

Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the Diamer-Bhasha Dam Project. Urgent tasks

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Abstract

The note presented here, unpublished, and recently found during a reconnaissance of the materials preserved in Harald Hauptmann's personal archives, presents a brief synopsis of the work conducted by the Pak-German mission in Gilgit-Baltistan and directed until 2013 by the author. The most important part of this note, which was drafted in 2015, however, lies in the ideal program that the author has in fact left in it for future reference for colleagues who would deal, after him, with this important region of Pakistan and its endangered cultural heritage.

Keywords: Karakoram/Karakorum, Upper Indus, Gilgit-Baltistan, rock-art, Diamer-Bhasha Dam.

Editorial Note

Over the past few months in Heidelberg, while organizing the papers in the archive of Harald Hauptmann (Sitara-i Imtiaz), the unforgettable director of the German Mission in Upper Indus, Ms Salwa Hauptmann, with the help of Luca M. Olivieri, found an unpublished manuscript of great importance for the further study and documentation of the extraordinary province of rock art in Gilgit-Baltistan. The text was compiled in September 2015, two years after the last campaign of the program inaugurated in 1979 by A.H. Dani and K. Jettmar, continued and completed in 2013 under the direction of Hauptmann. As the reader will see, The Note is presenting the most urgent task for future archaeologists in the region.¹ Mainly two future activities were considered: the first concerned the compulsory and priority documentation of a selected number of petroglyph groups; the second concerned the excavation and systematic study of a few sites deemed to be of priority importance. Obviously, these selections are calibrated on the area most at risk due to the construction of the Diamer-Bhasha dam and ancillary infrastructures, and therefore mainly refer to the areas affected by these. The project was conceived as phase 2 of the then recently concluded program. Although for well-known reasons (Harald Hauptmann would later leave us in

¹ [Cf. Jettmar, K. 1959. Urgent Tasks of Research among the Dardic Peoples of Eastern Afghanistan and Northern Pakistan. *Bulletin of the International Committee on Urgent Anthropological and Ethnological Research* 2: 85-96.]

2018; see JAC 2018, 1-2) this program could not even be initiated by Hauptmann, the contents of the note published here remain the urgent and unavoidable goals bequeathed to Pakistani and international scholars, and to all those who care about Pakistan's cultural heritage and its delicate cultural ecosystem along the Hindukush-Karakorum-Himalaya belt.

The note is illustrated by a series of archival images that tell, as it were, the visual history of Pak-German work in the region. One last thing we would like the reader to note: Hauptmann's laconic, very brief recommendation to his future heirs, namely to contextualize rock-art by accompanying it with excavations and site surveys, so as not to leave it as the tip of an unexplored iceberg, but as it was in ancient times, the imaginative kit of a world that had its own social and human three-dimensionality, which only archaeological excavations (Hauptmann was basically an archaeologist) can provide. In this we see how Hauptmann foresaw the possibility of an eventual outgrowth of the methodology elaborated, I would say almost, by K. Jettmar (an anthropologist) and expressed by the latter in his famous contribution to *South Asian Archaeology 1979*, entitled "Archaeology before excavation".² The text is reproduced in full with a few additions and notes. The images were chosen by Salwa Hauptmann. Editorial contributions are placed in square brackets.

One final note: the title refers to a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the Diamer-Bhasha Dam Project, which is different from the Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment conducted for WAPDA or to the Cultural Heritage Management Plan produced for WAPDA in 2013.³

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² [Jettmar, K. 1979. Rock-carvings and Stray Finds in the Mountains of North Pakistan. Archaeology before Excavation. In Taddei, M. (ed.) *South Asian Archaeology 1977. Papers from the Fourth International Conference of the Association of South Asian Archaeologists in Western Europe, held in the Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples*, 2. IUON, Naples: 917-926.]

³ The title refers to a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the Diamer-Bhasha Dam Project, which is different from the Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment conducted for WAPDA or to the Cultural Heritage Management Plan produced for WAPDA in 2013.

