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Opening Remarks



All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. The good end is for the righteous. Peace and blessings be upon the noblest of the Prophets and Messengers, and upon his family, his companions, and all those who follow them with excellence until the Day of Judgment.

Thereafter!

Tourism is considered an important pillar of a society's economy, culture, and international reputation. Countries such as France, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and China earn billions of dollars through tourism, and this era represents one of the most valuable commercial and economic opportunities within the tourism sector. However, despite possessing vast historical, cultural, and natural resources, Afghanistan still lags behind some countries on the global tourism stage.

Afghanistan has the Buddha statues, the shrines of national heroes, green mountains, rivers, and a rich cultural heritage. The historical sites of Herat, Bamiyan, Ghazni, and Kabul possess great tourism potential with global appeal. However, certain limitations—such as visa restrictions and some negative international perceptions—have resulted in limited visits by foreign tourists to Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the following factors can help strengthen Afghanistan's tourism sector and enable the development of short-term and long-term plans for tourist destinations, so that the tourism industry may grow and generate significant revenue:

1. Strengthening the financial foundations of relevant institutions through revenue collection in the tourism sector.
2. Attracting tourists domestically and internationally, and standardizing services related to tourist travel and mobility in support of tourism development.
3. Promoting the growth and development of tourism in accordance with applicable laws, and providing visa facilitation for international visitors.
4. Introducing Afghanistan's authentic culture to support the growth and development of tourism, and attracting investment from the private sector.

Many tourist areas and attractions are under the authority of other ministries and agencies. Investment in these tourist sites should be made in coordination and agreement with the mentioned ministries, and they should be introduced to international travelers, as the development of tourism and the rehabilitation of tourist areas can be an important step for Afghanistan's economic progress.

Since Afghanistan's tourism is part of global tourism and tourism can become a new source of revenue for the national economy of Afghanistan, implementing development and expansion projects in Afghanistan's historical, cultural, revenue-generating, and other recreational areas can generate significant income from this sector. This would contribute to the country's economic growth and strengthening, and, alongside this, pave the way for Afghanistan toward globalization.

Since, with the arrival of the Islamic Emirate, social security has been ensured in the country, it is necessary to also create a clear and suitable environment for tourism. This includes building infrastructure, restoring historical sites, gaining international trust, and promoting tourism, all of which can make Afghanistan an important part of global tourism.

The Afghan Tour magazine always collects and delivers essential information regarding the development of tourism in our dear country, Afghanistan, and all its tourism-related values.

Respectfully,



Brief Operational Report of the Operations Directorate of the Afghan Tour State-Owned Corporation for the First Three Quarters of the Year 1404 (2025)

During the year 1404 SH based on Decree No 1902 of the Honorable Office of the Prime Minister dated 22 03 1447 AH (16 September 2025) the duties and responsibilities between the Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation and the Tourism Directorate of the Ministry of Information and Culture were formally separated and defined.

In accordance with the said decree and guidance during the year 1404 SH the Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation completed residence visa extensions and exit procedures for 1100 foreign tourists and forwarded their cases to the Honorable Passport Directorate for final processing,

During the current year for the purpose of travel and sightseeing the Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation officially introduced 1020 foreign tourists to central and provincial authorities as well as to the provincial directorates of the Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation in order to ensure security facilitation and visits to historical and tourist sites so that the necessary facilities could be provided to foreign tourists,

At Kabul International Airport the Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation operates a number of transport vehicles equipped with GPS systems through these transport vehicles the transfer of foreign tourists between the capital Kabul and the provinces is carried out in a safe and convenient manner and in addition two private sector transport companies which are registered and licensed with the Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation also play an important role in the transportation of passengers and tourists,

The Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation plans to purchase 50 high model transport vehicles of various types during the final quarter

of the year 1404 SH for the transportation of domestic and foreign tourists in order to further enhance facilities and convenience for tourist transportation,

Kabul International Airport which serves as a key point of arrival and departure for foreign tourists has been equipped by the Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation with a large display screen installed in front of the terminal this screen operates 24 hours a day showcasing Afghanistan's authentic culture historical monuments and tourist attractions for visitors and enthusiasts,

Through its assigned inspection committee the Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation evaluates and calculates the menu prices of hotels that accommodate foreign tourists once per month throughout the year and registration fees are collected from them in exchange for official licenses furthermore officials of the Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation provide necessary guidance and recommendations to these hotels and restaurants to ensure the provision of quality services to foreign tourists and the Corporation's transport officials make efforts to introduce and transport tourists to the said hotels

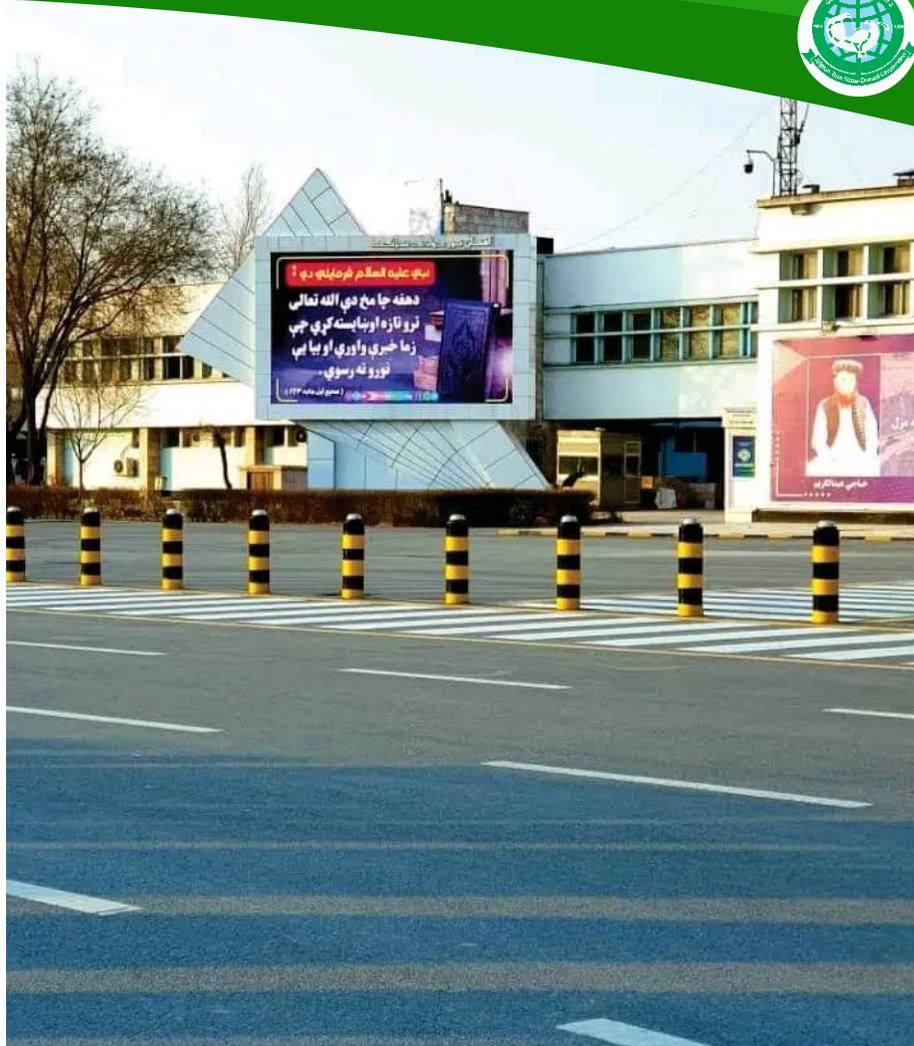


The Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation has collected registration fees from 40 guesthouses operating within the country that accommodate foreign tourists and has issued official licenses to them

Using attractive images of the country's natural landscapes historical monuments and tourist centers a large number of brochures billboards and promotional tourism information materials were designed and printed in album format and distributed to applicants and tourists with the aim of promoting and developing the tourism industry.

The Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation is committed through its promotional activities to introducing Afghanistan's tourist attractions and national values to international tourists so that by providing quality services and effective publicity positive awareness and perceptions are created among audiences and customers.

Likewise the Afghan Tour State Owned Corporation publishes the Afghan Tour Magazine every three months with high journalistic quality introducing tourist resources and attractions in order to promote and develop tourism and this magazine is published in Pashto Dari and English languages.



The Status and Importance of

First Part

Ecotourism in Afghanistan

Author: Assistant Researcher
Hikmat Rahman Amiri



Abstract:

This research was conducted with the aim of examining the status and importance of ecotourism in Afghanistan. Ecotourism, as one of the branches of sustainable tourism, plays an important role in environmental protection, strengthening the local economy, and promoting environmental awareness. Afghanistan, with its climatic diversity, pristine natural landscapes, and rich cultural heritage, has remarkable potential for the development of this type of tourism. The findings of this study show that regions such as Band-e Amir, the Wakhan Corridor of Badakhshan, and Nuristan possess high potential for the development of ecotourism. However, weak infrastructure, the lack of effective local management, and insufficient technical training are among the main obstacles to its development. The results indicate that by formulating a practical ecotourism strategy, implementing pilot projects at the local level, and ensuring the active participation of local communities, it is possible to achieve environmental conservation and sustainable economic development simultaneously. This study emphasizes the necessity of a scientific, managerial, and community-based approach to ecotourism as an effective tool for the sustainable growth of Afghanistan.

Introduction:

In recent decades, the concept of ecotourism, as one of the important branches of sustainable tourism, has gained a special place in the development policies of developing countries. Ecotourism, or "nature-based tourism," is a conscious and responsible journey to natural areas, aimed not only at enjoying the beauty of nature but also at contributing to environmental conservation and improving the livelihoods of local communities. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Global Ecotourism Network (GEN) regard this type of tourism as an effective tool for achieving sustainable

development and protecting biodiversity, especially in countries that possess rich natural and cultural resources but face economic challenges.

Our beloved country, Afghanistan, with its mountainous geography, diverse climate, and pristine natural landscapes, is one of the nations with great potential for the growth of ecotourism. Regions such as Band-e Amir in Bamyan, the Wakhan Valley in Badakhshan, and the Pamir Highlands are outstanding examples of the country's unique and unspoiled nature. With proper management, these areas can become major ecotourism centers in the region. Beyond environmental benefits, ecotourism can serve as a tool for poverty reduction, raising environmental awareness, and strengthening the social connection between people and nature. Despite these potentials, the development of ecotourism in Afghanistan faces challenges such as weak tourism infrastructure, the absence of clear national policies, lack of technical training, and cultural and social barriers. Therefore, a careful examination of these opportunities and limitations is scientifically and practically necessary to design an appropriate and sustainable ecotourism model for the country.

Jam Minaret - Ghor





The main objective of this research is to analyze the status of ecotourism in Afghanistan, identify the related natural and cultural capacities, and propose strategies for the sustainable development of this sector. To achieve this goal, a descriptive–analytical method has been employed, drawing on reputable international sources such as the UNWTO, UNEP, and UNESCO.

Ultimately, this article seeks to demonstrate that if ecotourism is managed in accordance with scientific principles, with the participation of local communities and the protection of the environment, it can become one of the most effective pathways for sustainable economic and environmental growth in our beloved country, Afghanistan.

Concept of Ecotourism

Ecotourism is one of the branches of sustainable tourism that, in recent decades,

has been recognized as an effective tool for environmental protection and local development. Various definitions of ecotourism have been proposed, each emphasizing specific aspects of environmental conservation, education, and economic development.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as: “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education” (The International Ecotourism Society [TIES], 2015, p. 3). This definition emphasizes that ecotourism is not merely visiting nature, but an experience accompanied by education and the enhancement of awareness.

The Canadian scholar David A. Fennell presents the concept of ecotourism with a focus on ethical and sustainable management, defining it as “a form of tourism based on natural resources that has minimal negative impacts and focuses on visitor experience and education.” From his perspective, ecotourism should have three key characteristics: non-consumptive use, ethical management, and localism. These principles, with their emphasis on environmental conservation, equitable use of resources, and the participation of local communities, form the theoretical framework for the development of sustainable ecotourism (Fennell, 2022, p. 45).



Fourty Stairs - Kandahar



Takht Rustam - Samangan



The World Tourism Organization also defines ecotourism as “responsible tourism to natural areas that conserves the environment and local culture and contributes to local economic development.” According to this definition, nature-based tourism should be aligned with sustainable development and the enhancement of the well-being of indigenous communities. Furthermore, the GSTC criteria provide specific principles for assessing and ensuring the sustainability of ecotourism, including the management of natural resources, local participation, fair distribution of economic benefits, and visitor education.

(Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2020, p. 5).

In Persian-language sources as well, ecotourism has been regarded as a tool for sustainable development and environmental conservation. The Iranian scholar Mohammad Reza Shariati writes: “Ecotourism is a type of tourism that emphasizes direct experience of nature, understanding local cultures, and enhancing the economies of indigenous communities.” He also emphasizes that the development of sustainable infrastructure, the training of local communities, and participatory management are the main foundations for the development of ecotourism in Afghanistan (Shariati, 2018, p. 123).

Therefore, in light of the above definitions, ecotourism can be analyzed scientifically across four main dimensions:

1. Environmental Dimension: This dimension focuses on the conservation of biodiversity and natural habitats, the reduction of negative human impacts, and the sustainable management of natural resources. It is designed in such a way that tourism not only causes minimal damage to ecosystems but also plays an active role in environmental protection (UNEP, 2017, p. 28).

2. Economic and Local Development

Dimension: One of the primary objectives of ecotourism is to generate income and employment for local communities. Revenue from ecotourism activities can serve as an incentive for environmental conservation and contribute to the economic development of rural and low-income areas. This dimension also includes the production and sale of local products, guiding services, and indigenous accommodations (Weaver, 2008, p. 72).

