

A Study of Religious Sites in Hazara: An Historical Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores the historical significance of religious sites in Hazara, a region in northwestern Pakistan. Despite their cultural and historical importance, these sites have received little scholarly attention, resulting in a significant gap in our understanding of the region's cultural and religious heritage. This research aims to address this gap by conducting a comprehensive historical analysis of religious sites in Hazara. Hazara's rich cultural and religious heritage is reflected in its numerous mosques, shrines, and temples, which are a testament to the region's complex history and cultural diversity. However, the lack of documentation and analysis of these sites has limited our understanding of their historical significance and cultural importance. This study draws on primary sources, including historical texts and archival records, to gather information on the history and development of religious sites in Hazara. Field observations were also conducted to document the current state of these sites and gather information from local communities. The findings of this study highlight the significance of Hazara's religious sites as symbols of cultural identity and religious tradition. The study also identifies challenges facing the preservation and conservation of these sites, including lack of funding, infrastructure, and institutional support. The research contributes to our understanding of the cultural and religious dynamics of Hazara and provides valuable insights into the region's history and cultural heritage. The study's findings have implications for policymakers, conservationists, and local communities working to preserve and promote Hazara's cultural and religious heritage.

Key Words: Hazara, Culture, Religious Sites, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity

Introduction

Religious places include pilgrimage to places of worship and centers of cultural importance where one goes to sacred locations in an attempt to practice spiritual tradition and rituals. Such a site is keen on moral codes and instills a specific behavioral pattern of society towards places and relics of worship. Religious tourism has been increasing over the past few years as each year a large number of Muslims go to Mecca for Hajj and a large number of Hindus also go to several temples. Here is a rough draft for your introduction. The Hazara Division, in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, is an area of deep historical and cultural importance. Situated between the great Himalayas and Indus River

plains, it has been a cultural crossroads of various civilizations and religious practices since long. Throughout centuries, it has witnessed various religions converging here and have left behind them a rich religious heritage of shrines that keep on resonating with spiritual, cultural, as well as historical significance. Religious places are not just houses of worship; they are living expressions of history, culture, and communal identity.

In Hazara Division, these monuments vary from ancient Hindu temples and Buddhist stupas to Islamic shrines and Sikh gurdwaras, each narrating their own distinctive tale. These monuments not only illustrate the religious aspirations of their specific periods but also summarize the socio-political forces and architectural developments of those times. Thus, examining these monuments offers an invaluable perspective to study the historical development and cultural diversity of the region. The geographical position of Hazara Division has ever been the melting pot of various influences¹. The region's accessibility to the historical Silk Road promoted the migration of merchants, visitors, and missionaries, who established and spread their respective religions. From the Gandhara era, which indelibly touched Buddhist art and culture, through the following Islamic era, which transformed the social and religious milieu, Hazara Division presents a microcosm of the greater historical shifts within South Asia. Besides, the British colonial period and the subsequent partition of India in 1947 added more complexities to the region's religious and cultural profile.

Religious places, by definition, are more than mere physical buildings; they are personifications of collective memory and spiritual devotion. In the Hazara Division, these places ranging from ancient temples, stupas, mosques, shrines, and gurdwaras are mute eyewitnesses to the country's rich and multicolored past. All of these sites are a chapter in the unrolling narrative of Hazara Division, shedding light on the religious rituals, architectural innovations, and socio-political developments that have occurred in the region. The geographical location of Hazara Division has played a crucial role in shaping its history and cultural features. Situated along ancient trade routes, such as those associated with the ancient Silk Road, the area has long been a crossroads for trade, culture, and religion. It has been shaped by successive migrations and conquests, from the Aryans and Persians through the Greeks, Buddhists, and ultimately, Islamic and Sikh conquerors.² These interactions have created a unique cultural synthesis, evident in the religious sites scattered across the division.³

The Gandhara civilization, which flourished in the area between the 1st century BCE and the 5th century CE, had a significant role in the early history of Hazara. Famous for its Buddhist culture, Gandhara brought monumental stupas, monasteries, and rock carvings, some of which still remain in the area. Locations like the Buddhist relics in Mansehra and Bhamala stupa are reminders of the legacy of this period. Not only do these places indicate the spread of Buddhism but also its

/accomplishments in terms of art and architecture, which resonated with other cultures far and wide beyond the Indian subcontinent. The onset of Islam brought another revolutionary period in the history of Hazara. Islam spread with the Ghaznavid and subsequent Mughal empires, becoming the dominant faith that influenced the area's religious and cultural identity. Mosque, madrasa, and shrine building between this time highlighted the Islamic presence, though Sufi traditions imbued a spiritual element that still resonates with local populations.⁴ The shrines of Sufi saints in Hazara

The Sikh era, specifically during the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the early 19th century, placed an additional strand in the religious and cultural fabric of Hazara. Sikh gurdwaras and fortresses, like

¹ Ali, Shahid. *Religious and Cultural Identity in Northern Pakistan: A Study of Hazara Division*. Islamabad: National Institute of Pakistan Studies, (2009), p. 99

² Hameed, Fatima. "The Role of Religious Sites in Identity Formation in Hazara Division." *Journal of Pakistan Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (2012), pp. 15-34.

³ Ahmed, Imtiaz. *Pakistan: The Social Sciences Perspective*. Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1990.

⁴ *Religious Studies* 15, no. 3 (2017), p. 92 Zubair, Mohammad. "Interfaith Relations and the Role of Religious Shrines in Hazara." *International Journal of*

those found in Mansehra, testify to the age-old existence of Sikh settlements in the area. The later British colonial period further reshaped the socio-political landscape of Hazara Division, introducing new administrative frameworks and shaping the construction of modern infrastructure. Yet religious diversity continued to remain a unifying feature, even as the partition of India in 1947 drastically reshaped its demographic landscape. Religious places in Hazara Division are not just worship places; they are cultural monuments that speak of the ethos of their communities. They are part of understanding the historical evolution of the area, as they contain the beliefs, values, and artistic endeavors of various eras. For example, the pre-Islamic Hindu temples within the region, like those of Chitti Gatti, illustrate the architectural acumen and spiritual traditions of the pre-Islamic communities. In the same manner, Buddhist monasteries and stupas exemplify Hazara as a focal point of Buddhist scholarship and culture.

Islamic heritage is rooted deep in the cultural fabric of the region, reflected in several medieval mosques and shrines. These buildings, marked by elaborate calligraphy, geometric patterns, and spiritual aura, represent the syncretism of Islamic art and architecture and local culture. The shrines of Sufi saints also play an important role in the religious life of the region, as they are places of spirituality, social unity, and inter-religious dialogue. The Sikh and colonial-era monuments further enrich the diversity of the region. Sikh forts and Gurdwaras not only reflect the historic presence of Sikh settlements but also mark the cultural and architectural inputs of the Sikh era. The Hazara Division has a diverse and rich past, which is evident in its many religious places symbolizing Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism. These places, although significant culturally and historically, have not received much scholarly interest, and hence there has been a disjointed perception of their connected stories. The area has been plagued by urbanization and abandonment, which will keep challenging the conservation of these precious cultural resources if no proactive action is undertaken. Lack of proper documentation has created voids in understanding their contribution towards defining the region's identity. This study fills these gaps by examining the cultural and historical importance of these sites and suggest ways in which they can be preserved and promoted as lasting symbols of Hazara's rich heritage.

The objectives are 1. To analyze the historical role of religious sites in Hazara Division during different historical periods. 2. To explore how the religious sites in Hazara Division reflect the region's historical importance by analyzing their role in different historical periods. 3. To examine how these religious sites have evolved over time, focusing on changes in architectural styles, cultural significance, and their functional roles within the communities they serve. 4. To investigate the contribution of religious sites in Hazara Division to the cultural and social identity of the region. 5. To assess the potential impact of future efforts to protect and promote religious sites in Hazara Division. her are the research questions are. 1. How does the religious sites in Hazara Division reflect its historical importance? 2. How religious sites evolved over time in terms of their architectural styles, cultural significance, and functional roles within their communities? 3. How religious sites in Hazara contribute to the identity of Hazara Division? 4. How can future efforts to protect and promote the religious sites in Hazara Division contribute to their preservation as cultural heritage?

