

FROM MARVEL TO RUINS: STUDY OF HISTORIC SIKH BUILDINGS IN RAWALAKOT, POONCH

NIMRA TARIQ^{1*}

Abstract

This paper aims to document and investigate the remnants of Sikh Samadhis in Rawalakot, Poonch, located in Pakistan administered Jammu and Kashmir. This paper will focus on two significant sites, namely, the Gulshan-e-Shauda Gurdwara and the Gurdwara Sahib Draid. Contemporary archaeological surveys in Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir classify these structures as Gurdwaras, but the researcher contends that their architectural characteristics and intended use merit reclassification as Samadhis. It will explore the cultural myths and stories associated with these buildings, as these narratives often provide a deeper understanding of tangible heritage and help unravel the mysteries of time. Furthermore, this study will document the construction style, layout, and overall structure of these Samadhis. It is important to note that a significant portion of the Sikh population was compelled to abandon their homes and religious sites in the areas of present-day Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir during the violence in 1947. Consequently, they migrated to Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, leaving behind these religious sites. This paper will illustrate the connections established by the Sikh community with these sites from the other side of the Line of Control (LOC). The data were collected through primary and secondary methods. They included archive reviews, old texts, interviews, focus groups, and site visits.

Keywords: Samadhi, Sikh Period, Pakistan administered Jammu and Kashmir, Rawalakot, Construction, Conflict

Cite This Article:

Nimra Tariq. (2024). From Marvel to Ruins: Study of Sikh Buildings in Rawalakot, Poonch. *Asian Journal of Civilizational Studies (AJOCS)*, 6 (1), 27-48.

INTRODUCTION

Present-day Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) is a semi-autonomous state within Pakistan, marked by a longstanding territorial dispute between India and Pakistan. Historically, this region comprised areas known as Darvabhisara, Karnaha, Dardah, surrounded by the Lohar/Lohara Kotta and Parnosta/Poonch (Ahmad, 2019). These territories were distinct from the Kashmir Valley and were occupied by the Rajas and Sultans of Kashmir (Ahmad, 2019). They had a diverse population comprising Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims.

The start of Dogra rule in Jammu and Kashmir initiated religious divisions that escalated into violent conflicts during the reign of the Dogras, and intensified in the 1947 partition of

¹ Lahore University of Management Sciences

Corresponding Author:

NIMRA TARIQ, Lahore University of Management Sciences
E-mail: nimra.tariq058@gmail.com

Pakistan and India. The Sikh community, which once resided in the region now administered by Pakistan, faced significant challenges during this period.

In the aftermath of the events of August 1947, the people of Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir were forced to abandon their homes and religious sites due to a series of violent events. Including communal tensions resulting from local uprisings, the intervention of the Indian military, and the incursion of tribal forces from Pakistan. Consequently, a substantial Sikh population from Rawalakot was compelled to migrate, leading to the abandonment of their religious sites. These deserted sites now serve as a testament to the region's once diverse religious history.

This research focuses on the remnants of two major Sikh religious sites in Rawalakot, Poonch, located within Pakistan-administered Kashmir: the Gulshan-e-Shauda Gurdwara and the Gurdwara Sahib Draid. To gather data, I utilized archival sources, conducted archaeological research surveys, interviewed residents, and conducted field visits. This paper aims to demonstrate that these religious sites should be reclassified Samadhis rather than Gurdwaras, based on their architectural characteristics and historical social functions. Additionally, this research will delve into the architectural features, styles, and construction of these Samadhis and analyze their social roles in the past and their contemporary relevance.

The earthquake of 2005 inflicted significant damage on the infrastructure of Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir. This paper will also document the impact of the 2005 earthquake on these Samadhis.

PAKISTAN ADMINISTERED JAMMU AND KASHMIR

In 1947, at the time of independence and the separation of the sub-continent, Jammu and Kashmir were grappling with internal uprisings against Maharaja Ranjit Singh, starting from the Poonch valley (Mohan,1992). With the creation of Pakistan and India, tribesmen from Pakistan's Northwest entered Jammu and Kashmir, attacking the Dogra army and civilians. As a result of internal political upheavals and tribal attacks, Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession, leading to the deployment of Indian troops and the outbreak of the First Indo-Pak War (Mohan,1992). This conflict resulted in a ceasefire and the creation of Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir and Indian-administered Jammu Kashmir.

This land dispute has resulted in political and military tensions between the two states, creating one of the most heavily militarized regions in the world and frequent military conflicts (Mohan,1992). However, the unresolved situation in Jammu and Kashmir continues to fuel public discontent. This dissatisfaction was also reflected in the armed struggle against the Indian government in the 1980s, where there were allegations of human rights violations and border crossings by the military.

The violence and riots of 1947 led to the mass migration of Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim populations from regions comprising Pakistan and Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir (Ahmad, 2019). Sikhs, against their will, migrated from Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir to Indian Jammu and Kashmir to protect their lives, leaving behind their homes and religious sites. Over time, the identities of these religious monuments became obscured due to the political erasure of the Sikh past of the region, aimed at creating a Muslim majority to fit the national identity of Pakistan and the displacement of the Sikh population.

District Poonch

Poonch, now divided by the Line of Control (LOC), was historically a jagir. Over time, it has been referred to as Parnosta, Prunch, Panonach, and Poonch (Ahmad, 2019). The Kashmiri population primarily knew it as Prunch (R. Lawrence, 2002). These Sanskrit terms collectively denote the outer geographical precincts of a state, as Azad asserts, implying that this specific region functioned as a natural extension of the primary Kashmir Valley (1975). Its neighbor, Kashmir, wielded significant influence, which often left Poonch at its mercy (Cunningham, 1871). While historical records often depict this area as a dependency or an occupied zone, Poonch occasionally enjoyed periods of independence.

Geographically, Poonch shares its boundaries with the Kashmir Valley to the east, Muzaffarabad to the northeast, Pakistan's Potohar region to the west, and Jammu to the south (Azad, 1975). In 1836, this jagir covered an area of 1600 square miles (Azad, 1975). The population in 1947 was approximately 4.21 lakhs, with ninety-five percent being Muslims (Azad, 1975).

