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Archaeological Importance of Swabi as Integral part of the Gandhara Civilization

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is twofold: first, we will briefly discuss the ancient history of Swabi, which is currently an important district of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan. District Swabi is inhabited by ethnically Pashtun population mostly belonging to lower middle and middle classes. The region has been important for its socio-political, cultural, and religious history. It was an integral and important part of Gandhara Civilization. We trace its history from 500 BC to the mid-19th century. For this purpose, we have provided an overview of the major dynasties that ruled over this area for many centuries. The second aim of the paper is to highlight the major archaeological sites located in district Swabi and we will also mention the important archaeological excavations and discoveries in the district.

Keywords: Gandhara Civilization, Swabi, Hund, Buddhism, archaeological sites

Introduction:

Swabi is one of the 38 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in Pakistan with an area of 1543 square kilometers (Anwar et al, 2015). According to Census 2017, Swabi's total population was 1624,616 (PBS, 2017). Swabi shares borders with Buner, Haripur, Mardan, and Nowshera districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It also shared borders District Attock of the Punjab Province (Jadoon, 2015; Buzdar, 2015). Earlier, Swabi district was a part Peshawar district and then of Mardan District from 1937 to 1988 when it was accorded the status of a district on 1 July, 1988 (Khatoon, 2015). The district is divided into four administrative units or sub-divisions of Lahore, Razzar, Swabi, and Topi with Swabi city as district headquarters (Buzdar, 2015). About 99% of Swabi's population comprise Muslims while small numbers of Hindus and Sikhs also reside in it (WUS, 2019). The overwhelming majority of Swabi's inhabitants are



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Pashtuns of Yusufzai/Mandar tribes and Pashto is the mother tongue of more than 95% of the people. However, Hindko is also spoken in some villages (Buzdar, 2015). The Yousafzais and Mandars are the main Pashtun tribes in the district while other major tribes are Jadoons, Khattaks and Awans. In addition to these major tribes, there are also people who belong to other tribes like Dalazaks, Tanolis, locally called as Miangaan, Sayyids, Qureshis, Gujars, Parachas, Awans, and Mughals (Jadoon, 2015).

Historical Background of Swabi

Swabi has great historical importance as it astride the historical route connecting Peshawar-Charsadda-Shahbaz-Garhi-Hund, and Taxila. In other words, Swabi owes its importance mainly to the fact that it was an integral part of Gandhara civilization. Being part of Gandhara civilization, it not only remained as a meeting place for merchandise but also for ideas and cultural values. Keeping in view Swabi's historical and cultural background, its rich cultural and archaeological heritage dating back to 5th century BC is understandable. Famous Greek historian Herodotus mentioned an area of gold mining which was later identified by Sir Marc Aurel Stein to be lying between Salatura (Swabi's Lahor) and Jaganath in Swabi district (Khan, 1995). So far, more than 100 archaeological sites have been discovered in Swabi district. These sites belong to different periods from 3rd century BC to 18th century AD ("Peshawar: New archaeological sites discovered," 2004).

The region known as Gandhara lies with Hindu Kush Mountains to its west and River Indus to its east. At present, this description of this area is known as "Gandhara proper." It was in 4th century BC that Gandhara's political borders expanded to eastern Afghanistan, Swat, Bannu, and Taxila and it came to be known as "Greater Gandhara" (Alexander, 2017). The political geography of Gandhara never remained static as it would change from time to time (Rehman, 1976). Similarly, capital of Gandhara kept changing and thus places like Kapisa (Bagram), Purus Pura or Purushapura (Peshawar), Pushkalavati (Charsadda) Takshasila (Taxila) and Udabhandapura (Hund in Swabi) served as its capitals (Shahi, 2019). Recently, Gandhara has been marked as one of the earliest centers for world trade with long distance trade stretching back to 4000 BC (Alexander, 2017).

Dr. D. K. Shahi, describing Gandhara writes that:



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What is Gandhara? It is really difficult to define. Gandhara was a territory and Gandhara was a community. Gandhara was a mystery and Gandhara is a history. Gandhara was the name of a culture and Gandhara was a style of sculpture. Gandhara was the land of confluence and Gandhara was the land influence. Gandhara was the land of quest and Gandhara was the land of conquest. Gandhara was an identity and Gandhara was a reality. Gandhara had it all. Thus, Gandhara was simply unique. (Shahi, 2019, p 8).