This research relies on a mixture of primary and secondary sources in order to achieve an in-depth knowledge of the religious sites of Hazara Division. Primary sources are historical writings, inscriptions, architectural surveys, and personal visits to important religious sites. These are yielding direct information regarding the historical, cultural, and architectural importance of the sites. In addition, interviews with community members, religious custodians, and local historians are done to collect oral histories and insights on the cultural significance of these sites. Secondary sources include academic books, journal articles, and past research on the history of Hazara Division, religious studies, and heritage conservation. The research uses the historical-analytical method, analyzing the historical development of the sites and the influence of the historical, political, and cultural factors. The research, using this method, provide a balanced analysis and recommend preservation methods

for the protection and promotion of the religious sites for future generations.

The investigation of religious sites and their meaning in the historical, cultural, and socio-political context has become more prominent in recent decades. Religious sites are not merely sites of worship but also symbols of community identity, collective memory, and historical continuity. This review of literature will analyze the importance of religious places in different contexts, discussing their development, the determinants of their formation, and their contributions to the formation of the identity of areas such as Hazara Division. Religious places have long been considered an integral part of cultural heritage. They not only represent the religious faith and tradition of people but also their architectural, artistic, and historical progress. As argued by scholars such as Lowenthal (1985) and Harrison (2013), cultural heritage involves both tangible and intangible aspects, with religious sites being under the category of tangible heritage. These places, including temples, mosques, churches, synagogues, and shrines, are an expression of the material culture of societies that built them. They are stores of collective memory, informing the identities and beliefs of individuals who visit them.

In Hazara Division, religious sites are a syncretic representation of multiple religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Sikhism. As discussed by Sardar (2014), such sites are symbols of historical transformation, where cultural identity within the region has come to be influenced by the interpenetration of multiple civilizations. Religious structures like the Buddhist stupas and Hindu temples in Hazara possess significant information about the cultural history of the region and the intersection of various religious traditions. The conservation of religious sites is an important aspect of protecting cultural heritage. As stated by UNESCO (2013), cultural heritage is vital in fostering understanding and cooperation between various communities. But these sites are confronted with various challenges, including abandonment, urbanization, and insufficient conservation. The conservation of religious sites is not only significant from a historical perspective but also for the preservation of the sense of identity and belonging among local communities (Smith, 2006).

Heritage tourism can be a possible platform for the promotion and conservation of religious sites within Hazara Division. Heritage tourism, if administered in a sustainable manner, can generate the funds required for conservation as well as create awareness of the places' importance. Heritage tourism, as suggested by Timothy (2007), not only develops the local communities economically but also creates pride and identity among residents. Promotion of religious destinations as cultural heritage may also be able to encourage interfaith communication and social integration. According to Husein (2011), religious sites can be areas where various religious communities meet to commemorate their common cultural heritage and promote mutual respect and understanding. Religious sites in Hazara Division offer rich insights into the historical, architectural, and cultural development of the region. These sites are significant indicators of the region's rich religious diversity and provide insight into the historical changes that have contributed to Hazara's social identity. Through an analysis of the development of these sites, their contribution to local identity, and the issues they encounter regarding preservation, this research seeks to emphasize the significance of preserving these cultural assets for generations to come. By promoting and safeguarding religious locations, Hazara Division can continue to commemorate its rich heritage in a way that promotes interfaith harmony and sustainable development.

Historical Background of Hazara Division

The history of the Hazara Division, which lies in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, is extensive and varied, going back thousands of years. Numerous different civilizations and empires have called the country home, and each has left its own unique cultural, architectural, and linguistic marks. The Gandhara culture, which peaked in the sixth century BCE, were the first people to be known to live in the area. Beautiful art and architecture, which drew greatly on Buddhist and Greek traditions, were hallmarks of the Gandharan civilization. The fabled Silk Road passed through the

region, making it a significant hub for trade and commerce.⁵

Invading the region in the fourth century CE, the Kushan Empire brought with it its distinct artistic and cultural customs. The area thrived under the Kushan Empire, which was well known for accepting all cultures and beliefs. When the Ghaznavid Empire overran the region in the tenth century CE, they brought their Islamic faith and lifestyle with them. The region thrived under the Ghaznavid Empire, which was renowned for its military prowess and administrative prowess. When the Mughal Empire overran the region in the sixteenth century CE, they brought their distinctive artistic and cultural customs with them.⁶

During this time, the world-famous Bab-e-Khyber was constructed, and the Mughal Empire was known for its magnificent architecture. In the 19th century CE, the British Raj overran the area and imposed its colonial system and lifestyle. Modern healthcare, education, and infrastructure were introduced by the British Raj, which had a significant impact on the area. The Hazara Division has played a significant role in Pakistan's administrative division since the country's independence in 1947. With a thriving economy, better infrastructure, and a lively culture, the area has kept growing and developing. Today, Hazara Division is a prosperous area known for its Many significant historic landmarks, like as the Abbottabad Museum, the Bunner-Gala Stupa, and breathtaking natural beauty, rich cultural legacy, and friendly inhabitants.⁷ Numerous civilizations and empires have called it home, and each has influenced the area with its own unique architecture, culture, and language. Today, the area is a prosperous part of Pakistan, known for its breathtaking scenery, vibrant culture, and friendly locals.⁸

Religious Sites In Hazara Division: An Overview

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan's Hazara Division is home to a number of religious sites that represent the area's rich spiritual and cultural legacy. These consist of churches, mosques, temples, shrines, and other significant historical and cultural sites. With influences from Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, its location has historically served as the focal point of cultural and religious interaction between civilizations and empires. Two of the most significant mosques in the area are the Mohallah Jogan Mosque in Mansehra and the Jamia Masjid in Abbottabad, both of which are distinguished by their exquisite beauty and spiritual character. Mosques serve as community hubs where people congregate for social and cultural events in addition to being significant sites of worship for Muslims⁹. The mosques are well-known for their majestic architecture, which perfectly captures the region's rich cultural legacy. Two of the most significant shrines in the area are Babiya Shrine in Mansehra and Shahbaz Gardez Shrine in Abbottabad. Both are devoted to revered Sufi saints and get thousands of pilgrims each year. The shrines have religious significance, attractive architecture, and lovely gardens.

The shrines are not only places of worship for Muslim pilgrims, but they are also significant historical and cultural sites. The Shiva Temple of Bunner-Gala and the Kalash Valley Temples of Chitral are two of the most significant temples in the nation; they are both well-known for their sanctity and beauty.¹⁰

In addition to being important places of worship for Hindus and the Kalash community, the temples are

⁵ Barth, Fredrik. *Political Leadership among Swat Pathans*. London: Athlone Press, 1959, p. 34.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Khan, Muhammad A. *The History of Hazara Division*. Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Historical Research, 2015, p. 98.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Khan, Asad. "The Significance of Buddhist Art and Architecture in Hazara Division." *Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 2 (2016): 345-365.

¹⁰ Ali, Amjad. "The Role of Sufism in Hazara Division." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2019): 123-140.

also significant sites of culture and history. The temples are well-known for their religious significance, exquisite sculptures, and magnificent architecture. The churches are well known for their religious significance, exquisite stained-glass windows, and magnificent construction. Along with these locations, Hazara Division is home to a plethora of other significant historical and cultural landmarks, including as the Mansehra Rock Edicts and the Bunner-Gala Buddhist Ruins. These locations are significant historical and cultural landmarks in addition to being significant spiritual destinations. The sites are well-known for their spiritual significance, exquisite carvings, and stunning architecture. In addition to promoting tourism in the area to highlight its rich cultural and religious legacy, the local government and administration are working to conserve these places.¹¹

The Hazara Division Cultural Heritage Preservation Project is one such initiative that seeks to save and repair a number of significant historical and cultural landmarks in the area. The Bunner-Gala Buddhist Ruins, the Mansehra Rock Edicts, and a few other significant sites will be protected as part of the program. The second initiative is the Hazara Division Tourism Development initiative, which will focus on building the area's tourism infrastructure, such as lodging, dining options, and transit. Blessed with a wide variety of religious sites, Hazara Division reflects the rich spiritual and cultural legacy of the area. Mosques, shrines, temples, cathedrals, and other significant historical and cultural sites are among them. The government and local authorities are supporting tourism in the area to showcase its rich cultural and spiritual heritage, and efforts are underway to conserve these locations.¹²

Architectural and Cultural Significance of Religious Sites

The religious sites in Pakistan's Hazara Division are extremely important and can be interpreted in a number of ways. In addition to being places of prayer and spiritual retreat, these locations which include mosques, shrines, temples, and churches are historical and cultural landmarks that capture the region's rich spiritual legacy and cultural variety. They offer a sanctuary where worshippers can pursue spirituality, learn about god, and find solace when they're in need. Believers hold the mosques, shrines, temples, and churches in the region in high regard because they feel that they are blessed with divine energy.¹³