1. Introduction

In the high mountains of northern Pakistan one of the world's largest rock art provinces is spread along the course of the Upper Indus from Kohistan in the south to Yasin, Hunza and Baltistan in the north. Around 50,000 pictorial carvings and 5000 inscriptions, documented by a Pak-German Mission, represent a space of time of more than 10,000 years until the introduction of Islam during the 16th century. The earliest group of images from Late Stone Age to Neolithic (9th-4th millennium BCE) reveals the archaic world of hunter-gatherers. Giant figures and masks, paralleled in Central Asia, are dated to the Bronze Age (3rd millennium BCE). The third group of Early Iron Age shows images of Eurasian animal style, which testify a new ethnic movement from the northern steppes. With the expansion of the Achaemenid Empire during the 6th century BCE Iranian influence is reflected by petroglyphs of warriors, stylised horses, and fabulous creatures. With the early Buddhist phase (1st-3rd century CE) the region entered the stage of history, as scenes of stūpa veneration and first inscriptions in Kharośthī show (group 5). During the Golden Age of Buddhism (5th-8th century) the existence of three kingdoms, Little Palūr, Great Palūr and the principality of the Dards, is attested by Brāhmī inscriptions. The region reached its historical role between Tibet and China in the north and the Indian kingdoms in the south. Strongholds, monumental Buddha reliefs, and Tibetan inscriptions in Baltistan reveal Tibetan influence. Along the Indus, delicate images of Buddha and stūpas with their worshippers, *jātakas* and episodes of Buddha's life are most striking. More than 700 inscriptions in Sogdian, Bactrian and Parthian testify the importance of the Upper Indus route as the southern branch of the Silk Route for Central Asian traders. The last group of simple drawings of warriors, horsemen with their symbols battle axe and sun disc, and the absence of inscriptions indicate an anti-Buddhist movement and mark the Medieval period since the 9th century.

2. Fieldwork history

The systematic investigation of the rock art province of Gilgit-Baltistan was inaugurated in 1980 after the opening of the 751 km long Karakorum Highway by a Pakistani-German team conducted by Karl Jettmar (1918-2002) and Ahmad Hasan Dani (1920- 2009) with an official license by the

Department of Archaeology & Museums (DoAM) in Karachi (since 1995 in Islamabad).

In 1984 the research project was established at the Heidelberg Academy of Humanities and Sciences as an own research centre 'Rock Carvings and Inscriptions along the Karakorum Highway'. The field research was mainly concentrated on the documentation of historically important clusters of rock images and inscriptions. Since 1989 the Pak-German Archaeological Mission (PGAM) of the Heidelberg Academy under the directorship of Harald Hauptmann has been able to continue and expand this documentation of all archaeological sites between Shatial and Gilgit along the Indus and its tributary Gilgit river. The aim of the project was not only focused on the topographic mapping of the rich rock carving sites and the systematic recording of all petroglyphs of every cluster, but also to survey archaeological and historical sites in Ishkoman, Ghizer, Yasin, Hunza and Baltistan. The last field survey was undertaken by the PGAM in 2013 in Baltistan.

3. Published Results

The results of more than 30 years of field research by the PGAM, including earlier anthropological, archaeological, and linguistic investigations between 1955 and 1979, have been published in preliminary [monographic] reports, in a dedicated series, articles, and catalogues.⁴

⁴ [Harald Hauptmann (HH), left a voluminous manuscript of over 400 pages with rich illustrations, which he intended as his definitive historical and archaeological study after many years of fieldwork. The volume, in English, was left in the author's personal archive, almost complete at the time of HH's demise, when, at the initiative of his wife, Salwa Hauptmann, it was edited and prepared for printing. The volume has been edited by Luca M. Olivieri, the photographic and cartographic apparatus is by Martin Bemann, the foreword by Hermann Parzinger (President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation). The printing of the volume is by Heidelberg University Publishing in collaboration with the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities: H. Hauptmann, *Lords of the Mountains. Pre-Islamic Heritage along the Upper Indus in Pakistan* (L.M. Olivieri, ed. in collaboration with M. Bemann; Foreword by H. Parzinger). Heidelberg University Publishing, Heidelberg (forthcoming). At the time this article is published, HH's posthumous volume is in the printing process, and will most likely be available at the end of 2023.]