Political power in Gandhara changed several hands as there came several dynasties who ruled over it but Buddhism continued to progress for many centuries irrespective of who gained power and who lost it. It continued its progress, though at various paces, till 460 AD and even survived Huns' destructive rule. It was in Gandhara that Buddha was permitted to be represented in human form and thus Buddha's first ever image was created in Gandhara. This anthropomorphic representation of Buddha is thought to have brought revolutionary change in Buddhist history and philosophy (Shahi, 2019).

As mentioned earlier, Swabi not only remained an integral part of Gandhara but also remained one of its major urban areas and even served as its capital. Therefore, it has great historical importance hosting dozens of archeological sites. In the following paragraphs, we briefly discuss Swabi's ancient history starting from 500 BC to mid-19th century.

Achaemenid Empire (550-326 BC)

Before the invasion of Achaemenids, there is not much recorded history available for the area. Some historians have made brief references to the existence of Assyrians and the Medes in this region without much details. Similarly, no recorded historical sources are present to explain the invasion of the Gandhara region by the Aryans. It is from the time of arrival of Achaemenians (Persians) that we find recorded history of the region (Ahmad, 2012). However, Bushra Khatoon argues that traces of Aryan rule can be found in Swabi. She claims that Shewa was a sub-tribe of Aryans and today there is a town in Swabi called Shewa. She further claims that the present-day Beka village in Swabi is also of Aryan period (Khatoon, 2015). Similarly, some archaeologists are also of the view that archaeological sites in the Maini valley in



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Swabi may lead to discoveries even beyond the Achaemenid Empire provided scientific and mythological excavations are undertaken (Khan, 2009).

After Aryans, the Gandhara region including Swabi became part of Achaemenid Empire (Hayat, 2017). The exact date of first annexation of Gandhara to Achaemenid Empire is not known but classical sources suggest that Cyrus the Great (the founder of the Achaemenid Empire) marched through Arachosia (modern Kandahar in Afghanistan), destroyed Kapisa (modern Bagram) and then advanced into Bactria between 539-530 BC and died somewhere in the northeast of his empire (Magee, Petrie, Knox, Khan, & Thomas, 2005). It is believed that it took place in 535 BC (Alexander, 2017). Though the exact date of Gandhara's annexation into the Achaemenid Empire is not known, it is established that when Darius assumed power in 522 then he considered Gandhara as province of his empire. The Behistun inscription¹ dating back to 520-518 BC also mentions Gandhara among the provinces that Darius inherited when he became king of Achaemenid Empire in 522 BC (Magee et al, 2005).

Pots, inscriptions, and wooden frames of this era have been discovered from various areas in Swabi. Some inscriptions discovered from Swabi address Darius the Great as Jaganath, which means the king of the world. At present, a village named Jaganath still exists in Swabi (Khatoon, 2015). It is said that it was Achaemenid King Darius-I who gave proper administration to the areas now forming Swabi district (Khan, 1995). During the Achaemenid rule, the region became the center of spiritual as well as worldly knowledge and people would come from far flung areas to get knowledge here. Panini was a great scholar who composed the oldest Sanskrit grammar known as Ashtadhyayi. Panini was from Salatura, a place near Chota Lahor in Swabi. It is said that Panini's work was greatly influenced by Achaemenians' quasi-alphabetic system (Ahmad, 2012).

Alexander the Great/ the Greeks (326/7-300 BC)

¹ It is said that Achaemenian King Darius-I caused to inscribe the names of the twenty-three provinces including Gandhara of his empire on a stone now known as Behistun inscription.



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Achaemenians' rule over the region continued till Alexander the Great removed them (Ahmad, 2012) around 530 BC and incorporated Gandhara in his empire (Magee et al, 2005).

After the death of Persian king Darius in 487 BC, his son Xerxes succeeded him and decided to attack Greece, which he did. Xerxes' army also included soldiers from the Gandhara region. When Alexander rose to power in Greece, he decided to take revenge from the Persians for the losses they had inflicted on Greece. Thus Alexander the Great marched on Gandhara and reached as far as Charsadda, Peshawar, Bajaur, and Swat. He faced severe resistance while taking Aornos Fort² in Swabi (Khatoon, 2015). Darius-III was the Achaemenid king at the time of their defeat at the hands of Greek forces (Warraich, 2011).