This region stretches from Jhelum to Pir Panjal (Sagheer, 2001) and shares significant mountainous borders with the Kashmir Valley and the Potohar region of Pakistan, resulting in shared traditional and cultural heritage (Azad, 1975). Historical records related to this region are notably scarce, necessitating historians to rely on analysis and speculative approaches to reconstruct its past, through connections to the Kashmir Valley or not (Azad, 1975).

Poonch, as the capital of the Loharkott dynasty, played a significant role in the history of the Kashmir Valley (Azad, 1975; Ahmad, 2019). After Lohar Kot, this region continued to be under the control of various strong rulers of Kashmir (Azad, 1975). Between the tenth century and 1347 AD, when Kashmir was ruled by Muslim kings, the upper regions of Poonch were ruled by Hindu kings from Kashmiri dynasties, while the lower regions were under local kings (Azad, 1975). These local rulers were either autonomous or under the influence of Punjabi kings (Azad, 1975). Many of these local kings had their own fortresses and courts, some of which still exist as ruins today. In 1013, Sultan Mahmood Ghazni attempted to conquer Lohara (Poonch), but he was unsuccessful (Sagheer, 2001). Poonch also served as a center for religious preachers who arrived with Shah-e-Hamdan to propagate Islam in the Kashmir Valley (Sagheer, 2001). In 1586, Kashmir was under the rule of the Chak dynasty before being conquered by Akbar and incorporated into the Mughal Empire. During this period, Poonch remained under the governance of local rulers. In 1836, Poonch came under the control of the Dogra rulers when Maharaja Ranjeet Singh granted this area to Hira Singh as a jagir (Azad, 1975). This political shift introduced the numbrdar system in Poonch, which closely collaborated with the Dogra rulers (Azad, 1975) and further accentuated caste differences with the allocation of land to specific tribes (Azad, 1975).

After the partition of India in 1947, Poonch in Pakistan remained a single district, although some areas became part of the Kotli district (Sagheer, 2001). Due to population growth, it was subsequently divided into two districts: Poonch and Bagh (Sagheer, 2001). More recently, Poonch has been further subdivided into two new districts: Poonch and Sudhanoti (Sagheer, 2001).

Presently, Poonch consists of three tehsils: Rawalakot, Hajira, and Abbaspur, with Rawalakot being one of its constituent valleys. Poonch played a critical role in starting the

rebellion against MMahaaraja and faced worst religious and and ethnic violence in 1947 (Sagheer, 2001). (Sagheer, 2001).

Rawalakot Valley

This valley is a part of the Poonch Valley or district, characterized by its flat terrain enclosed by mountains (Azad, 1975). The lower region of this area forms a valley containing numerous smaller valleys within it (Azad, 1975). A stream, known as a 'nalla,' flows through the center of this valley, which further joins the mainstream called 'goi nala.' Rawalakot serves as the modern-day capital of the Poonch district (Sagheer, 2001), situated at an elevation of 1638 meters. It is positioned within the Pir Panjal range, precisely at 33°51'32.18"N latitude and 73°45'34.93"E longitude. Rawalakot has a historical significance, as it played a pivotal role in the Poonch uprising against Dogra rule.

Sikh Period

The Sikh period extended from 1819 CE to 1839 CE. Gujjar Singh was tasked with capturing the hilly Muslim states by Ranjit Singh. He initiated his conquest with the capture of Bhimber, followed by advances into Kotli, Mirpur, Shahdra, Cahumukh, and Poonch, effectively integrating these hilly Muslim states into the Sikh state (Jhelum Gazetteer, 1904).

In 1814, Ranjit Singh launched an attack on Kashmir in response to an invitation from the Hindus of the region (Qazi, 1993: Fauq, 1934). In 1229 AH, Ranjit Singh began a campaign against Kashmir. While he stationed himself in Poonch, his army entered Kashmir via Tosh Maidan and Sado (Ahmad, 2019). They faced initial defeat at the hands of Kashmiri forces. Nevertheless, Ranjit Singh successfully took control of Kashmir in 1234 AH by entering through Warpal and Poshiana. During this period, Ranjit Singh halted at Kari, serving as the gateway to Pahari Rajadoms, where the Sudhan tribe surrendered to him (Azad, 1973). There was an attempt by Birbal Sahib kar to form an alliance with the raja of Pahar; however, he was apprehended and sent to Lahore (Qazi, 1933). By the close of 1819, Kashmir and its surrounding hill kingdoms had become part of the Sikh Khalsa under Ranjit Singh's rule (Huttenback, 1968).

With control over Kashmir and the neighboring Pahadi rajadoms, Ranjit Singh entrusted the outer hills of Kashmir to the Dogras in 1822 CE. Jammu was assigned to Gulab Singh and Dhian Singh.

To prevent future resistance, Gulab Singh appointed Shams Khan, the raja of Poonch, as an advisor to Dilbagh Rai, who was appointed as the Kardar (Fauq, 1931). Shams Khan Maldyal, without Gulab Singh's permission, entered Poonch, a territory he once controlled (Fauq, 1931). In retaliation, Gulab Singh launched a substantial military campaign against Poonch. Shams Khan sought refuge with the chief of Sadhuran, who, under threat from Gulab Singh, ultimately killed Shams Khan and his nephew, sending their heads to Gulab Singh. During Dogra rule, Lahore Jagir's influence and interference in politics and power distribution in Kashmir and its neighboring areas were significant, as Dogras were appointed by Ranjit Singh.

In 1840, the British dissolved the Sikh Khalsa after Ranjit Singh's death (Huttenback, 1968). In 1846, Gulab Singh was officially recognized as the ruler of Kashmir and the hill states by the British Raj. In 1886, a lawsuit was filed in a British court in Lahore by the sons of Dhian for custody of the hill states of Poonch, Bhimber, Chabal, and Jasrota. On 12th May 1884, Sir Frederick resolved the matter by sending them to Gulab Singh for discussions, leading to these states being granted semi-independent status (Fauq, 1931).

In 1947, following the British exit from the sub-continent, violence erupted throughout the region, leading to clashes and rebellions against Hari Singh in Jammu and Kashmir. In dire circumstances, Maharaja approached the Prime Minister of India and signed a treaty (Azad, 1975; Rashid, 2020), seeking assistance in quelling the mutiny, in exchange for Jammu and Kashmir remaining a semi-independent state within India. However, tribal forces from the tribal areas of Pakistan infiltrated the region of Azad Jammu Kashmir, leading to clashes between tribal groups, local armed factions, and the Indian army.

