

SECTION 4

Theoretical Framework

SECTION 4 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Vision of The Master Plan

The vision of the Master Plan has been drawn to a large extent from the principles stated in various International Charters and Conventions and also those adopted in various master plans or price cost documents (PC1's) prepared for various monuments/sites by the Department of Archaeology and Museums in the country. Some of these on which this Master Plan document is based are outlined below:

4.1.1 Maintaining the Authenticity and Value of the Site

The single most important aim of conservation as outlined in the Burra Charter (clause 2) is “to retain the cultural significance or authenticity of a place”. Clause 15 also states that, “the contribution of all aspects of cultural significance of a place should be respected. If a place includes fabric uses, associations or meanings of different periods or different aspects of cultural significance, emphasizing or interpreting one period or aspect at the expense of another can only be justified, when what is left out, removed or diminished is of slight cultural significance and that which is emphasized or interpreted is of much greater cultural significance.”

The values giving meanings and significance to Takht-i-Bahi and Seri Bahlol, which have adequately been stated in section 3.2 of this document, must be safeguarded. Given that the values can change in nature and perception, the assessment should be reviewed at stages, listing further values and to broadening the focus for protection of all significant values.

4.1.2 Safeguarding all Original Remnants is a Conservation Priority



Temporary Measures by the Department



Remnants of the wall at Seri Bahlol

As already stated, “the aim of safeguarding the world heritage sites is to maintain their authenticity and values for which these have been listed. Therefore any treatment should be based on the strategy of minimum intervention,” (MGWCHS) and all interventions should be reversible and should maintain the authenticity of the

resource. The importance of retaining original fabric and its inherent value was recognized by John Marshall, whose Conservation Manual written in 1923 serves as the main reference for the Department of Archaeology and Museums.

4.1.3 Conservation and Management Programs must be Sustainable

All actions addressing the maintenance and upkeep of both components of this World Heritage Site must be sustainable. This means the decisions are made on the basis of up to date, reliable and usable information and that all actions are reversible and minimal as needed, “changing as much as necessary but as little as possible. Also the changes to a place should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture.” Burra Charter articles 3.1 and 3.2. The programming should be designed in such a way that it can continue along clearly defined paths, following well designed and focused methodologies regardless of **administrative changes** on the site; meaning thereby, that all actions must be sustainable.

4.1.4 Tourism should Support Conservation rather than Destroy the Site

It is unfortunate to point out that because of security concerns in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in the wake of 9/11 episode, the foreign tourists have almost stopped coming to these sites in the province. The situation regarding the local tourists is also not very rosy. All the efforts and measures need to be taken to increase the number of tourists on these sites. However, all tourism efforts should include adequate controls to prevent the destructive impacts of tourism witnessed at this site and many other historic sites. The recommendations in the Master Plan ensure strictest possible control on the tourists to ensure that such activities do not undermine the authenticity and integrity of this World Heritage Site. All earnings from tourism should be spent on the maintenance of this cultural asset and the communities on which tourism is based.

4.1.5 Decision making must be based on Full Documentation

This Master Plan has taken the following statements into consideration to reflect the importance of research and detailed documentation for conservation process. It must be appreciated that this statement taken from Florence Charter, article 15, is for historic gardens, but is equally applicable to any other site of cultural and historic importance. “No restoration work and no reconstruction work on a historic garden shall be undertaken without thorough, prior research to ensure that such work is scientifically executed and involves everything from excavation to assembly of record relating to the garden in question. Before any practical work starts, a project must be prepared on the basis of said research and must be submitted to a group of experts for joint examination and approval.”

Hoi An Protocol, article 4.1.6 also very clearly spells out this as, “decisions regarding the type and extent of intervention carried out as part of a conservation plan should only be taken after extensive research, expert discussions and weighing of conservation options”.

It must be emphasized that the conservation works carried out under UNESCO at the Shish Mahal in Lahore Fort and the three structures in Shalamar Gardens followed these principles, in letter and spirit. Comprehensive documentation before, during and after the conservation works was carried out (both digital and graphic) which later formed a part of the archives/library for future reference, as is stated in article 32.1 of the Burra Charter. “The records associated with the conservation of a place should be placed in a permanent archive and made publicly available subject to requirement of security and privacy, and where this is culturally appropriate.”

4.2 Standards of Intervention

Most heritage conservation projects involve a combination of approaches, rather than a single isolated intervention. These levels of interventions have been adapted from the Burra Charter and are described below:

4.2.1 Levels of Interventions

The levels of intervention need to be fully understood by all those involved in conservation planning and regularly referred to, during the decision making process.

Conservation means the process of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance. Conservation may, according to circumstances, include the process of retention or reintroduction of a use, maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and interpretation; and will commonly include a combination of more than one of these.

Maintenance is the continuous protective care of the fabric and setting of a place, and is to be distinguished from repair. Maintenance is fundamental to conservation and should be undertaken where fabric is of cultural significance.

Preservation means maintaining the fabric of a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration. Preservation is appropriate where the existing fabric or its condition constitutes evidence of cultural significance or where sufficient evidence is available to allow other conservation processes to be carried out.

Consolidation is the act of physical addition or application of supportive material into the fabric of historic property, to ensure its continued durability or structural integrity.

Restoration is returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new materials. Restoration can also involve replacing missing or decayed parts ensuring that this integrates harmoniously with the whole, whilst also remaining distinguishable from the original on close inspection. It is only appropriate if there is sufficient evidence of an earlier state of the fabric.

Rehabilitation refers to the process of providing for compatible use of the property through repair, alteration and addition, whilst preserving those portions or features

that convey its historical or cultural values. Any change made should be of a substantially reversible nature and cause minimal impact.

Reconstruction means returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of new materials into the fabric. Reconstruction is appropriate only where a place is incomplete through damage or alteration and only where there is sufficient evidence to reproduce an earlier state of the fabric. Reconstruction should be identifiable on close inspection or through additional interpretation.

Adaptation means modifying a place to suit the existing use or a proposed use. Adaptation is acceptable only where the adaptation has minimal impact on the cultural significance of the place.

4.2.2 Selection of Intervention Levels

Most critical stage in the conservation process of a historic site is to decide which one of the approach/es be adopted. This decision determines the extent to which the integrity of the historic fabric is retained. The preferred levels of intervention are always those which show full respect to the historic fabric, maintaining and supporting existing fabric with a minimum of additions/alterations. Actions falling within the second level of intervention are those which exhibit to us, moderate respect for original material. It should only be employed in exceptional situations and with detailed justifications. And actions showing little respect for historic fabric should be avoided in all circumstances.