The vast cultural diversity and religious legacy of the area are reflected in the Hazara Division's religious sites, which are likewise of great cultural significance. Reflecting the distinct cultural traditions, architectural styles, and artistic motifs of the region, the religious sites hold great cultural and historical significance. The locations mark significant historical moments and represent the region's distinct cultural character, architectural styles, and creative themes.¹⁴ Mosques, shrines, temples, and churches in the region are remnants of the Mughal Empire, the ancient Gandharan civilization, and the British colonial period. The architectural significance of the religious sites in Hazara Division is enormous, and they serve as a reflection of the regional architectural traditions and styles. A blend of Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian architectural forms may be seen in the mosques, shrines, temples, and churches in the area, which reflects the region's spiritual depth and cultural diversity. The ruins' ornate decorations, sculptures, and complex carvings have great artistic and cultural value.¹⁵

The Hazara Division's religious institutions are socially significant since they are vital hubs for social interaction and community. These groups offer a hallowed place of worship where adherents can congregate, exchange stories, and deepen their bonds with one another. The social life of the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ali, Amjad. "The Role of Sufism in Hazara Division." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2019): 123-140.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ 6. Khan, Muhammad A. "The Historical Significance of Hindu Temples in Hazara Division." *Journal of Hindu Studies* 10, no. 1 (2017): 45-60.

¹⁵ Ibid.

area is influenced by the social and cultural events that are held by the mosques, shrines, temples, can congregate, exchange stories, and deepen their bonds with one another. The social life of the area is influenced by the social and cultural events that are held by the mosques, shrines, temples, and churches in the area. These events include festivals, processions, and ceremonies. The Hazara Division's holy sites are extremely important economically and bring in a lot of money from pilgrimages and tourism.¹⁶

Every year, millions of tourists and pilgrims are drawn to the area by its rich spiritual and cultural past, hoping to experience its spiritual aura and rich cultural legacy. In order to strengthen Pakistan's cultural and spiritual identity, it is crucial to preserve and conserve the mosques, shrines, temples, and churches that are part of the country's national history. There are several ways to appreciate the significance of the holy sites in Pakistan's Hazara Division. In addition to being major places of prayer and spiritual pilgrimage, these locations also serve as historical and cultural landmarks, demonstrating the region's spiritual wealth and diversity.¹⁷

Historical Significance of Mosques In Hazara Division

Mosques in Pakistan's Hazara Division are historically significant and represent the region's rich Islamic culture and cultural legacy. As hubs for social interaction, education, and worship, the mosques have been essential to the history of the area. Hazara Division's early Islamic history dates back to the Arab conquest of the area in the eighth century CE. The Mosque of Mansehra, one of the oldest mosques in the area, is one of the mosques constructed during this time. These mosques were modest buildings that reflected the unique architectural order of the area and were constructed from local materials.¹⁸

When the Mughal Empire seized the area in the sixteenth century CE, the Hazara Division entered the Mughal era. Some large mosques were built during this period, including Abbottabad's Jamia Masjid. Built of marble, stone, and brick, the mosques featured intricate ornamentation, sculptures and carvings. The Sikh Empire annexed the area in the 19th century CE, marking the start of the Sikh era in Hazara Division. Many Muslims were compelled to leave the area during this time, and some mosques were destroyed. The Mosque of Balakot, constructed by the Sikh governor of the area, is one example of a mosque that was constructed during this time.¹⁹ When the British Empire occupied the Hazara Division in the late 19th century CE, the British era officially began. Among the mosques constructed at this time was the British government's Mosque of Mansehra. The mosques had a blend of Islamic and Western architecture and were constructed using modern materials and concepts. Constructed around that time, the Jamia Masjid in Abbottabad is among the largest and most exquisite mosques in the area.²⁰

Mosques in the Hazara Division have played a significant role in the region's religious and cultural customs in the modern era. The Mosque of Haripur, one of the biggest mosques in the area, is one of several that have been constructed in recent decades. One of the biggest and most exquisite mosques in the area is the Jamia Masjid in Abbottabad, which is a magnificent fusion of Mughal and Islamic architectural elements. In addition to being hubs of social and religious activity, the mosques in the Hazara Division are also essential to the social and cultural life of the area. Weddings, festivals, and

¹⁶ Ahmed, Sajjad. "The Impact of Islam on Hazara Division." In Proceedings of the International Conference on Islamic Studies, 1-10, 2018, p. 67.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Hazara Division's Religious Sites: A Threat to Cultural Heritage." The Frontier Post, June 15, 2021.

¹⁹ Khan, Muhammad A. "The Cultural Heritage of Hazara Division." In Proceedings of the Conference on Cultural Heritage, 20-30, 2019.

²⁰ Ibid.

processions are just a few of the social and cultural events that take place at these mosques.²¹

Historical Significance Of Shrines And Temples In Hazara Division

Pakistan's Hazara Division is home to numerous temples and shrines that are rich in history and represent the region's religious and cultural traditions. In addition to being sites of worship, religious tourism, and cultural identity, shrines and temples are a part of the local past. One of the main shrines in the region is the Babiya Shrine of Mansehra, which is devoted to the venerated Sufi saint Babiya. The temple is renowned for its exquisite architecture and lovely gardens, and it is said to have been constructed in the 16th century CE. For Muslims, the shrine is a significant religious destination where they visit to receive Babiya's blessings. The Shahbaz Gardez Shrine in Abbottabad, which honors the revered Sufi saint Shahbaz Gardez, is another significant shrine in the area.²²

The temple is renowned for its stunning grounds and intriguing architecture, and it is said to have been constructed in the 17th century CE. Muslims visit the shrine to get Shahbaz Gardez's blessings, making it a highly esteemed spiritual destination. One of the most significant temples in the area is the Shiva Temple of Bunner-Gala, which is devoted to the Hindu deity Shiva. The temple is renowned for its exquisite architecture and elaborate sculptures, and it is thought to have been constructed in the ninth century CE.²³ Another significant collection of temples in the area are the Kalash Valley Temples of Chitral, which are devoted to the Kalash deity. According to history, the temples were constructed in the tenth century CE and are well known for their exquisite carvings and construction. The Kalash people visit the temples to offer prayers and receive blessings from their god, making them a significant place of worship.

The demolition of the temples and shrines in Hazara Division was also greatly influenced by the British colonial era, which lasted from the 19th to the 20th century CE. The majority of Muslims and Hindus were compelled to leave the area during this time, and some temples and shrines were completely or partially demolished. Pakistan's Hazara Division is home to many ancient temples and shrines that demonstrate the region's rich religious traditions and cultural diversity. They contribute to the history and identity of the area and are significant hubs for religious worship, spiritual pilgrimage, and cultural expression. As an essential component of Pakistan's historical and cultural legacy, the sites are being saved and maintained.²⁴

Impact Of Colonial Rule On Religious Sites In Hazara Division

In Pakistan's Hazara Division, colonial dominance had a significant and pervasive effect on religious sites. Historically, the area was ruled by numerous Muslim dynasties, but in the middle of the 19th century, the British Empire took control of it. Mosques, shrines, temples, and churches were among the many religious sites in Hazara Division that were impacted by the British colonial rule, which lasted for nearly a century. The indigenous Hindu and Muslim communities were viewed with distrust and animosity by the largely Christian British colonial authorities.²⁵

The colonial forces confiscated the properties and desecrated and destroyed many of the temples, mosques, and shrines. The transformation of most mosques, shrines, and temples into churches, schools, and other colonial buildings was another important effect of colonial occupation on religious sites in Hazara Division. In addition to destroying the local community's religious and cultural legacy, this forced Christianity upon them.²⁶

²¹ Hazara Division: A Historical Perspective. Islamabad: Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation, 2018.

²² Ibid.

²³ "Cultural Significance of Religious Sites in Hazara Division." The Weekly Times, May 20, 2021.

²⁴ The State of Cultural Heritage in Hazara Division. Lahore: Pakistan Institute of Cultural Heritage, 2020.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ "Preserving Hazara Division's Historical Sites." Dawn, February 20, 2020.