Fig. 1 - PGAM 2009: Giant, rock carving at Helor Das, north bank of Indus, Harald Hauptmann and Martin Bemmman (Photo PGAM).



Fig. 3 - Hodur West: Buddha Stupa group, Lotus Sutra, 5th to 8th century (Photo PGAM).



Fig. 4 - PGAM 2013: Harald Hauptmann (standing, third from right), Martin Bemann (standing, first from left) with the local helpers at Chilas. (Photo PGAM).

3.1 ANP

The series *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan* (ANP; in English, German and French; 1, 1989 – 5, 2004) focuses on specific topics of archaeology, epigraphy (esp. inscriptions in Kharoṣṭhī, Brāhmī, Sogdian, and Chinese) and cultural anthropology of Gilgit-Baltistan and neighboring regions. The Iranian and Sogdian inscriptions have been included in the edition of Sims-Williams, N. 1992. *Sogdian and other Iranian Inscriptions of the Upper Indus II. Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum: Part II, Inscriptions of the Seleucid and Parthian Periods and of Eastern Iran and Central Asia*. London. The ANP issues are published by the Heidelberg Academy of Humanities and Sciences; Publisher: Philp von Zabern, Mainz; the whole series has been digitized in Open Access: <https://digi.hadw-bw.de/view/anp>.

Permalink: <https://katalog.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/titel/68198507>

3.2 MANP

The series *Materials for the Archaeology of the Northern Regions of Pakistan* (MANP; in German with Urdu summary) are dedicated to the systematic edition of the rock carving sites. 11 monographic volumes of the series MANP have been issued between 1994 and 2013. The MANP volumes are all published by the Heidelberg Academy of Humanities and Sciences; Publisher: Philp von Zabern, Mainz; the whole series has been digitized in Open Access: <https://digi.hadw-bw.de/view/manp>.

Permalink: <https://katalog.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/titel/68214817>

[3.2.1 List of the MANP volumes]

MANP 1: Bemann, M. –König, D. *Die Felsbildstation Oshibat* (1994).

MANP 2: König, D. – Fussman, G. *Die Felsbildstation Shatial* (1997).

MANP 3: Bandini-König, D. – Fussman, G. (eds) *Die Felsbildstation Hodar* (1999).

MANP 4: Bandini-König, D. – Hinüber von, O. (eds) *Die Felsbildstationen Shing-Nala und Gichi Nala* (2001).

MANP 5: Bemann, M. *Die Felsbildstation Dadam* (2005).

MANP 6: Bandini-König, D. *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan I: Kataloge Chilas-Brücke und Thalpan (Steine 1-30)* (2003).

- MANP 7: Bandini-König, D. *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan II: Katalog Thalpan (Steine 31-195)* (2005).
- MANP 8: Bandini-König, D. *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan III. Katalog Thalpan (Steine 196-450)* (2007).
- MANP 9: Bandini-König, D. *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan IV. Katalog Thalpan (Steine 451-811)* (2009).
- MANP 10: Bandini-König, D. – Fussman, G. *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan V. Kataloge Ziyarat, Thakot, Khomar Das, Gichoi Das, Dardarbatı Das* (2011).
- MANP 11. Bandini-König, D. *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan VI. Ba Das, Ba Das-Ost, Gali, Gukona, Mostar Nala, Ke Ges, Ame Ges und Drang Das. Appendix: Katalog der Inschriften von Thor-Nord* (2013).

4. Urgent tasks for a future field campaign in the Diامر-Bhasha region

The field work along the Upper Indus region, especially in the area endangered by the future Diامر-Bhasha Reservoir, should be concentrated on the two main groups of the ancient heritage: 4.1. the rock carvings and inscriptions, and 4.2. the archaeological sites and other historical architectural remnants.

