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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.55966/assaj.2025.4.1.089>**The Uraśa State and its Capital: Archaeology and History-based Investigations****Shakirullah**

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zahoorarch@gmail.com**Abstract**

In spite of the several vicissitudes of time in the last two millennia which brought hordes of alien peoples and cultures into Hazāra, its original Uraśā or Araśa still survives in the Damtaur or Dhamtaur valley, Abbotabad. The level plain of Dhamtaur valley is locally known as Rush or Arash. The name variants recorded by the ancient writers were: Arash, Arsa, Uraśa and Uragā. It can be seen that the absence of a complete uniformity in the spelling is most evident. It is not unlikely therefore that the original spelling was Aruśa which, in the course of time, changed into Uraśa. If so, it would give us the key to elucidate the enigmatic Dhamtaur (correctly Dharmtaur = Religious Enclosure) and determine the name of a god (deity) to whom the worship was dedicated.

Monier William's Sanskrit Dictionary records that Aruśa was a designation of all important and favourite gods of the Vedic Aryans (Monier-Williams 1970). It is quite natural that the lands adjacent to the 'Enclosure' (Pl.Ia, b) with the lapse of time also came to be known after the name of the god, Aruśa (Indra), corrupted into Arash or Rash.

Xuan Zang does not name the capital but mentions the existence of a stupa and monastery 4 or 5 li (1km) to the south of it (Beal 1884). A recent survey conducted by the writers confirms the truthfulness of this statement. Much dilapidated remains of a Buddhist establishment at the site of Mochikot (Pl.Ia, b) were seen at about the same distance from Māngal, the probable capital of Rash.

Keywords: Uraśa, Araśā, Arsa, Rash, Aruśa, Pāṇini, Xuan Zang, Ptolemy, Mahābhārata, Rājatarāṅgiṇi, Dhamtaur, Māngal, Mochikot

Uraśa/Arsa, (or whatever its uncorrupted pristine form), as the name of a territory which is well preserved in ancient accounts such as Pāṇini (c.4th century BCE), Ptolemy (2nd century CE), Xuan Zang (7th century CE), Kalhaṇa (12th century CE) and Mahābhārata (4th century BCE to 4th century CE).

Location

Pāṇini places the ancient *Janapada* (state) of Uraśa on the left bank of the Sindhu (Agrawal, 1953: 44). In the English translation of *The Aṣṭadhyāyī Pāṇini*, this name is variously written as Uraśā and Usaśā (Vasu 1896: 685, 695, 729, 781). Ptolemy mentions a country called 'Arsa' and its towns 'Ithagouros and Taxila', placing it between the upper waters of the Bidaspes and the Indus that is, in the Hazāra country (Majumdar 1960: 371).

Lassen (I.A., vol. ii, 155) was the first scholar who identified Urasa for Hazara, the Ptolemy's territory 'Arsa' and *Mahābhārata* account 'Uragā' (Ganguli 1883-96: 1027). This name was applied for a country lying between Abhisāri (Kashmīr) and Siṃhapura (Salt Range), obviously a corrupted form of the same name.

Xuan Zang records that *Wu-la-shi* (Uraśa) is the name of a country, about 2000 li in circuit, situated to the north-west of Kashmīr. There is no king in this kingdom and it is dependent on Kashmir (Beal 1884: 147). Alexander during his east expedition (327-26 BCE) recognized the king of this region with the Arsakes (Majumdar 1960). The name is frequently mentioned in Kalhanas' *Chronical of Kashmir*. It narrates that the Kashmīrian king Saṃkaravarman (CE 883-902) was fatally wounded while coming through Uraśa (Stien 1900: 215-16).

The territorial position is recorded by different writers such as Cunningham who concludes that Uraśā may at once be identifiable with *Varsa* region of Ptolemy and it could be associated with the modern district of *Rash* in Dhantāwar (Damtaur) valley (Cunningham 1871: 87).

Damtaur

Damtaur (correctly Dharmtaur i.e. Religious Enclosure) is a small *darāh* enclosed within mountain ranges. Damtaur is also the name of a village situated on a top of the hill and presently occupied by the Gadūn (Jadūn) tribe. In the west of village, there are two small rivers (*khawar*) coming from the north-east and north respectively. One of these, the Ḍor river flows south of the village, and the other, the Durgun, on the north side (Pl. IIa, b). The former one comes from Wairan or Bairan Gali side and the latter from Kohistān of Māngali side. After their junction at this point, the united streams are called as the river of Damtaur. The subject river flows towards west and there it joins another small river known as Siran.