The reason for selecting one level of intervention over the other depend upon a number of factors, including the nature and heritage value of the site, the goals of conservation, the scale or resources being conserved and the resources available both human and financial. The site of Takht-i-Bahi being very well maintained and conserved will have interventions completely different from Seri Bahlol which is heavily encroached and only traces of the fortification wall remain. The mounds within the vicinity of Seri Bahlol, from where a large number of sculptures/artifacts were excavated, have completely disappeared; will therefore have a different strategy.

Efforts, however, must be made:

- i) That an appropriate assessment of conservation level(s) is carried out in advance of any conservation decision making.
- ii) The assessment is based on authentic information and full documentation.
- iii) The assessment can be supported by following international standards and guidelines for conservation, and that all subsequent decisions include references to these standards.
- iv) That decision is only made after discussions between the custodian of the site, the project management team and the standing technical committee which must be formed for this World Heritage Site.
- v) All interventions are reversible as far as possible.
- vi) All decisions are publicized for public comments.

4.3 Prioritization of Conservation Interventions

All conservation works at this World Heritage Site, need to be carried out, and based on need and assessment of the severity of the conservation situation. Both sites of Takht-i-Bahi and Seri Bahlol are complex and completely different in nature, therefore conservation actions need to be prioritized separately to ensure sufficient and effective investment of time and money. This has been amply stated in the Management Guidelines for the World Cultural Heritage Sites (MGWCHS) “the inevitable contradictions of the planning process should be resolved first by examining the implications of all viable alternatives, and then by deciding which is least harmful to the significance of the heritage site.

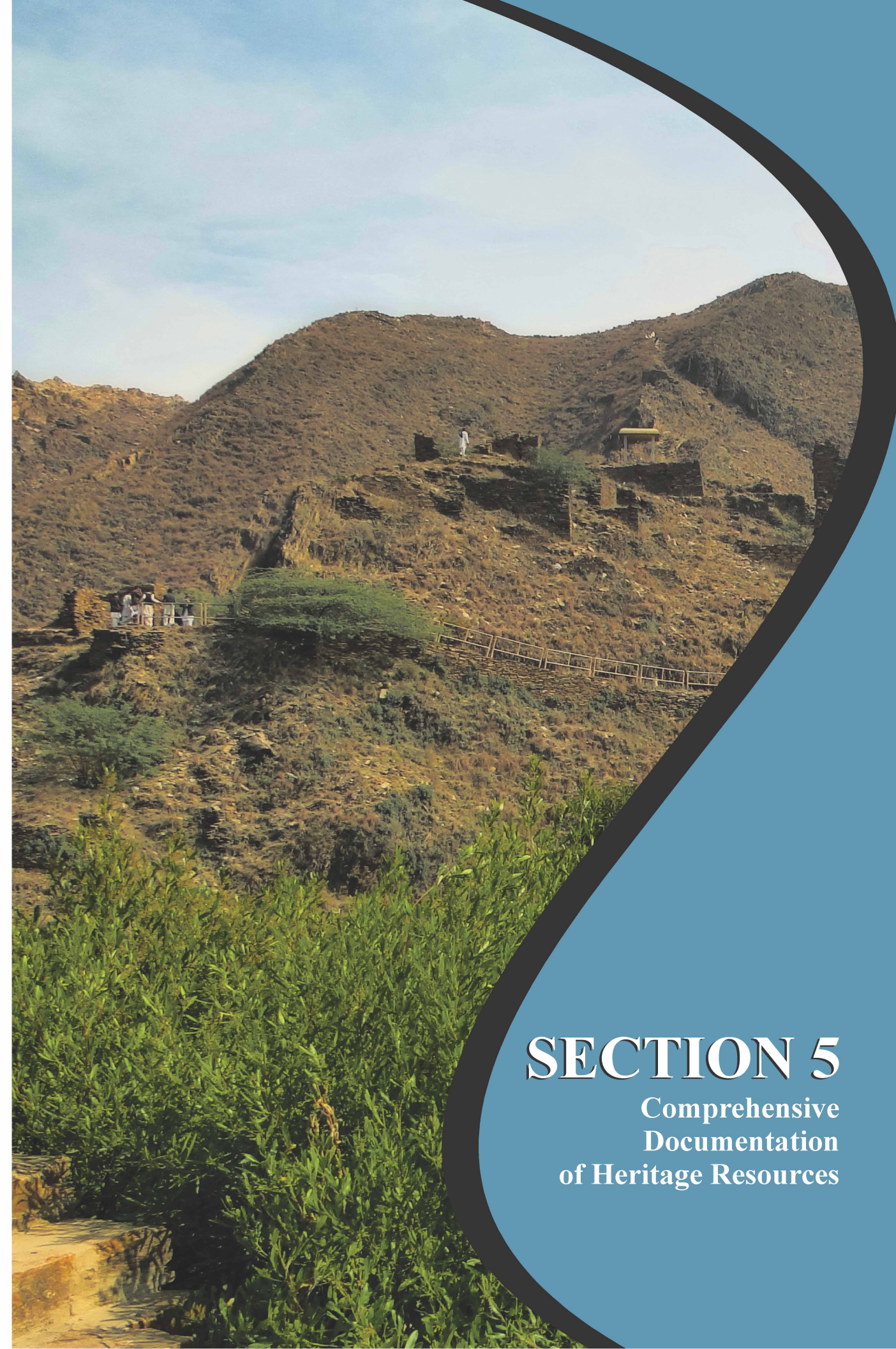
4.3.1 Conservation situation

The conservation situation can be characterized as follows:

- a) **Critical and in need of emergency or stabilizing action:** Elements in critical condition and progressively worsening and there is an imminent danger of losing those qualities/features which are the basis of significance. Immediate action may be required which will substantially improve the situation in both environmental and conservation terms. Some components of Takht-i-Bahi and the fortification wall at Seri Bahlol fall in this category.
- b) **Poor–Serious and in need of preventive conservation:** Components in a poor condition and progressively deteriorating and there is a growing danger of damage to these components. Problem is serious; however, short term actions initiated within the next six months or so and completed promptly will significantly improve the situation.
- c) **Fair–Long term conservation actions:** Components in a fairly good condition and stable, but there is a danger that they may, in the long run result in damage to or loss of those qualities/features which are the basis of significance. Long term actions in the form of specialist studies may be needed and started as soon as possible. The whole process may require a longer time scale before improvements can be seen.
- d) **Good – Requiring routine monitoring/maintenance:** The components are in a good condition and stable without immediate risk of loss and those qualities/features which are the basis of significance. However, routine monitoring/maintenance are the prerequisite to keep these in good condition for future generations.

