaṭak Mando Khel, and Ashraf Afghān Khaṭak, Babar Khel, and 'Ali Beg Afghān Khaṭak, Māmākhel, with the permission of its Kātlang owners, settled upon this site and revived its old name (i.e., Sāwal Dher). Since then (i.e., 1821), the place has not been depopulated. In the village is an ancient stone wall showing beautiful masonry, which appears to be the part of the defensive wall of a fort. Stone masonry walls and stone images, along with occasional copper coins are often found on this site during digging. To the north of this village, at a distance of about one and a half mile is a *dheri* (mound) called Taṛali. Many ruined places of worship and stone masonry walls may be witnessed here. This marks the site of a great city'. Just above the exposed patch of the wall mentioned above is the grave of a so-called *Shaheed* (martyr) bedizened with bright coloured flags and rags. On the head side stood a monolith 2 feet square and 5 feet in height. One side of the monolith was covered by an inscription comprising two long parallel lines of Śāradā characters. The head-stone, rough and irregular even on the inscribed face resembles those marking Yogi graves (see Rahman 2019: 83-92). It was removed by Garrick (2000: 116-118) and transported to Lahore.

Ibbetson (2007: III, 201) informs us that Sāwal is the name of a clan of the great Parācha caste. This is borne out by the Sāwal nomenclature such as 'Sāwal Parācha'. In Nowshera the Sāwal live in great numbers in the Parāchgāno Mohallah (the Parācha street).

The origin of the Parāchas is not known for certain. Some of them claim descent from one of the two daughters – 'Mir Nigal' (Mihir Nigār) and 'Mir Afzun' (Mihir Afzūn) – of the Sāsānian emperor Noshīrwān, also called Chosroes 1 (531-579). Some others believe that their profession as cloth (*Pārcha*) merchants gave them the epithet Parācha. In Attock they say they were originally fire-worshippers, but were converted by one Muḥammad Mustafa, and then became carpet makers, whence their name Parācha, from *firāsh*, a carpet (Ibbetson, *op.cit.*).

The Parācha claims to link them with the royal Sāsānian family may be taken as an attempt to glorify their past, though the general direction, south-eastern Iran, from which they might have migrated in the past, may be considered as nearer the truth. Some other ethnic groups such as Awān and Khwāja also appear to have drifted to South Asia from the same territory (see Pope 1958: 143-45).

The ethnic name Parācha is generally pronounced as Prācha. The addition of *a* between *P* and *r* in the first syllable occurred, it seems, during the British period when it was transliterated into Roman characters from the Persian original. The correct rendering therefore is Prācha, not Parācha. It is interesting to note that the Buddhist rulers of Bajaur and the adjacent territories, including perhaps part of Peshawar valley, in the second half of the first century CE, call themselves Apraca (Aprācha) rājās (King of Aprāca) in a series of their dedicatory inscriptions found on relic caskets. In the course of time the initial *A* in Apraca was dropped for the simple reason that everyday talk always favours short-cuts rather than unwanted precision in minutiae. For instance, the Persian name Anushīrwān is generally written and spoken as Noshīrwān. Thus, Prācha would appear to be a slightly abbreviated form of the earlier name Apraca (Aprācha). The similarity between these two names is so strikingly apparent that it cannot be dubbed as merely incidental. If this is so, the Apracas of Bajaur would not appear to have altogether disappeared from the face of the earth without leaving a trace behind in the present populations. Similarly, the Parāchas who wish to find a royal ancestry would be satisfied to have found it in the line of the Apraca rājās of Bajaur.

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