The lands dependent on Damtaur, Damtaur Rujūiyah, Nawan Shahr and Māngal, in the open part of valley are known as the *Zamīn-i-Rash* or *Arash* (Fig. 1). Raverty remarks about this name that it is probably derived from the Tājik (Dari Persian) word '*rash*' signifying 'full of ups and downs', 'hills and ravines', or possibly from the Arabic '*rashsh*', which means 'gently trickling as water or flowing gently' (1888: 287-88). If this statement of Raverty is accepted as correct, then it suits the marshy nature of the *Zamīn-i-Rash* as described earlier. But this interpretation of Raverty cannot be upheld, we know that Persian and Arabic could have reached Damtaur in the 10th century at the earliest. On the other hand, the word *Rash* derived from Uras or Urasā, was first reported by Pāṇini in the 4th century BCE. Therefore, the etymology of *Rash* may better be sought in Sanskrit of which Hindko, the language of Hazāra, is a derivative form.

Orthography

As described above, the word *Rash* (or whatever its original form) is recorded by ancient writers in different variants. Accordingly, Pāṇini identifies the name as Uraśā and Uras, Ptolemy calls as Arsa or Ovarsā, *Mahābhārata* mentions with Uragā, Xuan Zang finds it *Wu-la-shi* (Uraśa) and

Kalhana reports Uraśā. The diverse form of names indicates that the correct orthography can't be ascertained at this stage of research.

Presumably the original form of the subject name was Aruśa. If so, it suits the peculiar mode of expression prevalent in Hazāra with regard to certain names in which the medial *a* in the second syllable is converted into *u* or *o*. Thus, the Arabic word Hazrat is generally pronounced as 'Hazrot' (further corrupted into Hazro, the name of a village); Aṭak as Attok (written as Aṭtock) and Akbar as 'Akbor'.

It is interesting to note that Aruśa was the name of the most favourite Vedic Aryan god, Indra, the killer of enemies (Monier-Williams 1970: 88). About 250 hymns of the *Rigveda* are addressed to him. He smashes Vṛitra, the demon who *holds up* waters. It is suggested that the Vṛitra myth came with the Aryans from Kashmir or the north-western countries into the Punjab (Majumdar 1951: 371). The Vṛitra myth continued down to the Buddhist period in the guise of Nāga Apalāla. The above interpretation, if accepted, resolves the question as to what was the 'Enclosure' meant for. This apparently was the place which housed an object (or perhaps image) symbolically representing Indra. The *Rigveda* does not unequivocally record that Indra image existed at that early age of Aryan expansion. But something like this, a felish, did exist, for, in the opinion of a Regvedic poet ten cows were not an adequate price for such an object (or image). This is how the poet interprets it: "Who for ten mileh-kine purchase the from me this Indra who is mine. When he hath slain the Vṛtras let the buyers give him back to me" (Graffith 1895: 218).

The Xuan Zang's dimension of Urasa, 2000 *li* (or 333 miles) in circuit was measured by Cunningham (1871: 88) as correct. He further remarks, that the length from the source of the Kunaṛ river to the Gandgrah mountain is not less than 100 miles, and its breadth from the Indus to the Jhelam is 55 miles in its narrowest part.

Geography

Hazara is a region in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province that falls east of the Indus River. It is located between the latitudes of 88° 45' and 85° 2' in the north and 72° 86' and 74° 9' in the east. It mostly comprises of a small area of land wedged between the Indus and the Jhelum. The division's width is 40 miles in the centre and 56 miles at its southern base, with its extreme length being 120 miles. Its southern border is formed by the rivers Murree, Rawalpindi, and Attock. It is divided from District Swabi, District Amb, and, in the northern half, the recently established Districts of Tor Ghar and Buner by the River Indus. The Kaghan mountain separates it from Swat, Kohistan, and Chilas on the north. Azad Kashmir is located to the east.

The Hazara region was a part of Punjab province during the British administration in India, up until 1901, when the western portion of that province was divided from Punjab and constituted as a distinct province called North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), which is now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The region around Abbottabad and Mansehra was incorporated into the Peshawar Division's Hazara district. Furthermore, the Hazara Tribal Agency expanded into the lands to the north of this. The Hazara area and the Hazara Tribal Agency were sandwiched between the Amb and Phulra princely states. This administrative structure persisted until 1950, when the two little princely realms were combined to form the Hazara district. Under the One-Unit policy, the NWFP province was incorporated into West Pakistan from 1955 until 1970. In 1970, the Hazara district was established as a part of the Peshawar Division of West Pakistan

following the dissolution of the one-unit plan in July. Later, two tribal groups and the Hazara District were combined to create the new Hazara Division, which has Abbottabad as its capital. Initially, the Hazara division was divided into two districts (Abbottabad and Mansehra), however within a short period of time, Batagram District and Haripur District were separated off from Abbottabad District (Jadoon, 1977).

