



RESEARCH PAPER

**Rise of Post Modernism and Revitalization of Cultural Heritage in
Taxila: An Insight**

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the interconnected phenomena of postmodernism's emergence and the subsequent revitalization of cultural heritage. Through examining historical, social, and cultural factors, the study establishes a connection between the rise of postmodernism and the revitalization of cultural heritage. The contemporary era of postmodernism and globalization is causing the homogenization of different cultures, ethnicities, languages, and traditions. The emergence of an identity crisis is another dilemma. This evolution is a complex and simultaneous paradigm; hence, it is necessary to retain the distinguished and unique recognition by being modern and sticking to the actual roots simultaneously. The study incorporates a multidisciplinary approach, implementing insights from cultural studies, archaeology, sociology, and religious studies. Exploratory research methodology with in-depth interviews and focused group discussions has been employed with a randomly selected sample of 12 respondents using interview guides as a tool for qualitative research. The significant findings suggest that postmodernism has played a pivotal role in the revitalization of cultural heritage by encouraging critical engagement with the past, fostering a sense of belonging, and promoting cultural exchange. It is recommended to take actions and formulate policy to enhance collaboration with other stakeholders, such as local authorities, conservation organizations, and community groups, to ensure a comprehensive approach to conservation.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Meta Narratives, Post Modernism, Preservation, Traditional Identity, World Heritage

Introduction

Taxila, a city of rich cultural heritage, where ruins including a Mesolithic cave and the archaeological remains of four early settlement sites, Buddhist monasteries, and a Muslim mosque and madrassa. Explored by Sir John Marshall for almost 21 years and completed in 1918, holds a vital significance in making Taxila, a city of world heritage, accepted by UNESCO. As main targets of postmodernism are the cultural values, traditional notions and identity, it is therefore significant to identify its impacts on the conservation strategies of historically and archeologically beneficial sites, remains and artifacts. By the proper conduction of an in-depth study in Taxila, a region rich in cultural heritage, this study tends to highlight the systematic and dynamic relationship between postmodernism and the conservation of cultural legacies, offering significance insights for future conservation strategies. Postmodernism is a critical and philosophical movement that emerged in the mid 20th century, challenging cultural notions of intelligence, culture, and identity. Its historical backgrounds can be traced back to diverse philosophical writings across different disciplines, including philosophy, political science, Anthropology, architecture, and social sciences.

The preservation and conservative of is a significant part of international dialogue and engagement. This is due to the fact that it is capable enough to bring states and communities together and create global understanding and statesmanship. The conservation strategies of cultural heritage locations, values, and artifacts not only

safeguard a specific state's or nation's historical backgrounds and identity, but it also adds to humanity's shared heritage and historical treasures. In recent years, there has been a rising concern of the significance of cultural heritage in global politics, with a number of treaties and agreements aimed at improving its preservation and ensuring its worth for perpetual relevance. The rise of postmodernism and revitalization of cultural heritage in Taxila represents an international movement, (Gerstenblith,2010) towards preserving and celebrating the vibrant and distinguished heritage of communities around the world. As the investigation of an increasingly reciprocally connected and diverse society, the importance of acknowledging and honoring our cultural roots has become more significant than ever. In Taxila, this revived enthusiasm in the ancient remains and artifacts of the region serves as a authentication to the enduring influence of heritage and identity in shaping international affairs. By acknowledging and preservation of the distinctive cultural identity of Taxila, we not only preserve an important part of our collective history but also foster a sense of unity and appreciation for the diverse cultural heritage that binds us all. This study aims to identify the global ramifications of cultural heritage preservation and its potential to strengthen relationships between nations. By examining the role of cultural heritage in international relations, this research seeks to shed light on the ways in which it can promote cross-cultural dialogue, foster conflict resolution, and contribute to peacebuilding efforts.(Bouchet,2012) Moreover, this study will analyze the impact of international agreements and policies on cultural heritage preservation, as well as identify best practices for promoting cooperation and collaboration in this important area. Through a comprehensive investigation of these issues, this study aims to serve to a better communication of the role of cultural heritage in shaping global collaboration and promoting towards a more interconnected and inclusive world. Taxila, a historic Tehsil of district Rawalpindi, Pakistan, is greatly signifying in the contemporary post-modern era. Taxila, a hub of diversity and cultural heritage has played a beneficial role in forming the world's philosophical, physical, and religious heritage. In today's world, Taxila's significance lies far beyond its historical background, offering valuable insights for the global negotiations and dialogue. Taxila served as a center of learning and diversity, and was also known as the Oxford of Ancient India. Taxila's renowned educational institutions, took place in the 6th century BCE, that grasped students from all over the globe comprising of Buddha himself. The subjects taught in the university included the philosophical writings, mathematics and statistical analysis, geography, astronomy and medicine. These educational acknowledgement serves as a emblem of value of wisdom and crucially of information responsible for a prosperous future. The remains of this university could still be seen in the ruins.

