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Antiquity Style and Places of Interest in Chakwal: An Historical Analysis

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Abstract

District Chakwal was established on July 1, 1985, after being a tehsil of District Jhelum. It is connected to the rest of the province by the Grand Trunk Road and M-2 Motorways, with about 79 kilometers running through it. Chakwal has a rich history, dating back to ancient times. During Mughal emperor Babar's rule, seven tribes, including Awan's, Waince, and Rajput's, settled in the area. Prominent families like Chaudhary's, Awan's, and Rajput's are still influential today. The region has also been ruled by Hindu Shahi kings, Mughals, and Sikhs. Chakwal, known as "the jewel of Potohar," features beautiful canyons at Thirchak-Mahal and various lakes. The district's highest point is Chehl-Abdal hill, rising 3,500 feet, popular for hiking and religious significance. Kallar Kahar, at 2,500 feet, and the Katas Raj temple-fort in Choa Saiden Shah are also notable tourist spots, especially during the annual Shivratri pilgrimage. Chakwal has a mix of natural beauty and historical sites, making it a potential tourist hub. Visitors can explore old forts and ancient temples set against stunning plateau views. The present study highlights the places of interest in Chakwal, because the topic has been selected in view of the significance of the historical places in Chakwal. In this paper an attempt has been made to explore the important places of Chakwal with special reference to the Muslims, Hindus architecture. The study took place in Karyala, Chakwal, using a qualitative approach. Data was gathered through key informants and in-depth written and oral form of the history. It found

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that preservation issues hinder Pakistan's tourism economy despite its rich cultural heritage.

Keywords: Chakwal, Places, Shrines, Interest, Temple, Stone

Introduction

Chakwal is the main town of Chakwal District in Punjab, Pakistan, located 90 km southeast of capital Islamabad. It was founded in 1525 by Chaudhry Chaku Khan and remained a small town until it became a Tehsil Headquarter in 1881 and a district in 1985.¹ Chakwal is situated in the Dhanni region of the Pothohar Plateau in northern Punjab, Pakistan. This plateau was home to the ancient Soan valley civilization, supported by fossils, tools, coins, and archaeological sites. Chakwal City covers an area of about 30 square kilometers. The Indus Valley civilization thrived here between the 23rd and 18th centuries BC, and early Stone Age artifacts, dating from 500,000 to 100,000 years ago, have been discovered on the plateau. The local people speak a unique Chakwali or Dhani dialect of Punjabi, differing from the Pothohari language. The Dhanni area in Chakwal Tehsil was once uninhabited, part of the Jammu state of the Dogra Rajputs. While powerful tribes like Ghakkars and Janjuas ruled nearby areas, Dhanni served as a hunting ground for Jammu's Rajas. In 1190 C. E., Raja Bhagir Dev, a Jamwal prince, fell in love with a Gujjar woman, converted to Islam, and settled there with his men, becoming known as Muhammed Mair. His descendants are the Mair-Minhas Rajputs. The Mairs focused on pastoral activities for centuries and remained in this area and in 1525 C. E., Mughal King Babur's army was ambushed by hostile tribes while traveling to Kashmir.² The Mair herds came in handy, waking Babur's troops and causing the enemies to flee. The next day, Babur offered Raja Sidhar, the tribe's

¹ <https://mysargodha.forumotion.com/t298-history-of-chakwal>

² <https://newpakhistorian.wordpress.com/tag/kassar/>

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chief, two-thirds of the land of Dhanni in exchange for help draining a large lake in the area. Raja Sidhar and the Kassar chief took on the project, successfully diverting the water through Ghorī-Gala. They were rewarded with the title of Chaudhry and administration over a new area called 'Dhan Chaurasi.' Sidhar established villages named after his sons, while Kassar leaders founded Bal-Kassar and Dhudial.

Chakwal, a historical seat of administration in the Dhanni Country, is believed to have been founded by a Mair-Minhas Rajput from Jammu. The Hindu family of Gadihok, who were "Qanoongoes" during the Mughal era, claim the area was named "Malooki Dhan" after their forefather, Malook Chand. However, Janjua's claim and Kassars claim it was actually "Baluki Dhan" named after their ancestor Bal Kassar.³ "Ain-e-Akbari" indicates Gakkhars as the rulers of the land. Mair Minhas Rajput, Mughal Kassar, and Kahut Quraish were the three main landowning tribes in Dhanni, originally settled by Mughal Emperor Zaheerudin Babur. The Mair-Minhas concentrated in areas like Haveli-Chakwal and Badshahan, while the Kassars lived in northern areas known as Babial and Chaupeda, and the Kahouts resided in Kahutani in the southeast.⁴ Their influence grew during Sher Shah Suri's rule, but after Mughal King Humayun returned to India, he granted control of Potohar to the Gakhars, who moved the capital to Bhoun, making it larger than Chakwal. The Mair-Minhas and Kassar tribes regained power after King Aurangzeb's death, with key positions restored to their leaders.