3. Educational and Awareness-Raising

Dimension: Visitors to natural and cultural areas become familiar with the environment and local culture through education and direct experience, thereby enhancing their environmental knowledge and attitudes. This dimension plays an important role in sustainable development, as responsible visitor behavior helps reduce the harmful impacts of tourism (TIES, 2015, p. 9).

4. Social and Cultural Dimension:

Ecotourism should be accompanied by respect for indigenous cultures, the participation of local communities, and the promotion of social justice. This dimension helps reduce social conflicts, strengthen cultural identity, and create solidarity between visitors and host communities (Fennell, 2022, p. 48).

Based on the above definitions and analyses, it can be concluded that ecotourism is not merely a tourism activity, but rather a scientific and managerial approach to environmental conservation, economic development, and the promotion of culture and education.



Characteristics and Principles of Ecotourism

Minimizing Environmental Impact: Visitors must act responsibly so that the least possible damage is caused to habitats, species, and natural resources. This includes following designated trails, limiting visitor numbers, and preventing pollution.

Supporting Environmental Conservation (Provide Benefits for Conservation): A portion of the income generated from ecotourism should be allocated to environmental protection and conservation projects, thereby creating economic incentives for conservation.

Economic Benefits for Local Communities (Generate Benefits for Local People): Job creation, the sale of local products, and participation in tourism services help improve the livelihoods of local people.

Awareness and Education (Build Awareness & Respect): Through local guides and environmental education, visitors become familiar with the region's culture and nature and develop responsible attitudes toward the environment.

Providing a Positive and Educational Experience for Visitors (Deliver Quality Visitor Experience): The travel experience should be educational, safe, and memorable in order to strengthen motivation for conservation and responsible behavior.

Participatory and Local Management (Stakeholder Participation & Local Management): Decision-making and management processes should be carried out with the participation of local communities.

Sustainable Use of Natural Resources: Resources such as water, energy, soil, and habitats must be used in a manner that ensures their long-term renewability.

Studies show that adherence to these principles guarantees both environmental protection and the economic and social development of local communities. In our beloved country, Afghanistan, regions such as Band-e Amir and Wakhan, which possess pristine natural landscapes, can ensure sustainable ecotourism development through the application of these principles. In particular, participatory management and the empowerment of local communities in these areas are crucial, because without the involvement of indigenous people, tourism projects are often short-lived and harmful (Amiri & Nowruzi, 2019, p. 50).

Furthermore, educating and raising awareness among visitors plays an important role in reducing the negative impacts of ecotourism. Direct experiences of nature, combined with scientific and cultural guidance, increase understanding and respect for the environment and local culture. In the long term, this contributes to sustainable tourism and the conservation of natural and cultural resources.



Travel and Tourism in Islam

Author:
Shams-ul-Haq Madani



Introduction:

Travel and tourism relieve fatigue and sadness, bring vitality to the body, refresh a person, and increase one's strength in work. A Muslim should not spend the entire day in meaningless amusements and corrupt behaviors, because such things arouse feelings of irreligiousness in a person. There is no doubt that travel and tourism play an important role in both the development and the decline of human character. Proper and purposeful travel and tourism give a person great energy, whereas aimless and improper travel and tourism, unfortunately, lead a person toward destruction, make them a victim of immoral society, and drive the younger generation into misguidance. This very point is emphasized in Islam, because Islam permits purposeful travel and tourism; however, Islam strictly forbids such travel and tourism that involve wasting time and moral corruption. Any way that involves breaking moral and religious boundaries in Islam is unlawful, for example, lying in order to make people laugh, or traveling and sightseeing for the fulfillment of base desires. Observing moderation in travel and tourism is not only permitted by Islam; rather, Islam itself also supports healthy and wholesome travel and tourism.

Travel and Tourism Must Be Purposeful:

Islam states that travel and tourism are

interesting and enjoyable activities; however, they must be purposeful. The blessed religion of Islam strictly forbids such travel and tourism in which time is wasted and carnal desires are pursued. As mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and in the Hadiths, travel and tourism in this world bring a sense of happiness to both wife and husband. They also include learning about the conditions and events of different peoples, as well as activities such as horse riding, archery, and running.

Travel and Tourism that are from Prohibited Actions:

Islam forbids games or activities in which human dignity and honor are violated. Practices such as pitting hungry animals against humans, where dignity is lost, or mocking and ridiculing the creations of Allah Almighty, are not permitted in Islam. Likewise, during games and recreational activities, proper dress is very important. Any clothing that does not properly cover the private parts of men and women renders such activities impermissible in Islam. Similarly, travel and tourism that cause negligence toward Islam and faith, or that bring no benefit to the community, or that cause harm to people, are not allowed in Islam. Allah Almighty says in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:11).

Translation:

O believers! Let not a man ridicule other men, for it may be that they are better than him; and let not women ridicule other women, for it may be that they are better than them. Do not seek out faults in one another, and do not call each other by offensive nicknames. After embracing faith, to gain a reputation for immorality is a very bad thing. Those who do not abandon this behavior (do not repent) are indeed wrongdoers.

In a Hadith, the Prophet PBUH said: "A Muslim is the one from whose hand and tongue other Muslims are safe."

(Sahih al-Bukhari 6484)

Jam Minaret - Ghor





Allah Almighty created the night for rest and the day for attending to the affairs of life. Today, however, we should live according to the principles of nature and seek the advancement and happiness of life within this framework. Healthy and purposeful travel and tourism should be undertaken daily. If travel and tourism are not healthy, one should refrain from them, because neglecting this leads to the violation of one's own rights and duties. It is also worth noting that extravagance should be avoided during travel and tourism, as Islam absolutely does not permit it. In fact, Islam calls a person who is extravagant a "brother of Satan."

Observing the Rights of Allah and of People During Travel and Tourism:

Islam teaches that travel and tourism should be conducted in such a way that the rights of Allah and the rights of His servants are not harmed; rather, travel and tourism should support the fulfillment of these rights and duties. As mentioned in a Hadith, the Prophet PBUH said: "Everything that a son of Adam engages in heedlessly is invalid."

(Reported by Al-Tirmidhi 709)

Travel and Tourism for the Call of Islam:

Travel and tourism also refer to visiting different countries, and during such travel, a person should not only engage in sightseeing but also work to invite people to Islam, making this the main purpose.

Islam permits great effort and travel to distant lands for the purpose of spreading the message of Islam. Such travel becomes a means of success, a source of knowledge, and an opportunity to learn about the customs and civilizations of both the new and old peoples of the world. Travel and tourism in Islam are also meant for understanding past nations, especially those who disobeyed Allah, and to observe the consequences they faced.

Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an: *(Surah Al-An'am 11)*

Translation: "Say, 'Travel through the land and observe how the deniers met their end.'"

In another verse, Allah says: *(Surah An-Naml 69)*

Translation: "Say, 'Travel through the land and see how the criminals met their fate.'"