4.1 Rock carvings and inscriptions

Petroglyphs of ingenious diversity and abundance cover boulders and rock faces not only along the ancient roads on both banks of the Indus, but also grace the routes traversing high mountain passes such as the access to the Babusar Pass through the Thak and Boto Gah nala thus marking the southern branch of the legendary ‘Silk Road’ system which connected China with historical India. A main cluster of rock carvings, which is endangered by the future Diامر-Bhasha Reservoir, is found between Shatial in Indus-Kohistan and Raikot Bridge extending over a stretch of more than 100 km along the ancient routes. The centre of these unique rock art galleries in the Indus valley is located at the foot of Nanga Parbat (8,125 m) around Chilas in the Diامر District. Altogether more than 50,000 pictorial carvings and 5,000 inscriptions are known from Gilgit-Baltistan representing a space of time of around 12,000 years from the Late Stone Age to the post-Buddhist period (9th century CE) and the gradually

introduction of Islam, i.e., from 9th-8th millennium BCE to the 16th century CE. But, the tradition of drawing crude graffiti by shepherds is still alive. The tremendous diversity of the rock art permits insight into the long history of various ethnic groups with their different social-cultural and religious traditions. Together with the inscriptions these monuments represent unique testimonies to reconstruct the previously vaguely known rich culture and history of the vast mountainous region which in its long history likewise separated and connected the great civilisations of High Asia and the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent: the regions, “where the empires meet”.



Fig. 5 - PGAM 2008: Alam Bridge, Harald Hauptmann, Martin Bemman, Akhtar Khan (standing, first from left), and a local helper. Rock carving: Procession with Buddha Statue on Elephant (Photo PGAM)
[See fn. 4 below].⁵

⁵ [Interestingly, the boulder with the graffitied image of the elephant is given as “undocumented” until 2019 in the caption of Figure 20 of Van Aerde, Mohns and Khan 2020. This information, as can be deduced from the photo reproduced above (taken in 2008) Aerde, Mohns and Khan 2020 = Aerde M.E.J.J. van, Mohns A.D.L. and Khan A.G.

In the impending Diamer-Bhasha dam reservoir covering an area of 32,000 acres only 88 archaeological sites including 121 rock carving sites with 37,046 petroglyphs, among them 3,610 inscriptions in Kharoṣṭhī, Brāhmī, Sogdian, Middle Iranian, and Chinese (one in Hebrew), have been systematically recorded. In 2009 a list of “the rock art sites that will be inundated by the future Diamer-Bhasha Dam Reservoir”, was compiled by the PGAM (in a masterplan). This list has been enlarged and finalized in 2015. The endangered sites along both banks of the Upper Indus are presented with the relevant coordinates. Rock carving sites beyond the borders of the future Diamer-Bhasha Reservoir are also endangered by the widening of the Karakorum Highway and the construction of new roads or merely by the need for building materials. There are many examples in main sites, especially on the southern route between Shatial and Alam Bridge, which testify the ongoing systematic blasting of boulders with petroglyphs.

The rock carvings can be attributed to seven different chronological main stages from the Late Stone Age (9th-8th millennium BCE) to the post-Buddhist period (after 9th century CE). A first selection for a representative exhibition in a local museum has been made by PGAM first in 2009 and from the Heidelberg archive in 2015, but since then many rock carvings have been destroyed or damaged by recently incised pictures and modern inscriptions. The aim of the field campaign around Chilas would be the scrutinizing of the actual condition of the first selection (of around 100 rock images which characterize the time range of around 12000 years). Some important Buddhist scenes such as in Chilas-Jayachand are painted with election propaganda and afford a cleaning by a specialized conservator to avoid the destruction of the rock's varnish.

Only a very small number of boulders with petroglyphs could be transferred from its original location to a future local museum in Chilas, but the most important images, which represent the highlights of the different stages of history such as of the two Buddhist periods, cover rock faces especially in the central region of Chilas-Thalpan. The sometimes-

(2020), Buddha on the Rocks, Gandharan Connections through the Karakorum Mountains. In Rienjang W. and Stewart P. (Eds.), *The Global Connections of Gandharan Art, Proceedings of the Third International Workshop of the Gandhara Connections Project, University of Oxford, 18th-19th March 2019*. Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing Ltd. 105].