During the Sikh era, Dhanni was ruled by Chaudhry Ghulam Mehdi, who invited Sardar Mahan Singh. The powerful Dogra cousins, Raja Gulab Singh and Dhian Singh, increased the Chakwal Chaudhries' influence, making Chakwal an active

³ Punjab District Gazetteers Jhelum District (Vol XXVII-A) 1904.pdf p, 254

⁴ Bilal Hashim, Chakwal Gazetteers, p,28

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center. Dhanni horses gained popularity, including those owned by Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. During the Second Anglo-Sikh War in 1849, the British confiscated land from those who supported the Sikhs, leading to Chakwal's growth as a city. During the decline of the Mughal empire, Ghulam Mehdi Khan invited Maha Singh to help against the Awans and Janjuas. The Sikhs then placed the Mair-Minhas Chaudhrys in charge of Dhani country. Under Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, the power of the Chakwal Chaudhrys grew as he defeated the Janjua chiefs and gave control of the salt mine to Gulab Singh. However, as the Chaudhrys refused to pay taxes, Ranjeet Singh appointed new Chaudhrys, leading to a banquet where the old Chaudhrys killed them but spared one to report their strength to the Maharaja.

After the Maharaja's death, the East India Company gained more power in Lahore. Charat Singh led a rebellion with British help, supported by the Mair Chaudhrials of Chakwal. The Janjuas supported the British while the Kassars and Awans stayed neutral. The British experienced a major defeat at Chalianwala in 1849 against Charat Singh's army. However, the Sikhs could not maintain their victory, and the British regrouped to defeat them again. The British demanded 7.5 million rupees as compensation from the bankrupt Lahore Darbar. Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu agreed to pay if he received Kashmir Valley, becoming the Maharaja. The British took revenue rights from the Chakwal Chaudhrials for supporting Charat Singh. They asked Gulab Singh for help, and he managed to get half of their land back.⁵

During the Pakistan movement, Chakwal residents supported Raja Mohammad Sarfaraz Khan of AIML. After Independence, the Sehgal family became top businessmen, and migrants from Chakwal, like Manmohan Singh former Indian prime minister and the Oberoi group, of village Bhoun achieved notable success.

⁵ Ibid, p, 22

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However, still the people of Chakwal are proud on their soldiers' bravery and skill. They honor their ancestors and call Chakwal the land of Shaheeds and Ghazis.

Corporeal Facets of Chakwal

The District of Chakwal is known as “the jewel of Potohar.” Its landscape includes the Thirchak-Mahal canyons and many lakes. The highest point is Chehl-Abdal hill, at 3,500 feet, which is a popular hiking spot with religious significance. Kallar Kahar, also a tourist destination, is at 2,500 feet, and the Katas Raj temple-fort in Choa Saiden Shah hosts an annual pilgrimage during Shivratri. Chakwal is connected by road to Jhelum and Lahore via the Sohawa road, and to Rawalpindi via the Mandra road. It is a semi-arid area with limited irrigation systems and water sources for agriculture, leading over 70% of its population to rely on rainfed subsistence farming. Most villages lack irrigation. The district is accessible through the Grand Trunk Road and M-2 Motorways, with about 79 kilometers of the M-2 running through it. The district features unique geology with both hills and flat plains. The Salt Range enters the district in the southwest corner where Mount Sakesar meets the village of Lawa. The lower boundary of Tehsil Talagang is lined by the northern ridges of the hills, which eventually lead to the Chakwal plateau, situated between 1300 and 1900 feet above sea level. Beyond the northern ridges and the Nili hills, there is a rough sloping area leading to a wide plain that covers the Tahsils of Chakwal and Talagang. This plateau generally slopes downwards towards the northwest, with some areas sloping towards the south and east, and is occasionally interrupted by short low hills near the Sohan naddi.⁶ Eastward of Tehsil Chakwal, most of the plateau is now part of the Rawalpindi District. District Jhelum is left with a narrow strip of rough land behind the Nili hills, called the