C o n c l u s i o n :
Islam is a complete religion in every sense, advocating moderation and a balanced life. It is not a religion that forbids travel and tourism. In Islam, the concept of travel and tourism is to journey through Allah's creation, to reflect upon His creatures, and to travel to witness the beauty of the world. This strengthens one's faith in the Oneness of Allah. Therefore, purposeful travel and tourism for personal reflection and learning are highly recommended.

Top Dara - Parwan





Shah Faizullah Agha Mausoleum (Ziyarat)

The mausoleum of Shah Faizullah Agha is located south of Charbagh Safa Village in the Surkhrod District of Nangarhar Province. This mausoleum is one of the region's important historical and religious sites, and for several centuries it has been used by people as a place of pilgrimage and a sacred path.

Shah Faizullah Agha, whose original name was Ratan, was a tribal leader and influential figure in Nangarhar during the period of Hinduism. When the blessed religion of Islam began its conquests and the light of Islam reached Afghanistan, Hadda was then a major cultural center of Buddhism and an important site for Buddhist pilgrims. Hadda, as the center of Gandhara civilization, housed a large Buddhist temple. It is said that the companions of the Prophet (Sahabah) established contact with Ratan and invited him to accept the truth of the blessed religion of Islam. Ratan gathered the tribes and encouraged them to embrace the religion of Islam, telling the people that Islam is a beautiful religion, calling for the worship of one Creator, ensuring social justice, honoring human dignity and respect, eliminating the false beliefs of idol worship, and spreading the message of truth and righteousness through the true representative of Allah (SWT).

It is said that Ratan openly declared his acceptance of Islam and called on the people to either become Muslims or take up arms against the Companions of the Prophet. As a result, many people embraced Islam, while some chose to resist. When the Buddhists

were defeated in the battle, their temple in Hadda was buried under the earth, the area was abandoned, and they migrated toward India.

Ratan chose the name Faizullah for himself, and the people gave him the title of Shah Faizullah Agha. When Sultan Mahmood of Ghaznawi set out from Ghazni to India with the intention of conquest, he had already ordered the construction of the mausoleum of Mehtarlam Baba in Laghman. At that time, Shah Faizullah Agha had passed away. Mahmood of Ghazni then commanded his soldiers to take the remaining bricks of Mahtarlam Baba's mausoleum, one by one, and transport them to the mausoleum of Shah Faizullah Agha in Surkhrod.

And so, it happened. Mahmood of Ghaznawi then ordered that the mausoleum of Shah Faizullah Agha be constructed, and it was built at that time. Unfortunately, it is now in a ruined state and in need of restoration.



Farm Bagh and Park

Said Jamal 'Jamal'



Tourism is recognized worldwide as a new industry, and in most countries, extensive efforts are made to develop this sector, yielding significant benefits. Overall, Afghanistan—and in particular Khost Province—has numerous geographical, recreational, pilgrimage, and natural sites in its districts and center that are attractive to tourists.



Khost Province enjoys a favorable climate and is rich in notable tourist areas, which has made it a province of

interest for travelers. This provides strong potential for the tourism industry: if paved roads, transportation facilities, hotels, small and large parks, parking areas, and other amenities are provided to these tourist sites, it is likely that the tourism industry in Khost will grow substantially and, at the same time, unemployment will decrease.

This article focuses on the tourist area of Khost Province known as Farm Bagh. In gathering materials for this article, public library sources and references were utilized, and discussions were held with professionals, professors, and local and tribal elders.

Farm Bagh is one of the beautiful recreational areas in Khost Province, attracting many visitors for leisure. It is located in the southeastern part of Khost city and is considered a tourist site near the city, approximately 10 kilometers from the center.

Farm Bagh covers an area of 380 jeribs (approximately 190 hectares) and was constructed during the tenure of Naib-ul-Hukma (deputy governor) Faiz Mohammad Khan, who served as the deputy governor of Khost during the reign of Zahir Shah. In addition to Farm Bagh, Naib-ul-Hukma Faiz Muhammad Khan developed other recreational areas, such as Milmakot Tourist Garden, Balawot Bagh, and Sigai Tourist Garden. Farm Bagh was established about 70 years ago, and despite the challenges it has faced over time, it still attracts tourists due to its natural beauty, greenery, and charm.



The tourist garden is situated along the Shamal River and features beautiful green hills on both sides, offering a natural landscape. The garden is covered with lush trees and has a flowing river to the north. To the east lies the historical Hasan Kot mound and scenic hills, to the west is the Nuruzim tribal area with green fields, and to the south stretches the Mastarbul mountain range, which adds to the site's unique beauty and attracts both domestic and international tourists.

On regular and special days, Farm Tourist and Recreational Park receives both local and foreign visitors, who come to hold gatherings, enjoy leisure activities, and experience the park's beauty.

Mehtarlam Baba Shrine

Shah Mahmood 'Darwish'



The Mehtarlam Baba Shrine, locally also known as Baba Sahib Shrine, is dedicated to Mehtarlam Baba, the brother of Noorlam Sahib. This shrine is considered one of the most important spiritual and historical sites in Laghman Province, attracting not only local residents but also visitors from across Afghanistan. It is located in the provincial capital, Mehtarlam City, and holds significant historical value. Based on various research sources and historical narratives, the shrine is described as follows:

According to Islamic traditions, Mehtarlam Baba is associated with the era of Prophet Noah peace be upon him and his companions, and he was renowned for his piety, worship, and wisdom. Some narratives suggest that Mehtarlam Baba was a descendant of Prophet Noah, though there is no definitive historical evidence to confirm this.

The Mehtarlam Baba Shrine was constructed during the reign of Amir Abdul Rahman Khan. At