Until 1976, Hazara was a district before becoming a separate division. Additionally, in October of the same year, Mansehra received the status of a full-fledged district. It began with the Batagram and Mansehra tehsils. As a result, Abbottabad Tehsil was divided from Haripur Tehsil and turned into a district in July 1991. A separate Abbottabad District was established for the remaining portions of the Abbottabad Tehsil. Similar to this, the Hazara Nationalists' voice has been calling for a separate province for a very long time. In essence, the provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa passed a motion on March 21 calling for the establishment of the Hazara as a distinct province. Administrative divisions were abolished in 2000, and the fourth layer of government was erected to replace them. Currently, the Hazara Division comprises the following districts (figure 2):

1. Abbottabad District
2. Haripur District
3. Batagram District
4. Upper Kohistan District
5. Mansehra District
6. Kolai-Palas District
7. Lower Kohistan District
8. Torghar District

Historical Accounts

Preliminary excavations of the nature of a trial trench in the Khanpur cave near Haripur, and the surveys conducted by the Department of Archaeology, Hazara University Mansehra, have brought to light new evidences and a number of ancient sites. But detailed investigations of these works are awaited. The first two rays of light piercing the pitch darkness in which the early history of Urasa is enveloped are: 1) Hindko language and 2) Aśokan Rock Edicts. It is generally believed that Hindko, the language of Hazara, presently under much pressure from Pushto, is a dialect of Sanskrit introduced into the valley of the river Indus by the Aryan tribes in about 1500 BCE. Since then, Hindko, although has been transformed in the course of centuries, has not only stood fast in front of alien invaders (like *Dari*, Turkish and Pushto) but also absorbed them to a great extent. The Pushto speaking Tarīn tribe, for instance, has completely changed over to Hindko. Secondly, the strategic position of Mansehra, situated as it is almost midway on the route linking Taxila with Kashmīr did not escape the notice of the Mauryan emperor Aśoka (3rd century BCE) who not only installed his proclamations, the Mansehra Rock Edicts, but also dispatched a Buddhist Monk Majjhantika for the propagation of Buddhism in Ghandhāra and Kashmīr.

Urasa comes in the full light of history in the 12th century when the Kashmīrian poet Kalhaṇa Stein 1900:218) narrates that the Kashmīrian king Saṃkravarma (883-902), while passing through the territory of Urasa was fatally wounded by the arrow of a person whom Kalhaṇa derisively dubs as Śvapāka ('dog-cooker'). Kalhaṇa's frequent references to Urasa suggests that

it was closely connected with Kashmīr (Stein 1900: 585). In the 11th century, Urasa was occupied by a Kashmirian force (Stein 1900: 585) during the rule of Kalaśa (CE 1063-1089). Saṃgata, the king of Urasa, along with other dependent princes appeared in the court of Kalaśa (Stein 1900: 589). In another reference to Urasa, Harśas's son Bhoja was married to the princess Vibhavamati, the daughter of king Abhaya of Urasa (Stein 1900: 16-18). In the reign of the Kashmirian king Sussala (CE 1112-20) tribute was levied from the ruler of Urasa (Stein 1900: 574).

In the twelfth century Dvitiya, the lord of Urasa, was defeated by Jayasimha (CE 1128-49). After this the name Urasa disappears from historical records. But, in a much-restricted sense, it still exists as the name of a small portion of the Damtauṛ valley.

In the 14th century Urasa came to be known as Pakhli, which owes its origin to the Gibari Sultan Fakhal. Darwezā (1940: 107) records that Sultan Fakhal, conquered the hilly countries of Bajaur, Swat and Kashmīr, while his brother, Sultan Bahram held Tirāh and the Kabul valley from their capital Pāpin near Jalalabad. Behram was succeeded by his son Tumnā, and likewise Fakhal by his son Awais. They continued to rule over these parts until the period of Amīr Timūr's invasion (CE 1398-99). Thereafter, they became vassal kings to Timūr and his successors. In course of time these local rulers also lost their nominal power in their respective states.