Alexander occupied Ora (near Swat) and Pushkalavati (Charsadda), the then capital of Gandhara, and Hund on the bank of Indus River (Swabi). He stayed in the region for one month only and due to severe resistance he ultimately gave up his campaign. During his campaigns, he was thrice seriously injured and some historians are of the view that these injuries were later the major cause of his death (Hayat, 2017).

It is said that Alexander the Great, along with his army, relaxed in Hund, organized sports, and offered sacrifices to the gods before crossing the Indus (Sehrai, 1979; DAMKP, 2016 & Khatoon, 2015). A tower known as Alexander memorial or the Corinthian pillar has also been erected in the center of the Hund museum in memory of Alexander the Great (Mehsud, 2019).

Maurya dynasty (300-200 BC)

After the death of Alexander, the Great in 323 BC, his empire divided into small principalities under various rulers including his generals (Warraich, 2011; Hayat, 2017; Rajput, 2018). The Gandhara province of his empire consisting of areas of modern Afghanistan and Pakistan became a separate kingdom with one of his generals called Seleucus, as its ruler (Khatoon, 2015). It was in these circumstances that Chandra Gupta Maurya, a member of royal family of Magadha, occupied greater part of North-western India sub-continent and established his rule (Rajput, 2018). He also attacked

² Some historians and archaeologists argue that Aornos Fort was situated in present day Swat.



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Seleucus's kingdom. Resultantly, Seleucus married his daughter to Chandra Gupta and vacated his kingdom for him (Khatoon, 2015).

After ruling the area for 25 years, Chandra Gupta Maurya in 298 BC abdicated in favor of his son Bindusara. Bindusara was then succeeded by his son Ashoka the Great in 272 BC and proved as one of the greatest rulers of ancient India (Rajput, 2018). He became more popular than his father and grandfather. Buddhism rapidly spread under his patronage (Khatoon, 2015) as he declared it as state religion (Rajput, 2018). Ashoka also dispatched a missionary to Swabi's Lahor for proselytization purposes and ordered the opening of a worship place the remains of which still exist. Similarly, Hund and Topi in Swabi also host sites related to this period (Khatoon, 2015). Ashoka caused to be inscribed on stone the teachings of Buddhism in places including Peshawar valley---Swabi is part of Peshawar valley (Rajput, 2018).

This was perhaps one of the largest empires the world has witnessed. As Chandragupta provided security to the citizens to move freely, trade and commerce rapidly flourished in the region. Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and ancient Hinduism all existed together and thus led to the development of ideas and thoughts (Hayat, 2017). This period's idols, plates, wooden frames, coins, and Buddha's statues have been recovered from various sites in Swabi (Khatoon, 2015).

Greco-Bactrian period (200-100 BC)

During the very rule of Ashoka, another dynasty known as Greco-Bactrian dynasty surfaced around the Amu Darya known in Latin as the Oxus River (Hayat, 2017). Greco-Bactrians were people of nomadic and barbaric nature. They first abolished the Greek Kingdom of Bactria which had existed since the days of Alexander the Great and then a branch of this tribe known as Scythians marched toward the Afghan hills and ultimately reached Gandhara region (Rajput, 2018).

When the collapse of Maurya dynasty started, Demetrius occupied the territories of Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, the present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab to establish Bactrian or Indo-Greek kingdom with Taxila as its capital (Khatoon, 2015; Hayat, 2017). Demetrius was the son of Euthydemus, the governor of Bakhtar (Turkistan) under a Greek ruler. After his father's death, Demetrius declared



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independence from Greek rulers and made Taxila as capital of his kingdom (Khatoon, 2015).

Coins of this period recovered from various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa carry names of some 40 Greco-Bactrian kings. Heliocles was the last Greco-Bactrian king who ruled till 50 BC (Khatoon, 2015). During excavations at Aziz Dheri in Swabi, several antiquities including a coin belonging to Indo-Greek ruler Apollodotus II were found (Khan, 2008). Numismatic evidence from this period suggests that the kings of this dynasty belonged to two houses that were headed by Eucratides and Euthydemus (Warraich, 2011). The antiquities recovered from Shakrai Dherai also suggest that the site remained occupied from Indo-Greek to Hindu-Shahi period (Khan, 2009).