4.3.2 The Aims of Prioritization

The aims of prioritization is simply to identify various components of both sites which fall into one of the four categories as mentioned in 4.3.1 above. Decisions as to what conservation actions are required for a particular component will be based on a condition survey along with the research into past interventions (if any) and assessment through ongoing monitoring of best component concerned. All decisions should be made in the context of the international practices, set out in relevant charters and guidelines presented in an annexure separately. Consideration of the relative significance of the resource and the nature and extent of the threat it faces should also form the basis of this prioritization.



SECTION 5

Comprehensive
Documentation
of Heritage Resources

SECTION 5 | **COMPREHENSIVE DOCUMENTATION OF HERITAGE RESOURCES**

5.1 Introduction

The protection and conservation of archaeological heritage must be based upon the fullest possible knowledge of its extent and nature. General survey of archaeological resources is therefore an essential working tool, in developing strategies for the protection of archaeological heritage. Consequently archaeological survey should be a basic obligation in the conservation, management and monitoring of the heritage. Comprehensive recording and documentation is also a prerequisite of any program to protect the universal value of a World Heritage Site, like Takht-i-Bahi and Seri Bahlol.

5.1.1 Resource Data Base

Inventories of various components constitute a primary resource data base for scientific study and research. The inventoried components that enhance the historic and cultural character of both components of this site include the following:

- i) Remains of fortification wall around the main mound of Seri Bahlol.
- ii) Demarcation of twelve or so, lesser mounds from where the sculptural artifacts had been recovered in the past. According to D.B Spooner “No sculptural finds of a religious nature have ever been made in the main mound itself, whereas the surrounding mounds have yielded large quantities. I judge therefore, that the main mound marks the site of an ancient town or city, which may or may not have been a Royal residence and that the curiously large number of lesser mounds, which to the number of a dozen or more, surround the main mound on all sides, at a distance from one to two miles from it, are the remains of the main temples or stupas erected in connection therewith.”

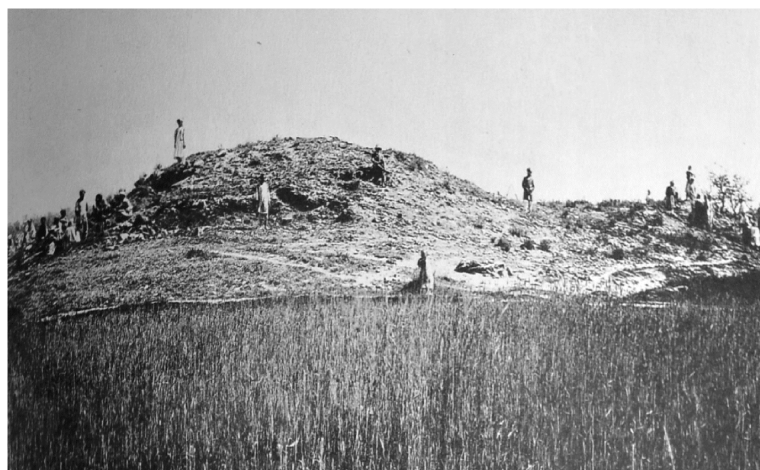


Figure 5.1: Mound “E” at Seri Bahlol before excavations

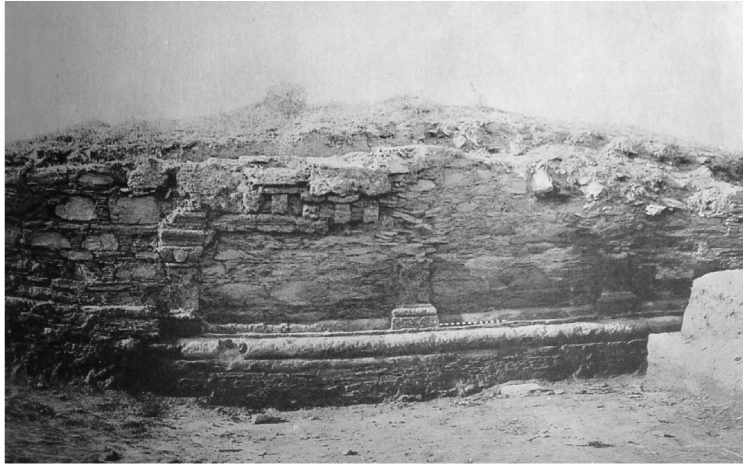


Figure 5.2: North face of Main Base: Mound “E” after excavations

- iii) The archaeological remains of Takht-i-Bahi, main stupa complex as explained in section 2.2.2 of this document.
- iv) Archaeological remains on many other adjoining hill top which have also been excavated.
- v) The total area of these hills is around 1100 acres and these are surrounded by lush green fields on all four sides. It is therefore presumed that many more similar complexes might as well exist on these hills. According to some archaeologists, almost 70% of the area of those hills is still intact/unexcavated.
- vi) A complete catalogue of the sculptures and other antiquities that have been excavated from there, in the past as well as those which may be found in future explorations should also be inventoried. These have been exhibited in museums of Peshawar, Lahore, Mardan and elsewhere in other parts of the world. Errington, Bellow, Spooner, Stein, Tissot, Hargreaves and Schmidt have mentioned these.

5.1.2 Documentation System

Each of these diverse components require a different type of documentation which, in combination would present, as full as possible a record of existing elements, their integrity and condition. The recording methodology has been tailored to the requirements of this World Heritage Site, so as to be useful for the conservation processes. These sites were first discovered and excavated in the later part of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century: the records of the excavations and the sculptural finds have not been maintained in a systematic manner. Neither are these records/finds available at one place. One of the objectives of this Master Plan is to keep a comprehensive record of the historic structures/remains/artifacts along with the baseline information. Documentation and condition survey catalogues were prepared for collecting detailed information to assist in conservation, maintenance,

management and monitoring activities. The documentation system comprised of the following:

- i) Baseline survey folios
- ii) Topographic survey, to yield information about the spatial relationship along with the elevations of various components with one another.
- iii) Condition survey.

5.2 Baseline Survey Folios

Graphic, photographic and written records provide comprehensive information about a resource. The survey conducted, has yielded accurate data, necessary for planning, conservation and maintenance programs and carrying out further research and critical studies. These also provide important basis for further specialist studies. Information has been developed regarding the standing structures, ruins, decorative elements, written information consisting of names, locations, their importance, accessibility, ownership, significance and statement of significance. Bibliography such as references, dossiers, description, brief history and dates of known interventions has also been collected.

