INTRODUCTION

While perusing the sources of Kashmir history one encounters with an important fact that runs like a thread through its whole history: the Kashmiri culture is an extension of the civilizations that emerged on its borders. The traits of these civilizations transmitted to Kashmir through various sources, the most important being immigrants and settlers, empire builders, missionaries, fortune seekers and traders. The Neolithic culture which is the earliest fully known culture of Kashmir represents the traits of Chinese, Russian, Central Asian and Iranian cultures. This hybrid culture immigrated into Kashmir through northern, western and north-western borders of Kashmir in the wake of mass immigrations from these lands. The megalithic culture represented by menhirs, bronze, iron, rice, millet, grapes and stone walled houses emerged primarily because of new waves of immigrations from these borderlands. The coming of Aryans around 1000

---


B.C is also evidenced, though dimly, by the presence of gray ware.\textsuperscript{3} Then we see Kashmir becoming successively a part of Achaemenids, Mauryas, Indo-Greeks, Sakas, Parthians, Kushans, Kidarites and Huns.\textsuperscript{4} Following the integration of Kashmir with these great empires, far-reaching changes occurred in every sphere of its life in the wake of mass immigrations and the deliberate policies of the empire builders to seek cultural conquest of the annexed territories to ensure enduring political unification.

To be sure, the culture of Kashmir is essentially a diffusion-stimuli-culture; and in this diffusion Central Asia has played a major role for many obvious reasons. One that Central Asia is situated on the immediate borders of Kashmir and there are a number of passes which connect the valley with different parts of the region stretching from the modern Chinese Turkistan to the borders of Iran. Second, the empire builders who emerged on the borders of Kashmir and integrated Kashmir with their empires mostly belonged to Central Asia. No less important is the fact that Central Asian culture was a far-superior culture as being situated at the cross roads of many civilizations, it had imbibed the salient traits of all of them.

Towards the middle of the first century A.D a momentous development took place in Kashmir, which left a profound bearing on the life and conditions of its people. It was the occupation of Kashmir by a great power namely, Kushans whose empire extended from Central Asia to Mathura. The significance of Kushan period does not lie only in the fact that they ruled the valley for a long period but more significant is that the


\textsuperscript{4} Wani, Aman Ashraf, \textit{Exogenous Influence in Kashmir From the Neolithic Times to the Advent of the Christian Era}, unpublished M.Phil dissertation, Chapters V, VI and VII.
Kushans integrated Kashmir with a large empire inhabited by different culture groups. A sizeable number of these groups migrated to and settled in the Valley. And what is significant to note is that these immigrants belonged to the upper sections of the society, namely ruling class, missionaries, urban artists and craftsmen and men of letters. Trade and cultural links further fostered the ties between Kashmir and the neighbouring world. Through these varied sources, modes and channels new technology and culture transmitted to Kashmir. This is clear from the style of the Harwan stupa and its structural remains particularly its tiles and walls, tiles of Hutmur and Hoinar, terracotta figurines found at various places in the Valley, place names and the pre-eminence Kashmir achieved as a great centre of Buddhism. Referring to the importance of Harwan tiles as source for re-situating the Kashmir history in the context of global civilizations Percy Brown says,” In short these motifs (of Harwan tiles) are suggestive of the impact of half a dozen of alien civilizations of the ancient world.”

As a matter of fact Kushan occupation of Kashmir paved the way for the influx of a culture which was an amalgam of Chinese, Central Asian, Iranian, Greek and Indian civilizations, which far-reachingy promoted Kashmir’s technology, economy and culture besides giving it a cosmopolitan character. More importantly, Kashmir got integrated with the world market by giving the Kashmiri trader access to Silk Route which was under the control of the Kushans. That trade with the outside world was greatly promoted under the Kushans is substantiated by hoards of coins found on the trade routes between Kashmir and the neighbouring world.

It is very strange that notwithstanding a very significant and formative stage of Kashmir history, the Kushan period has been almost left out by the
historical works written in modern times. Most of the modern works dealing with the ancient history of Kashmir dismiss the pre-Karkota period within a few pages give an impression as if Kashmir had no past prior to the Karkota dynasty. It is only due to the work carried out by the archaeologists in recent times that the significance of early history has started gaining recognition among the historical circles. Among the archaeological discoveries are the artifacts belonging to the Kushan period, which proved too significant to skip the attention of scholars interested in social, cultural and economic history.