Scythian/Saka Period (100-70 BC)

In the first century BC, the Indo-Greeks were challenged by a new force coming from the Central Asian side---the Sakas also known as Scythians. Scythians, led by Azes I, deposed the last Indo-Greek king in Gandhara named Hippostratus to capture the region. Thus, Gandhara fell into the hands of Scythians (Warraich, 2011). Thus, Swabi, along with other areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Afghanistan, remained under the rule of Scythians (Khatoon, 2015).

During 1993 excavations at Aziz Dheri archeological site in Swabi, 10 layers were discovered associated with Hindu Shahi, Kidarite, Kushan, and Indo-Scythian periods (Khan, 2008). Similarly, antiquities like carved slabs, coins, figurines, metal objects, painted pottery, sculptures, and stone beads dating back to this and some other periods were also recovered from Banr Dheri archaeological sites in Swabi (Khan, 2009). British officer and archaeologist Sir Alexander Cunningham also in 1863-4 recovered several coins of the Indo-Scythian period from Hund (Sehrai, 1979).

Parthian Period (70-5 BC)

The last Scythian ruler, Azes-II was dethroned by Gondophares to found the Indo-Parthians dynasty. Before assuming the charge of Gandhara, Gondophares was governor of Kandahar (Warraich, 2011). Parthian rulers patronized Buddhism in the area (Khan, 1995) and introduced features of Iranian, Roman, and Greek arts in their idol making. Some Japanese archaeologists have recovered these idols from



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archaeological sites in the Nogram area of Swabi (Khatoon, 2015). Traces of Parthian rule have also been found in areas like Aziz Dheri in Swabi (Khan, 1995).

Kushan Period (5 BC-225 AD)

The Parthian empire came to end at the hands of Kushans who were originally from Chinese Turkistan and were ousted from their area of origin by their powerful rival tribes. They first settled in Bactria from where they reached Gandhara via present-day Afghanistan (Warraich, 2011; (Khatoon, 2015).

Kanishka (127-151 AD), a famous Kushan king, paid great attention to arts and crafts as a result of which unique Buddhist statues, reliefs, and sculptures were produced in the region. Kanishka also changed his capital to Purushapura, modern Peshawar while Taxila was a major center of Buddhism where people would come from different parts of the world to learn about Buddhism. Several Chinese monks also visited the region to learn about Buddhism and perhaps it is this period in which Buddhism travelled from Gandhara to China via Silk Road (Hayat, 2017). Thus, Gandhara during Kushans period emerged as a great cultural and trade center. Rulers patronized Buddhism and Buddhist art reached new heights (Warraich, 2011).

During the rule of Kushans, Swabi was an important place where there were highly skilled idol makers (Khatoon, 2015). During archaeological excavations in Aziz Dheri in 2007-8, a hoard of Kushan-era coins including a gold coin of great Kushan King Kaniska were discovered by archaeologists (Khan, 2008). Coins belonging to this period have also been recovered from archaeological sites of Muradu Dheri in Swabi (Khan, 2009). Some coins of this period have also been preserved in the Hund museum.

Kidarites (225-425 AD)

Following Kushan's rule, Gandhara passed into the hands of Kidarites (Waraich, 2011) who have been addressed by authors of different regions with different names. For example, they have been mentioned as Chionites in Latin literature, Kidarite Huns in Greek literature, Huna by Indian writers, while Honk and Kushans in the American literature. Exact time of Gandhara's annexation by Kidarites is not known but some historians, on the basis of ancient sources, guess that it was somewhere between 390 and 430 AD. After occupying Gandhara, the Kidarites apparently tried to expand their



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influence eastward due to which they came into conflict with the Guptas. Thus, several encounters took place between the two sides (Zeimal, 1996). This period also witnessed weakening of Buddhism and resurgence of Hinduism (Khatoon, 2015).