5.3 Topographic Survey

As both the components of this World Heritage Sites are located either on mounds (raised about 30 feet from the ground in case of Seri Bahlol) or on hilltops in an isolated mountain range surrounded by lush green fields or small urban centers, (in case of Takht-i-Bahi) it was necessary to carry out a topographic survey of both the sites. This survey has yielded useful information about elevations, peaks, spatial relationships of various components, approaches, ridges and seasonal rainwater disposal etc. The information regarding remedial measures, whether emergency, stabilization, preventive maintenance or conservation requirements has been developed on the basis of this topographic survey as well as detailed visual examination of the actual site and its surroundings. Topographic plans including related information of each of the sites are given at figures 5.3 to 5.6.

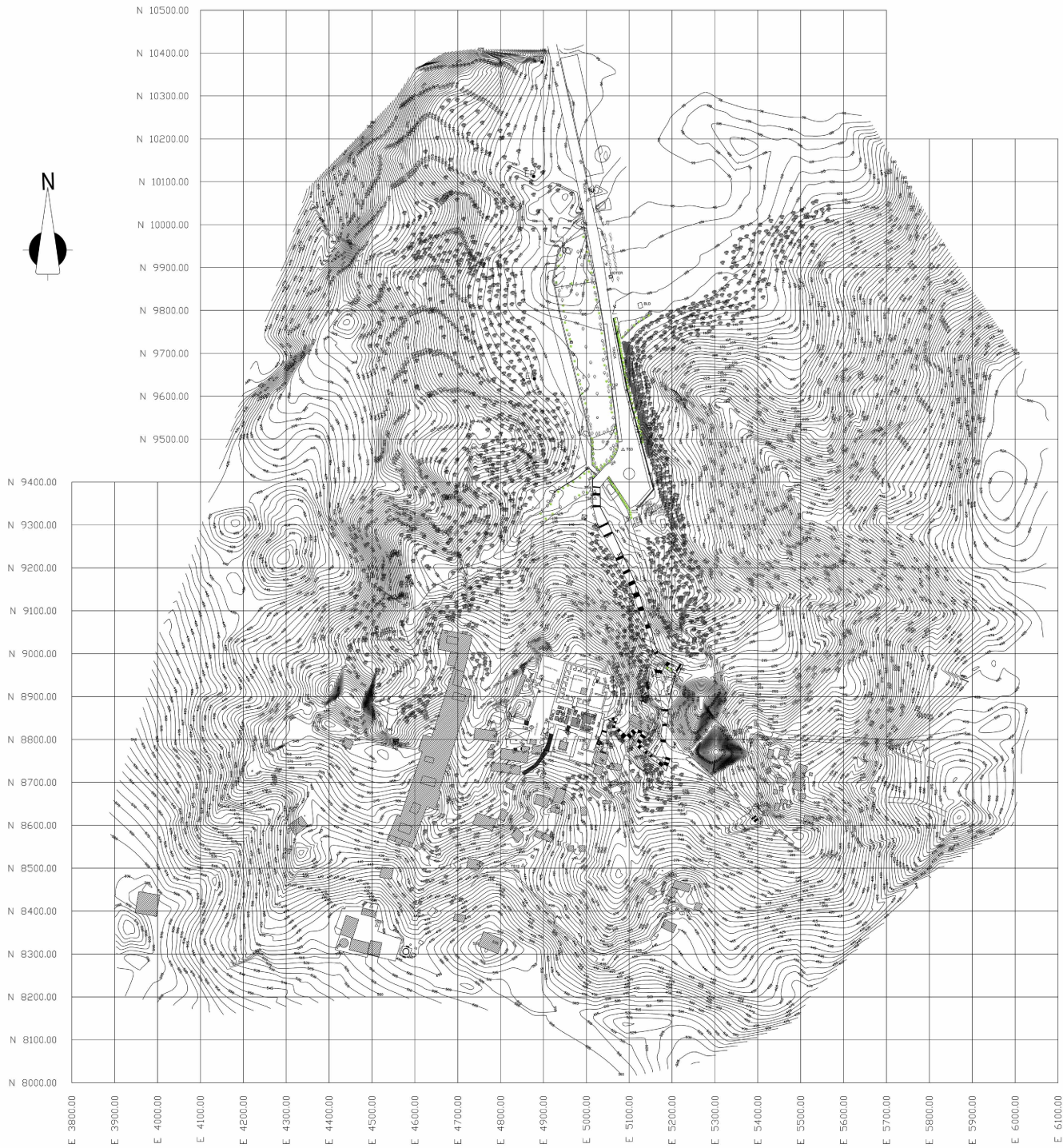
5.4 Condition Survey

The Design and Management Consultants team has undertaken a comprehensive visual survey of both sites and their immediate environment. It also collected data in the form of photographs of both sites as well as of sculptures and other artifacts at Peshawar and Lahore museums. This information is provided in detail separately in an Annexure.

5.4.1 Condition Survey of Takht-i-Bahi

The condition survey undertaken by our team indicated the following threats to these sites. The following points are relevant to Takht-i-Bahi:

- i) Rapid urbanization around this site including encroachments which need to be checked immediately.

