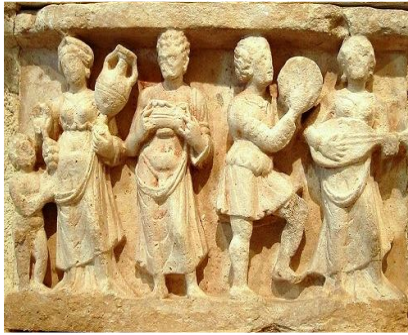

**KASHMIR ARCHITECTURE DURING KUSHAN PERIOD:
AN INVESTIGATION**

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INTRODUCTION:

Kalhans Rajataragini (Stein 1961: 30) mentions Kushan Kings Hushka, Jushka and Kanishka of having built three cities on their own names as Hushkapur, Jushkapur and Kanishkapur in Kashmir valley has been corroborated by the archaeological discoveries from time to time. These three cities have been identified as Ushkur and Kanispur in Baramulla district (ibid: fn.168), while Jushkapur has been identified by Cunnighum (1924: 116) in Srinagar near Zukura, where no substantial archaeological evidence has been confirmed makes us here to propose some other place for the third city of Kushans in Kashmir valley. The recent observation made by Mani (1999-2000: 1), that Jushkapur lies near to the other two cities found by Kushan Kings is most probable and his identification of the site as Zugiyar near Fatehgarh in Baramulla district may represent it, as later temples, sculptures and images have been noticed in the area. This inference is quite possible in light of my own observations while collecting the information about the local history of the area. Locals have informed me about a site in north western direction from Ushkur, where eighty stone steps have been counted by an elderly man to reach to the top of the mound shows the archaeological potential of the area from Ushkur to Kanispur, a crescent shaped karewa. Jushka as Kushan king is still a debatable issue for scholars as not even a single coin bearing the name Jushka has been reported so far. But it is worthy to mention here that besides a founder of a city Jushkapur, Kalhana attributes to this King a foundation of another city Jayasvamipura, which Sir Aurel Stein himself was unable to trace. Owing to its geographical position as well as its close proximity and connectivity with other Kushan sites such as Taxila in Pakistan, Baramulla has remained a favourite spot for building activities during Kushan period. Apart from two Kushan towns more than fifty archaeological sites of Kushan period have been reported from Baramulla district. Archaeological evidence from other parts of the valley especially sites like, Harwan, Hutmur, Hoinar, Ahan, Doen Pather, Semthan and Kutbal has thrown open new chapter in the art and architecture of Kashmir valley which definitely came to prominence due to the patronage of Kushan kings. In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the art of Kashmir valley from 1st century AD to the 5th century AD during the Kushan period.

KUSHAN ARCHITECTURE IN KASHMIR:

There are very few excavated Kushan sites in Kashmir valley including Harwan, Ushkur, Kanispore, Semthan, Ahan and Kutabal. But the sites which have well represented the Kushan strata and brought forth the structural evidence and art of the period are, Harwan, Kanispore and Semthan. Although other sites have thrown ample light on the Terracotta art of the period but due to restricted excavations no structural remains were excavated at these sites. This paper on the architecture of the Kushan period is based on these excavated sites especially Harwan and Kanispore.

Harwan (34° 9' 30" N. Latitude and 74° 54' E. Longitude) is situated three kilometres beyond Shalimar garden in Srinagar district. Harwan is one of the most important archaeological sites of Kushan period in Kashmir valley and was extensively excavated by R. C. Kak in 1920's. The site is entirely of Buddhist nature. It was Stein who identified Harwan as "Sadarhadvana" of Kalhanas Rajatarangini (Stein 1961: 31,