The ruins of Kushan sites attracted the attention of many archaeologists and art historians – both indigenous and foreign. Among them mention may be made of Percy Brown, R.C. Kak, Robert Fisher, S.L. Shali, J.L. Bhan, G.S. Gaur, Aijaz Bandey and a few others. They provide us with various view-points which help us in understanding and interpreting the significance of the Kushan ruins found at various sites in the Valley. Percy Brown in his book *Indian Architecture* (Buddhist and Hindu periods) makes a brief mention (not more than two paragraphs) about the Kushan art and architecture. He has summarized the significance of the Harwan tiles and enumerated the influences, which these tiles depict. His observation in this regard is worth quoting “.....they represent the motifs suggestive of more than half a dozen alien civilizations of the ancient world, besides other which are indigenous and local. Such are the Barhut railing, the Greek the Greek ‘Swag’, the Sassanian foliated bird, the Persian vase, the Roman rosette, the Chinese fret, the Indian elephant, the Assyrian lion, with figures of dancers, musicians, cavaliers, ascetics and radical types from many sources as may be seen by their customs and accessories..... The remains at
Harwan indicate that the memorable impact of diverse historic cultures,...also had repercussions on the arts of Kashmir.” Although the account of Percy Brown is remarkable, it is incomplete because Harwan ruins do not only constitute tiles, there are many other finds which are equally significant for the reconstruction of Kushan history. R. C. Kak’s *Ancient Monumets of Kashmir* makes a brief mention about Harwan and Ushkur, but his plates on Harwan tiles constitute an extremely rich repository of information. It is basically a source book with special reference to Harwan finds. S.L. Shali’s book *Kashmir: History and Archaeology through the Ages* contains archaeological data obtained from different sites, inspiring one to construct history by making the facts to speak. Aijaz Ahmad Bandey’s monogram *Early Terracotta Art of Kashmir* gives a description of various terracotta artifacts of Kushan period. He has also tried to place the finds in their proper context. Robert Fisher, intrigued by the motifs on the Harwan tiles, wrote an article in which he tried to analyze whether Harwan was a Buddhist establishment or not. Although he asserts that Harwan was originally inhabited by Ajivakas, he seems to be uncertain about his own conclusion; and hence titled his article *The Enigma of Harwan*. Prof. Gulshan Majid gave new dimension to the origin of Harwan tiles when he propounded his theory of Iranian influences on Harwan ruins in his article *Harwan Ruins: A Study of Iranian Influences*. He concludes that Harwan is not a Buddhist site and the asthpana at Harwan pertains to Zoroastrian goddess Anahita. The topic is still open to discussion. However, all early traditions believe Harwan to be a Buddhist Settlement. J. L. Bhan’s article, *Tile – A Vital link between Kashmir and*
Central Asia, provides an interesting information about some common features which the art of Kashmir shares with Iran and Central Asia.

Not withstanding the pioneering work done by the archaeologists, a systematic history of the Kushans in Kashmir has not been written so far. The present work is a humble attempt towards meeting this felt inadequacy in the available stock of historical literature on Kashmir. Needless to emphasise our work is based on whatever archaeological explorations have been conducted so far, and whatsoever little literary evidence has been handed down to us. We have also been benefited by the comparative method as the information on Kushan civilization particularly its presence in Gandhara, helped us to interpret the archaeological and literary evidence. After all, Gandhara acted as the immediate source of transmission of Kushan culture to Kashmir. Yet we are conscious of our limitations as want of the non-availability of adequate information precluded us from giving a comprehensive picture of the period. No doubt as compared to the period that preceded it we have a good deal of archaeological material, but the fact still remains that neither the data is sufficient for want of serious archaeological explorations, nor any work of the period has survived to us. Therefore the present work can not be more than an outline of Kashmir under the Kushan's. Yet until archaeology throws some refreshingly new light, the historians may have to remain contented with giving just a sketchy account owing to crippling gaps in sources.