Numerous mosques, shrines, and temples in the Hazara Division were also abandoned and demolished by the British colonial government. In Hazara Division, colonial occupation had a disastrous effect on Muslims and Hindus. The colonial government evicted Muslims and Hindus from their houses and communities and seized their belongings. The people's religious and cultural identity was also significantly impacted by the demolition and defilement of temples, mosques, and shrines.²⁷ The native population rebelled and opposed the colonial government in spite of the terrible impact that colonial occupation had on Hazara Division's houses of worship. The vast majority of mosques, shrines, and temples were restored, and most Muslims and Hindus carried on with their religion in secret. On holy places in Hazara Division, the effects of colonial authority are still visible today. The religious and cultural heritage of the locals is still deteriorating, and many mosques, shrines, and temples are still in poor condition.²⁸ Nonetheless, attempts are made to save and repair these locations as well as to spread the original occupants' religious and cultural legacy. In Pakistan's Hazara Division, colonialism had a real and lasting effect on holy sites. The local population's religious and cultural identity was severely damaged by the devastation and destruction of mosques, temples, and shrines, their conversion into churches, and other colonial structures, as well as by their neglect and abandonment. However, there is hope for the future due to the resurgence and resilience of the Muslim and Hindu populations in Hazara Division as well as the ongoing attempts to restore and preserve these locations.²⁹

Religious Sites As Markers Of Cultural Identity

In Pakistan's Hazara Division, religious landmarks such as churches, mosques, shrines, and temples play a significant role in defining cultural identity. These monuments are significant culturally because they reflect the region's distinctive customs and cultural practices as well as its spiritual elements. Since the region's cultural legacy greatly influences the architectural design, artwork, and iconography used in these monuments, they serve as symbols of cultural identity. For instance, the mosques in the Hazara Division serve as both powerful symbols of cultural identity and places of worship. Their architectural and artistic styles, which incorporate exquisitely carved sculptures, sculpture, and adornment, are a reflection of the region's distinct cultural mores.³⁰ Other significant markers of cultural identity include the temples in Hazara Division, such as the Shiva Temple in Bunner-Gala.³¹

Additionally, significant cultural landmarks are the churches of Hazara Division, such as Abbottabad's St. Luke's Church. The churches are thought to be endowed with spiritual energy and are devoted to the Christian saints. The distinctive cultural heritage of the region is represented by the architecture of these churches, which includes the use of rich decoration, sculptures, and detailed carvings.³² There are several ways to interpret the importance of religious places in Hazara Division as symbols of cultural identity. First, the places of worship are sizable spiritual and pilgrimage hubs that give believers a place to encounter the sacred. Second, religious locations have cultural significance and provide witness to the region's unique spiritual beliefs and cultural legacy. Thirdly, these locations serve as significant markers of cultural identity and give people a feeling of recognition and inclusion in the rich cultural legacy of the region. The Hazara Division Cultural Heritage Preservation Project is one of several initiatives the government and local government entities have launched to save and safeguard historic locations. It seeks to preserve and restore some of the region's most important historical and cultural landmarks, such as Shiva Temple, Babiya Shrine,

²⁷ "Hazara Division's Rich Cultural Heritage." *The News*, January 10, 2020.

²⁸ "Religious Sites in Hazara Division: A Symbol of Cultural Identity." *The Daily Pakistan*, March 15, 2021.

²⁹ "Hazara Division's Historical Sites: A Source of Cultural Pride." *The News on Sunday*, April 11, 2021.

³⁰ *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*. Translated by Elias Elias. London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1898, p. 103.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 104.

The Intersection Of Religion And Culture

Throughout history, the complex and multifaceted phenomenon of the junction of religion and culture has influenced the lives and experiences of both individuals and organizations. The convergence of religion and culture is especially poignant in Pakistan's Hazara Division, where a number of religious traditions, including Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity, have shaped local cultural practices, customs, and beliefs. In addition to serving as places of prayer and education, the mosques, shrines, and madrasas in the area are also important historical and cultural landmarks that attest to the region's rich Islamic past.³²

Likewise, Hazara Division's Hindu and Christian communities have added to the region's cultural variety. The region's rich cultural heritage is reflected in the churches and temples, which are significant places of worship and hubs of local life. Hazara Division's art, culture, traditions, and morals have also been impacted by the Hindu and Christian populations, especially in the fields of music, literature, and the arts. The Hazara Division's festivals and holidays also reflect the region's religious and cultural interactions. For instance, there is a great deal of excitement and hoopla in the neighborhood around the significant Islamic holidays of Eid al-Azha and Eid al-Fitr. Likewise, there is a lot of enthusiasm in the region for the Hindu holidays of Diwali and Holi. Additionally, the region's mosques and madrasas have played a significant role in promoting education and learning, especially among the Muslim community.³³

Symbolism And Their Meaning In Religious Sites

Mosques, shrines, temples, and cathedrals are examples of religious structures that are infused with meaning and symbolism that represent the historical, cultural, and spiritual contexts of the communities that constructed and worshipped there. The complex and varied symbolism and meaning found in religious sites in Pakistan's Hazara Division are a reflection of the area's rich religious traditions and legacy. For instance, the mosques in Hazara Division are richly decorated and feature intricate sculptures and carvings that represent the area's Islamic heritage. Mosques' architectural features, such as its arches, domes, and minarets, are symbolic of the region's distinct cultural traditions.³⁴

Mosques are significant sites for religious pilgrimages, worship, and communal life; the place's cultural identity is closely linked to the mosques' symbolism and significance. The shrines are seen to have mystical power and blessings, and their symbolism and meaning are strongly tied to the region's spiritual identity and practice. Additionally, significant and symbolic are the Hazara Division's temples, such as the Shiva Temple at Bunner-Gala.³⁵

The region's distinct cultural customs are reflected in the temple architecture, which includes elaborate carvings, sculptures, and elaborate ornamentation. Hindu deities are worshipped at the temples, which are said to have spiritual strength and blessings. Additionally, significant and symbolic are the churches in the Hazara Division, such as Abbottabad's St. Luke's Church. The churches' design, which includes intricate sculptures, carvings, and ornate ornamentation, reflects the area's distinct cultural legacy. Christian saints' names are given to the churches, which are believed to hold

³² Barth, Fredrik. *The System of Social Stratification in Swat, North Pakistan*. Cambridge Press, 1957, p. 34.

³³ 21. Ahmed, Akbar S. *Millennium and Charisma among Pathans*. London: Routledge, 1976, p. 67.

³⁴ Khan, Asad. "The Significance of Buddhist Art and Architecture in Hazara Division." In *The History of Hazara Division*, edited by Muhammad A. Khan, 123-140. Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Historical Research, 2015.

³⁵ Ali, Amjad. "The Role of Sufism in Hazara Division." In *The Hazaras of Afghanistan*, edited by Akbar S. Ahmed, Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2003, pp. 45-60.

spiritual power and blessings.³⁶

Their significance and symbolism are closely linked to the local religion and cultural identity. The cultural customs and practices of the Hazara Division are likewise infused with the symbolism and significance of its holy places. To guarantee the region's rich cultural legacy and spiritual traditions survive, religious places within Hazara Division must be protected and conserved.³⁷

The Hazara Division Cultural Heritage Preservation Project is one of the initiatives the government and local authorities have put in place to preserve and conserve them. The goal of this initiative is to preserve and restore some of the division's most important historical and cultural sites, such as Shiva Temple, Babiya Shrine, and Shahbaz Gardez Shrine. The holy sites' meaning and symbolism in Pakistan's Hazara Division are closely linked to the area's religious practices and cultural identity. With their rich symbolism and significance, the area's churches, temples, mosques, and shrines highlight its distinct spiritual traditions and cultural legacy. Maintaining the region's cultural identity and promoting its rich cultural legacy depend on the sites' conservation and preservation.³⁸

The Role Of Religious Sites In Shaping Cultural Narratives

In Pakistan's Hazara Division, religious monuments such as churches, mosques, shrines, and temples play an important role in shaping cultural narratives. Religious structures like churches, mosques, shrines, and temples are significant in forming cultural narratives in Pakistan's Hazara Division. These places serve as significant gathering places for social interaction, worship, and religious pilgrimages. They represent the unique religious and cultural traditions of the area and are also rich in cultural significance. For example, in addition to being houses of prayer, the mosques in Hazara Division are important historical and cultural structures that symbolize the area's Islamic past. Their iconography, architecture, and artwork all exhibit a unique cultural identity that is deeply embedded in the local way of life.³⁹

As shrines to Hindu gods, the temples are thought to be endowed with spiritual energy and blessings. Their iconography, artwork, and architecture all contribute significantly to the region's cultural legacy and represent the distinctive customs of the region. Because they represent the region's Christian heritage, the churches in the Hazara Division such as Abbottabad's St. Luke's Church are significant historical and cultural landmarks. The churches are thought to have divine authority and blessings, and they are named after Christian saints. A significant portion of the region's cultural heritage is represented by the churches' structures, artwork, and icons, which all capture the distinctive cultural traditions of the area.