The wave of violence initiated with the Dogra regime's actions in Poonch in response to a rebellion (Rashid, 2020). This violence, coupled with the incursion of tribal fighters from Pakistani territories, ignited communal violence in Poonch and Jammu. Massacres occurred involving Muslims and Sikhs in different parts of Jammu (Rashid, 2020). The spread of rumors about violence and killings in one area triggered further violence in other locations. Rumors of mistreatment of Muslims in Jammu fueled violence against Hindus and Sikhs.

These violent events and killings resulted in mass displacements of Muslims from Jammu and Sikhs and Hindus from Poonch, leading to a significant demographic shift in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Archaeological study and research have received little attention in Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir. This area was not studied by some of the famous researchers who worked on archaeology and historical sites in Kashmir, such as Buhler, Cunningham, Stein, and Marshall (Ahmad, 2019). This was mainly due to political unrest in the region before 1947. However, Frederic Drew, in his work *The Jammu and Kashmir Territories: A Geographical Account*, provided some insights in 1875 into the archaeology of this region.

In 2014, AJK Tourism Department and TIAC compiled a list of one hundred archaeological and historic sites in AJK (Khan and Rahman, 2016). They visited one site being studied in this research, Gulshan-e-shuada Gurdwara Rawalakot, and provided detailed descriptions (Khan and Rahman, 2016).

Mr. Irshad Ahmad, the head of archaeology in AJ&K, published his list of archaeological sites in the region. In 2019, Muzaffar Ahmad published his book, *History and Archaeology of Azad Jammu and Kashmir*, which sketched the history of AJ&K using all the available written resources and archaeological evidence. Dr. Ruksana Shah, during her master's and doctoral thesis with TIAC, worked on historical sites in Neelum and corresponding areas of AJ&K. She was able to excavate an ancient stone structure commonly identified as a temple or a university.

A conspicuous scholarly gap exists in the research pertaining to historical monuments within the domain of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K), with specific emphasis on the Poonch region.

The town of Rawalakot, therefore, offers a compelling opportunity for the comprehensive investigation and documentation of historical monuments within this geographical location.

There are few non-archaeological Urdu resources that provide information about the art history and archaeology of this region. Syed Muhammad Azad, in his *Tareekh-i-Poonch*, discusses ruins as proof of the existence of dynasties in the Poonch region (1975). He also provides information about the historic buildings found in the region. Dr. Muhammad Sagheer Khan, in his book *Poonch ki Tahzeeb o Sakafat*, gives details about the archaeological and historical sites in Poonch (2001). He also mentions the sites under study in this research in Rawalakot. Dr. Muhammad Sagheer Khan and Syed Muhammad Azad relied on their personal experiences and observations in the Poonch region to provide these insights.

Considerable research work in this field has been done in the Indian-administered Jammu Kashmir (Ahmad, 2019). There were also studies before 1947 that focused on the Kashmir valley and Jammu. Numerous studies have been conducted in Pakistani border areas close to AJK (Ahmad, 2019). *Kashmir Archaeology*, written by Iqbal Ahmad, has a chapter on the ancient monuments of Kashmir. It describes the general architectural features of different periods in Kashmir's history (2007). The article *Mountain Temples and Temple-Mountains* by Michael W. Meister provides descriptions of the famous temples of Kashmir and their ground plans (2006).

Suman Jamwal's *Development of Religion and Religious Structures in the Jammu Region* elucidates the features of religious architecture associated with Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam in Jammu. It also explains the ceremonies and activities that occur in these religious buildings (2006). *The Rich Heritage of Architectural Monuments, Sacred Shrines, and the Uniqueness of Dogra Culture in Jammu*, written by Vasundhra, provides information about some famous historical sites in the Jammu province of Jammu and Kashmir (2001). It elaborates on the impact of Dogra rule on the architecture of the area. This article is relevant to this study as Samadhi's understudy was most likely built during the Sikh and Dogra periods, providing relevant information for the analysis. *Indian Temple Architecture: A Case Study of Jammu Temples* by Anoop Kumar and Vinod Kumar discusses the style of temples within the Jammu city (2015). There has been little work done on the Sikh period architecture of Jammu and Kashmir. The Dogra period has remained the center of attention for researchers because of its historical significance in its relationship with the Sikh government in Lahore under Ranjit Singh and the British government. Dogras were mostly focused on the construction of Hindu temples, hence more work is available on Dogra Hindu temples.

Poonch was under Lahore raj before coming under the rule of Dogras. It was one of the connecting routes for Punjab and the Kashmir valley, hence it had a strong Punjabi impact on its construction style.

METHODOLOGY

The data collection process incorporated both secondary and primary research methodologies. Secondary data was accessed from reputable academic institutions, such as LUMS (Lahore University of Management Sciences) and the Punjab University library, in addition to various online resources. Additionally, some relevant books were provided by Mr. Ghaffoor, the assistant director of the Department of Archaeology, Punjab.

Conducting primary research involved engaging with the local communities residing close to the buildings. Interviews were conducted with a cohort of more than eight individuals, both men and women, whose age exceeded seventy years, ensuring valuable insights into the historical significance of these structures. The information gleaned from primary research was then meticulously compared and aligned with the data gathered from secondary sources, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of these architectural landmarks.

AIMS

This academic endeavor aims to contribute to the archaeological understanding of Rawalakot, Poonch, by focusing on the documentation and preservation of Sikh archaeological heritage within the region. It aims to clarify the identity of the Sikh holy buildings in Rawalakot as Samadhis, though commonly known as Gurdwaras. The research aims to shed light on the historical diversity of religious communities that have inhabited the area over the years, as manifested through their distinctive architectural styles. This paper will illustrate the connections established by the Sikh community with these sites from the other side of the Line of Control (LOC). Additionally, this research will delve into the architectural features, styles, and construction of these Samadhis and analyze their social roles in the past and their contemporary relevance. The research methodology involves meticulously recording data from all available literary sources and the oral memories of local elders, aiming to construct a comprehensive and accurate account of the cultural and religious past of Rawalakot, Poonch. Through this multidimensional investigation, the project seeks to enhance our understanding of the region's rich heritage and contribute to the broader fields of archaeology and historical studies.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SAMADHI AND GURDWARA

In Sikhism the difference between Samadhi lies between architectural and functional differences. A Samadhi is a simple structure, built to pay homage to a revered spiritual figure in Sikhism (Singha,2000). It provides space for individual meditation and Prayers. On other hand Gurdwaras have an elaborate architectural style depicting the theme of community and simplicity essential to Sikhism (Singha,2000). It is structured around a main hall, called Darbar Sahib, it is the main congregational area. In front of it is a raised platform, Takht, Guru Granth Sahab. It was built for community purposes, so it usually has a langar to feed the community, and a guest house to house travelers (Singh,2003). Gurdwaras also include domed structures and Nishan Sahibs, tall flags representing Sikhism. They represent Omnipresence of Waheguru and emphasize equality of all individuals in front of God. Gurdwaras also have open courtyards known as Sarovars, which are sacred pools of water.