⁶ Punjab District Gazetteers Jhelum District (Vol XXVII-A) 1904.pdf p, 6

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Pabbi ilaqa. This area has many small ravines and is marked by deep beds of mountain torrents flowing from the Salt Range, moving northwards in a mostly straight path. These torrents collect all the drainage from the area. Villages have high banks in open fields to gather drainage water in large ponds, which the cattle rely on for water. In difficult seasons, water sources in the Chakwal, like wells, may dry up, causing villagers to travel far for water. The western part has heavy clay soil that is productive in good years but suffers during droughts. Generally, as you move from east to west, the soil becomes coarser and sandier, rainfall decreases, and land holdings increase, leading to less careful farming methods. The Gandhala valley near Choa Saidan Shah showcases the beautiful scenery of the Salt Range uplands. The area around Choa also has beauty when viewed at the right time and place, though the high viewpoints can overshadow nearby hills. Kallar Kahar lake receives mixed reviews; while one side is dull, the other offers stunning views, and the surprise of a large lake in the hills adds to its charm. The Bunha river starts in the Surla area of Chakwal and flows north out of the mountains. It then heads east and near Duhman, it joins with the Julian, Kutian, and Saruli rivers, collecting water from eastern Chakwal and parts of the northern Salt Range. The western part of Dhanni, known as West Chakwal, is drained by a small ravine called Khunala and a larger stream called the Dhrab. The Dhrab starts at Kallar Kahar, initially flows north, and then curves to join the Gabhir near Dhrabi village. Talagang Tehsil is primarily drained by two large streams named Gabhir, both originating from near Jaba in the Shahpur Salt Range. At that time, the torrents were not used for irrigation, although there were several permanent hill streams from springs in the Salt Range that supplied water. The valley of Choa Saiden Shah was irrigated by

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one of these streams. The area has coal found in lower tertiary beds at Dandot and Baghanwala, with mining at Dandot.⁷

Places of Interest in Chakwal

Chakwal offers a mix of natural beauty and historical sites, including ancient forts and temples, making it a potential tourist destination with stunning views. The main places are;

- Katas Raj
- Malot Temple
- Kusak Fort
- Samarkand Fort
- Kallar Kahar Lake
- Chehl Abdal Peak
- Dulmial Village
- Neela Wahn

Katas Raj

The Katas Raj temples are in the village of Katas Raj near Choa Saidan Shah, on the Kallar Kahar road, Chakwal. These temples are important to the Hindu religion and were built at different times by various rulers as offerings to the gods. The real name of Katas was “Katakasha” or “Katak-Shal,” meaning “weeping eyes” in Sanskrit.⁸ Another name is “Teksh Raj,” meaning “King of snakes.”⁹ Subhan Rae

⁷ Bilal Hashim, Chakwal Gazetteers, p.13

⁸ Raja Muhammad Arif Minhas, Pakistan Ky Asaar e Qadima, Islamabad: Jadid Traders Book Center, 1997, p. 414.

⁹ Sahibzada Sultan Ali, Salt Range mein Asaar e Qadema, Chakwal: Asad Muhammad Publishers Rawalpindi, 1998, p. 99.

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Batalvi referred to it as “Kott Chena.” These names and the legend of Lord Shiva¹⁰ and his wife's death give Katas important significance in Hinduism. The Shiva Temple and the temples of Satt-garrah in Raj Katas are well-known. The sacred pond, believed to be ancient and mentioned in the Mahabharata, is especially significant to Hindus.¹¹ The pond in Raj Katas is said to be made from the tears of Lord Shiva, who cried for his wife's death. This legend makes the pond very important, and the nearby temples are built to honor its sacredness. The caste system in Hinduism restricts interaction among different castes. Raj Katas is a pilgrimage site for Brahmins and Kshatriyas, where visitors come to bath in a sacred pond and honor the Shiva temple. The red stone in the temple is believed to bless devotees with children. Additionally, Raj Katas is home to a university that is a major center for learning the Sanskrit language.¹² This area has experienced many invasions that affected its culture and introduced various religions. The Raja Harri Singh mansion next to the temples reflects this influence. Following the partition, many Hindus left for India, and the government of Pakistan took control of the temple complex.¹³

Malot Temple

The Malot temple, described by Sir Alexander Cunningham in 1860 as "strikingly bold and picturesque," is believed to date back to the 12th century. Located in Kallar Kahar, it was built by Raja Mal Khan, a Janjua Emperor. The Janjua rulers

¹⁰ Maha-deva, also known as the Great God, is a popular Hindu deity in Shaivism. He is viewed as the creator, preserver, destroyer, revealer, and concealer of all beings. Among the Hindu Trinity, he is labeled as “the Destroyer” or “the Transformer.”