proposed sawing petroglyphs from the granite rocks would require both a great expense and an unusual technical process, which would at least result in the destruction of the whole monument. Most of the rock faces beyond it show crevices. The process of cutting out an image would enlarge these fissures and would not lead to the desirable success. A most convenient way for the preservation of the most important around 100 rock images would be their documentation by 3D-scanning. Based on such digital documentation a later replication of the original images could be realized during a longer period by a specialized museum laboratory or a sculptor's workshop (the same procedure is practiced worldwide such as with some of the painted Franco-Cantabrian Stone Age caves in France and Spain). The 3D-scanning of around 100 rock images would afford three months at the minimum, since only one or two items can be coped with for one day.⁶

As a first step, the field work should be concentrated on the rock carving sites around Chilas and Thalpan, where the listed prominent rock images can more easily be examined concerning their conservation and actual condition. Rock carving sites with exceptional images on the northern bank of the Indus (Dardarbat Das, Thor North, Ba Das East, Gukona, etc.), which are only accessible by rafts, should be taken in consideration for the 3D-scanning process in a second step. The technical team should always be accompanied by an experienced archaeologist.

4.2 Archaeological sites and other historical architectural remnants

During the field surveys since 1989 also all historical sites such as ruins of ancient settlements, forts, singular building structures (control posts, fortified camps, rectangular enclosures, and resting places along the ancient routes on both banks of the river), also of possible monasteries or stūpas have been recorded (see the hill settlement of Patel Kot at Hodur village). Based on this documentation sites (such as the possible site of a monastery at Thalpan) should be selected for a systematic excavation. Other places should be exemplary documented by a team of topographers and architects: small settlements with (perhaps seasonal) round buildings

⁶ [In 2023, 3D technologies are much more advanced than at the time HH wrote these notes. For example, at present, team from LUMS (supported with funds from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) is actively engaged in a digital survey of the Diامر-Bhasha region (see <http://heritage360.pk/Diامر/Diامر.html>) and has posted almost 2000 3D models of individual rocks to site collections in Sketchfab: <https://sketchfab.com/cvlablums/collections>].

at Thor North, Ba Das, Mostar Nala. Rectangular enclosures at Khomar Das, Gali-Gukona. Such sites would not afford a systematic excavation, but in some better-preserved structures a cleaning of the interior space.

[4.2.1 Ancient settlements which could be recommended for an excavation (ref. to MANP maps)]:

- a) Thalpan, eastern part of the terrace: monumental structures with a flight of steps, possible ruins of a stūpa.
- b) Thalpan Village, lower terrace with illicit diggings: stone walls and stucco reliefs may indicate the location of a stūpa.
- c) Hodur: Hill settlement of Patelo Kot above the village (see: MANP 3, 1999).
- d) North bank of the Indus: Thor North, Ba Das, Mostar Nala. South bank: Turril Nala. Ruins of ancient settlements with assemblages of round structures (Ba Das: MANP 11). The aim of systematic architectural surveys and documentation of these sites with restricted cleaning of the round or oval stone circles: structure of the seasonal camps and their chronological and typological classification.
- e) Rectangular structures, perhaps fortified camps, or farmsteads: Gichoi Das (MANP 10, map 4.1), Khomar Das (opposite Chilas, MANP 10, map 3.1-2), Ba Das East, Gali – Gukona (MANP 11).
- f) Observation posts: Ba Das (MANP 11), Thak Nala South.
- g) Control posts and resting places for the caravans (simple stone walls for the mule`s or porter`s load (MANP 10/11).
- h) Singular monumental structure at Dardarbatl Das (Dadam Das) on terrace above Indus.
- i) Ancient cemeteries or singular graves at different sites have been severely plundered: exemplary is the destruction of the large cemetery with different tomb construction at Ges (with monumental buildings).



Fig. 6 - PGAM 2004: Takot 2004, mapping work by team member (Photo PGAM).

4.3 Methodological addendum

During the systematic field work in Diamer-Bhasha, the activities of both groups concerning rock carvings and other archaeological monuments should always be coordinated.



Fig. 7 - PGAM 2013: Rock paintings at Gohar Abad, Martin Bemann and Akhtar Khan (Photo PGAM).

Harald Hauptmann

Heidelberg, September 2015