Remnants of the Kidarites period have been reported from various sites across Swabi (Khatoon, 2015). For example, coins of this period were recovered from Aziz Dheri during excavations in 2007-8 (Khan, 2008). Kidarites exercised their political power till the first half of 5th century when they were removed from power by the joint force of Sasanians and Hephthalites. From now onward, Hephthalites remained as the strongest force in Central Asia and Bactria till the emergence of Turks on the political horizon in the 6th century AD (Khodadad, 2010).

The Huns Period (450-600)

The Kidarite dynasty was overthrown by a new wave of nomads known as Hephthalites White Huns in mid-5th century and thus took control of the Gandhara region. However, details about how it was exactly replaced are not known (Zeimal, 1996; Ghose, 2003). White Huns were also nomads of Chinese origin who crossed the Amu River and reached Gandhara (Khatoon, 2015). The Huns established their capital in Bamiyan in Afghanistan (Thapar, 2003).

White Huns targeted Buddhism and destroyed many Buddhist worship places, idols, and towns (Khatoon, 2015). A Chinese pilgrim, Sung-yen, who had been sent on official mission by the Wei dynasty of China, reached Gandhara in 520 AD and found the country destroyed by the Huns (Kapur, 2010). He described Hun ruler Mihirakula as uncouth in manner and an iconoclast who was opposed to Buddhism to the extent that he even killed monks (Thapar, 2003). The accounts of destruction of the country by Mihirakula were even heard by Hiuen Tsang who came to the area about one hundred years later. According to Hiuen Tsang, Mihirakula destroyed 1600 stupas and viharas (Buddhist temples) in Gandhara only (Kapur, 2010). Interestingly, White Huns were originally not Hindus, but they adopted this religion due to their animosity toward Buddhism and its followers (Khatoon, 2015). Remnants of this period have been found in various areas of Swabi (Khan, 2008).

Vardhana Dynasty (600-650)



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After Huns, Gandhara, with Swabi as an integral part of it, became a part of the empire ruled by the Vardhana dynasty. It was this period when Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang came to India. He stayed at royal court for 15 years and recorded events of the time. He has mentioned Lahor and Hund in his writings. According to his memoirs, Hund used to be a great trade center at that time (Khatoon, 2015).

Harsha Vardhana was the last ruler of this dynasty whose reign lasted from 605 to 657 AD. Harsha was himself a scholar and would hold discussions with scholars of other religions (Kapur, 2010). There is difference of opinion among scholars with regard to the exact duration of Harsha's reign. Kapur has mentioned his period as 606-657 while prominent scholar on ancient India Romila Thapar (2003) notes that Chinese ruler Tai Tsung sent an ambassador to Harsha's court who upon reaching the court in 647 found that Harsha had died recently.

The Turk Shahi and Hindu Shahi dynasties (650-1026)

After the Vardhana Dynasty, the area including modern Swabi came under the Shahi dynasties -Turk Shahi and Hindu Shahi (Rahman, 2002). The Turk Shahis were probably descendants of Kushans and the Turk Shahi Dynasty was founded by Barhatigin (Warraich, 2011). Though there is disagreement about the exact date of commencement of rule of the Turk Shahi dynasty, some historians strongly believe that it began in 666 AD (Rehman, 1976).

In the middle of the 9th century, the last ruler of this dynasty LagatŪrmān was put in jail by his Brahmin minister Kallar and occupied the throne himself. The removal of LagatŪrmān from power by Kallar not only resulted in the change of king but also dynasty. Thus, the Turk Shahi dynasty was replaced by the Hindu Shahi dynasty (Rehman, 1976). Hund (Swabi) served as the capital of Hindu Shahi dynasty (Harmatta & Lityinsky, 1996; Mehsud, 2019).

Coins of this period including a copper coin belonging to Hindu Shahi king Vakka Deva have already been recovered from Swabi's` archaeological sites (Khan, 2008). One can also observe these coins in the Hund Museum. An inscription of Bhima king of Hindu Shahi dynasty was also recovered from Dewal in Gadoon valley of Swabi (Sehrai, 1979). Hindu Shahi dynasty ruled over Gandhara for some two hundred years



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till 1026 and were ultimately defeated by Mahmud of Ghazna (Warraich, 2011; Rahman, 2002).