¹¹ Liaqat Ali Khan Niazi, *Tarikh e Chakwal*, Chakwal: Anjamun e Toqeer e Adab, 1992, p. 147

¹² Ibid,

¹³ Muhammad Usman Ali, *Temples Of Katas: Their Historical And Religious Significance*, Yakin Doğu Universities İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, Yıl 1, Cilt 1, Sayı 1, Bahar 2015 (49-64), p. 52

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were often attacked by foreign invaders. Despite the passage of time, the temple's remains are still impressive.¹⁴ “The temple, made of red sandstone, blends Greek design with local architecture. Similar to Nandna and Ketas' Shivite temples, it was built when Kashmir controlled the Salt Range, reflecting the Martand temple style.”¹⁵ “The temple is an 18-foot square structure with an entrance porch facing east. It features round fluted pilasters on each side of the porch supporting a trefoiled arch. Smaller pilasters with similar arches are located next to the inner door. Each corner of the temple has massive square pilasters, and each face projects outward, flanked by semicircular plasters supporting a taller trefoiled arch. Underneath each arch's capital are kneeling figures sheltered by half trefoiled canopies, and smaller fluted pilasters support the cornice. Ornamented niches with trefoiled arches are found between the pilasters, leading to a balcony that supports three miniature temples. The portico's plinth and the lower outer wall have a wide band of moldings, with the basement remaining four feet above the ruins. The overall facade is bold and picturesque, though the small pilasters supporting the cornice may detract from its appearance. While the external pyramidal roof is lost, the interior roof remains intact, narrowing from squares in the porch to an octagon and then to a circle in the temple, where it once was covered by a single slab that is now missing. The height of the cornice above the basement of the temple is nearly 30 feet, with the interior measurement from the floor to the base of the dome being about 28 feet 4 inches. The temple's interior is quite simple, lacking any statues or pedestals, although it is believed that a lingam was once inside, connected to Brahmanical worship of Mahadevs in Kashmir. Outside, the remaining figures are heavily damaged and cannot be identified, but they are confirmed not to be

¹⁴ Dawn, August 27, 2017

¹⁵ Statement of Salman Rashid, Travel Writer, Fellow of Royal Geographical History, The Castle that Raja Mall Built, 30 June, 2014

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Buddhist nature.

The gateway is located 58 feet to the east of the temple and measures 25 by 24 feet, having two rooms measuring 15 1/4 by 8 1/4 feet each. There are decorated niches on the north and south sides for statues, topped with trefoil arches from flat pilasters. Each capital features a lion statue beneath a half trefoil canopy, and small pilasters support the cornice similar to those on the temple's exterior. Although the roof is missing, the building's square shape suggests it might have had a pyramidal exterior with flat ceilings inside. The large pilasters have 12 flutes, and their capitals reflect the traditional Kashmirian Doric style, though with a wider hollow molding compared to other temples in the region.”¹⁶ The unique bases of the pilasters, while appearing strange, were clearly intended for support. Locals have no specific history about the temple, attributing its construction to the Kauravas and Pandavas, a common belief for many temples in Kashmir.

Kusak Fort

Kusak Fort is located in Choa Saidan Shah and was built in the 11th century by Raj Jodh, the son of Raja Mal Khan Janjua, known for Malot Fort. The fort is made of local red stone and soil and is built on an elevated platform. It originally included a king's palace, 70 houses for troops, two large northern gates, and two water ponds. Temples were built for the primarily Hindu troops, and warehouses were added for grain storage. The fort's wall is 370 feet high, but few remains exist today, except for a temple.¹⁷ Kusak Fort was besieged by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and is now privately owned by Jodh's descendants. The Jhangar Valley in the Salt Range is a mix of beautiful mountains and fields. A sign at Mughal Chowk near Lehr

¹⁶ Cunningham in his Archaeological Reports, Vol. V, pp. 85 to 90

¹⁷ H. M, Elliot, The History of India Vol. III (London: Tubner Press, 1871), 23-45