In the social sciences, postmodernism has influenced the study of culture, identity, and power. Anthropologists like Clifford Geertz emphasized the subjective and constructed nature of cultural meanings, while cultural theorists like Stuart Hall explored the complex interplay of power, identity, and representation in a globalized world. Overall, postmodernist scholarly writings challenge the assumptions of modernity and encourage a more critical, self-reflexive, and contextual understanding of knowledge, culture, and society.

This ancient city is an emblem of cultural diversity and tolerance. At that time, Taxila was a cultural amalgam of various traditions, theologies, and philosophies. This ethnic fusion is visible in the archaeological ruins, (Dwyer,2009)which demonstrates a blend of Greek, Persian, and Indian architectural shingles. In the contemporary era, where multicultural mosaic and intolerance often command the attention, Taxila remains as a firm symbol of the significance of mutual understanding and cross-cultural dialogue. Hence, Taxila's relevance in the present post-modern era is greater than it's historical significance alone. This ancient city serves thought provoking lessons and enlightenment for the present society, which is a demonstration of the cultural diversity, knowledge, tolerance, and spiritual comprehension. As this paper aims to navigate the convolutions of the 21st century,

Taxila's legacy remain as the representation of importance of coordination to a unconditional developed future .

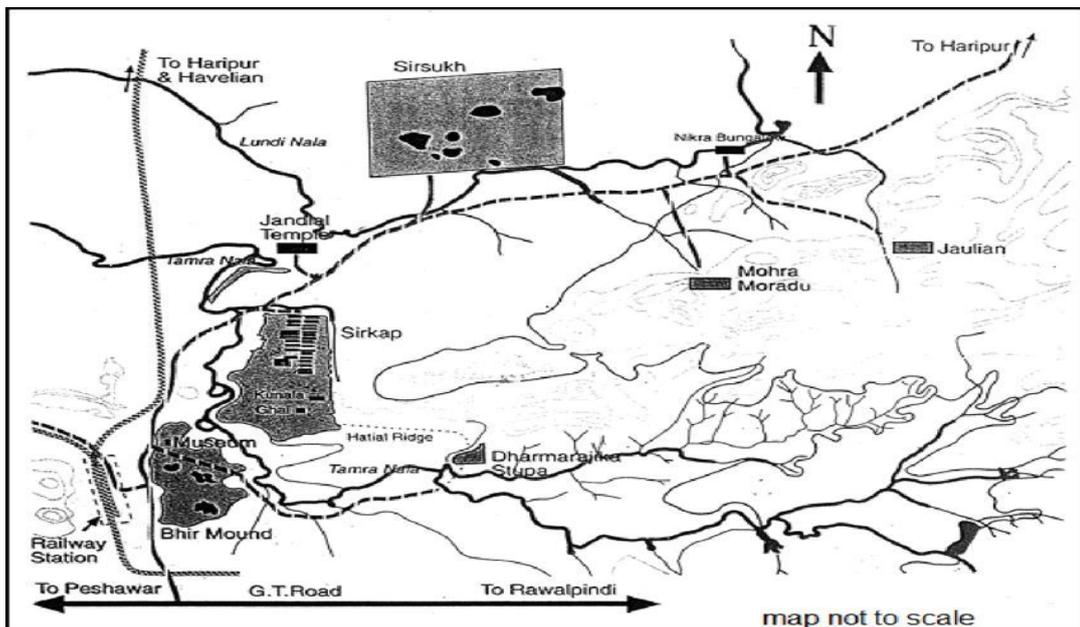


Figure 1 Map of Main Archaeological Sites in Taxila World Heritage Site Source: (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2010e).