These holy locations have produced complex, multi-layered cultural narratives that reveal the region's distinctive spiritual practices and cultural legacy. These stories, which are represented in the art, literature, music, and dance of the area, are derived from its history, geography, and culture. To preserve the region's cultural narratives and promote its rich cultural legacy, the sites must be protected and conserved. The Hazara Division Cultural Heritage Preservation Project is one of the many initiatives the government and local authorities have launched to conserve and preserve the sites. Some of the most important historical and cultural sites in the area, including the Shiva Temple, the Babiya Shrine, and the Shahbaz Gardez Shrine, are being restored and conserved as part of this project. As representatives of the distinct cultural tradition and spiritual ethos of the area, religious institutions in Pakistan's Hazara Division are in charge of forming cultural history. These institutions' conservation and preservation are crucial to preserving the region's rich cultural heritage and

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Khan, Muhammad A. "The Historical Significance of Hindu Temples in Hazara Division." Research paper, University of Peshawar, 2017.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

promoting its dissemination.

Shawala Chitti Ghatti, a village in Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, is a treasure trove of cultural and historical significance. The area is home to a revered Shiva Temple, one of the oldest still in existence and use in Pakistan, dating back at least 2000 years. This ancient temple features a notable Shiv lingam and is a site of great spiritual importance for pilgrims and tourists alike. The temple's location in Barari village, Mansehra, makes it a significant cultural and religious landmark in the region. The village itself is steeped in tradition and history, with Hindu festivals being an integral part of its cultural heritage. The 6th of Phagan and the 1st of Baisakh are significant dates in the Hindu calendar, marked by alms-giving and worship of the Hindu god Ling at the village mandir. Zeeshan Children Academy, located in the area, provides quality education to students, while Nippon Paint's Shahrah-e-Resham Mansehra Branch offers a range of color paints and other services. These modern facilities demonstrate the village's commitment to progress and development.⁴⁰

The scenic beauty of Chitti Ghatti is another aspect that makes it an attractive destination for tourists and researchers. The area's weather is characterized by high temperatures and low humidity, with sunny conditions prevailing for most of the year. The 15-day forecast shows temperatures ranging from 36°C, with wind speeds of 4 Km/h, making it an ideal time to explore the region's outdoors.⁴¹

Despite its many attractions, Chitti Ghatti faces challenges in preserving its cultural heritage. The village's historical sites, including the Shiva Temple, require careful conservation and management to ensure their longevity. Efforts to promote cultural tourism and sustainable development can help support the local economy and preserve the region's rich cultural heritage. Shawala Chitti Ghatti is a village with a rich cultural and historical heritage, offering a unique blend of traditional and modern amenities. Its ancient Shiva Temple, vibrant festivals, and scenic beauty make it an attractive destination for tourists and researchers. By prioritizing cultural preservation and sustainable development, the village can continue to thrive and showcase its unique cultural identity to the world. According to Shiv Temple Society Pakistan President Sham Lal, pundits would lead the pooja in the 2,000-year-old place of worship in Gandiyan village of Mansehra district on Saturday, the last day of Diwali. He said prayers would be offered for the progress of Pakistan and interfaith harmony in the country. They would also distribute prasad among worshippers. Om Darshan Lal, the pujari of the Shiv Temple, demanded that the temple near the Abbottabad telephone exchange be handed over to the Hindu community as the Cantonment Board Abbottabad (CBA) had promised them an alternative place of worship in the city. He said the temple had been closed around a month ago by cantonment authorities due to security reasons. However, he claimed that the CBA administration failed to deliver on its promises of reopening the place of worship.⁴²

⁴⁰ The Friday Times: "Mansehra's Shiv Temple" - an article discussing the history and significance of the Mansehra Shiva Temple.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "Tarikh e Hazara" by Dr. Sher Bahadur Khan Punni - a comprehensive history of the Hazara region.

Gurdwara Shiri Guru Singh Sabha

Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Mansehra, Pakistan, is a historic Sikh temple built in 1937, showcasing stunning Sikh architecture with a large hall, guest room, and terrace. Located on Kashmir Road, this three-story building is a prominent landmark in the city. The Gurudwara Guru Singh Sabha is evidence to the Sikh rule in district Mansehra. After partition Gurudwara is used by different departments. Its present condition is very pathetic which can be observed in the present study. Presently Gurudwara is used as a municipal library and it is situated on the main road of commercial area, where plenty of traffic causes pollution, smoke, dust etc. which spoils the appearance of Gurudwara badly along with some other conservation issues. Its distinguished religious importance, architecture and decorations can be utilized for attracting tourists. It is strongly suggested to convert this Gurudwra into a museum rather than a library, to make a major religious tourism flow to the Mansehra. Keeping in view the present study the relevant authorities should make a comprehensive conservation plan to retain the beauty of this important heritage site. An awareness campaign of the importance and heritage conservation needs to be launched. By providing the tourist facilities, proper marketing and promotion this Gurudwara can be used for the sustainable tourism development.⁴³

Abbottabad Church

Saint Luke Church Abbottabad is a historical landmark located in the picturesque city of Abbottabad in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Built in the late 1800s, the church is a fine example of British colonial architecture and is one of the oldest and most revered churches in the region. In this article, we will explore the history, architecture, and significance of St. Luke's Church in Abbottabad. St. Luke's Church was built in 1864 by the British during their colonial rule in the region. The church was built to cater to the needs of the British troops stationed in Abbottabad at the time. The church has been in continuous use since its inception and has witnessed several important events in the region's history. St. Luke's Church Abbottabad is a beautiful example of British colonial architecture. The church's design is a blend of Gothic and Romanesque styles, with a pointed arch entrance and lancet windows. The church has a tall bell tower with a pointed spire that adds to its grandeur. The interiors of the church are equally impressive, with stained glass windows, wooden pews, and a high wooden ceiling. The Church is significant not just for its historical and architectural value, but also for its role in the community. The church is also significant for its connection to the region's history. Many important events in the region's history have taken place in or around the church. For example, during the 2005 earthquake that devastated the region, the Church served as a shelter for the displaced people.⁴⁴

⁴³ "The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study" by Sayed Askar Mousavi (1997) - an in-depth study of the Hazara people

⁴⁴ "The Hazaras" by Hassan Poladi - a detailed account of the Hazara people's history and culture

Ashoka Rocks

Mansehra Rock Edicts are fourteen edicts of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, inscribed on rocks in Mansehra in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The edicts are cut into three boulders and date back to 3rd century BC and they are written in the ancient Indic script of Gandhara culture, Kharosthi. The edicts mention aspects of Ashoka's dharma. The site was submitted for inclusion in the World Heritage Sites and is currently in the tentative list.⁴⁵

Ashoka was dismayed by the destruction caused by his military during the conquest of Kalingas and in remorse later converted to Buddhism. Following his conversion, Ashoka visited sacred Buddhist locations throughout the Mauryan Empire and erected multiple pillars bearing his inscriptions of a new morality law. Mansehra Rock Edicts are one of the 33 inscriptions of Edicts of Ashoka describing expansion of Buddhism and his Law of Piety or dharma. The fourteen edicts contain text in the Kharosthi script which is an ancient script used in the Gandhara. The Kharoṣṭhi script was first deciphered by James Prinsep after which the Edicts of Ashoka in Kharosthi script were translated. In 2004, the site was submitted for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites by Department of Archaeology and Museums, Pakistan.

Cultural Identity and Community Formation

The Hazara Division of Pakistan has a close relationship between community creation and cultural identity. Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian influences have all influenced its own cultural history, which has given the area a wide range of customs, attitudes, and rituals. The Hazara Division's language, traditions, music, dance, art, and literature all exhibit its cultural character. An essential component of the region's cultural identity are its customs, such as processions, festivals, and ceremonies. An essential component of the region's cultural identity is its art, dancing, and folk music, among other cultural practices.