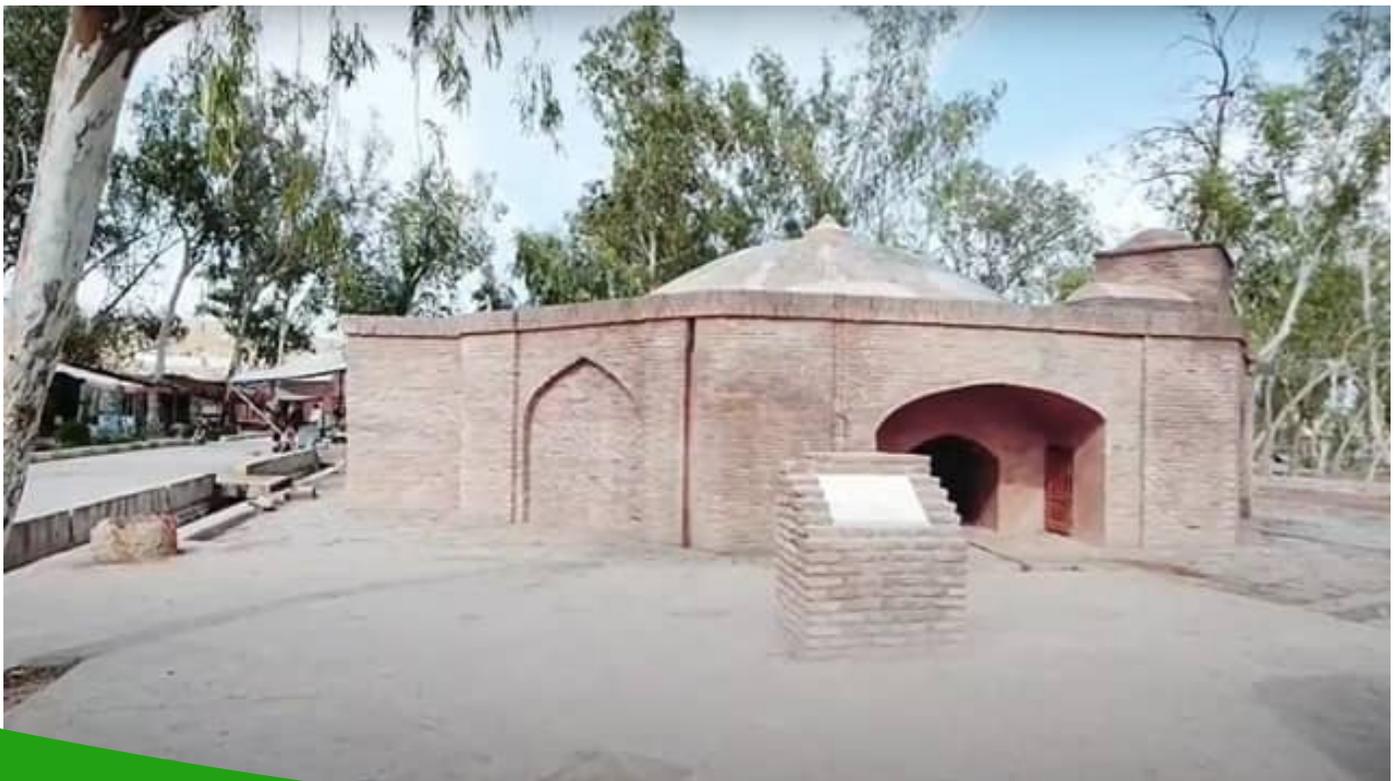
the time, there was no water facility, so a water reservoir was built near the shrine, which was later renovated and improved by the subsequent government.

Meaning of the Name

The name Mehtarlam is derived from "Mehtar" (meaning great or respected) and "Lam" (meaning sacred or holy), which together signify a "great and sacred personality."

Location, Structure, and Layout of Mehtarlam Baba Shrine

The shrine is situated in the heart of Mehtarlam City, surrounded by a beautiful green environment with gardens, water channels, and open spaces. The interior of the shrine features a historic mausoleum built in the style of Islamic architecture, including mihrabs and designated areas for prayer. Around the shrine, there is a spacious courtyard with rest areas for visitors. Inside, one can observe ancient calligraphy, Arabic inscriptions, and religious paintings.





Touristic Value of Mehtarlam Baba Shrine

The Mehtarlam Baba Shrine holds significant historical and ancient importance for Afghans and is considered a special gathering place for the people, offering a peaceful environment for visitors. Every year, people from various provinces of Afghanistan visit this site for tourism and leisure.

Recreational and Natural Beauties Around the Shrine

The shrine is not only of religious significance but also boasts remarkable natural beauty. Surrounded by lush gardens, shaded by green trees, and complemented by flowing water channels, it serves as an ideal recreational spot for families and tourists. The gardens surrounding this shrine are suitable for recreation, attracting people with their fresh air, green trees, and clean environment.

Availability of Rest Areas for Visitors

Every year, special ceremonies are held at the Mehtarlam Baba shrine on various occasions. During the days of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, people come to the shrine to offer prayers, give alms, and participate in religious rituals. Additionally, special dhikr (remembrance) sessions and spiritual rituals are held here for devotees of Sufism and mysticism.

Cultural Impact

The Mehtarlam Baba Shrine plays an important role in the social and cultural life of the people of Laghman. Due to its spiritual significance, it is also a special place for people from other provinces of Afghanistan. The shrine serves as a key gathering center for the residents of Laghman and is a place for preserving traditional Afghan customs and religious practices.

Access to Mehtarlam Baba Shrine

The shrine is located in the center of Mehtarlam City, the capital of Laghman Province, approximately 90 kilometers from Kabul.

Conclusion

Known locally as Baba Sahib Shrine, the Mehtarlam Baba Shrine is a major religious, historical, and recreational site in Laghman Province. It is not only significant for its religious value but also forms an important part of Laghman's culture due to its lush gardens, natural beauty, and role as a social gathering place. Every year, thousands of people—including local residents and visitors from other provinces—travel to the shrine for prayers, ziyarat, and leisure, showing deep reverence and affection for this sacred site.

Tourist and Recreational Attractions in Kabul

Senior Researcher: Kitab Khan Faizi

Abstract:

Tourism and travel have long been prevalent in various countries around the world, and travelers and tourists have visited different regions. Among these is our ancient and historical country, Afghanistan, which, with a historical background of more than 5,000 years, has nurtured numerous tourist attractions within its land. Tourists from different parts of the world come to this ancient region to visit its archaeological and tourist sites, observe our historical and cultural landscapes, and through this process, our country is introduced to the world, contributing to the growth of the culture and economy of our beloved nation.

Keywords:

Tourist, Kabul, Sites, Archaeological, Gardens, Stupas

Introduction

Our beloved country, Afghanistan, due to its ancient sites, beautiful natural landscapes, and astonishing mountainous structures, has been able to attract the attention of tourists and travelers to this ancient land. In this majestic and magnificent territory, international travelers and tourists have traveled back and forth since ancient times. Among them was the Greek geographer Herodotus, known as the Father of History. Likewise, Chinese travelers—especially (Xuan Zang), the famous pilgrim—visited the tourist sites of Afghanistan and left behind valuable records and notes.