Ghaznavid Period (1026-1065)

After Hindu Shahi dynasty, Swabi came under the control of the Ghaznavid dynasty. Mahmud of Ghazna, the most popular and famous ruler of the dynasty, defeated Jayapala and his son, who succeeded him, in several encounters. He captured their capital city of Hund (Swabi), looted their temples, and collected huge booty from them. Mahmud appointed one of his trusted slaves as the administrator of this newly occupied territory. Jaypala was so humiliated that he committed suicide by setting himself on fire (Mishra, 1972; Rehman, 1976). Thus, the whole Swabi came under the Ghaznavid Empire and Mahmud constructed forts at various places (Khatoon, 2015). Ghaznavid occupation of the area also brought Islam to the Gandhara region and it was for the first time that Swabi came under direct Muslim rule (Mishra, 1972). It was also in Ghaznavid period that most of the people of today's Swabi embraced Islam. Mahmud made Swabi's Lahor as his capital and founded a village Islam Garh (now known as Salam Garh) in Swabi. After the death of Mahmud, his successors suffered from infightings and even fought wars against each other in present day Swabi (Khatoon, 2015).

Ghori dynasty and Delhi Sultanate (1065-1193)

Ghaznavids were replaced by the Ghoris as the lords of the Gandhara region including Swabi. Khusru Malik was the last ruler of Ghaznavid dynasty. When Shahabuddin Ghori, the younger brother of Ghiyasuddin Ghori who had already taken Ghazni from Ghaznavids, besieged Khusru Malik's capital Lahor (Swabi) then Khusru Malik surrendered before him without fighting. Thus, Lahor also ceased to be the capital of Ghaznavids. Later, Ghori also occupied Hund (Khatoon, 2015).

After the death of the Ghori brothers, their kingdom split among their generals. Taj Uddin Yildiz occupied Ghazni while Nasir-ud-Din Kabacha occupied Lahor. Yildiz marched on Lahor and took it from Kabacha. Yildiz's government was then overthrown by Muhammad Shah (Khwarazm Shah). Later, Khwarazm Shah's son Jalaluddin was defeated by the forces of Chengiz Khan and he escaped from the battlefield by crossing the Indus River while riding on his horse. From 13th century to



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the first quarter of 16th century, Swabi remained under the Delhi Sultanate. During this period, it also faced raids from Mongols and Tamerlane and thus many people migrated from Swabi to Delhi to avoid these raids. It was also the period that the forefathers of the present dwellers of Swabi (Yousafzai, Gigyani, Otmankhail, and Muhammad Zai) migrated from Afghanistan and settled in this area (Khatoon, 2015).

Mughal period (1526-1738)

The founder of Mughal Empire Zahiruddin Babar wanted to secure Yousafzai tribe's support for his missions to Indian sub-continent. For this purpose, he married the daughter of a Yousafzai Pashtun from Swabi named Malik Shah Mansur after whose name there is a famous village in Swabi (Khatoon, 2015). In his memoir, Babar has also written about his hunting in Swabi village³ (Sehrai, 1979).

After removing Zahiruddin Babar's son and successor Humayun from power, Sher Shah Suri paid special attention to the area now known as Swabi. He constructed two roads there: one connected Mardan's Shahbaz Garhi with Swabi's Ismaila, Adina, Kalu Khan, Nawey Kaley, Maniri, and Topi while the other linked Mardan with Swabi's Yar Hussain, Dagai, Lahor, and Jahangira. During the reign of Akbar, Yousafzai tribe of Swabi fought several battles against royal forces at Hund and Panjpir in which Akbar's trusted aids like Todar Mall and Raja Man Singh also took part (Khatoon, 2015). Keeping its importance in view, Akbar the Great ordered the construction of a fort in Hund and the task was given to a senior general Raja Birbal (DAMKP, 2016). The remnants of this fort are still present in the Hund Museum premises (Mehsud, 2019).

Akbar the Great's successor Noor-u-Din Muhammad Salim known by his imperial name as Jahangir constructed a fort on the bank of River Kabul to safeguard his empire's interests. Jahangira, a town which is divided into two parts with one in Swabi while the other in Nowshera district, was also named after Jahangir (Sehrai, 1979). Jahangir's successor Shah Jahan tried to befriend Yousafzais of Swabi and even appointed their chief Bahako Khan as in charge of toll collection in the area. However, Aurangzeb diverted from this policy and several battles took place between the royal forces and the Yousafzais of Swabi (Khatoon, 2015). A force of 5000 Yousafzai under

³ Swabi is now headquarter of the district.