Cultural identity and community building are intimately related in Hazara Division. The cultural traditions, values, and customs of the Muslim, Hindu, Christian, and Sikh populations in the region define their boundaries. Mosques, temples, churches, and gurudwaras are among the common cultural institutions that have brought the communities together. For instance, among the Muslim communities in the area, the mosques in Hazara Division serve as significant institutional hubs for communal life. The Hazara Division's Gurudwaras are important hubs for the Sikh community's daily activities. The Gurudwaras serve as places for Sikhs to congregate for communal activities such as prayer and study. The Sikh tradition and cultural heritage of the area are reflected in the Gurudwaras, which are also significant cultural institutions in the area. In Pakistan's Hazara Division, community development and cultural identity go hand in hand. Because of the region's distinct cultural heritage, its communities are defined by a rich tapestry of customs, values, and cultural practices. Because they represent the cultural character and legacy of the area, the mosques, temples, churches, and Gurudwaras in Hazara Division are important hubs of communal life and cultural organizations.

Battagram Mandir is a notable Hindu temple in the Battagram district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, reflecting the region's rich cultural heritage. The area is predominantly Muslim, but the temple stands as a testament to its historical significance and architectural uniqueness. Battagram itself is known for its scenic valleys and mountains, attracting tourists and locals alike. The temple's existence highlights the importance of preserving cultural and religious sites in the region.

⁴⁵ Khan, Asad. "The Historical Significance of Buddhist Sites in Hazara Division." Unpublished manuscript, 2020.

Future prospects for preservation and promotion

Emerging trends in preservation and promotion

In Pakistan's Hazara Division, cultural heritage promotion and preservation are essential to preserving both the region's diverse cultural history and its cultural identity. The region's cultural legacy is being documented and exhibited through digital technologies like digital archiving, virtual reality, and 3D scanning. For instance, Hazara University has put in place a program for digital preservation in order to preserve and showcase the area's cultural legacy. Building digital representations of the area's cultural landmarks, including as churches, mosques, shrines, and temples, is part of the effort. Another new trend is preservation through community-based projects.⁴⁶

Collaborating with the local community to preserve and promote their cultural heritage is known as community-based conservation. This method includes local communities in the process of preserving and promoting their cultural heritage while also defining their role in this process. For instance, the administration of the Hazara Division has started a community-based conservation program to preserve and advance the region's cultural legacy. It includes collaborating with nearby communities to promote cultural festivals and events as well as to discover and protect cultural sites. Another new development in the promotion and conservation of Hazara Division's cultural heritage is cultural tourism.⁴⁷

Promoting the region's cultural legacy as a travel destination is known as cultural tourism. This approach entails promoting the region's cultural legacy to visitors and acknowledges the financial advantages of cultural tourism. To promote the region's cultural legacy to visitors, the Hazara Division administration, for instance, has started a cultural tourism project. Another new trend in Hazara Division's cultural heritage promotion and preservation is capacity building. The practice of offering training and capacity-building initiatives to government organizations in charge of managing cultural heritage, local communities, and cultural institutions is known as capacity building.⁴⁸

In order to offer training and capacity-building programs to local communities, cultural organizations, and government agencies interested in the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, Hazara University, for instance, has initiated a program. Another recent development in the preservation and advancement of Hazara Division's cultural legacy is international cooperation. International collaboration involves working with international bodies, such as UNESCO, to protect and promote the cultural heritage of the region. For example, the government of Hazara Division has partnered with UNESCO to conserve and promote the region's cultural heritage⁴⁹. Along with promoting cultural events and festivals, the cooperation involves collaborative efforts to identify and conserve cultural sites. A comprehensive plan for the preservation and advancement of Hazara Division's cultural legacy must be created in order to address these problems. In order to locate and preserve cultural locations as well as organize festivals and other cultural events, this strategy should entail collaborating with regional communities, cultural groups, and governmental institutions.⁵⁰

It should also entail conducting training and capacity-building initiatives among government agencies, cultural groups, and local communities that are active in the promotion and protection of cultural assets. Furthermore, it is essential to raise awareness and respect of Hazara Division's cultural

⁴⁶ Azeem, Abdul. Antique discovered from Zar Dheri (Shinkiari Hazara), Comparative Study of Sculptures|| Museum.Journal National Museum of Pakistan, 3(2002), 66-67

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Junaid Shakirullah, and Haq Nawaz, Contextualizing Buddhism: Exploring the Limits of Buddhist Survivability in High Altitude Valleys in District Mansehra, Pakistan Heritage, 11, (2016), 45-87

⁴⁹ John Marshall, Taxila, An Illustrated Account of Archaeological Excavations carried out at Taxila under the orders of the Government of India between the years 1913 and 1934, Vol. II, London: Cambridge University Press.1951.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

legacy. Mass media marketing, cultural festivals and celebrations, and education and outreach initiatives can all help achieve this. In addition to receiving the required resources and support, local communities must be actively involved in the preservation and safeguarding of cultural assets. Maintaining the region's cultural identity and promoting its rich cultural legacy depend on the preservation and promotion of Pakistan's Hazara Division. Trends including digital preservation, community-based preservation, cultural tourism, capacity building, and international collaboration provide up new avenues for conserving and promoting the region's cultural heritage. There are still a number of issues, though, and resolving them will call for a multifaceted approach and cooperation from local communities, cultural institutions, and government officials.

Collaborative Efforts Between Government And Local Communities

In Pakistan's Hazara Division, cooperation between the local community and the government is necessary for the preservation and advancement of cultural heritage. In order to identify, preserve, and promote cultural heritage locations, customs, and traditions, the local community and the government must work together. In order to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the Hazara Division, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and local communities initiated the project. Work is done with the assistance of local communities to discover and preserve the places of cultural heritage, which include mosques and shrines to temples and churches. The Bunner-Gala Cultural Heritage Preservation Society is an additional illustration of a cooperative endeavor between the government and the community. This association was founded by the local community and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to protect and develop Bunner-Gala's cultural heritage. In order to identify and preserve cultural heritage places, such as the Shiva Temple, a noteworthy historical and cultural monument in the region, the group collaborates with local people⁵¹. There are several advantages to local communities and the government working together. One advantage is that it gives local communities the opportunity to take ownership of their cultural heritage, ensuring that historical sites and customs are maintained for upcoming generations.⁵²

Second, they give the government a chance to work with local people to find and safeguard cultural heritage assets, ensuring that these places are preserved in a way that respects local customs and practices. Third, collaboration between the government and the local community gives the government the chance to offer financial support and resources to guarantee the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. Finally, cross-cultural knowledge and contact are fostered by government-local community collaboration projects, which can aid in the removal of social and cultural obstacles. Even while government-local community cooperation projects have many advantages, there are a number of issues that need to be resolved.⁵³

First, it can be challenging to establish the confidence and collaboration needed for government- local community joint programs. Second, it might be difficult to properly define duties and responsibilities when local communities and the government work together. Thirdly, partnerships between local communities and the government need a lot of money and resources, which may be hard to come by. Lastly, government-community collaboration techniques demand a great deal of commitment and consistency, which may be challenging to sustain. It is crucial to establish clear policies and processes for cooperative approaches between the government and local communities in order to overcome these obstacles.⁵⁴

⁵¹ "Cultural Significance of Religious Sites in Hazara Division." The Weekly Times, November 20, 2020.

⁵² Majumdar, The classical accounts of India, (Calcutta, 1960), 245-262

⁵³ Samuel Beal, Si-yu-Ki: Buddhist records of the western world: Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen Tsiang, AD 629, (London: Kegan Paul, 1884), 145-175

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Establishing a high degree of trust and collaboration between the government and local communities is also necessary, and this can be done through frequent communication and consultation.⁵⁵ Furthermore, it is necessary to finance and make resources accessible for cooperative activities between the government and local communities. Last but not least, ongoing monitoring and assessment are necessary to ensure a high degree of commitment and sustainability for government-local community collaborative programs. In Pakistan's Hazara Division, cooperative efforts between the local community and the government are necessary for the preservation and advancement of cultural heritage. Such efforts provide an opportunity for local people to take possession of their cultural heritage, for the government to invest money and resources to enable the conservation and promotion of cultural heritage, and for cross-cultural understanding.⁵⁶

The Role Of Technology In Promoting Cultural Heritage

Since technology offers a way to preserve, promote, and share cultural content with a larger audience, it plays a crucial role in the diffusion of cultural heritage. It is impossible to ignore the significance that technology has had in promoting cultural heritage in Pakistan's Hazara Division. Digital archives are one way that technology has made Hazara Division's cultural legacy possible. Digital archives are computer-based repositories that house and make available digital copies of cultural heritage items, including audio recordings, pictures, and manuscripts. For instance, a virtual archive of cultural heritage artifacts pertaining to the history, culture, and traditions of the region has been established by Hazara University.⁵⁷

