

## HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY: AZAD – JAMMU AND KASHMIR – A STUDY BASED ON LITERARY EVIDENCE

*Muzzaffar Ahmad, A Publication of Meezan House*

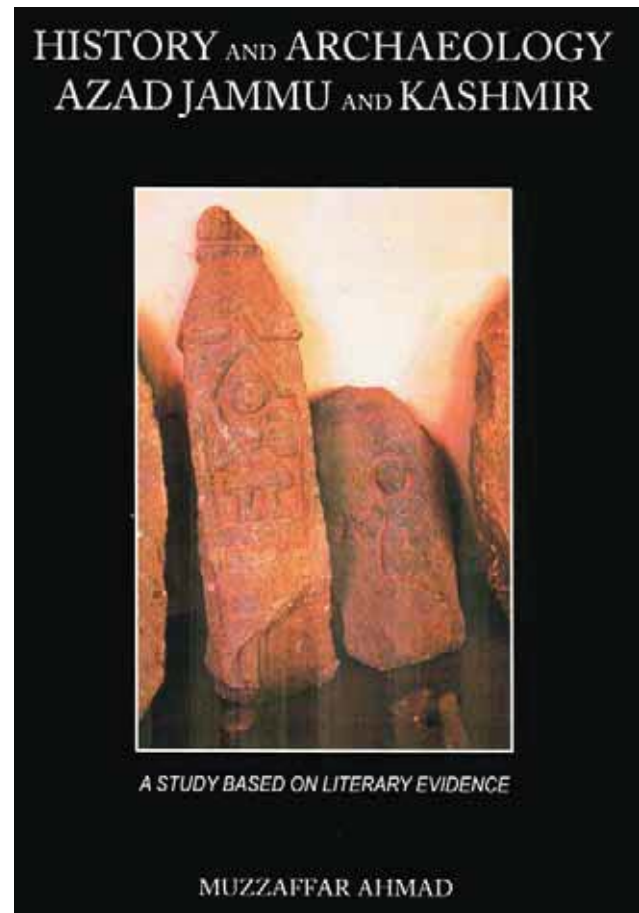
Reviewed by Hussain Khalid\*

### BOOK REVIEW

Archaeology is the study of human history and prehistory using the tools and methodology of surveying and excavating land to seek and discover artifacts, both ordinary and extraordinary, in order to examine the history they witness and get a better knowledge of human culture. Many ancient prehistoric cultures with unwritten histories have been discovered thanks to archaeology, and archaeological remains of any place are a testament to the lived experience of events by humans before us.

The book "HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY- AZAD JAMMU-AND KASHMIR, A STUDY BASED ON LITERARY EVIDENCE" is based on Muzzaffar Ahmad's MPhil thesis, which he submitted to Hazara University. The book, which was published in January 2019 by Meezan Publishing House, is an attempt to create an inventory of Azad Jammu and Kashmir's archaeological legacy based solely on literary evidence. According to the author the book tries to create a historical portrait of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, as well as a literary examination of the archaeological data. The book can be considered as a collection of literary evidence supporting the history and archaeology of AJ and K gleaned from publications from various times as well as oral accounts backed up by surveys of the region's archaeological sites.

The book is organised into six chapters to provide the reader with information about various aspects of the context of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, such as its geology, geography, administration, ethnic settings, and climatic conditions, before expanding into Azad Jammu and Kashmir's history and archaeology, as well as literary sources from various eras and places. Ahmad also verifies and double-checks the data gathered through the literature review for accuracy and reliability. The table of contents reveals the book's structure; it lists all of



the topics covered in each chapter. Following that is a list of Maps and Plans nevertheless, some of the maps are difficult to read.

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While the purpose and methodology of Ahmad's body of work, which we can refer to as a guide to History and Archaeology of AJ and K, are straightforward, it is the author's intent that makes it a labour of love; he curates prehistoric and historic information and anecdotes in chronological and geographical order. The book is a work in progress that serves as a basis for archaeological study in the region; the information is sparse and has to be fleshed out more, as the author himself states in the introduction. To the authors' credit, it is a useful resource for beginning to learn about the archaeology of the region through history, and it can be pivotal in conducting systematic exploration and field work for archaeologists, but it falls short in providing a holistic insight into the history of each time period for general readers, despite the fact that this was not the author's primary goal in compiling this study.

What remains intriguing is the author's technique to organize the collected information on the region by district; this strategy prevents the material from becoming overwhelming while making it simple for the reader to find the information they seek. Furthermore, the book's core is the set of columns listing the names of archaeological sites by district, historic writings on them and their origins. In my opinion, these columns give the book a useful introduction to the archaeological heritage of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The final piece of Ancient Routes is the cherry on top; it connects the Azad Jammu and Kashmir territory to the larger context, making the region's rich history and archaeology understandable.

Ahmad's effort in compiling this book is admirable, and it would be valuable to experts and visitors interested in learning more about Azad Jammu and Kashmir's history.