During and after the spread of the noble religion of Islam, travelers such as Ibn-e-Hawqal, Yaqubi, Ibn-e- Khordad, Baladhuri, Yaqut Hamawi, Ibn-e- Battuta, and other travelers visited Afghanistan and recorded their observations. One of the most renowned travelers of our land is Nasir Khusraw Balkhi, who was born in Balkh in 394 AH, and whose *Safarnama* (Book of Travels) is considered one of his most valuable works. Modern tourism was established in 1840 CE by the Englishman Thomas Cook, who, under the *package tour* program, transported the first group of tourists from Scotland. The International Union of Official Tourism Organizations was established in 1925 CE in The Hague to better regulate global tourism, and Afghanistan became a member in 1959 CE; however, tourism activities began in Afghanistan in 1958. (32:2)

For the first time, tourism in Afghanistan was

formally established in the year 1337 Solar Hijri (1958), when the Tourism Department was founded within the framework of the Ministry of Information and Culture with a budget of four million Afghanis. (74-73:9)

The first group of tourists, numbering 436, entered Afghanistan and visited various regions of the country. With the establishment of this institution, the number of international tourists gradually increased, reaching 18,360 visitors in the year 1356 Solar Hijri (1977). The factors of war caused a decline in international tourism in the country, and only 8,000 tourists visited Afghanistan in 1370 Solar Hijri (1991), generating an income of one million US dollars. (2:14) Later, global tourism affairs were placed under the framework of aviation and tourism, and after the establishment of the Interim Administration in Afghanistan, tourism once again came under the Ministry of Information and Culture, where it continues its activities to this day. (197:8)

The city of Kabul is one of the ancient and tourist cities located in central Afghanistan. Since ancient times, it possessed strong fortifications, and its connection with surrounding areas was facilitated through numerous gates. The remnants of these walls can still be seen on Mount Asmai, as well as the city gates. In addition to the Asmai and Sher Darwaza mountains, ancient Kabul contains historical sites, monuments, minarets, gardens, and recreational areas, all of which attract the attention of international tourists.

Among the historical monuments of Kabul is Tappa-e- Maranjan, which is located in a part of the hill known as Tappa-e- Nader Khan. A Buddhist temple once existed there, and on this hill, there is a large Buddhist stupa built of rubble stone. Stairways have been constructed on its eastern and western sides, making it an interesting site from a tourism perspective.



Paghman Palace - Kabul



Another local and international tourist site is located on the foothills of Mount Sher Darwaza. It consists of a Buddhist stupa along with a number of buildings from the Islamic period, dating back to the 1st century CE. At this site, Babur had planted Judas trees (arghawan), which further enhanced its beauty. For this reason, it was considered a recreational area for the people of Kabul and is regarded as one of the most prominent tourist attractions in the city (87:13). Among local residents, this tourist site is known as Khwaja Safa, where a shrine is also located.

Tamim Ansar is among the tourist sites in Shohada-e- Salehin, situated southwest of Bala Hissar of Kabul on the foothills of Mount Sher Darwaza. In this area, in addition to countless graves, there are two other long graves, one of which is famously known as Jabir Ansar. A stone or inscription is installed above its gate, indicating that the structure was built in 1237 AH (1821–1822 CE) by a person named Allah Wardi Khan. In this inscription, only the name Jabir Ansar is mentioned, not Tamim Ansar; however, according to scholarly research, the death of

Tamim Ansar is also confirmed at this site and is recorded as having occurred in 44 AH (664–665 CE). Scholars have mentioned different places for the death of Tamim Ansar. It is said that Tamim Ansar came to Sijistan for jihad with Abdul Rahman ibn-e- Samurah and, according to Ibn-e- al-Barr, he was among the eminent Companions. He was martyred in Kabul in 44 AH (664–665 CE). It is also said that Ibn-e- Aamir conquered Kabul in the same year, and Abu Rifa'ah Adawi was killed there.

In summary, no doubt or uncertainty remains regarding the burial of Hazrat Tamim Ansar at this site. The former structure has been rebuilt, and its spring is flowing. Water from the spring—known as the Nazargah-e- Hazrat Khidr (peace be upon him)—has been channeled through pipes, and an inscription was deemed necessary. In conclusion, it can be stated that the pure and blessed body of Hazrat-e- Abu Rifa'ah or Tamim Ansar is buried at this very place (5-1:4).



One of the very famous and sacred sites among the people of Kabul is the Panja-e- Shah Shrine, located south of Shohada-e- Salehin and south of the ancient Tappa-e- Narinj, on the foothills of a mountain covered with Judas trees. It has an approximate age of 100 years. On the western wall, there is a stone embedded in the wall bearing the carving of a handprint. In the courtyard of the shrine, the deceased are buried, and the dates on two of the graves correspond to 910 AH (1504–1505 CE) and 911 AH (1505–1506 CE). There is also a stone plaque at this site containing six couplets, dated to 1363–1376 AH (1944–1957 CE) (27-26:4). At this site, the ceremonial banner (Jahanda) is raised once a year in the month of Hamal (March–April), after which devotional recitations continue for forty days.

As mentioned earlier, Tappa-e- Narinj is an ancient site that was excavated by Afghan archaeologists in 1383 SH (2004–2005 CE) and was transformed into an open-air museum, attracting the attention of international travelers and tourists.

One of the tourist sites that has attracted international tourists from past to present is Kol-e Hashmat Khan, which contains water throughout the year.

Another important tourist attraction is the Stupa of Qala-e Khandar, located southwest of Kabul city, with an elevation of 1,815 meters above sea level (213:5).

Tangi-e Sayedan is also considered one of the global tourism attractions in southwest Kabul. This ancient site is located near the lush and verdant Lalandar Valley, alongside which there is a natural spring. Although it has suffered some damage due to smuggling of historical artifacts, a number of monks' cells are still present. On the walls of these chambers, red-colored shapes and motifs can be observed (139:6).

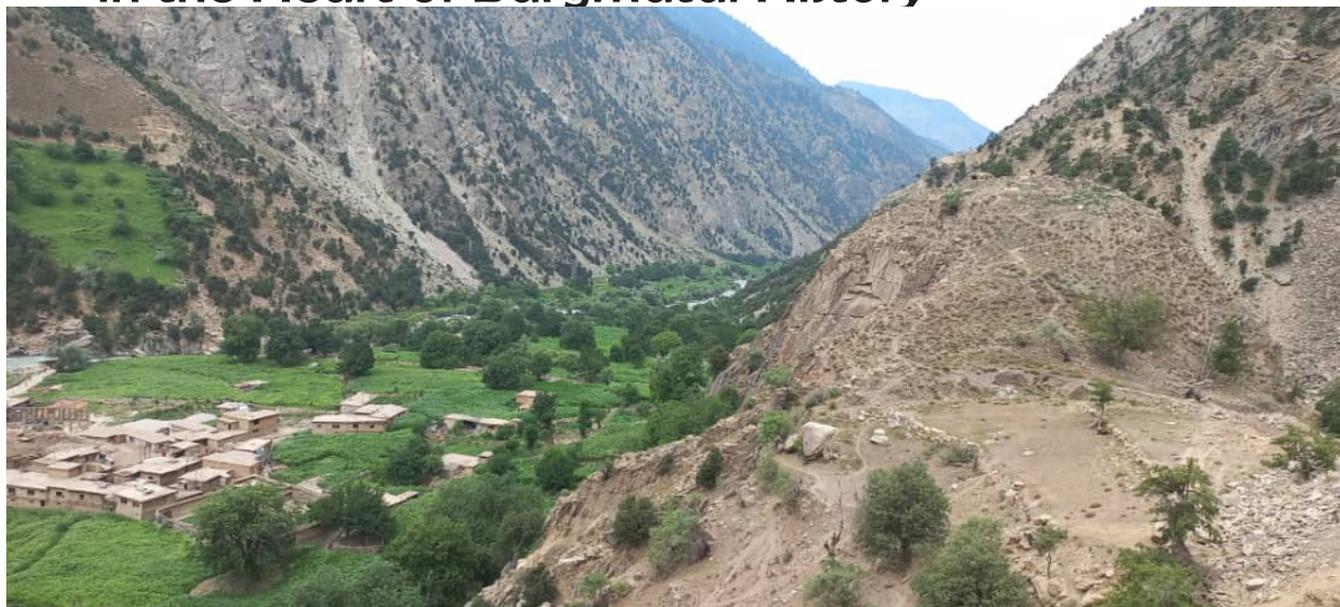
Another attraction of Kabul is Shewaki, which is located at the junction of the Botkhak and Gardez roads. In this area, there are Buddhist stupas dating back to the 5th century CE, making it a suitable site for international tourists (83-81:10).