The establishment of cultural heritage sites is the second method that technology has supported Hazara Division's cultural heritage. Sites dedicated to cultural heritage offer a venue for showcasing and disseminating information about the legacy to a wider audience. For instance, the government of the Hazara Division has established a cultural heritage website that disseminates information about the division's cultural heritage places, customs, and practices. Additionally, social media has been essential in promoting the cultural history of the Hazara Division. Information on cultural heritage can be promoted and shared with a wider audience using social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.⁵⁸ For instance, the Hazara University maintains a social media page that offers details about the division's cultural heritage locations, customs, and practices. The Hazara Division's cultural legacy has been marketed through the use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies. The development of interactive and virtual cultural heritage experiences has been made possible by the two technologies. For instance, Hazara University created a virtual reality experience that enables visitors to explore the cultural heritage sites of the Hazara Division in a virtual setting. In addition to these technologies, smartphone apps have been used to promote Hazara Division's cultural heritage. Information about cultural heritage can be promoted and shared with a wider audience using mobile apps.⁵⁹

For instance, the administration of the Hazara Division has created a smartphone application that offers details about the region's cultural heritage places, traditions, and practices. There are several benefits to using technology to preserve Hazara Division's cultural legacy. First of all, it presents an opportunity for cultural legacy to be preserved and promoted on a global scale. Secondly, it provides local communities with an opportunity to recover their cultural legacy. Thirdly, it provides

⁵⁵ "Hazara Division's Historical Sites: A Source of Cultural Pride." *The News on Sunday*, October 11, 2020.

⁵⁶ Mukherjee. *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, (Calcutta, India.1988)

⁵⁷ Shakirullah; Abdul., Hameed Muhammad Zahoor, and Usman Naveed, *Archaeological excavations at Bādo Dheri, Zar Dheri, Guli Bāgh and Takiya Baṭagrām Baffa, District Mānsehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pākistān*. (Department of Archaeology Hazara University Mansehra, 2023), 1-123

⁵⁸ Shakirullah and Abdul Hameed, *Bado Dheri Excavation 2019: A Preliminary Report*. *Pakistan Heritage* 12(2020), 231-265

⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

an opportunity for intercultural communication and understanding. However, using technology to promote cultural heritage in Hazara Division presents a number of difficulties. First, the area lacks resources and infrastructure, which could make it more difficult to use and access technology. Secondly, the use of technology to promote cultural heritage is not well understood or acknowledged. Third, the use of technology has the potential to destroy or contaminate a region's cultural heritage. The promotion of cultural heritage in Pakistan's Hazara Division is significantly aided by technology. Technology provides a platform for cultural legacy protection, transmission, and wider distribution. To guarantee that technology is used appropriately in the promotion of cultural heritage, however, a number of issues pertaining to its application must be addressed.⁶⁰

Sustainable Tourism and Its Impact On Religious Sites

Since it permits the economic advantages of tourism while reducing its detrimental effects on the environment and local populations, sustainable tourism is essential to the preservation of sacred monuments. Sustainable tourism has emerged as a crucial component in the preservation of Pakistan's rich religious and cultural legacy in the Hazara Division. Every year, hundreds of tourists are drawn to the area by its rich religious and cultural legacy, which includes churches, mosques, shrines, and temples. However, the ecology, local populations, and infrastructure in the area may be strained by the tourists. To lessen these negative effects and make sure that tourism benefits the local population and preserves the area's religious and cultural history, sustainable tourism practices can be used.⁶¹ Making sure that tourism benefits the community is one of the most important sustainable tourism tenets. This can be accomplished in Hazara Division by encouraging locally based tourism. In order to ensure that local communities benefit from tourism and have a role in preserving their cultural and religious heritage, community-based tourism initiatives involve them in the industry's development. Reducing adverse environmental effects is another fundamental tenet of sustainable tourism.⁶² This can be accomplished in Hazara Division by encouraging eco-friendly travel. Using eco-friendly transportation, cutting back on trash, and conserving energy are all part of green tourism. The area can reduce its environmental impact and protect its natural landscapes by encouraging green tourism. Respect for regional norms and culture is another aspect of sustainable tourism. This is made feasible in Hazara Division by encouraging tourists to be sensitive to cultural differences. Giving visitor's information about the customs and culture of the place they are visiting and educating them about the need of respecting these traditions is known as cultural sensitivity. The area can guarantee that tourism won't disrupt the way of life of the locals by practicing cultural awareness. Religious sites in Hazara Division are greatly impacted by sustainable tourism. By lessening the detrimental effects of tourism, sustainable tourism practices may contribute to the preservation of local religious landmarks, including churches, mosques, shrines, and temples.⁶³ It is possible to guarantee that tourism benefits the local population and contributes to the preservation of the area's cultural and religious legacy by supporting community-based tourism initiatives, eco-friendly travel strategies, and cultural sensitivity. In addition, interfaith communication and understanding can be promoted through sustainable tourism. Barriers between religions and cultures may be broken down via sustainable tourism, which aims to foster awareness and respect for customs and traditions. A deeper appreciation and regard for the region's rich cultural and religious legacy, as well as interfaith communication and understanding, can be facilitated by sustainable tourism. It is

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ahmed Hassan Dani, *The Historic City of Taxila*, (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1986), 45-275

⁶² "Religious Sites in Hazara Division: A Symbol of Cultural Identity." *The Daily Pakistan*, September 15, 2020.

⁶³ Shakirullah, Muhammad Zahoor, Adil and Khan Shah Owais, Mineralogical analysis of schist stone from the Buddhist Complex of Zar Dheri (Mansehra, Pakistan), *Journal of Asian Civilizations*, 45(2022), 39-58

essential to the preservation of Pakistan's Hazara Division's holy sites.⁶⁴ Through the promotion of ecotourism, community-based tourism, and cultural sensitivity, the region can guarantee that locals benefit from tourism while maintaining the region's religious and cultural legacy. Additionally, more respect and appreciation for the region's rich religious and cultural legacy, as well as greater interfaith understanding and interchange, can be ensured by sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism practices are being promoted by the Hazara Division government and local administration.⁶⁵ To encourage cultural awareness, green tourism, and community-based tourism, the government has developed a number of initiatives. In order to guarantee that tourism benefits local populations and protects the area's religious and cultural history, the local government is also working to promote sustainable tourism. Additionally, a number of community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are working to advance sustainable tourism in Hazara Division. These organizations are working to advance sustainable tourism, cultural sensitivity, and community-based tourism.

A Vision For The Future

In Pakistan's Hazara Division, capacity building and training are essential components of cultural heritage promotion and preservation. The division's churches, mosques, temples, and shrines are all part of its rich and varied cultural legacy. The heritage must be conserved and promoted with professional knowledge and expertise. However, in order to properly manage the preservation and promotion of cultural assets in Hazara Division, a number of obstacles and setbacks must be addressed. Programs for capacity building and training should be put in place to help communities and local stakeholders get the knowledge and abilities needed to preserve and manage cultural heritage in order to get over these obstacles.⁶⁶

Courses on capacity building and training can be arranged for a number of reasons, including enhancing the local community's and stakeholders' ability to protect and promote cultural heritage, improving their knowledge and abilities in this area, raising awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage among local communities and stakeholders, and promoting community-based preservation and promotion initiatives. The administration of the Hazara Division and local authorities can also be very helpful in promoting training initiatives and capacity building for the promotion and protection of cultural assets.⁶⁷

In addition to facilitating partnerships and collaboration with both domestic and foreign groups, they can offer financial and technical assistance. Additionally, community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can play a significant role in assisting with training and capacity building initiatives for cultural heritage promotion and preservation. Programs for training and capacity building can be offered in a variety of formats, including study trips, workshops, seminars, and training sessions. These programs can be taught in Urdu, English, and local languages, and they can be customized to fit the particular needs and demands of local stakeholders and communities.⁶⁸ One of the greatest advantages of capacity development and training programs is their ability to increase the ability of communities and local stakeholders to preserve and promote cultural heritage. This can be accomplished by offering training and capacity-building initiatives aimed at protecting and advancing cultural heritage, such as promoting cultural heritage festivals and events, safeguarding cultural heritage sites, and preserving cultural

⁶⁴ "Hazara Division's Cultural Heritage: A Rich Legacy." *The Business Recorder*, August 20, 2020.