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Sultanpur, 10km east of Choa Syedan Shah, calls it the “Highway to Heaven.” This narrow road leads to Kusak village, a quiet place at the foot of a mountain. At the top of this mountain are the ruins of Kusak Fort, which need to be preserved. “The Salt Range was a key route for invaders from Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan, leading to frequent attacks on the Kusak State. Its rulers used various strategies, such as fighting back or forming alliances with invaders, to protect their land. Historians note that in 1290 AD, Jalaluddin Firoz Shah Khilji of the Khilji Dynasty severely defeated the Kusak State. Over time, the Janjua Rajputs regained control of the area. In 1398 AD, the state faced another threat when Amir Taimur approached, but the ruler and Janjua Sardars promised support for his goal of conquering Delhi, leading him to spare the fort. In 1810, the Janjua Rajputs faced difficulties when Maharaja Ranjit Singh besieged Kusak Fort. Sultan Fateh Mohammad Khan, the king of Kusak State, resisted Ranjit Singh for six months, but eventually, they reached a truce. The long siege caused severe shortages of food and water for the people living in the fort. As a result, the Sultan and his tribe moved to Haranpur, where they lived for 40 years. Sultan Fateh Mohammad died in Haranpur in 1830, and his family returned to their homeland in 1850, establishing Lehr Sultanpur village nearby. The Kusak State remains owned by the Sultan’s descendants.”¹⁸ KusakFort is a hidden treasure with a rich history and beautiful architecture. It played a crucial role in protecting the region from invasions and improving local conditions. Unfortunately, the fort is now in poor condition due to natural damage and has not received enough attention for restoration and maintenance. Issues like structural instability and erosion threaten its integrity and historical importance. The Archaeology and Tourism department needs to take action. Excavations should be conducted to better understand the fort's history, and

¹⁸ Dawn, November 24, 2012

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tourism could generate revenue. Currently, treasure hunters are illegally digging the fort, risking the loss of our heritage.

Samarkand Fort

West of Kallar Kahar, along the road to Chinji, is the small village of Maira Emma. About an hour's walk south leads to Samarkand Fort, which has only four round battlements filled with clay and some ruins. Local fraudsters claim to be historians and say this was the original Samarkand, from which people migrated to the famous city in Uzbekistan around 250 CE. They are unaware that the Samarkand in Central Asia is the place where Alexander killed his general Cleitos, the same man who had once saved his life in battle. In February 1221, Jalaluddin Khwarazm, fleeing from the Mongols, met the local chieftain Rai Sangin of the Khokhars. He likely asked if there was a safe place to hide from his pursuers, prompting Rai Sangin to show him a hidden fortress in the area. Later that year, after raiding and obtaining treasure, Jalaluddin may have given Rai Sangin money to strengthen the fort. During the monsoon season, as the hills became lush and green, he might have felt nostalgic for his homeland and sighed "Oh, Samarkand!" This could explain why the fort was named after the famous city, or he may have asked Rai Sangin to name it Samarkand after seeing the greenery.¹⁹ However, the fort and nearby area were hardly used due to the lack of water. Located in a mountainous region, it was difficult for vehicles to access. It served mainly as a refuge for fugitives like Jalaluddin, and was never meant to become a renowned city as some local historians suggest.

¹⁹ The Express Tribune, February 4, 2012

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Kallar Kahar Lake

Kallar Kahar Lake is a well-known wetland in Pakistan, located 25 km north of Chakwal. It attracts many migratory birds in winter. The lake's water comes from rain and mountain streams but is brackish and unsuitable for drinking. Recently, the lake has been polluted by sewage, and a government project is underway to clean it. Metals are found naturally in freshwater, but human activities have increased their levels, raising concerns about health risks and the need for environmental monitoring and management. Kallar Kahar lake is a popular family destination and attracts many tourists daily. It has various restaurants, resorts, and boating options, helping to promote Chakwal district. The lake, described in a 1904 gazetteer, is the only one in the district, circular, about a mile wide, and approximately four feet deep, with salty water. Villagers have a legend that the water was once fresh. One day, while women were filling their pitchers, Baba Farid, a holy saint, stopped by and asked for some water. The women told him the water was salt. He acknowledged this and walked away. Later, when the men returned home, they found that the water in their pitchers was indeed salty, and the lake became salty from then on. Another important place Takht-e-Babri is located in Kallar Kahar, Chakwal district. It is a small limestone tableland used as a platform by Mughal King Babar to view the lake and address his army. The area has fresh water springs that irrigate fruit gardens and recharge Kallar Kahar Lake. Babar, the great Mughal emperor from Kabul, stayed here in 1519 AD while on his mission to conquer Punjab and Delhi. He liked the place and decided to stay, leading to the site's name, Takht-e-Babri.