Literature Review

The main purpose of this study is to figure out the research gap through secondary data collection from the already published research papers available, regarding the topic. In the recent years, the recognition of the need to protect and conserve cultural heritage sites in Pakistan had been increased tremendously. Efforts have been made to document and restore these sites, driven by both local communities and governmental organizations (Fatima, 2023). The ancient civilization of Gandhara, dating back over 4,500 years, left behind a legacy of architectural marvels, artistic expressions, and religious practices (Ahmed. M., 2014). In Taxila, the Buddhist stupas, often built on elevated platforms, above a hill, that might reflect the sacred connection between the terrestrial and the sacred realms (Sinha, 2011). Taxila, had being invaded by several and we're ruled by Indo-Greek empires after Alexander the Great's conquests. The city served as a hub of commerce, economy, culture, and learning. Taxila started progression and development under the Kushan Empire with further endowments to art and learning. Buddhist art and architecture, including stupas and monasteries, were prominent during this period, (Khan,2023)The possible mission of this research study could be to understand and analyze the impact of postmodernism on the preservation of cultural heritage in the context of Taxila. By achieving this, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on the role of postmodernism in formation of the cultural conservation strategies and to provide initiatives for more adaptive and sustainable paradigm to protect cultural legacies in the dynamic societal concerns and globalization.

Sir John Marshall is regarded as the one responsible for the construction and of the Taxila Museum and all excavations carried out in the region. The museum, located 34 km northwest from Islamabad. The construction of the museum was started in 1918 under the supervision of sir John ,later Viceroy Chelmsford laid the foundation stone. The construction was completed in 1928 ,when Sir John got retired from his post and the inauguration ceremony was done under Habib Ullah Khan, who was the Minister for Education at that time.(Khan,2022) . Heritage management involves the managing of a region's cultural, natural environment. For the policy implementation, the agenda is being

approved by various tourism departments across the globe. Their main concern is to develop the sites to attract and appeal local and foreign tourists. Keeping in view the competitive tourism market; the customer is the boss in tourism too, so the interests of visitors can't be denied. Cultural tourism is exploration of sites, places through the activities and historical backgrounds and by analyzing the art and culture of previous times. Heritage tourism also promotes local economy that can be used as an investment on the preservation and improvement of the sites and services. (Khan, O. ,2020)

One main hurdle on preservation of these archaeological sites is the increasing effects of climatic changes which put adverse effects on natural and cultural World Heritage properties. The Archaeological remains at Taxila could be seen lying openly under tropical climatic conditions. And their continuous exposure to the open air and the weather effects, like temperature, rain, storm, etc. caused the development of cracks, leaned, bulged out, collapsed or decayed artifacts and structures considerably as seen in Julian stupa and Dharmarajika Stupa. (Somuncu and Khan, 2010)

In the contemporary phases, UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS) have observed some of the significant hazards because of multiple factors including earthquakes, climate change, management issues, urban sprawl and acid rain . However, destruction evaluation often failed to comprehensive image and to examine the extension of the several types of threats affecting WHS. This condition is well highlighted by WHS, Pakistan, where the potential threats have been only partially identified. As a result, we experience an increased damage to the sites affecting their state of preservation. (Khan et al. ,2022)

Theoretical Framework

Firstly, the postmodernism theory employs the concept of differences to destabilize other concepts . Thus, it says that there is no truth but truths and no privileged civilization but multiple cultures. Hence, ,the power knowledge nexus, which claims only one civilization as true, holds no solid foundation. But in reality, there are many diverse civilizations, and Gandhara is one of them that needs to be explored and revitalized . Secondly , using the lens of constructivism, we understand that construction is a phenomenon built on past experiences and agent – structure interactions. Therefore, the abodes of the Taxila, looking back on history and social interactions, focus more on the Aryan culture and Islamic civilization that are given patronage by the government . Hence , it depicts the phenomenon of constructivism, where society focuses on constructing and reviving just one civilization—the Islamic civilization—and considers it the only true civilization while denying the value of other civilizations like the Gandhara civilization. Thirdly , the neo-Marxist school of thought says that the main actors are not the nation states but the bourgeoisie class. In the case of Taxila , the revival of Gandhara civilization seems suppressed by the far right wings and capitalist bourgeois class .This is because its revival directly conflicts with their ideologies and interests. Hence, the revitalization of the Gandhara has been stymied if seen through a neo-Marxist lens. Fourthly , the liberalism school of thought supports life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Hence, the revitalization of the Gandhara civilization in the Taxila will bring innumerable socio – economic benefits for the masses, as it will allure tourists across the world to visit this civilization under the shadow of liberalism . Fifthly, if we look through the realist school of thought, then the major religious stakeholder groups in Taxila do not want a revisionist power to threaten their status quo . Thus , the power politics stymie the revitalization of the Gandhara civilization in Taxila. Lastly , the Frankfurt School's critical theory shows a way forward .It acts as a force to stimulate change. Hence, by unmasking power relations and challenging the status quo, ,it urges us to seek emancipation. Thus, by coming out of the hegemon influence, ,one can revive the Gandhara civilization. It investigates how postmodernism, characterized by pluralism, fragmentation, and the rejection of grand narratives, has led to a renewed interest in exploring and preserving diverse cultural expressions. Furthermore, the research explores the role of postmodernism in challenging

traditional notions of cultural heritage and promoting a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of cultural identity.