Likewise, after passing Shewaki, one encounters another attraction known as Guldara-e- Musahi. In this lush and verdant valley, there is an ancient site widely known among historians and archaeologists as the Guldara Stupa, which enjoys great historical significance. Travelers and researchers such as General Cunningham, Charles Masson (Ch. Masson), William Simpson (W. W. Simpson), and Honig Berger visited this historical and cultural site (38-32:10).



Jana Pit (Atiwar Bagam): A Lost Treasure in the Heart of Bargmatal History

Gul Zaman 'Jinah'



In ancient Nuristan, behind every hill lies a story, a memory, and a history. In the western part of Bargmatal District, there is a village called Jana Pit—a remarkable settlement that, despite being eroded by the winds of time, still holds the living narratives of the area's historical identity, migrations, conflicts, and culture.

Jana Pit is situated on a high point in western Bargmatal. The village was built atop a hill with agricultural lands to the north, which was also the only accessible route to the village. Its east, south, and west sides are naturally enclosed, with only a narrow passage (dok) on the eastern side, which historically served as the sole route for transporting supplies during difficult times and conflicts.

Approximately 150 years ago, residents from eastern and western Bargmatal jointly inhabited Jana Pit. The area was not only suitable for living but also held agricultural, security, and social importance. Over time, however, internal disputes and conflicts among the residents led to the village's destruction. Families moved to safer locations in the plains below the hill, leaving Jana Pit abandoned.

Village Structure and Features

Jana Pit had a strategic location, naturally protected by the hill. The northern route via farmland was the main access path, while the eastern narrow passage served as an emergency route for bringing food and military supplies. The area spans roughly one jerib (approx. 0.2 hectares). Jana Pit was not just a residential area; it also contains historical, cultural, and archaeological artifacts. Buried under the ground are remnants that reflect the lifestyle, construction, tools, and customs of its former inhabitants.

Unfortunately, some of these artifacts have previously been removed and sold by people, which is considered the destruction of cultural heritage. This issue requires serious attention, and it is necessary to study, document, and protect this area. Today, the value of Jana Pit lies in being a memorial of a displaced community and a symbol of the shared life of the people of eastern and western Bargmatal. From a geographical and natural defense perspective, it is a strong and secure location, and still, undiscovered information, artifacts, and cultural objects remain buried underground.

Jana Pit is a forgotten village, yet its name survives in the memory of history. It tells a story of war, division, and hardship, but also reflects unity, migration, and cultural richness. Preserving and documenting this site as part of Afghanistan's cultural heritage is essential so that future generations remain connected to their roots and history.

Rabia Balkhi Tomb

Mohammad Amad 'Rahmani'



The tomb of Rabia Balkhi is located in the old city of Balkh, one of the historic cities of Balkh Province. This tomb is situated near other historical buildings, such as the Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa Khanqah and the Noh Gunbad Mosque, and is considered one of the cultural and literary symbols of the province.

Rabia Balkhi was one of the earliest female poets in the history of Persian literature. She lived in Balkh around the 4th century Hijri (approximately one thousand years ago). Rabia came from a high-ranking and noble family; her father was one of the commanders of Khorasan. Her life story, however, is famously associated with her love for a servant named Baktash.

When her brother, Haris, learned of this love, he imprisoned Rabia in a bathhouse out of honor and prejudice and cut her veins. While there, she wrote her final poems on the walls with her own blood, securing her name forever in the pages of history.

The Tomb

Rabia Balkhi's tomb is a small, simple, and historic building located in the heart of the old city of Balkh. The tomb is constructed from bricks and decorated with a low dome and an arched doorway. Inside, there is a simple grave marked with the name "Rabia Balkhi." Many visitors pay their respects by placing flowers or reading her poetry.

Cultural and Literary Significance

Rabia Balkhi is recognized as the first female poet of the Persian language. She inspired many later poets, including Mawlana, Sanai, and Attar of Nishapuri. In Persian poetry, she symbolizes pure love, courage, and selfless devotion.

One of her famous poems begins:

*"I am that eloquent bird whose voice flows into the earth.
But my voice never dies; it remains in the world."*

This poem reflects the lofty spirit of her eternal love. Another of her poems reads:

*"Your love ran through me
like blood in my veins,
Leaving me empty, yet
full of you, O beloved."*

Current Condition

Today, Rabia Balkhi's tomb is considered one of the most important cultural and historical sites in Balkh Province. Each year, domestic and international tourists, students, and literature enthusiasts visit Balkh to see her tomb. Although the tomb building requires restoration, it still retains its unique beauty and spiritual significance.



History of Archaeological Activities in Ghazni Province

Mohammad Shafiq 'Yawari'