fn.173) as an abode of the great Buddhist scholar 'Nagarjuna'. The site comprises of three terraces cut into a steep hillside yielding important evidence of constructional techniques, artistic remains and other cultural material. The upper most terraces revealed the remains of an apsidal stupa built in diaper pebble masonry with spacious rectangular antechamber on plan and semi-circular sanctum at the back (Fig.1). Around this stupa a pavement of moulded brick tiles having various shapes and forming different patterns was encountered during excavations (Kak 1933: 105-111). In the middle terrace highly damaged rubble built walls and diaper pebble structures were exposed. Four structures were excavated in the lower terrace. Among which two are in diaper rubble style, which includes a triple base of a medium sized stupa (Fig.2) and a set of rooms which might have served as chapels (Fig.3) or for residential purpose (Agarwal 1998: 96). The oldest evidence of a complete Kashmiri stupa is found on terracotta votive plaques discovered at Harwan (Kak 1933: pl.xviii, Fisher 1989a: Fig.1, Rosenfield 1967: 36, Fig.3). The other two structures exhumed are probably monasteries and were given the name pebble style (Fig.4) due to the extensive use of the pebbles of which only traces of the walls have been left. From the above description it is clear that three different styles of constructional techniques were used at Harwan. The masonry started with pebble style, the diaper pebble replaced it which finally gave way to diaper rubble masonry.

As per the plan of the site, it seems every terrace had several buildings. Kak (1933: 108) suggests that there was a central flight of steps which connected each and every terrace and gave access from one building to another. Fisher (1989b:10) has found some similarity in the plan of Harwan and Surkh Kotal in northern Afghanistan, as he suggests, that both Harwan and Surkh Kotal originally had a stairway leading through the centre of each terrace, thus suggesting Parthian influence at Harwan. Scholars have divergent opinions regarding the apsidal temple found on the Upper terrace at Harwan as not of Buddhist nature. But the fact that the ruins from all terraces belong to the Kushan period and are Buddhist can be gleaned by the fact that the great Parthian fire temple at Surkh Kotal dedicated by Kanishka in northern Afghanistan (Fisher: *ibid*) and the apsidal temple found in Sirkap Taxila (Marshall 1985: 81-82, pl. xiv) are same in plan as apsidal temple at Harwan. It can be mentioned here that the Kushans were known for their patronage to Buddhism as well as other religions of the time. The best examples of this religious syncreticism are Kushan coins depicting the variety of gods. But Kashmir was largely dedicated to Buddhism can be substantiated by the fact that the fourth Buddhist council was held in Kashmir (Beal 1906: 150-156). As Percy Brown (1956: 187) points out, "there can be little doubt that the settlement in Kashmir was an outlying branch of that Buddhist movement which had its monastic establishments widely distributed over a great part of North-West India and beyond, at this period of its history".

These constructional techniques at Harwan were confirmed at Kanisapur (in Baramulla) during excavations. The ancient city of Kanishkapur (modern Kanisapur) is situated on the left bank of the river Jehlum on a karewa about 100 meter in height from surrounding ground level called Rajteng. The site yielded the cultural sequence from Aceramic Neolithic to Historical period. But the large scale structural evidence has come from Kushan period designated as period-III at Kanisapur. A large structure at KNP-1 was exposed with north-south orientation and was traced up to the length of about 22 meter, with a distance between its east and west walls is about 17 meter and its height and width of the wall is 28cm and 70cm respectively. A lime brick pavement was attached with these walls in the inner side of the structure. The structures found at KNP-1, are of diaper pebble masonry as found at Harwan. Vertically placed line of single course of brick tiles was exposed between the pavement and the diaper pebble wall (Mani 1999-2000: 12, 2008: 219). Three courses of vertically placed plain brick tiles in a series of twelve tiles in each course with flatly placed tiles below were found, which might have been circumambulatory pathway around the structure same as reported from Harwan (*ibid*). Due to the limited excavation of only one season (1998-99) this structure was not fully exposed. Although the evidence furnished by excavations at KNP-1, the structure partly exposed resembles with the structure of Terrace-1 at Harwan, which is an apsidal temple, with vertically placed rows of tiles as well as circular tile pavement outside the structure. A debris of brick bats, roof tiles, long iron nails, suggesting that the superstructure was built of wood and roof tiles were provided

on the top fixed with the help of long iron nails in the beams, rafters and planks (Mani 1999-2000: 8-12, 2008: 219-220).