GULSHAN-E-SHUADA TEMPLE/ GURDWARA

These days, this temple is referred to as Gulshan-e-Shauda Temple/Gurdwara because of its proximity to the Gulshan-e-Shauda housing scheme. According to Google Maps, this building is marked as "Dairi Sahib"; however, its original name remains unknown. Locals call this

building Dairi siri (Arif, personal communication, December 15, 2021). This Samadhi is also called Chapa-ni-ta'ar by some locals (Nazir, personal communication, December 16, 2021). The area associated with the site is called Dharamshal. Sometimes labeled as a Hindu temple, this building's architecture markedly differs from the typical Pahari-style temples found in the Poonch valley. It lacks the elaborate stone dome and dedicated deity niche commonly observed in such temples.

In the prevailing discourse, the edifice under investigation has been designated as a Gurdwara; however, multiple interactions with residents have consistently indicated the presence of ashes interred within the building. Gurdwara refers to a sacred Sikh shrine erected to honor the visit or stay of Sikh Gurus at a specific location (Arshi, 1986). Following the demise of the 10th Guru, Guru Granth Sahib is revered as the eternal Guru (Bansal, 2015). Gurdwara now serves as a dwelling place for the Gurus. Within Sikhism, a Samadhi is constructed to commemorate esteemed and revered personalities of the community who have passed away (Khan, 2021). They usually have the ashes of the person after cremation buried in them. Informants reported that this building was built to commemorate Sikh spiritual leaders. Post-1947, Sikh migrants revisited Azad Jammu Kashmir and took the ashes from the building with them (Rasheed, personal communication, December 27, 2021). This reflects that the ashes were Holy to the community, and they were buried in the building.

At times, Samadhis undergo conversion into Gurdwaras, as exemplified by the transformation of the Samadhi of Baba Atal (Khan, 2020). While it is plausible that this site may have experienced a conversion from Samadhi to Gurdwara, no concrete evidence substantiates such a transformation. The size of the Gurdwara is proportional to the size of the community in any area, which means a larger Gurdwara was built for the larger community (Arshi, 1986). In this regard, Gulshan-e-Shauda Samadhi should have been big as it hosted Sikhs of Rawalakot and all the neighboring areas. However, this structure, including all the missing structures: a hall and rectangular room, is not sufficient to accommodate all the population.

Location

This historic site is located 10 km northeast of Rawalakot city near the Gulshan-e-Shauda housing scheme. It is situated on a flat area atop a mountainous mound. This site offers a panoramic view of Rawalakot valley and the surrounding mountains. During the summers and spring, the Samadhi and its surroundings are adorned with greenery. Access to this Samadhi is via a road extending from Rawalakot's main entrance road. This Samadhi is in proximity to an area that had a majority Sikh population before 1947. In its vicinity, there is a spring called Sikhai da Nada, which served as a major water source for the community both before and after 1947.

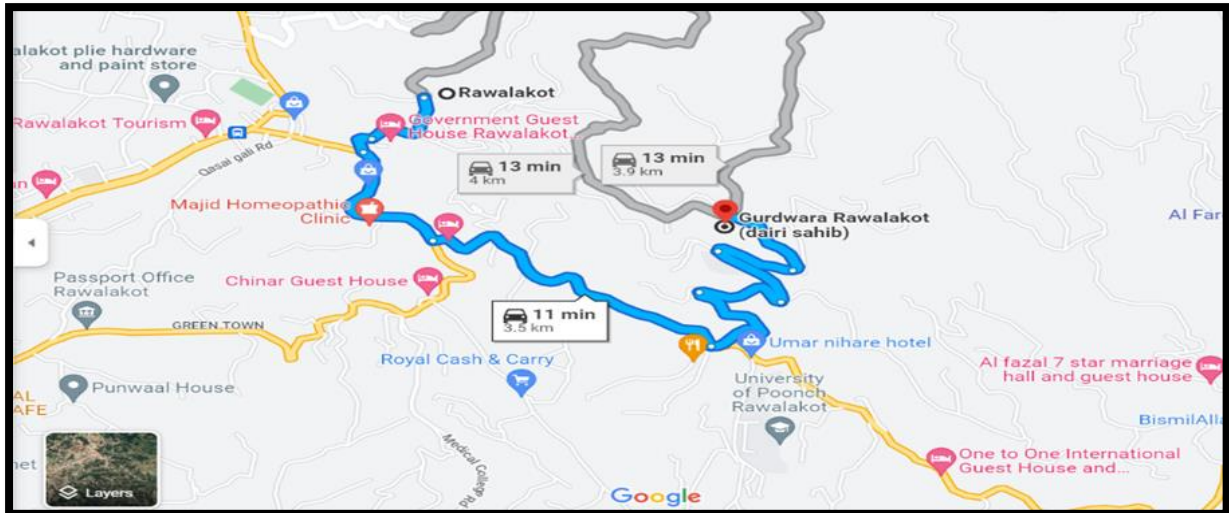


Figure 2.1 Distance and location of Gulshan-e-shauda Samadhi in reference to Rawalakot city (Google maps, 2021).

Construction Time

This building was constructed approximately 150-200 years ago (Arif, personal communication, December 15, 2021). It was tentatively constructed during the Sikh period (Khan and Rahman, 2016).