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Chehl Abdal Peak

Chehl Abdal peak, located near Basharat village in Choa Saidan Shah, is the highest point in the district at 3,500 feet. Local legends have turned it into a shrine, though it was originally just a resting place for seekers of truth. The 40 Abdal brothers used to worship there. Today, both worshippers and tourists visit the peak for its beautiful views and to offer supplications. “A 20-minute truck ride from Basharat village took us to the end of the road. A short walk led us to the top of Chehel Abdal. There, an electric pole without cables stood with a worn green flag. Surrounding it were stone hovels, with steep drops on two sides. The construction consisted of limestone blocks, with some buildings made without mortar and one with plastered blocks. The buildings likely served as a hostel for worshippers, and there was an altar at the top, resembling a burial mound. More picnickers than worshippers visit Chehel Abdal, especially on Thursdays when a regular bazaar occurs. They bring goats and chickens to be slaughtered and cooked on the peak, with festivities starting mid-afternoon on other days.”²⁰

Dulmial Village

Dulmial, known as the “Village with a Gun” and the “Hometown of Gunners,” sent 460 soldiers to fight for the British in World War I, and 732 soldiers in World War II, the most from any village in South Asia. A memorial stone honoring these soldiers remains in the village. In 1925, the British Government gave the villagers a cannon to recognize their efforts. The cannon is now displayed at the village entrance. Additionally, Dulmial has a historic peepul tree, the oldest and second largest in Punjab. “The warriors of Dulmial were sent to various locations around

²⁰ Dawn, March 11, 2018

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the world during the First World War, with eight not returning home. Those who came back earned many medals. The village has a rich military history, having 21 retired Indian officers and 90 active sergeants by the start of the war. After the partition, Dulmial produced five Lt Generals and 23 brigadiers for the Pakistan Army, with many families contributing army officers. This strong military tradition is linked to early education in the village, which had its first primary school in 1857. A 200-year-old Scottish cannon at the village entrance represents the sacrifices made by its men during the war.”²¹

Neela Wahn

Neela Wahan, a natural waterfall and lake in Kallar Kahar, is a popular tourist spot known for its clear waters and believed healing properties. Locals refer to it as “Chashma-aab-e-Shifa.” The lakes are located 20km from Kallar Kahar Lake and 155km from Islamabad, hidden in a valley surrounded by rocky hills. To reach them, visitors must hike through a narrow and difficult path. The name “Neela Whan” means “Blue flowing water,” named for the beautiful blue waterfall that cascades from a hill. Despite being a popular summer destination, the Punjab Tourism Development Corporation has not invested much in promoting or supporting this site, with only a single signboard present.²²

Important Shrines of Chakwal

A significant shrine, visited by large number of people on a routine basis, are present in Chakwal District. Details of some important shrines, are given as under:

²¹ <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/dulmial-pakistan-the-town-of-forgotten-world-war-heroes-1.60462815>

²² Dawn, June 24, 2024

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- Darbar Hazrat Aho Bahoo, Kallar Kahar
- Darbar Sakhi Saidan Shah Shirazi, Choa Saidan Shah
- Darbar Ghazi Mureed Hussain Shaheed Bhalla

Darbar Hazrat Aho Bahoo, Kallar Kahar

In Kallar Kahar, near Takht e Babri, there is a shrine with an interesting legend. The Imperial Gazetteer describes a story about a faqir who traveled from the south. During his journey, a black deer followed him. They eventually arrived at a hill near Kallar Kahar, where the faqir passed away. The deer, in mourning, also died beside him. Afterward, any cattle that grazed near their burial site became sick and died, leading villagers to avoid the area, believing it was cursed. Later, a saint named Makhdum Jehania visited the site, prayed, and reassured the villagers that it was not a negative presence but the resting place of the holy faqir. The people then built a shrine, and since then, their cattle thrived again. The legend does not appear to be of Muhammadan origin, as the faqir is named Sakhi Aho Baho, which might indicate Buddhist influences.

Darbar Sakhi Saidan Shah Shirazi, Choa Saidan Shah

Choa Saidan Shah is named after the Sufi Saint Sakhi Saidan Chah. The legend says he turned a desert into a sweet water spring by striking the ground with his staff. His shrine is located in a courtyard away from the main bazaar. Chila Gah, Hazrat Sultan Bahoo, Kallar Kahar, Chila Gah, Hazrat Baba Farid Gunj Shakkar, Kallar Kahar, Darbar Pattalian, Darbar Alawal Sharif, Darbar Pir Waliat Shah, Karsal and Tombs of the grandsons of Sheikh Abdul Kadir Jilani, Kallar Kahar are also the important places of the district. About the fairs and melas, “that the attendance on the one at Katas is estimated to be 10,000 people, and it is held on

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1st Baisakh and for four days after. It is attended by the Hindus. The one at Choa Saidan Shah also sees the same number of numbers, and it is held from 25th Chet to 2nd Baisakh. It is chiefly religious and attended mostly by Muslims. Of the remaining “Melas” attached to shrines, those at Dharabi in Chakwal and Jabbi in Talagang, are the most noticeable.²³