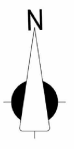
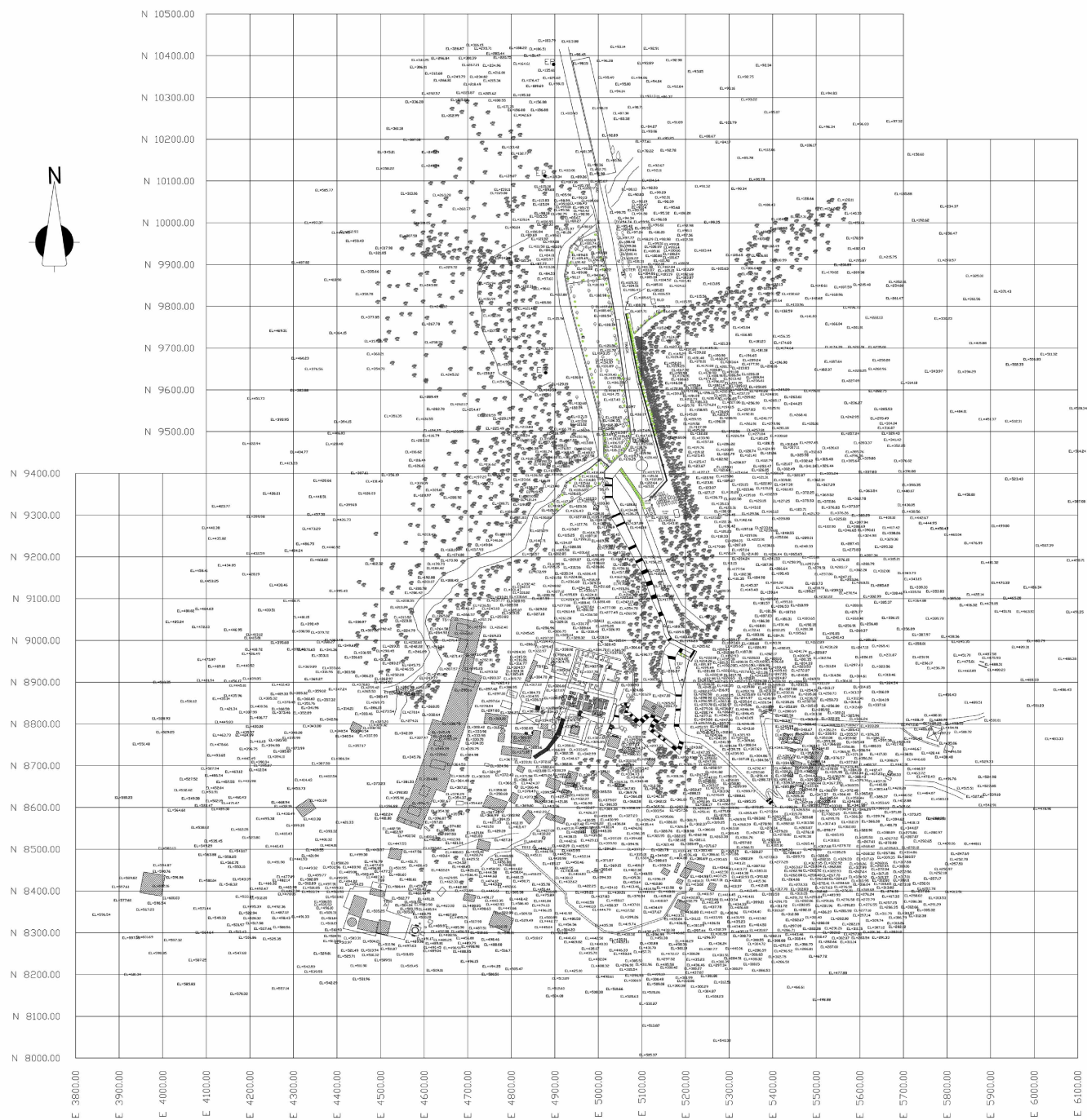


LEGENED

DRAIN	
BOUNDARY WALL	
EP	
DISTBIN	
LP	
WATER TANK	
BULDING	
HATCH	
ROAD	
TS	
DP	
WALL	
TREE 1	
TREE 2	
TREE 3	
TREE 4	
<p>AREA OF TAKHT-I-BAHI TOTAL AREA SQFT 4008551.12 ACRE 92.11</p>	

Design & Management Consultants
 7-A ,Sikandar Malhi Road, Canal Park Gulberg II Lahore.

Figure 5.3: Topographic Survey Plan of Takht-i-Bahi (Contour Plan)



LEGENED

DRAIN	
BOUNDARY WALL	
EP	
DISTBIN	
LP	
WATER TANK	
BUILDING	
HATCH	
ROAD	
TS	
DP	
WALL	
TREE 1	
TREE 2	
TREE 3	
TREE 4	
TREE 5	
TREE 6	

AREA OF TAKHT-I-BAHI
 TOTAL AREA SQFT
 4008551.12
 ACRE 92.11

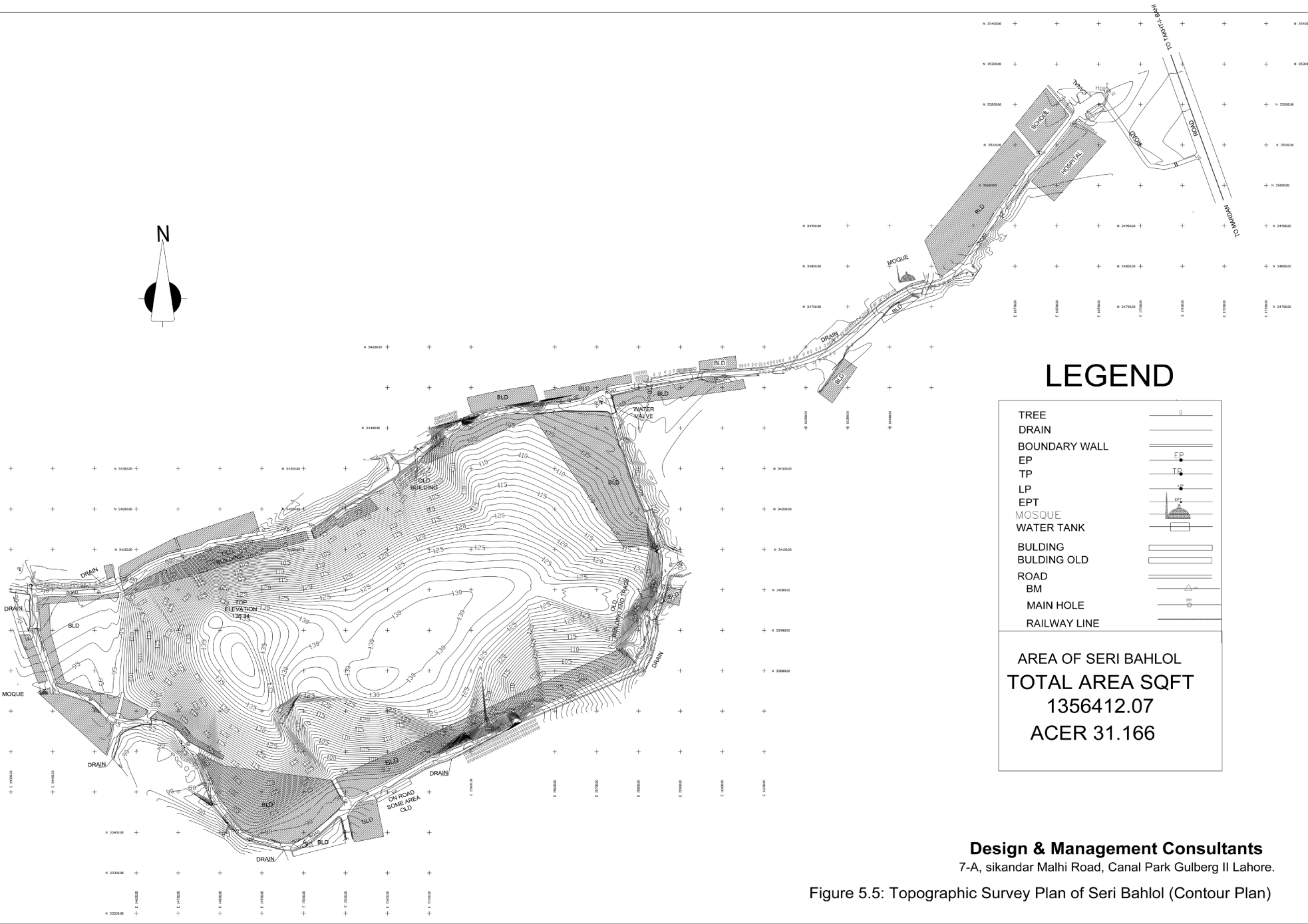
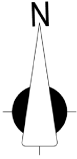
MIA Associates (Survey Consultant)

For

Design & Management Consultants

7-A, Sikandar Malhi Road, Canal Park Gulberg II Lahore.