Measurements

The octagonal-shaped platform has a circumference of 32 m, and its extensions (external) are 2.30 m. The lintel measures 124 cm in length, 38 cm in width, and 9.30 cm in thickness. The entrance of the building is 170 cm high and 106 cm wide. The associated structure on the site is 4.70 m long and 6 m wide. The small room in the interior is 2.50 meters in length, and the hall is 2.37 m long, with the wall being 0.27 m in width. The total length of the site is 32 m, and its width is 18 m. The longest stone slab in the building is 0.7 m.

Construction Material

This building is constructed from limestone stones. It uses lime mortar to bind the stones in the building. The interior is plastered and painted, while the roof of the Samadhi is made of scorched bricks (Khan and Rahman, 2016). The stones used in the construction of the building are rectangular and vary in size.

Construction Style

The stones used in building construction are arranged horizontally, with lime mortar visible on the exterior. The dome's top interior is made of brick, while the exterior base is constructed using stone. The gutter of the dome consists of larger rectangular stones, and the conic shelf is made of stone slabs. The platform is also constructed using various stones of different sizes.

The building is entirely made of stone, with no use of wood in its structure, which differs from the typical architecture of the region at the time. In contrast, other Sikh architecture in the neighboring locality was constructed using mud and wood, similar to most residential buildings (Rasheed, personal communication, December 27, 2021). The choice of stone for this Samadhi's construction underscores its significance to the Sikh community.

Plan

This building has a hexagonal plan and is built on an octagonal platform (Khan and Rahman, 2016). It is oriented towards the South. As the building is constructed on a cliff, its platform is uneven. This plan resembles the 19th-century Samadhis built in Lahore, which had octagonal and square plans (Khan, 2020). Poonch was part of Lahore Jagir under Maharaja Ranjit Singh; hence, the structure and plan could have been influenced by Samadhis in Punjab.

Structure

There is a staircase of five to seven steps on the building's North-East side. The monument's entrance features an arch, now present only as a lintel (Khan and Rahman, 2016). The building's roof is shaped like a semi-circle and has a defined gutter and cornice shelf. The edges of the wall are finely crafted, and the walls are smooth and well-ordered. According to research conducted by the Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, there are traces of remains of a hall and a rectangular room right in front of the standing building (Khan and Rahman, 2016).

The interior of the present structure consists of a single room with a missing door. The room has extensions inside it, and it lacks windows, which is typical of Kashmiri stone temples from the Hindu period. There is no source of light inside the building other than the door. It lacks any structure for communal accommodation, like langar and Sarovaras. However, it has dome structure that is present in most Gurdwaras, but it is not exclusive to Gurdwaras, it symbolizes omnipresence of God and can be present in any Sikh holy structure. Its main structure lacks the space for any communal religious activity that is central to a Gurdwara.

Decorations

There are no signs or evidence of decorations on the exterior or interior of the building. Nevertheless, an examination of the walls inside the edifice revealed traces of plaster and limestone, indicating the possibility that the walls might have been whitewashed and plastered at some point in the past. The natural color of the rocks is maintained on the exterior. The dome of the building is neither painted nor plastered.

Damage

The building is heavily damaged and neglected. Both the interior and exterior require preservation and attention from the tourism and archaeological department of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Interior

The interior of the Samadhi is in a state of disrepair. The floor of the Samadhi is cracked and has depressions in places, indicating that some illegal excavations may have taken place in the building. These excavations could have been attempts to retrieve rumored buried treasures. According to one interviewee, a former Sikh who remained in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and converted to Islam in 1947-1948, the digging was conducted by displaced members of the Sikh community who returned to retrieve the ashes of their holy figure. The walls bear marks of carvings, ashes, and smoke. The interior of the dome also exhibits some cracks, most likely resulting from the earthquake in 2005.

Exterior

The exterior of the building is in a state of severe disrepair. Cracks mar the walls, and on one side, stones are missing. Much of this damage can be attributed to the 2005 earthquake (Arif, personal communication, December 15, 2021). Additionally, some damage occurred during and after the violence of the 1947 partition when individuals attempted to harm the building as a symbol of the Sikh presence in the area, seeking revenge against the Sikh community.

The walls are covered with wall chalking and murals of a political nature, featuring pictures of figures like Che Guevara, a Marxist revolutionary who played a significant role in the Cuban revolution, and Maqbool Bhat, a Kashmiri nationalist and freedom fighter. The building's roof is overgrown with vegetation due to neglect by the authorities and is significantly damaged, with the bricks deteriorating rapidly. Both tourists and locals climb on the roof, exacerbating the damage. The Pakistan military has also conducted training exercises in the vicinity of the historic monument, with some morchas remaining near the building. The deployment of ammunition and air travel in the vicinity can contribute to further damage.

The government has constructed a park just a few meters from the Samadhi, increasing the likelihood of damage. Local children frequent the area, often scratching and writing on the walls and attempting to climb the building.

Myths And Stories

This Samadhi was built in remembrance of two brothers, Balband Singh and Rocha Singh, who were considered pious and holy by the local people (Rasheed, personal communication, December 27, 2021). These brothers were locally known as wahi. They spent time in prayer and meditation at the site of the Samadhi (Rasheed, personal communication, December 27, 2021). These brothers were believed to have moved a heavy rock with just the touch of their fingers, and this building was erected at that spot to commemorate them.

There is a story of a woman who roamed the building for fifteen days. Once she left, people found a five-foot pit in the building that was dug to unearth the rumored treasure left by the Sikh community (Arif, personal communication, December 15, 2021). There are also stories about hidden Sikh treasures within the building (Nazir, personal communication, December 15, 2021).

Events And Prayers

One informant reported that the building was the center of a celebration on the first day of Baisakhi. This Samadhi was a central religious site for Sikhs from all the neighboring areas of Rawalakot: Dhamni, Topa, Kotla, Banio, and Taradkhal (Rasheed, personal communication, December 27, 2021). During this event, Sikhs from all over Rawalakot and neighboring areas congregated at the Samadhi. They would wear yellow cloth strips across their necks that would extend to their upper bodies and carry red flags (Arif, personal communication, December 15, 2021). Gatka, a sword martial arts performance mostly associated with Sikhs in Punjab, was also performed (Rasheed, personal communication, December 27, 2021). Food was cooked and distributed among the people, with a special emphasis on sweet delicacies; Muslims and Hindus avoided eating food cooked by each other, and raw food materials were given to Muslims to cook their food. This event was attended by both men and women. Muslim and Hindu men were also welcomed to observe the event. There was an outdoor arrangement outside Samadhi for the Baisakhi event shamiana and chataye (Rasheed, personal communication, December 27, 2021). Another informant reported that before all the festivities, people recited Granth Saheb. There was a presence of security officials from the regimes; one informant reported the presence of Dogra police in 1946 (Rasheed, personal communication, December 27, 2021).