⁶⁵ John Marshall, *Excavations at Taxila: The Stupas and Monasteries at Jauliāñ* (No. 7), (Government printing, India, 1921).

⁶⁶ "Hazara Division's Rich Cultural Heritage." *The News*, January 10, 2020.

⁶⁷ "Preserving Hazara Division's Historical Sites." *Dawn*, February 20, 2020.

⁶⁸ "Hazara Division: A Cultural Overview." *The Express Tribune*, March 15, 2020.

heritage artifacts. Enhancing local stakeholders' and communities' ability and competence in the area of cultural asset protection and promotion is another important advantage of training and capacity building initiatives.⁶⁹

This can be accomplished by offering training and capacity-building initiatives centered on cultural heritage conservation and promotion, such as preserving cultural heritage artifacts, conserving cultural heritage sites, and promoting cultural heritage festivals and events. Programs for training and capacity building can also help local communities and stakeholders become more conscious of and appreciative of cultural heritage. This can be achieved by implementing training and capacity-building initiatives that emphasize the importance of preserving and promoting cultural heritage, including the part it plays in fostering social cohesiveness, cultural identity, and economic growth.⁷⁰ Finally, community-based preservation and promotion can be supported through training and capacity building initiatives. This can be accomplished by offering training and capacity-building initiatives that emphasize community-based preservation and promotion. These initiatives include creating plans for community-based cultural heritage preservation and promotion, forming committees for community-based cultural heritage preservation and promotion, and offering training and capacity-building initiatives for community-based cultural heritage preservation and promotion. In Pakistan's Hazara Division, training and capacity building are essential elements of cultural heritage promotion and preservation. Initiatives aimed at building capacity and providing training have the potential to strengthen local stakeholders' and communities' ability to protect and promote cultural heritage, improve their knowledge and skills in this area, raise the level of awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage among local stakeholders and communities, and encourage community-driven preservation and promotion.⁷¹

Conclusion

Studies conducted on the holy places of the Hazara people in Pakistan have shown a rich cultural legacy that dates back up to 3,000 years. By examining the historical pattern of the mosques, shrines, temples, and churches in the area, the study has shown how significant a role religious sites have played in forming the history, culture, and identity of the area. The research's most noteworthy conclusion is how important Hazara is as a hub for religious and cultural exchange. Due to its advantageous location at the meeting point of the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia, the area has become a major center for business, trade, and intercultural exchange. A variety of cultures, including Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian, have affected the region's literature, art, and architecture, which also reflects this interplay. The importance of Hazara religious places as regional cultural markers is another of the study's main conclusions. In addition to being significant religious locations, these monuments such as the Bunner-Gala Stupa, the Shiva Temple, and the Mosque of Mahabat Khan are potent representations of the history, culture, and customs of the area. They demonstrate the region's rich cultural diversity and the depth of its religious and cultural interaction history. This study has also shown how important it is to preserve and protect Hazara's sacred sites. Most of them are in bad shape, and several are in danger of being developed, abandoned, or purposefully destroyed. In addition to serving as places of worship, these monuments also serve as important pieces of cultural and historical heritage that must be conserved for future generations. The Hazara religious sites have been confirmed by this study to be the best symbols of the region's cultural diversity and identity. In addition to being a part of the region's cultural legacy, the sites have provided insight into the history of cultural interchange in the area. It is crucial that these locations be safeguarded for upcoming generations and that efforts be made to foster a deeper awareness and

⁶⁹ "Religious Sites in Hazara Division: A Historical Perspective." *The Nation*, April 10, 2020.

⁷⁰ "Cultural Significance of Religious Sites in Hazara Division." *The Daily Times*, May 20, 2020.

⁷¹ "Hazara Division's Historical Sites: A Threat to Cultural Identity." *The Frontier Post*, June 15, 2020.

respect of the region's rich cultural legacy.

It is imperative that governmental institutions, community organizations, and foreign organizations work together to preserve and safeguard Hazara's sacred places. All of these stakeholders must work together to develop efficient conservation and management plans, provide funding and resources, and raise awareness of the need of protecting these sites. Furthermore, improved understanding and respect of the region's cultural variety is necessary for the conservation and safeguarding of Hazara holy monuments. Campaigns for education awareness, festivals and celebrations of culture, and grassroots initiatives can all help achieve this. Additionally, adherence to sustainable tourism principles is necessary for the preservation and safeguarding of Hazara's sacred sites.

The study of religious sites in Hazara provides a fascinating glimpse into the region's rich cultural and historical heritage. The historical analysis of these sites reveals a complex narrative of spiritual, social, and political evolution, shaped by the interactions of various religious and cultural traditions. From ancient Buddhist stupas to Sufi shrines and mosques, Hazara's religious landscape reflects the region's strategic location at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. The historical significance of these sites extends beyond their architectural and artistic value, offering insights into the lives and experiences of the people who built, used, and revered them. The Buddhist stupas, for example, testify to the region's importance as a center of Buddhist learning and culture, while the Sufi shrines reflect the influence of Islamic mysticism in shaping the spiritual and social fabric of Hazara's society.

The preservation and promotion of these religious sites are essential for understanding and appreciating Hazara's cultural heritage. Efforts to conserve and restore these sites must be accompanied by initiatives to document and study their history, architecture, and cultural significance. By doing so, we can ensure that these sites continue to serve as vibrant centers of spiritual and cultural expression, while also contributing to the region's economic and social development through sustainable tourism and cultural exchange. Furthermore, the study of religious sites in Hazara highlights the importance of interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange in promoting mutual understanding and respect. By exploring the history and significance of these sites, we can foster a deeper appreciation for the diversity of religious and cultural traditions that have shaped Hazara's identity. This, in turn, can contribute to the development of more inclusive and tolerant societies, where people of different faiths and backgrounds can coexist and thrive.

The historical analysis of religious sites in Hazara also underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the region's complex past. By examining the ways in which different religious and cultural traditions have interacted and influenced one another, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the region's history and its ongoing impact on contemporary society.

Ultimately, the study of religious sites in Hazara serves as a reminder of the importance of cultural and historical preservation, interfaith dialogue, and cultural exchange. By working together to promote and protect these sites, we can build more inclusive and tolerant societies, where people of different faiths and backgrounds can coexist and thrive. Through this collective effort, we can ensure that Hazara's rich cultural heritage continues to inspire and enrich future generations. The legacy of Hazara's religious sites extends beyond their historical significance, offering a powerful symbol of the region's cultural and spiritual identity. As we reflect on the importance of these sites, we are reminded of the need to prioritize their preservation and promotion, while also fostering a deeper appreciation for the diversity of religious and cultural traditions that have shaped Hazara's heritage. By doing so, we can ensure that these sites continue to serve as vibrant centers of spiritual and cultural expression, inspiring future generations to appreciate and respect the region's rich cultural heritage.

Encouragement of sustainable tourism practices, support from local businesses and the community, and making sure that tourism boosts the local economy and improves the preservation and protection of the region's cultural heritage are all ways to guarantee this. In general, community involvement, sustainable tourist management, and a long-term commitment to cultural heritage conservation are

necessary for the preservation and safeguarding of Hazara's sacred monuments. By working together, we can make sure that these locations are safeguarded and conserved for future generations and continue to be valuable cultural resources that promote cross-cultural communication, understanding, and appreciation.

Recommendations

- To oversee the preservation and advancement of Hazara Division's cultural legacy, a dedicated organization needs to be established. It should be in charge of finance and resource provision, developing and enforcing conservation measures, and collaborating with stakeholders and the local population.
- Every Hazara Division cultural heritage site needs a comprehensive conservation plan. A comprehensive assessment of the site's state, a conservation plan, and a maintenance and management plan must all be included in the plan. The cultural heritage of the Hazara Division should continue to be preserved and promoted with enough financing and resources.
- To improve the protection and promotion of cultural assets, Hazara Division needs to promote community-based tourism. This type of tourism gives visitors an opportunity to learn about and experience the local way of life while also directly benefiting local communities.
- To guarantee a greater appreciation and comprehension of cultural heritage within Hazara Division, awareness campaigns and educational initiatives must be developed. Schools, local communities, and tourists must all be the focus of these awareness campaigns.
- To support the preservation and promotion of Hazara Division's cultural legacy, partnerships with national and international organizations are required. These partnerships can take use of resources, finance, and expertise.
- In order to support the local economy and protect and promote Hazara Division's cultural heritage, a sustainable tourist plan should be developed. The strategy should include measures to reduce the negative effects of tourism and promote eco-friendly travel.

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