Figure 5.4: Topographic Survey Plan of Takht-i-Bahi (Spot Levels)



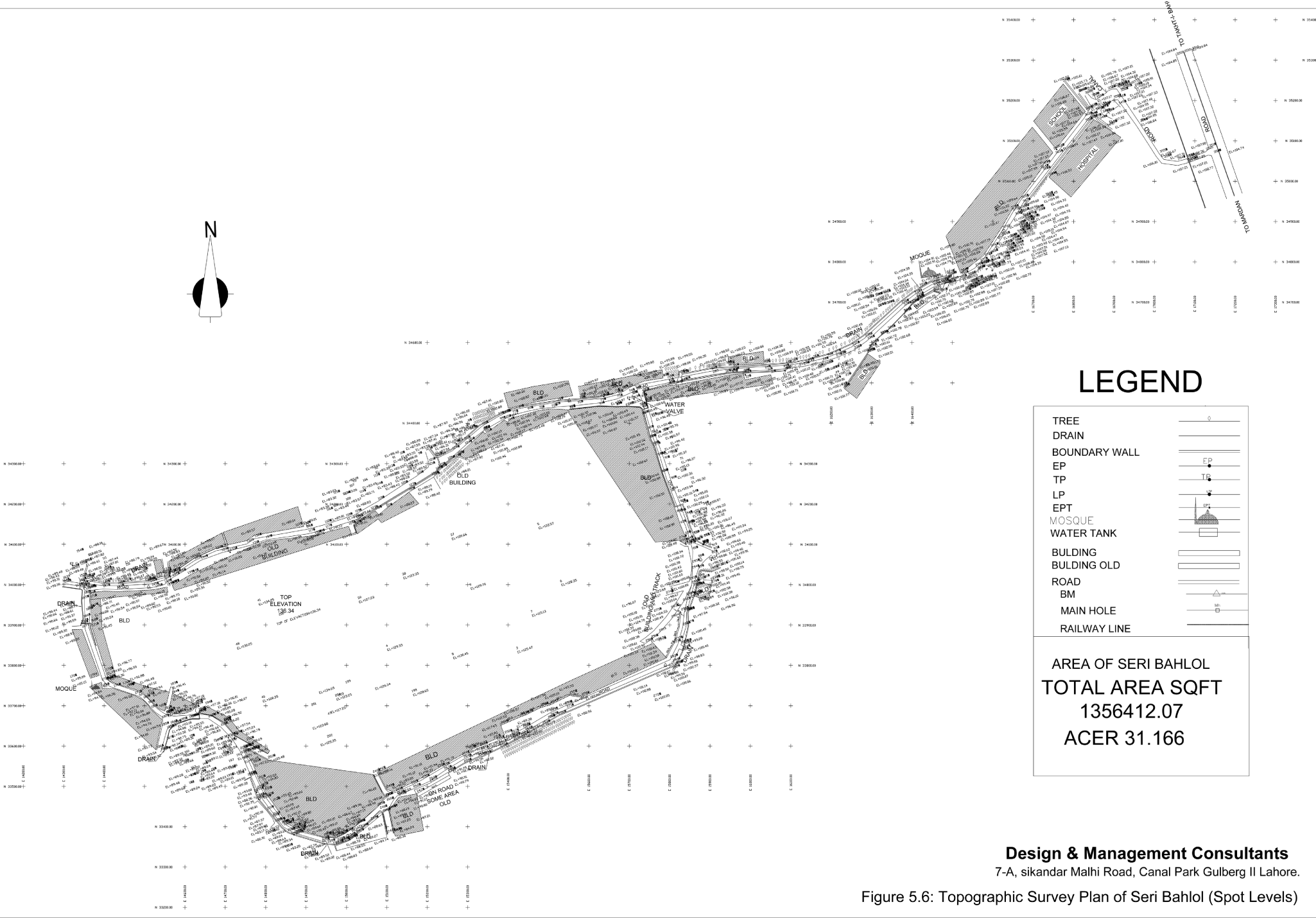
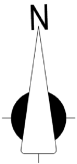
LEGEND

TREE	
DRAIN	
BOUNDARY WALL	
EP	
TP	
LP	
EPT	
MOSQUE	
WATER TANK	
BUILDING	
BUILDING OLD	
ROAD	
BM	
MAIN HOLE	
RAILWAY LINE	

AREA OF SERI B AHLOL
TOTAL AREA SQFT
1356412.07
ACER 31.166

Design & Management Consultants
7-A, sikandar Malhi Road, Canal Park Gulberg II Lahore.

Figure 5.5: Topographic Survey Plan of Seri Bahlol (Contour Plan)



LEGEND

TREE	
DRAIN	
BOUNDARY WALL	
EP	
TP	
LP	
EPT	
MOSQUE	
WATER TANK	
BUILDING	
BUILDING OLD	
ROAD	
BM	
MAIN HOLE	
RAILWAY LINE	

AREA OF SERI BAHLOL
 TOTAL AREA SQFT
 1356412.07
 ACER 31.166

Design & Management Consultants
 7-A, sikandar Malhi Road, Canal Park Gulberg II Lahore.

Figure 5.6: Topographic Survey Plan of Seri Bahlol (Spot Levels)

- ii) Uncontrolled wild growth of vegetation within the main stupa complex and in the surrounding ruins, because of lack of adequate staff to check this, is one of the main causes of decay.



Wild growth at wall at Seri Bahlol



Wild growth at Takht-i-Bahi

- iii) The absence of a proper surface drainage system along with the blockage in the drainage system needs to be cleared and maintained.
- iv) Flash floods, as a result of torrential rains also cause damage to the premises, so the natural surface drainage system needs to be studied in detail. This was witnessed during the monsoon season in July and August of 2010.
- v) A well planned planting program to reduce dust and pollution on the site is required.
- vi) Lack of management of the tourists in a well spreaded site like this, with very few people employed by the Department of Archaeology is the single most damaging factor and threat to this site.