Present Condition

In its current state, this building is partially damaged (Khan and Rahman, 2016). It can be maintained and preserved to promote tourism and religious pilgrimage in the area. Such preservation efforts could bring revenue to the local community and help bridge religious differences among the people.



Figure 2.2 Inside view of dome of Gulshan-e-shauda Samadhi.

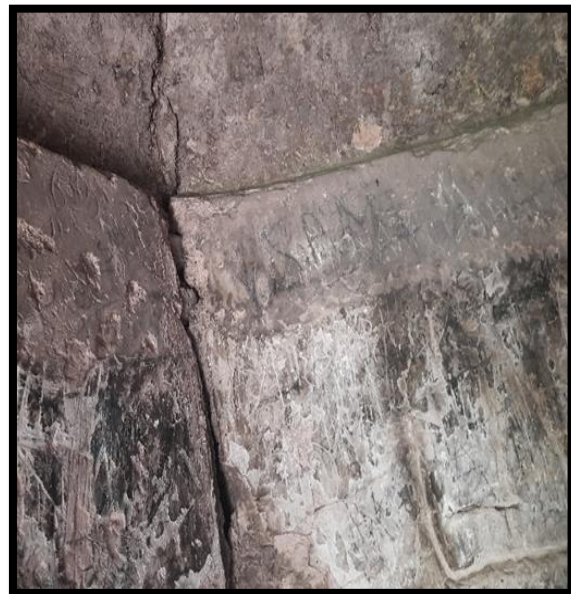


Figure 2.3 Damaged walls of Gulshan-e-Samadhi.



Figure 2.4: Front view of Gulshan-e-Shauda Samadhi



Figure 2.5 Damaged exterior wall of Gulshan-e-shauda Samadhi.



Figure 2.6 Back view of Gulshan-e-Shauda Samadhi.



Figure 2.7 Side view of Gulshan- Shauda Samadhi.

GURDWARA SAHIB DRAIB

The structure under investigation is commonly identified as a Gurdwara; however, its limited size renders it inadequate to fulfill the communal functions typically associated with

Gurdwaras, nor does it possess sufficient capacity to accommodate the sacred scripture, Guru Granth Sahib. Moreover, it contains the cremated remains of a revered Sikh leader, Rocha Singh, interred within its premises. This evidence suggests a strong likelihood that the edifice is, in fact, a Samadhi (Arif, personal communication, December 16, 2021). This Samadhi was privately owned by a family. The head of the family was popularly known as pai (Nazir, private conversation, December 16, 2021).

It is situated on the land of Ravail Singh and his son Tara Singh (Arif, personal communication, December 1, 2021). This family was one of the wealthiest families in the area before 1947. The owners of the Samadhi still maintain contact with the local community (Nazir, personal communication, December 16, 2021).

This Samadhi had a Gurdwara beside it, constructed in the traditional/common architectural style of homes using mud and wood (Arif, personal communication, December 16, 2021). The Gurdwara was buried during the riots of 1947. It featured floral and vegetative decorations. A Shamshan ghat, a place where Sikh people cremate their deceased, is located within a five-minute walking distance from this Samadhi. As this Samadhi is privately owned and relatively small in size, it is not mentioned in any literature. It is situated right next to residential houses, which is why it is not recognized as a tourist destination. There has been no archaeological work conducted on this Samadhi.

Location

This site is located in an area called Daraid within the Raqba of Dahmni. It is a forty-minute drive from Rawalakot's main city to reach this old building. It is situated in close proximity to a kas. This kas also has a Shamshan ghat, a place where Sikh people cremate their deceased, next to it. Daraid had a majority Sikh population before 1947 (Arif, personal communication, December 16, 2021). Muslims and Hindus were in the minority in the region. The Samadhi is adorned with a 600-year-old Chinar tree next to it (Nazir, personal communication, December 16, 2021). The leaves of this tree were used for medicinal purposes by the local Sikh community.

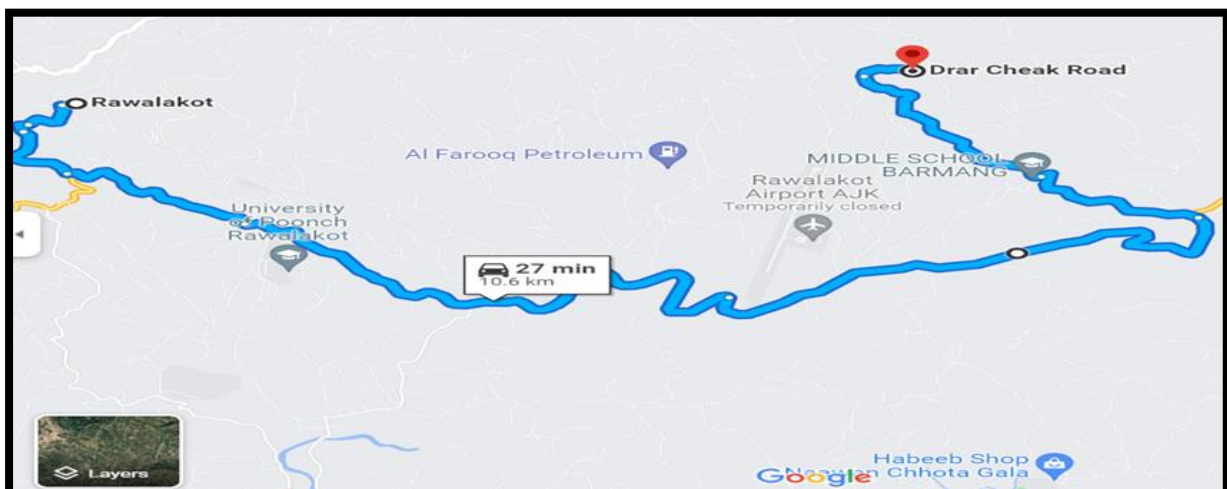


Figure 3.1 Location of rakba Draid in reference to Rawalakot city (Google maps, 2021).