Darbar Ghazi Mureed Hussain Shaheed Bhalla

Mureed Hussein was the only son of Chauhdry Abdullah, a respected old man from Bhallah, Tehsil Chakwal. He got married at 20 and shortly after, experienced a dream meeting with the Holy Prophet, which changed his life significantly. In 1935, a distressing news article titled “Palol Ka Gadha” reported that a Hindu veterinary doctor in Palol named a donkey after the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihe Wassallam). This act angered many Muslims in India. The British government responded by transferring the doctor to a different location, but this did not satisfy the outrage. Many people, including Mureed Hussein, felt that the punishment was not enough for the offense. Mureed decided to go to Narnaund to address the disrespect towards the Prophet's name. Dr. Raam Gopal was strong and impressive, but a weak lover showed that physical strength isn't everything. One hand move defeated the ogre, while Mureed Hussein waited for the police. A lawsuit was filed against Mureed Hussain in district Hasaar. Barrister Jalal-ud-Din Qureshi and other Muslim lawyers defended him for free. Mureed could have used legal loopholes to save himself, but he chose honesty over deceit. He openly admitted his actions in court, which allowed the judges to quickly close the case. As a result, he was sentenced to death. His sincerity inspired a non-Muslim prisoner to convert to Islam, and he was named Ghulam Rasool. On Friday, 24 September 1937 at 09:00

²³ Bilal Hashim, Chakwal Gazetteers, p,45

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am, Ghazi Mureed Hussain faced the gallows with a smile, sacrificing his life for the honor of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihe Wassallam). Those present noted that he appeared happy and was reciting prayers. When asked to stop, he insisted they do their job while he fulfilled his duty. He met his creator while sending greetings to the Holy Prophet.

Mandars, Up House, Thakar Diwara, And Shamshan Ghatt of Karyala

Karyala is a village and union council in Chakwal District, Punjab, Pakistan. It is situated on the Surla hills in an area known as Dhani, meaning rich. Nearby are the Khewra Salt Mines, among the world's oldest, and Dandot coal mines. Karyala village greatly influenced nearby areas before the partition of the Indian subcontinent due to its gold bazaar and trade market. People from villages like Kallar Kahar, Bohun, Balkasar, Mureed, and Durmiyal would visit Karyala Bazar on horses to trade goods. The author, who has lived in Karyala for nearly forty years, finds the village's history and notable sites fascinating. First and foremost, the official residence of the only Hindu / Sikh family of the Karyala Chakwal was the hometown of Shaheed Bhai Mati Das and his brother Shaheed Sati Das has a rich history. Their grandfather, Bhai Praga Das Chibber, was a Jathedar during Guru Hargobind Ji's time. Surinder Kumar, a notable figure from Karyala, is a direct descendant of Bhai Mati Das. Both brothers were captured and executed in Delhi alongside Guru Tegbhadur and Bhai Dayala; Bhai Mati Das was sawn in two, while Bhai Sati Das was burned alive. Maharaja Ranjit Singh rewarded their family with large land grants. In 1947, the family chose to remain in Pakistan and converted to Sanatam Dharam, becoming Nanakpanthis. They continue to live in their ancestral home of 400 years. Next in significance the UP house – An iconic symbol of Hindu culture is one of the oldest buildings which was constructed in

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1890 as crafted on the building. The important aspect of the building was that the building was allotted to the forefathers of famous Pakistani scientist Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan after partition of Indian sub-continent. Dr A. Q. Khan got his early education from Government School of Karyala. Another notable structure is Shermati Jamna Dehvi Mandar- A stunning example of Hindu architecture and a heritage site and commonly known as the “Thakar Dewara” by natives. The important element of the building was that Brahman Hindus worship their temple. This Mandar was last time renovated in 1935. Last but not the least, the oldest and the only remaining cremation ground (Shamshan Ghaat) holds cultural, religious and ritualistic significance in Hinduism. It is situated few miles away from the village where Hindu families take their loved ones and burnt their bodies after they die. They used to perform the last rites and the bodies were cremated. It is a place with open space where a fire is lit on a platform of wood. Many stones can be seen in the cremation ground which served as a memorial, allowing the family members to return and pay respect.

Conclusion

Preservation means understanding and managing architectural heritage for future generations. Pakistan has important historical sites, and the best way to honor this history is by maintaining these buildings and sites. Traditions show the history and culture of nations. Great civilizations developed through knowledge and education. Historical sites are important for both their archaeological value and their role as religious monuments. They also significantly contribute to a country's economy. Pakistan needs to focus on its historical sites. The government must take action to conserve and preserve these buildings and promote them to prevent deterioration and enhance tourism.