Akhund Darwezā's list of the Gibari rulers shows that Qirān was the last among them to have taken the honorific title *sulṭān* (king) and that his successors- Bālo, Dāwaryāe, Nazo-all had the comparatively inferior title *malik*. This may be taken to suggest that Timūr's invasion (CE 1398-99) took place during the reign of Qirān and that his great-grandfather, Sultan Bahrām, must have died long before this invasion, perhaps in the year 1350 or little earlier. As Sulṭān Fakhal (Pakhal), was a brother of Sulṭān Bahram and is known to have completed his military exploit during the life of his brother, took control of the land of Urasa, we are naturally driven to the conclusion that Fakhal's occupation must be dated in the first half of the 14th century and that this was the time when the term Pakhli (often softened as Pakli) came into vogue.

Abu al-Fazl, the learned vizier of the Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605), writes (Jarret 1949: 397) that Pakli is bounded on the east by Kashmīr, west by Aṭak Banāras, north by Kator and south by the tract of country in which the Gakhaṛ tribe dwells. Its length is 35 and breadth 25 kos. The emperor Jahangir (1605-1628), Akbar's son and successor, follows Abu al-Fazl in his Tuzuk-I Jahangīrīr (Rogers 1978: 126). Both tell us that Amir Timūr on his way back from Hindustān to Turān placed a body of his soldiery to hold the country of Pakli.

Another change in the nomenclature of the ancient land of Aruśa appeared after Timur's return to Turān. This time the *raison d'être* was the settling down of the Qarlugh Turks in the *Pakli Sarkar*. One of the *mings* (Regiments) of Amir Timūr's army was composed of Qarlughs. A large portion of them were left in Pakli to hold possession of the land. As the Turkish *ming* consisted of one thousand, Hazār in Persian, the land of Pakli came to be known as Hazarāh. After some time Hazarāh was divided into two parts: 1) Qarlugh Hazarāh and 2) Chachh Hazarāh. It is noteworthy that all this happened not by design but by fault. Neither the Gibari Sultan Pakhal, nor Timur issued any proclamation to change the name from rush to Pakhli or Pakhli to Hazarāh. With the expansion of the Pukhtūn tribes in the region, the Qarlughs were driven out and their land was occupied by the Jadūns or Gadūns.