Construction Time

This Samadhi was constructed some 200 years ago in the 19th century (Ashraf and Arif, personal communication, December 16, 2021). It was constructed on a private tender by a local wealthy Sikh family. The labor force working on the building was mostly Muslim, especially the Awan family (Ashraf, personal communication, December 16, 2021).

Measurements

The floor of the building is 3.9 meters from all four sides. The back side wall of the building is 6.5 meters, while the front side wall is 6.6 meters. The side walls of the building are 6.5 meters. The entrance of the building is 3.11 meters tall and 1.3 meters wide. The entrance is facing the South-West direction.

Construction Material

The Samadhi is constructed with chiseled stone. The stones are placed horizontally, and there is the use of mud-plaster to hold them together. The entrance is made using three big stone slabs: two arranged vertically and one horizontally. The semi-circular dome of the building is also made of stones.

Construction Style

The building features a semi-circular dome with a square room. It possesses only one entrance, and there was no evidence of a constructed stairway.

Plan

This Samadhi follows a rectangular plan and does not include a platform for the building.

Structure

The building comprises a single room with only one entrance, lacking any other openings. The doorway entrance features two holes on the lower and upper sides, which could have been used to support the door. The door is currently missing; however, it was also made of stone (Arif, personal communication, December 16, 2021). The building boasts a semi-circular dome with a well-defined gutter and a conic shelf. This square room has space for only two people at a time. It lacks all the features associated with a Gurdwara like a central hall, Takht, Sarovars, and a langar hall. However, it is simple and easily accessible to an individual, aligning with the function and architecture of a Samadhi. In addition to this its door is very small for the use of a communal congregation as only one person can enter it in a bend position again aligning with the role of a Samadhi.

Decorations

The exterior walls of the building have been whitewashed. There are also traces of plaster and color on the interior walls. The internal side of the dome is also plastered. The entrance displays flower patterns carved onto it, with three flowers arranged in a circle on top of the stone slab. A triangular pattern, formed by curvilinear lines, separates these three flowers, with one flower situated in the middle of the triangular pattern. The side slabs also feature decorations in the form of three registers. The largest register (wall side) showcases flowers, the second register contains semi-circular projections, and the third register features petal-shaped carvings. These decorations adorn the edges of the entrance. These carvings have been whitewashed, along with the building's walls, dated back to pre-1947 (Ashraf, personal communication, December 16, 2021). Additionally, there was a Khanda, a Sikh emblem consisting of double swords, on top of the dome (Arif, personal communication, December 16, 2021).

Damage

The Samadhi is in good condition with very few damages. However, this Samadhi was used as a storage house, which caused damage to its interior (Afzal, personal communication, December 16, 2021).

Exterior

The building's exterior has cracks resulting from the 2005 earthquake; however, the walls remain intact, with no missing stones. The dome has become covered in vegetation.

Interior

The floor of the Samadhi is badly damaged, showing signs of digging and dismantling. The walls of the building on the internal side remain intact, but the plaster on the dome and walls is damaged.

Events and prayer

There were Baisakhi celebrations at the Samadhi attended by Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims (Ashraf, personal communication, December 16, 2021). Weekly communal prayers were held in the Gurdwara next to the Samadhi, and Muslims also attended Baisakhi along with the Sikhs. They used to cook food and surround their houses with a dung circle for purifying purposes on Baisakhi (Arif, personal communication, December 16, 2021).

Myths and stories

It is rumored that Sikhs buried their treasure in the Samadhi before leaving their homes in 1947 (Ashraf, personal communication, December 16, 2021).

Present Condition

The building is in good condition with minimal damage.

Shamshan ghat

Chiani was built near a kas. Now, there are a few stones showing the places where the dead were cremated. Sikhs disperse the ashes of their dead along with wood in the water (Dukalskis and Johansen, 2013). Hence, proximity to a stream is practical to facilitate the last rites for the family of the deceased. Muslims and Hindus also attended Sikh funerals (Ashraf, personal communication, December 16, 2021). Muslims used to take wood for cheekha, piling of the wood for cremation, at Sikh funerals. There is a graveyard next to the Chiani where they buried their young children (Ashraf, personal communication, December 16, 2021). Twelve stones are arranged in two sections of a rectangular arrangement.



Figure 3.2 Back side of Draid Samadhi.



Figure 3.3 Front side of Draid Samadhi.



Figure 3.4 and 3.5 Carvings on entrance of Draid Samadhi.



Figure 3.6 Traces of color on walls of Draid Samadhi.

CONCLUSION

This research conducted an analysis of the ancient temples located in Rawalakot, situated within the Poonch district of Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir. The scope of this project was primarily geographically confined to Rawalakot, Poonch, with a specific focus on the examination of two Sikh Samadhis.

The two Samadhis under investigation, dating back to the 19th century and originating from the Sikh era, are notable structures. Although commonly called Gurdwaras, their structural and functional attributes align more closely with traditional Samadhis. It is apparent that these structures lack the structural capacity to fulfill the communal role traditionally associated with Gurdwaras, as indicated by residents. Furthermore, local informants have reported the presence of ashes interred within these structures, aligning with the customary functions of Samadhis.

Historically, these Samadhis served as sites for the Baisakhi festival within the region. The Gulshan-e-shauda Samadhi acted as a religious hub for the surrounding villages of Rawalakot, while the Samadhi Draid exclusively catered to the villages in Draid. These structures exhibit distinctive stonework, reflective of the architectural influences prevalent during their construction era.

Regrettably, both Samadhis have been abandoned since the mass migrations of 1947 and have suffered significant deterioration due to the absence of restoration or conservation efforts. Sikhs from other side of the LOC still visit these sites and maintain a relationship with the local communities around them. The dearth of active museums in AJ&K dedicated to preserving artifacts unearthed from various heritage sites underscores the urgency of initiating conservation initiatives that actively engage local communities. Concurrently, there is a pressing need to promote tourism in a manner that can mutually benefit both the local populace and the government.