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Kattas Raj Temples, Kallar Kahar Road, Chakwal



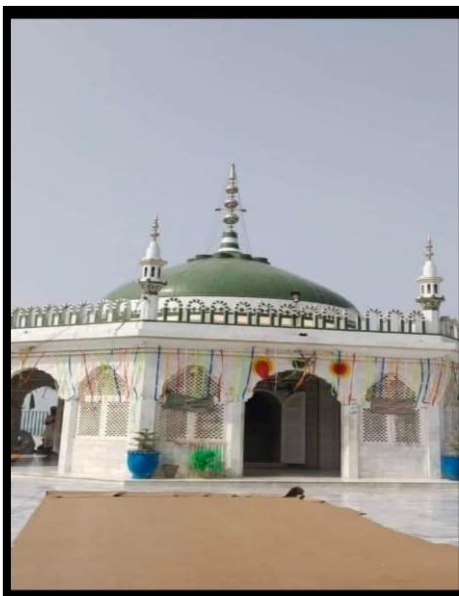
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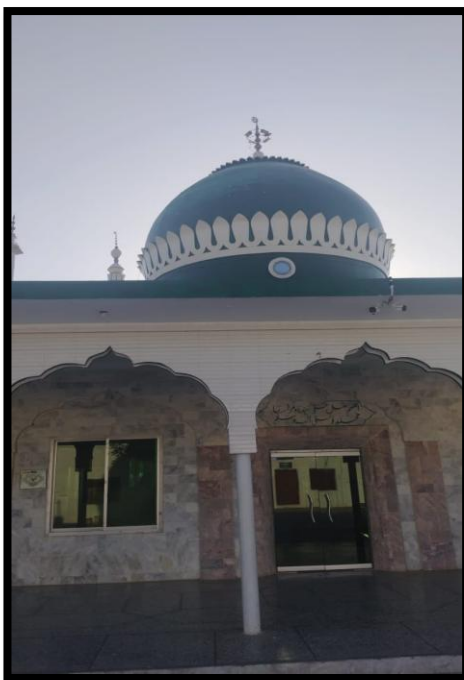
Kallar Kahar Salt Water Lake, Chakwal

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Shrine of Hazrat Aao Bao Sarkar, Kallar
Kahar, Chakwal
(Photo by Adnan Mehr)



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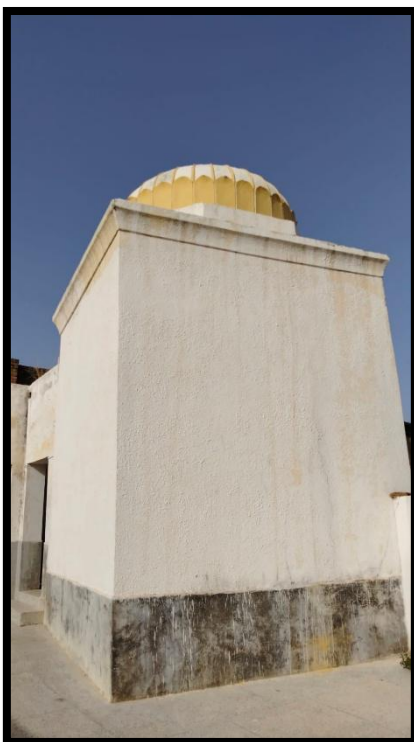


Shrine of Ghazi Mureed Hussain Shaheed,
(Aashiq-e-Rasool S.A.W) Bhalla, Chakwal
(Photo by Adnan Mehr)



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Temple of Shrimati Jamna Devi, Karriala, Chakwal
(Photos by Adnan Mehr)

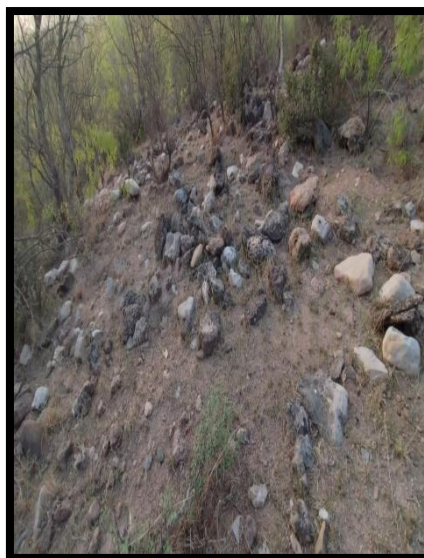


Temples of Prem Chand, Karriala, Chakwal
(Photos by Adnan Mehr)



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Main Entrance of UP House constructed in 1890, Karriala, Chakwal
(Photo by Adnan Mehr)



Cremation Ground (Shamshan Ghaat), Karriala, Chakwal
(Photos by Adnan Mehr)