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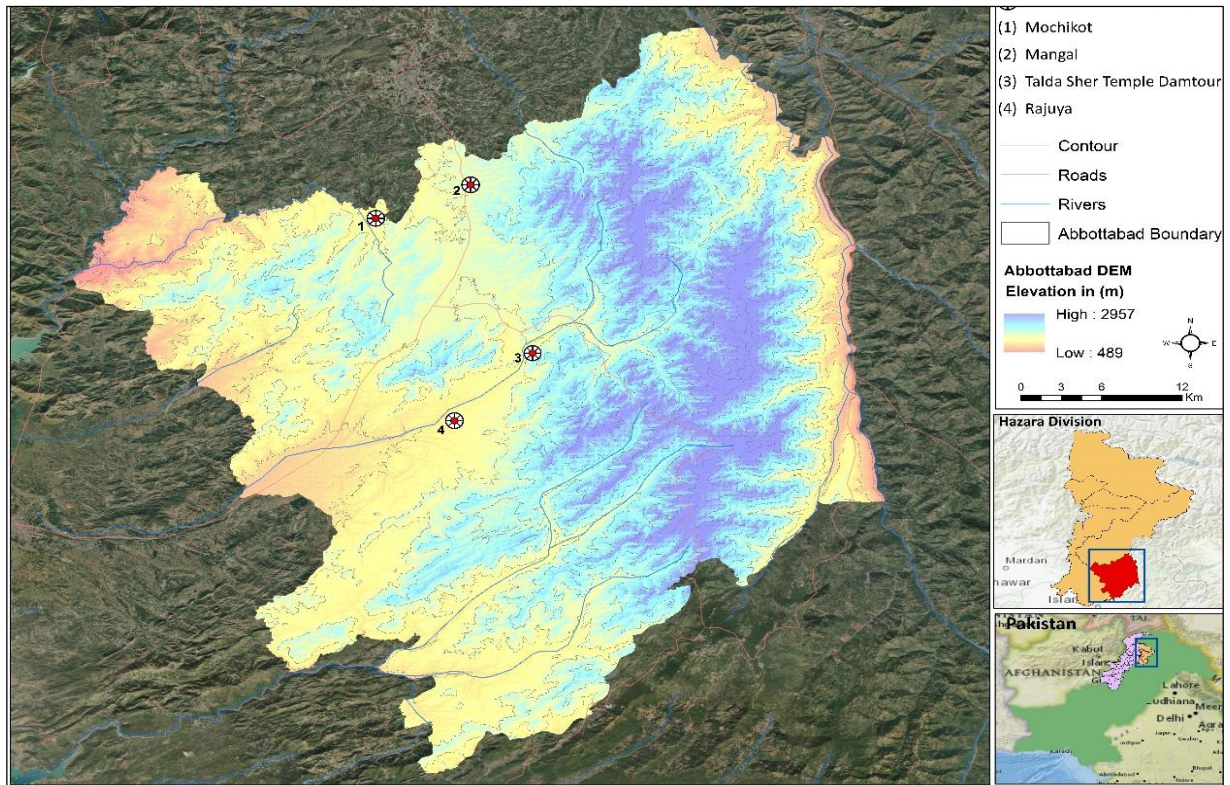
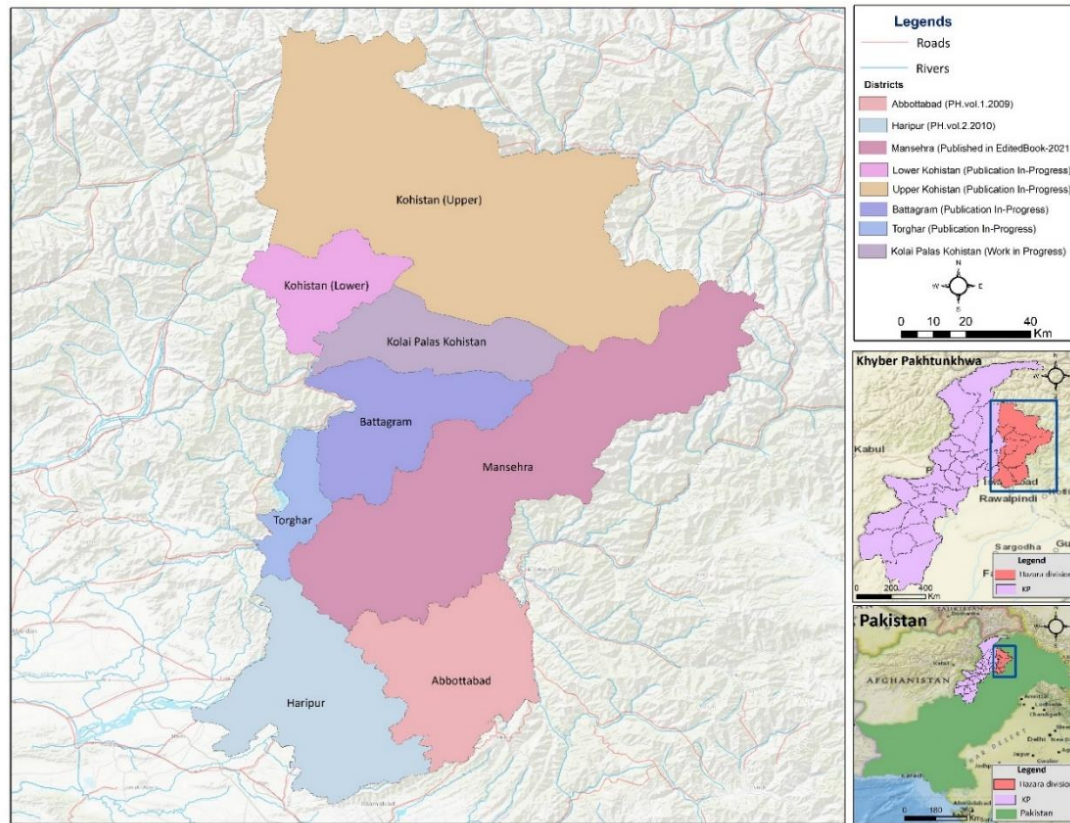


Figure 1: Map showing the main towns of Zamin-i-Rash or Arash



1Figure 2 Map showing present location Hazara



Pl. Ia: Māngal (Abbottabad); view of Mochikot site with both seasonal streams, Māngal katha from its east and Sherwan katha from west.



Pl. Ib: Māngal (Abbottabad); showing the stupa wall in diaper masonry and other ruins



Pl. IIa: Damtaur (Abbottabad); A view of the site Damtaur (Talda sher)



Pl. IIb: Damtaur (Abbottabad); view of the site from south showing both the rivers(khwar) Durgun and Ɖor