At KNP-2, a large disc shaped pattern of a pavement, with several concentric circles made out of wedge shaped rectangular and square tiles was excavated (ibid). While at KNP-1, plain tiles without any decoration or motifs were reported, but at KNP-2, decorative motifs on tiles suggest the developmental stage within the site of Kanispur, but still not comparable to Harwan tiles, which have shown excellent artistic skill of the late Kushan period. On the basis of the tiles found at Kanispur, which are not highly decorated as Harwan, we can safely assume that the structure at Kanispur (KNP-1) is older than that of Harwan. This new evidence at Kanispur refutes the claim made by some scholars (Bhan 1986, Paul 1986, Fisher 1989b) on the basis of highly decorated tiles depicting ascetic image, hunting scenes and famous 'Parthian shot' that the structure at Harwan belongs to Ajvikas or Parthians or Hunas and not to Buddhism. Banday (1922) has refuted all these claims and has proposed that terracotta art of Kashmir has to be associated with Kushans as well as to Buddhism. At KNP-3, a wall built in rubble style was noticed running from south-east to north-west of 35cm high and 47cm wide and was exposed up to 1meter. The above mentioned evidence shows the gradual development of art and architecture, which was followed at different places at different times within the Kushan period in Kashmir valley. Apart from many terracotta figures, terracotta balls, clay sealings with Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts, structural activity has been noticed at Semthan when during excavations mud brick, rubble and diaper pebble walls were found from period-IV, associated with Kushans (Gaur 1987: 331, Shali 1993: 122). This overall uniformity of structures in Kashmir valley has a close affinity with its neighbouring region Taxila, where same type of masonry style has been used during Kushan period (Brown 1955: 40). But in case of Kashmir, structures were decorated with tiles which in comparison have very few examples in the nearest Gandhara region as well as from Central Asia. Such decorated terracotta tiles were also reported from Bhamala near Taxila by Marshall (1951). This phenomenal feature is not reported from any site in Mathura region, which gives Kashmir unique place in architectural study of Kushan period. The only example, relation of which can be made with Kushan sites of Gangetic and Sutlej basins has come from Semthan excavations, where a mud brick wall has been reported (Shali: ibid).

CONCLUSION:

Although very limited excavations of the Kushan sites has been undertaken, but the evidence has shown almost uniform pattern of art and architecture in Kashmir valley during Kushan period. We can safely assume that the concept of decoration of structures with terracotta tiles has originated from Kashmir and was followed at Taxila. On the other hand, the influence from Gandhara, especially Taxila, is evident from the masonry style adopted in Kashmir valley of which the evidence has come from many excavated sites, while as, no relation can be made with Mathura region except a single example from Semthan, which is not sufficient. With the passage of time from 1st century AD to 5th century AD, certain developments in art and architecture have been traced in Kashmir valley. Apart from these above mentioned sites, accidental discoveries have brought to light many other sites, such as, Hutmur and Hoinar, where terracotta tile pavements with concentric circles as well as pebble walls have been reported. These sites if excavated systematically will certainly address some of the problems in Kushan studies faced due to the paucity of evidence in Kashmir valley.

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PLATES



Fig.1: View of an apsidal temple at Harwan in diaper pebble masonry with rectangular antechamber and semi circular sanctum at the back (Upper terrace).



Fig.2: Triple base of a medium size Stupa in rubble masonry at Harwan.



Fig.3: Residential quarters for monks at Harwan (Lower terrace) in rubble masonry.



Fig.4: Pebble style wall of a monastery at Harwan (Lower terrace).