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the leadership of Bhaku crossed the Indus River at Hund and occupied Pakli in Hazara. In 1667, Mughal forces reached Panjpir and Shah Mansur in Swabi and attacked installations of Yousafzai. Later the same year, Mughal troops plundered Yousafzai's houses in Karamar valley. Aurangzeb was so preoccupied with subduing these people that he personally came to the region (Sehrai, 1979 & Khatoon, 2015).

Khattak's loyalty to the Mughals also brought them into confrontation with Yousafzais. The great Pashtun poet and warrior Khushal Khan Khattak and his father Shahbaz Khan, who was leader of Khattak tribe, also took part in these wars (Khatoon, 2015).

The Pashtun and Sikh rule (1738-1849)

As the decline of Mughal Empire started after the death of Aurangzeb, so Khorasan's ruler Nadir Shah occupied the present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (including the erstwhile FATA) from the Mughals and included them in Afghanistan. Thus, in 1739 Swabi ceased to be under the Mughal rule. After Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Abdali established a Pashtun kingdom in Kandahar. Ahmad Shah Abdali was succeeded by his son Taimur Shah whose rule over the Yousafzais was in name only. This paved the way for the Sikhs and the first battle between the Sikhs and the Yousafzai was fought in Hazro in 1813 in which people from Swabi's villages like Yar Hussain, Lahor, Zaida, and Hund also took part. Sikhs won the battle and occupied the Attock fort in 1814. Hari Singh Nalwa, the Sikh governor of Peshawar established checkpoints in Swabi and would launch attacks against the residents of the area (Khatoon, 2015).

The Yousafzai tribe did not concede to Sikh rule in the area. They would frequently create troubles for the Sikh regime due to which Ranjit Singh personally marched against them, crossed the River Indus at Hund and a bloody battle took place between Sikh forces and Yousafzai and Khattak tribes in Nowshera. The tribal force was defeated by Sikh Army but this did not end their resistance to the Sikh rule (Sehrai, 1979). In order to strengthen Sikh regime's position in the area, Ranjit Singh's commanders built forts at Akora Khattak, Jahangira, and Khairabad (Bansal, 2016).

It was in these circumstances that Ahmad Shaheed Barelvi emerged on the scene. He received a warm welcome from Swabi's elders like Khadi Khan of Hund, Ashraf Khan of Zaida, and Fateh Khan of Punjpir (Sehrai, 1979; Khatoon, 2015). He also stayed at



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Hund with its chief Khadi Khan and organized his forces against Sikhs (DAMKP, 2016). After his second defeat, Barelvi went to Punjpir with Fateh Khan and started increasing his power and influence there. On 25 February 1829, a large assembly was held in which Ulema, under the leadership of Barelvi, announced plans to implement Sharia. This led to differences between Barelvi and the local elders especially Khadi Khan. Barelvi wanted the locals to marry their daughters to his men and completely give up Pashtunwali⁴ but this was not acceptable to the elders. Situation reached such a point that Barelvi's men on 8 August 1829 secretly attacked Khadi Khan's Hund fort and killed him. The incident was followed by several other battles between Barelvi's forces and local leaders (Khatoon, 2015).

Conclusion:

The above brief discussion on the ancient history of Swabi highlights the archeological importance of the district. The area hosts more than 100 archeological sites dating back to different ruling dynasties from 3rd century BC to 18th century. Keeping its huge importance in view, it is responsibility of the Directorate of Archeology Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to make necessary arrangements for the preservation and excavation of these sites to better understand the ancient history of Swabi. Mega scientific research is needed to explore the rich archeological history of the region and to protect the ornaments found while excavating the historical sites. Though more than 100 sites have already been discovered, there are also possibilities to unearth more archeological sites which are not known so far. Keeping in view the speedy urbanization process in the country involving rapid and mega construction projects, there is need for immediate appropriate steps on the part of concerned authorities to protect the valuable past of the area from destruction. As excavation of these sites require vast financial resources and technological expertise, the archeological department should try to enlist assistance of international experts and agencies specializing in preservation and exploration of archeological sites.

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⁴ A code of conduct followed by the Pashtuns.



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