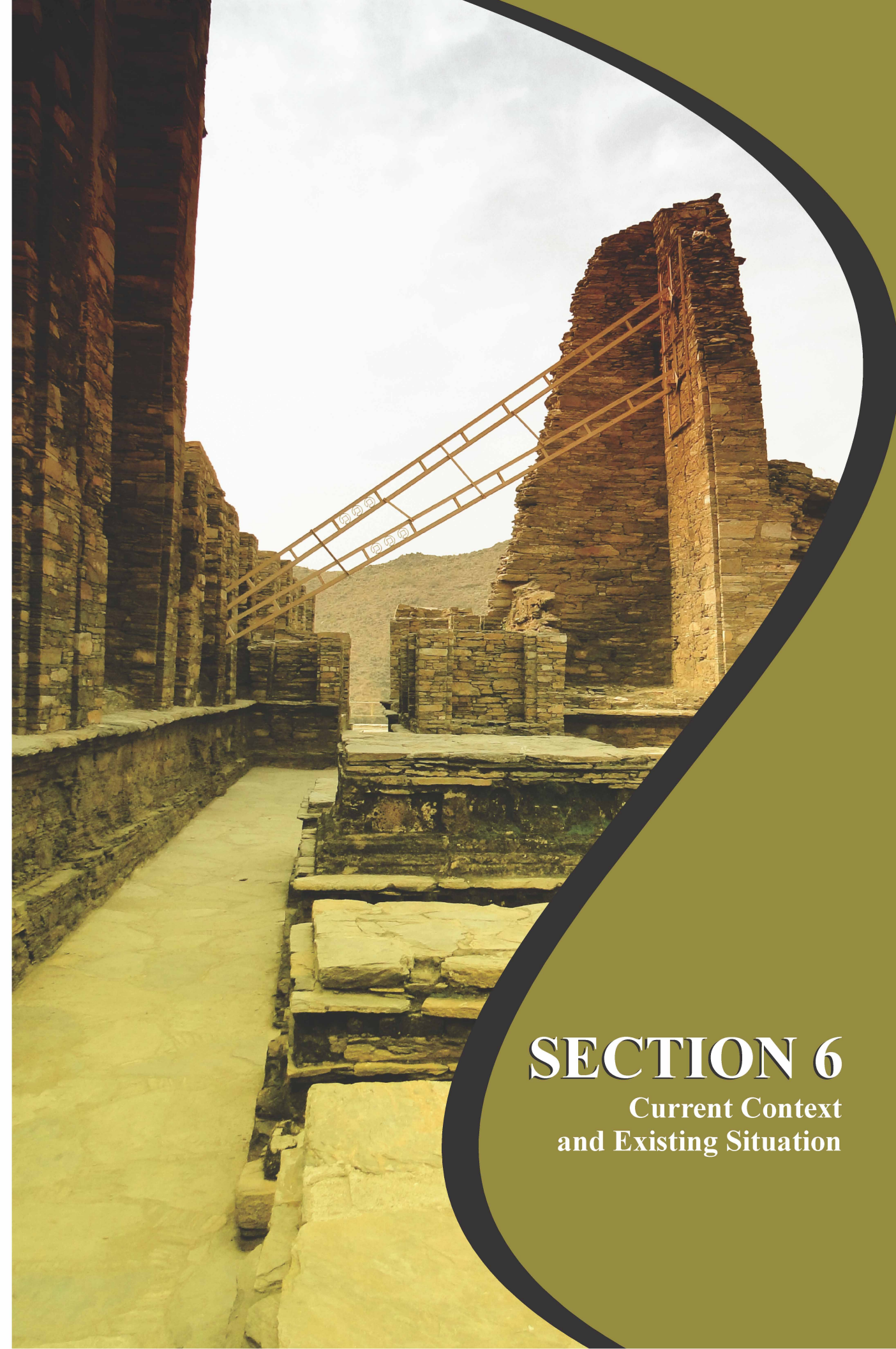
5.4.2 Condition Survey of Seri Bahlol

The following points were observed for Seri Bahlol:

- i) The entire site is now occupied by the villagers who, over the years, have built their houses right on the ancient remains leaving no traces of what existed here originally. Only traces of the perimeter wall here and there can be seen. Illegal digging, particularly in and around Seri Bahlol, is known to continue and occasionally some artifacts are found by the villagers. The main mound of Seri Bahlol, which is heavily encroached and occupied by modern construction, encourages people to carry out illegal digging within their houses without the outside world knowing this. Also the twelve or more, lesser mounds spread in a radius of two miles of the main mound have disappeared as they had not been protected. Those cultivating the lands around, carry out illegal digging without any check.
- ii) A critical concern of the Seri Bahlol is the condition of the remains of the fortification wall which should have been the most spectacular and majestic

part of the city covering a perimeter of 4750 feet. This was built around an elongated mound some 30 feet in height. Intermittent stretches of wall which remains now, show that the wall was worked out in a diaper pattern, a style characteristic of the first Century A.D. An aerial view of this mount has been given in section 2.3.3.

- iii) There may have been some management and maintenance at Takht-i-Bahi but unfortunately, Seri Bahlol has been totally neglected and left to the mercy of encroachers. The condition of the wall is aggravating day by day due to lack of maintenance. The sewerage from the houses can be seen piercing through the wall frequently. The damages are further compounded by the rainwater that finds its way into the wall and its foundation. The extent of damage from percolation of water through the wall cannot be exactly determined unless detailed structural studies are undertaken.
- iv) Since the site came under the administrative control of the Department of Archaeology and Museums, no effort has been made to carry out any archaeological excavations in the site to know whether the site was originally used for secular buildings.
- v) Lack of interest on the part of Department of Archaeology and its deteriorating condition and practically no facilities for the visitors, there are hardly any tourists coming to this site.



SECTION 6

Current Context
and Existing Situation

SECTION 6 | **CURRENT CONTEXT AND EXISTING SITUATION**

6.1 Introduction

Cultural heritage including historic buildings sites, cultures and other invaluable assets are the distinguished elements that encapsulate a nation's soul and spirit. The cultural heritage of Pakistan is unique as they portray the vibrant, largely traditional communities, thriving in a culture of tolerance, peace diversity and continuity. The history of conservation of monuments in Pakistan goes back to prehistoric era. Inscriptional records and the literary references available clearly show that the monuments were cared and looked after by the Kings, their subordinates, monks, and merchants. This tradition was pursued by the British Colonial Officers during their rule in the sub-continent. After independence (1947) this responsibility was passed on to the Federal Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, but after the devolution, in the wake of 18th amendment in the constitution of the country, all monuments in the province of KPK have now been passed on to the care of the Provincial Department of Archaeology.