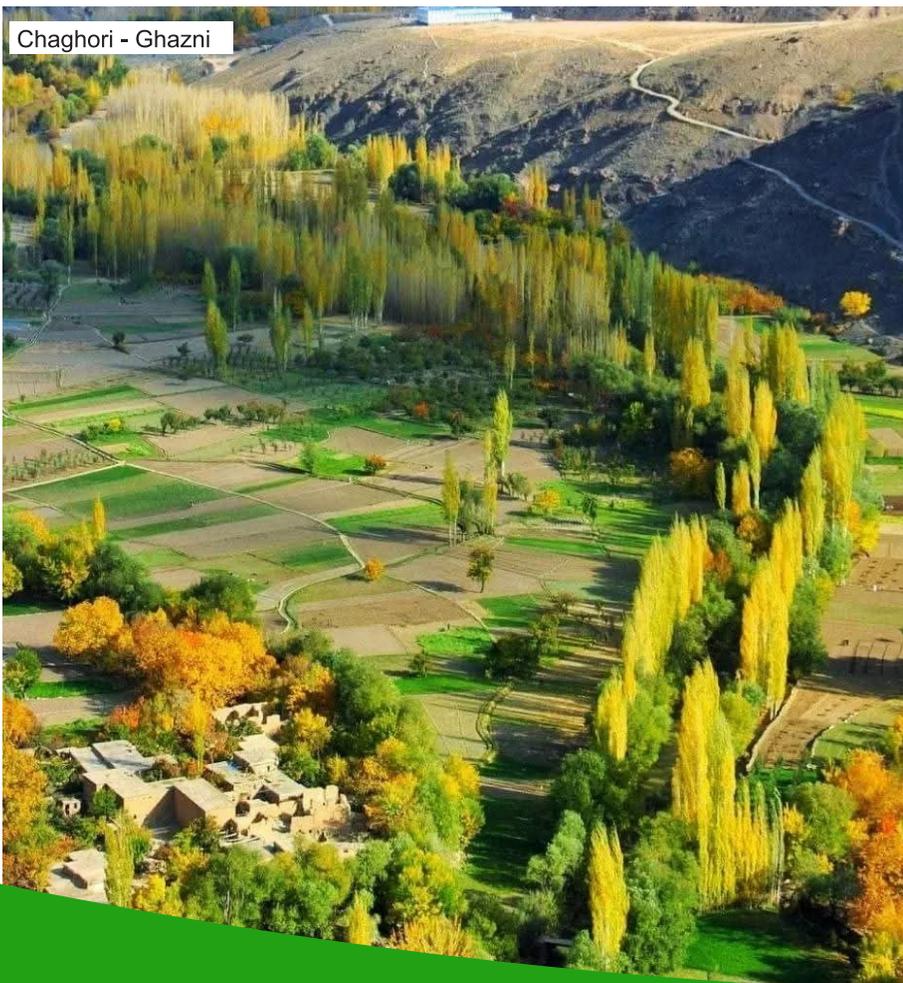
The collection of Islamic-period artifacts in Ghazni Province began with the activities of the Italian archaeological team between 1956 and 1978. It is noteworthy that, at the request of the Afghan government at the time, an agreement was signed between the National Museum of Afghanistan and the Italian Institute of Near and Middle East Studies to clarify and introduce the Islamic Middle Ages through the presentation of artifacts from this period. Following this agreement, the archaeological activities of the Italian team in Afghanistan commenced. Based on reliable and detailed studies and sources regarding the Middle Ages, Professor G. Somoni, the head of the Italian Institute of Near and Middle East Studies, conducted the first survey in Ghazni city in 1956. In the same year, two areas in the Minaret Plain—located between Bala Hisar and the

village of Rawza—were identified, and excavation work in the mentioned areas began.

The survey and excavations in the areas of Ghazni began in 1960 (1339 Hijri Solar) through a joint effort of Italian and Afghan archaeological teams and continued in Ghazni city until the fall of 1978 (1357 Hijri Solar). However, due to political problems that arose in Afghanistan, cultural and archaeological activities, as well as excavation work at the historical sites in this province, were halted. The artifacts obtained from these excavations—especially the gravestone carvings, shrines, and marble works—are undoubtedly significant and valuable for understanding the history and chronology of constructions. They truly reflect the grandeur of Ghaznavid-era art. Moreover, the surveys and excavations were carried out both inside and outside Ghazni city. Notable areas include Ramak in Deh Yak District of Ghazni Province.

History of Ghazni Province Museum

The Museum of Islamic Arts in Ghazni Province was first established in the Rawza area in 1962 (1341 Hijri Solar). The artifacts recovered by the Italian archaeological team, in collaboration with Afghan archaeologists, prompted the creation of a temporary exhibition to display these items. At that time, the Afghan government also approved two research and excavation projects: one focused on urban development and the other on the restoration of historical monuments and the relocation of cultural heritage. Both projects were initiated by the Italian engineer Andrea Bruno.



Chaghori - Ghazni



Andrea Bruno wrote a travelogue in which he documented, in order, the historical sites from the pre-Islamic period, including the Sardar Hill area. He detailed the work of the Italian archaeological team, which began between 1959 and 1960 (1338–1339 Hijri Solar), and shed light on the Two Minarets of Ghazni, the Masud III Palace, and several Islamic-period tombs. This account concluded in the Rawza area with his visits to the mausoleums of Sultan Mahmood of Ghaznawi and Sultan Abdul Razaq Timuri.

This travelogue was one of the most important accounts, as it described many historical monuments dating from the 11th to the 16th centuries CE. Following detailed studies and the approval of the budget and resources by Afghan government authorities, the restoration work on the mausoleum of Sultan Abdul Razaq began on August 12, 1961. The project covered the structure from its foundation, about 2 meters below ground level, up to the upper sections, which had been in a very poor condition.

In the later months of 1966 (1345 Hijri Solar), this mausoleum—recognized for its exceptional artistic and historical significance—was thoroughly restored and repurposed as the Museum of Islamic Arts. For the first time in Afghanistan, a museum was established within a historic structure of notable beauty and importance. The museum displayed highly valuable artifacts recovered from archaeological sites, items previously stored in the museum's depot, as well as pieces purchased and collected by Mr. Umberto, Ahmad Ali Kohzad, and local residents.

In 1973 (1352 Hijri Solar), an agreement was signed for the construction of a second archaeological museum in Ghazni city between Zamir Ali Tarzi, the head of the Archaeological Institute of Afghanistan, and Morziotti, an archaeologist from Italy. According to this agreement, it was decided that artifacts from the pre-Islamic period, particularly from Sardar Hill, would be displayed in the museum. The project was planned to be implemented on a 12,000-square-meter site, and the foundation-laying ceremony took place in 1976. Unfortunately, construction was halted two years later due to the problems arising from the 1979 Soviet invasion. In the same year, the Islamic Museum in Rawza village was also closed to visitors, and by order of the government at the time, its artifacts were transferred to the Ghazni central museum. After a long period, the Italian archaeological team resumed work in 2003 with the aim of reconstructing museums in Afghanistan, giving priority to the Rawza Museum and its collections in the Afghan government's project plans. Consequently, the Ghazni Museum project began in 2006 at the Sultan Abdul Razaq Mausoleum, funded by the Italian

Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with UNESCO and the Directorate of Historical Monuments of Afghanistan. The pre-Islamic Museum project was then advanced to its next phase.





The exhibition of the Ghazni Museum's artifacts was held for the second time in 2014 (1393 Hijri Solar) in honor of Ghazni being chosen as the Capital of Islamic Culture and Civilization. The exhibition was set up in the administrative building of the Directorate of Information and Culture. In March 2013, over 130 selected Islamic-period artifacts were displayed—after initial cleaning—in the entrance hall, the large central hall, and eight other rooms of the Ghazni Islamic Museum. These artifacts, primarily marble stones dating precisely to the 11th and 12th centuries, included products from the Ghaznavid period. However, by the end of the same year, due to security concerns

facing the museum, the authorities were forced to collect the artifacts, and the museum was once again closed to visitors.

The exhibition of Islamic-period artifacts was held for the third time in the spring of 2019 (1398 Hijri Solar) in the administrative building of the Directorate and was reopened to visitors. This exhibition displayed 150 Islamic-period artifacts, including stone, clay, wood, and metal items. It remains open to visitors, and daily dozens of students, scholars, domestic and international tourists, and local residents come to see it.