Operationalization

Operationalization refers to the application of theories and data collected in one's own research. Operationalization of theoretical framework is hence an important factor in a research paper: The theory of Cultural Performance proposed by Victor Turner in 1982 suggests that cultural heritage is something dynamic rather than a static concept. This perspective could be implemented to cultural heritage by identifying the significance while shaping our historical understanding.

Material and Methods

This section deals with the methodology used for the conduct of the research and in analyzing the problems regarding the revitalization of cultural heritage. The study has been conducted in the urban area of Tehsil Taxila in March–April 2024. The total population of Taxila is 664,475. According to the records provided by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, The study is based on both secondary and primary data, and an interview guide was prepared to cover all the relevant information and gather qualitative data. The secondary data was collected by using 15 published articles between 2001 and 2024. Whereas the primary data has been collected through the exploratory research methodology because there was little information available regarding the issues hindering cultural preservation, The exploratory study was guided to examine how or why cultural heritage preservation occurs or not. The sample collection was done randomly through respondents aged between 20 and 70 years of age. Individuals were selected regardless of their religion or gender. A focused group Discussion comprising of 5 local tourists as respondents has been done at Dharmarajika stupa as well.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the data collected , indicates a positive response of museum and stupas management. Their increasing concerns to heritage management in post modern era are encouraging. Moreover the development of modern and innovate incentives such as :The introduction of modern applications on smart phones such as Taxila museum , Dharmarajika stupa for tourists , Well educated staff for guidance of local and foreign tourists , Modern technological equipment on showcase.

Also, the day by day increasing visits of foreigners and transportation of artifacts to various international exhibitions is a source of inspiration to enhance cross cultural and cross regional cooperation.

The responses of respondents showed a tolerant and harmonic behavior as they exhibit during the interview. Majority of the local tourists were either Muslims or Christians but they came to Dharmarajika stupa, a site considered sacred for Buddhists and still is a holy place of worship for them. The respondents, irrespective of their Religious biasness, came to visit and support their local cultural heritage. Hence it could be said and observed that Taxila is a place with increasing religious tolerance behave. This could promote the positive image of the region worldwide, which attracts more tourists from various nations.

Conclusion

Postmodernism challenges the idea of grand theories and meta narratives that played a role in creation of one's knowledge regarding history and culture and enjoys the divided and diversified human experience. Cultural Heritage is considered the fundamental base of mankind, one that allows a connection to the past and formation of human society.

It could be tangible, including the Giza pyramids, Akbar's Taj Mahal or the archeological museums or remains, this might also include a living phenomena like the Chinese New Year or natural experience like the coral reefs and different species animals (Zhang,2022) . Heritage could be passed from one generation by preservation that ensures the continuation of that heritage in both the present and for the future generations.

The concept of preservation-as-change is nowhere more evident than in conversations regarding the repatriation of indigenous remains from museums and private collections. The act of museums collecting and displaying human remains dates back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when museums around the country acquired tens of thousands of human remains as the result of forceful colonization (Jenkins, 2016). Today these collections are viewed not only as a reminder of but the active continuation of colonial harm to indigenous communities. The intellectuals discuss that the reestablishment and restoration of these artifacts will result in the loss of cherished and productive knowledge regarding the human species, as scholars will no longer have access to them as experiment samples for study. Like heritage itself, the duty of heritage preservation for future generations is an evolving process. Present-day society cannot decide for the future generations what constitutes "valuable" heritage, though we can be certain that the priorities and interests of the future will be different than those of the present. Preservation is thus historically situated and temporal by nature, influenced by and constructed from present situations. What is considered rightful and allowable today may be deemed problematic in the future. Thus, preservation should be a process that accepts temporality, one that may expire at specific points in the future.

Recommendations

- Protection of fragile / deteriorating artifacts from further damage by adopting modern safety procedures.
- Increased accessibility incentives for disabled who are unable to physically visit the sites
- Provide a permanent record of cultural heritage for future generations
- Developing and implementing conservation plans to address these issues
- Collaborating with other stakeholders, such as local authorities, conservation organizations, and community groups, to ensure a comprehensive approach to conservation
- Providing educational resources and materials for students and teachers
- Offering guided tours and workshops that provide hands-on experiences with cultural artifacts

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