These Samadhis have bearded extensive damage in 2005 Earthquake without any conservation they can be further damaged by such natural disasters. Consequently, a proactive stance on the part of the government is imperative to safeguard these invaluable heritage sites. Furthermore, future academic research endeavors should be directed towards constructing comprehensive historical narratives of these sites and archiving them digitally for posterity. Researchers can focus on finding more of these sites in remote areas of the region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Acknowledgements to the University of Punjab for sharing historical books from their archives and Asif Ghafoor, Assistant Director of Archaeology Punjab, for giving access to his personal book collection. I extend my thanks to Dr.Nadhra Shahbaz for her guidance during the project. My appreciation extends to the local journalist Ayaz Sarfraz for aiding in mapping and connecting with informants. I'm deeply thankful to my informants who shared their lives with me. I'm grateful to my incredible baba, who, despite battling terminal cancer, tirelessly drove me to seek new informants. I hope he's proud of the research's evolution, and I dedicate this work to his unwavering love and support. Thanks to my friends Hareem Fatima and Hafsa Zoonash Khan for their invaluable assistance in capturing site pictures and measurements. I want to give my acknowledgement to Dr Arsalan Malik for his support and encouragement during the process of research.

REFERENCES

- Mohan, Anand.1992. The historical roots of the Kashmir conflict, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. 283-308.DOI: 10.1080/10576109208435908
- Ahmad, Muzaffar. 2019. *History And Archeology Azad Jammu And Kashmir*. 6-97: Meezan Publishing House.
- Azad, Syed Muhammad. 1975. Tareekh-E- Poonch. 18-127. Hadi Gail Tehsil Bagh Poonch Azad Kashmir: Idara Maraf Kashmir.

- Arshi, Pardeep Singh. 1986. Sikh architecture in Punjab. 1st ed. New Delhi, India: Intellectual Pub. House.
- Ahmed, Iqbal. 2007. Kashmir Archeology. 88-213: Gulshan Books.
- Afzal, Havaladar. Personal communication. Shared in Azad Jammu Kashmir, Conducted by Nimra Tariq, December 16 .2021.
- Arif. Personal communication. Shared in Azad Jammu Kashmir, Conducted by Nimra Tariq, December 15 .2021.
- Arif. Personal communication. Shared in Azad Jammu Kashmir, Conducted by Nimra Tariq, December 15 .2021.
- Ashraf. Personal communication. Shared in Azad Jammu Kashmir, Conducted by Nimra Tariq, December 16 .2021.
- Anoop, Sharma, & Kumar Vinod.2015. Indian Temple Architecture: A Case Study of Jammu Temples. *International Journal of Science, Environment and Technology*, 4.
- Ahmed, M Nazir. 2008. Aurak.e.jammu o Kashmir.6: Alfaisal.nashran.
- "BBC - Religions - Sikhism: Vaisakhi." BBC.co.uk, 2022.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/sikhism/holydays/vaisakhi.shtml>.
- Bansal, Bobby Singh. 2015. Remnants of the Sikh Empire: Historical Sikh Monuments in India and Pakistan.1-10. New Delhi, India: Hay House Publishers India.
- Cunningham, Alexander.1871. The Ancient Geography of India. 134. Paternoster Row: Teubner and Co.
- Dew, Frederic. 1875. The Jammu and Kashmir Territories; A Geographical Account: Edward Stanford.
- Dukalskis A., Johansen R. C.2013. Measuring Acceptance of International Enforcement of Human Rights: The United States, Asia, and the International Criminal Court. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 35(3): 605. Retrieved September 17, 2023, from <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/hurq35&i=588>.
- Fauq, Muhammad Deen. 1931. Mukammal Tareek-E-Kashmir.54-329.54-329.54-329: Veri Nag Pub.
- Ghaffar A., Abbas F. 2010. An Overview of Past History Based on Seismicity Pattern of Kashmir Region, An Interpretation From 2005 Earthquake. *Animal and Plant Science*, 4(20):297.
- Gazetteer of the Jhelum District. 1991, 1904: Sang-E-Meel Publications.
- Huttenback R. A. 1968. Kashmir as an Imperial Factor during the Reign of Gulab Singh (1846–1857). *Journal of Asian History*, 2(2): 77–78.

- Jamwal S. 2006. Development of Religion and Religious Structures in Jammu Region-An Overview. *Annals Of The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 87:163-174. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41692054>.
- Kak, Ram Chand. 1933. *Ancient Monuments Of Kashmir*: Indian Society. <https://www.indianculture.gov.in/rarebooks/ancient-monuments-kashmir>.
- Khan M. A., Rahman G. u. 2016. Threat to the Cultural Heritage of Pakistan: Survey and Documentation of Tangible and Intangible Heritage of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. *TIAC Quaid-E-Azam University*:73–125.
- Khan, Nadhra Shahbaz. 2020. *The Samadhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore*. 61-62: EBVERLAG.
- Meister M.W.2006. Mountain Temples and Temple-Mountains: Masrur. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 65(1): 26-49. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25068237>.
- Nazir. Personal communication. Conducted by Nimra Tariq, 16 December 2021
- Pirzada, Irshad Ahmad. *A Handbook on Azad Jammu and Kashmir*. 64. Rawalpindi: Nawab Sons Publication.
- Qazi, Zahurul Hasan Nazim Siwhalwari. 1933. *Nigaristan-E-Kashmir*.333-342.1st ed.
- Rashid I. 2020. Theatrics Of A ‘Violent State’ Or ‘State of Violence’: Mapping Histories and Memories of Partition in Jammu and Kashmir. *South Asia: Journal Of South Asian Studies*, 43(2):4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1712774>.
- R. Lawrence, Walter. 1909. *Imperial Gazetteer of India: Kashmir and Jammu*. 126. Calcutta: Superintendent Of Government Printing <https://indianculture.gov.in/gazettes/imperial-gazetteer-india-kashmir-and-jammu>. Accessed 4 Jan 2022.
- Rasheed. Personal communication. Shared in Azad Jammu Kashmir, Conducted by Nimra Tariq, December 27 .2021.
- Shabbir. Personal communication. Shared in Azad Jammu Kashmir, Conducted by Nimra Tariq, December 20 .2021.
- Singha, H. S. (2000). *The Encyclopedia of Sikhism (over 1000 Entries)*. Hemkunt Press.
- Singh, G. (2003). *Soul of Sikhism*.149. Diamond Pocket Books (P) Ltd..
- Sagheer, Dr Muhammad. 2001. *Poonch Ki Tahzeeb O Sakafat*. 32-41. Muzaffarabad AJK: Kashmir Academy.