6.1.1 Historical Background of Conservation Efforts in the Sub Continent

The systematic conservation and the study of the antiquarian remains, started in the 18th century and regular legislation about the monuments and sites were framed in the beginning of the 20th century. In the beginning there was no concept of the management of monuments and sites. The Archaeological Survey of India was the nodal agency for the upkeep of the monuments and their maintenance. Various legislations from time to time have strengthened the working of the government organizations and now the monuments are being looked after and controlled on the concept of the public involvement.

With the start of the 20th century, the Archaeological Survey of India entered a new era. With the arrival of Lord Curzon, as the Viceroy of India, archaeology got a new impetus. On 6th of February, 1900 he announced that "research could not be set behind the conservation and conservation behind the research. Both are parts of any scientific scheme of all antiquarian works." He further said "it was his judgment that it is equally our duty to dig and discover, classify, decipher and conserve." To meet these requirements, he appointed Sir John Marshall as the Director General of Archaeological Survey of India.

While appointing Sir John Marshall he emphasized and declared that the most important function of the Director General was "to ensure that the ancient monument of the country were properly cared for, that they were not utilized for purposes which were inappropriate, that repairs were executed when required and that any restoration which might be attempted was conducted on artistic lines." Thus the Viceroy placed the Archaeological Survey of India on sound grounds and secure foundations. His instructions form the basis of modern management and maintenance systems and are

equally valid today. Most of the excavations on both components of this World Heritage Site were, therefore, conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India during the first two decades of the 20th century.

6.1.2 Current Conservation Situation

In 1947, the far reaching political changes affected this country most. It took a very long time, that the Pakistan Department of Archaeology could recoup what had been lost during the partition. Years later, it was in 1975 that the Antiquities Act could be passed. Unfortunately, this act is not being followed in letter and spirit, by those responsible for the upkeep of the monuments. Then came the period when modern country and town planning regulations were introduced, resulting in construction of dams, expansion of roads and highways, industrial expansions, mushroom growth of colonies and appreciation of land values. This gradually caused serious threat to the monument and their environment. Today, the monuments of Pakistan across the country face serious challenges. Although both the components of this Heritage Site are located in suburban areas, far away from a large urban conglomerate, yet they suffer from lack of recourses, well equipped man power accompanied by vandalism. The monuments continue to deteriorate with the passage of time.

6.2 Dossiers of Historical Interventions at this World Heritage Site

Before undertaking the conservation works on any site of historical or cultural importance, it is important to compile record of the past interventions.

6.2.1 Historical Intervention at Takht-i-Bahi

The first modern historical references to these ruins at Takht-i-Bahi were made by the French officer of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh in 1836. Explorations and excavations on the site, however, began in 1852 and continued in 1864, 1870, 1907, and 1910 and up to April 1920. The site underwent major restoration work in the 1920s. These works have been reported by Hargreaves, Bellow, Spooner and others. Detailed accounts of these are available in Archaeological Survey of India Reports from 1906-1907 to 1919-1920. Major excavating/exploration works have been reported during the year 1916-17.

Since 1947, the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan carried out their first archaeological excavations on this site in the year 2003-05 on a selected ridge lying to the west of the main stupa complex. As a result of these excavations, interesting structural remains have been exposed and antiquities retrieved. This also leads us to believe that other hilltops/ridges in the close vicinity may also have remains of the Gandhara culture of that era. A large area of the site is yet to be excavated. Apart from this, only routine repair works were carried out over the years. In the year 2002, however a development project was approved by the Central Development Working Party of the Government of Pakistan for PKR.100 million which was reviewed in 2005 and amended in 2008. The cost was also revised from PKR.100 million to PKR.114.9 million.

6.2.2 Historical Intervention at Seri Bahlol

Similarly the first report on the major Buddhist communities at Seri Bahlol was published by Bellow in 1864. The site was subsequently explored and reported by Tissot, Spooner and Schmidt. According to Schmidt, “the site of Seri Bahlol remains one of the least well understood complexes of the greater Gandhara Buddhist traditions. At the same time, the relative importance of Seri Bahlol to the history of Buddhism and its artistic legacy is unquestioned, attested by numerous well known and widely published images, including the earliest examples of the use of colossal scaling for independently sculptured images of Buddha and Bodhisattva. The significance of Seri Bahlol is further demonstrated by numerous life size images of Bodhisattva including the enigmatic Bodhisattva image type, which bears a wreath in his left hand”. (Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1906-1012).



Precious antiquities recovered during excavation

After 1947, the department seems to have abandoned this site and left it to the mercy of the inhabitants of the village. No work was ever carried out, not even the routine maintenance. The remains of the perimeter wall are, therefore, in a very bad shape.

Several volumes of dossier of historical accounts and records of interventions to Takht-i-Bahi and Seri Bahlol have been prepared. These carry excerpt from all reports and printed documents that were found to date. The dossiers are available separately as an annexure.

6.3 Urbanization and its effect

6.3.1 Urbanization around Takht-i-Bahi Complex

The Archaeological site of Takht-i-Bahi is located some two kilometers east of the town of Takht-i-Bahi off the busy Mardan-Swat road. The area was not very congested some years ago until the IDP's from Swat occupied this area. Since then the area has become very congested.

The entire stretch of land from the main Mardan- Swat road up to the foot of the hills, housing these monuments, has all been urbanized. Many IDP's from Swat have made their houses and are permanently living in the area. In the absence of any building regulation and byelaws, the development has been haphazard.



Entrance to Takht-i-Bahi from Mardan-Swat road

The suburban sprawl has also increased the traffic manifold on this road and the current road leading up to the monument has become very busy. The increased traffic around the site along with the Frontiers Sugar Mill (2 Km away) and Rehman Cotton Mills in the close vicinity has also increased the pollution manifold.

6.3.2 Urbanization at Seri Bahlol

Seri Bahlol on the other hand, is located in the middle of lush green agricultural fields. Until lately the population of Seri Bahlol was confined between the perimeter wall because the land outside belonged to Khans and Maliks who were not willing to sell this land. However, with the increasing population of the village and rising land prices, there had been a lot of pressure on the land lords to sell small parcels of land across the road which circles round the mound. Modern structures have now started coming outside the fortified village.

As the village does not lie on any major road, the volume of traffic is only limited to occasional vehicle going to the village. As such there is no pollution from the vehicles. However, the only source of pollution is the open drains and the solid waste, seen to litter around.



Solid waste littering around