

INDIA

Report 1: The Nako Monuments

Nako (Kinnaur, Dt., Himachal Pradesh, India) lies at an altitude of c. 3600 metres above the Spiti River in Upper Kinnaur. Once an important centre of Buddhism, today most of the temples are almost completely neglected. Of at least seven temples from different periods, spread throughout the village, the two oldest – the Lo-tsa-ba IHa-khang and the IHakhang gong-ma – are intended to be preserved under an Austrian project. These two early temples are, from an art-historical perspective, the most important ones. Both contain murals and (repainted and repaired) clay sculptures from the early 12th century.

Nako was visited in the first decades of this century by the renowned scholars A.H. Francke and Giuseppe Tucci. They also published the earliest reports about Nako. An ongoing FWF (Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung) funded Austrian research project on the early Buddhist art in the Western Himalayas has documented the Nako monuments in 1994, 1996, and 1998 and published certain aspects of the art preserved in the two oldest monuments.

Lo-tsa-ba IHa-khang

The largest temple of Nako, the Lo-tsa-ba IHa-khang or gTug-lag-khang, is also the oldest monument in the village. It is a c. 7.9 metres long and 8.35 metres wide room with an apse at the back, c. 2.7 metres deep and 4.55 metres wide. The room is extremely high (between 5.5 and 5.7 metres). Of the original painting, the south-wall is best preserved. The inner section of the mandala of the north wall, presumably centred around Vairocana, has been repainted. Paintings from different periods remain in the apse, which is also occupied by contemporary but occasionally restored clay sculptures. There are also remains of inscriptions and a large wall-text in the apse. On the wall to the left (south) of the apse, and on the renewed entrance-wall, fragmentary donor depictions are preserved. The roof of the temple was damaged in a 1975 earthquake, and since then only a tin roof covers the monument and protects the murals and sculptures.

IHa-khang gong-ma

The (Lo-tsa-ba'i) IHa-khang gong-ma is placed directly opposite the Lo-tsa-ba IHa-khang. It is a small square room measuring c. 5.55 x 5.55 metres, with a height of 4.7 metres. Although the main wall (east wall) is decorated mainly with sculptures, the side and entrance walls still preserve extensive parts of the original murals. The structure is endangered today because of the fragility of the architecture. New water damage has been observed between 1994 and 1996 and an emergency repair of the roof was carried out in spring 1998 (cf. below).

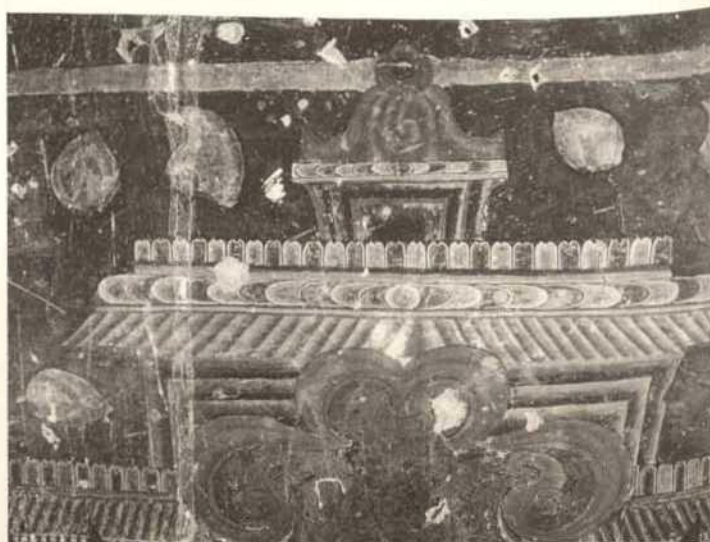
The Historic and Art Historic Importance of Nako Monastery

The earlier paintings in the Lo-tsa-ba IHa-khang are clearly in the tradition of West Tibetan painting, of which the paintings of the renovation period (1042) of the temple of Tabo (Himachal Pradesh) are the earliest known remnants. Tabo Monastery is a



Nako, Kinnaur: deity with consort dressed in local western Tibetan dress, Main Temple, south wall

Nako, Kinnaur: architectural frame, Small Lo-tsa-ba Temple



National Monument in the lower Spiti Valley, just a few hours drive (or two-day's walk) from Nako. However, the decorative, iconographic, and technical details observable in the Nako paintings show an unusually large number of changes and inventions that occurred between the establishment of the two monuments. For example, for the first time, the fully developed mandala with gates, fire-circle and secondary non-Buddhist deities attending the mandala are depicted on the walls, goddesses take a much more prominent position, and gold and silver paint in high relief is used in the region. On account of these changes and the style of the paintings, the Nako Lo-tsa-ba IHa-khang can be attributed to the first decades of the 12th century.

The IHa-khang gong-ma also preserves unique features. It is the only monument hitherto known where a central goddess as the main image of a composition is flanked only by Buddhas. It also preserves the depiction of a protective deity wearing Chinese or Central Asian armoured dress. The decorative details in the IHa-khang gong-ma paintings are much finer than in the Lo-tsa-ba IHa-khang. The IHa-khang gong-ma is thus not contemporaneous with the Lo-tsa-ba IHa-khang, but approximately a quarter of a century later.

To summarise, the two oldest Nako paintings evidence a distinctive phase in the early development of (western) Tibetan Buddhism. They are the only monuments in the western Himalayas

attributable to the first half of the 12th century, a period facing the disintegration of the West Tibetan kingdom. They are thus an invaluable source for the study and understanding of the early development of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan culture in general.

In general, the monasteries of the western Himalayas during the 10th and 12th centuries were among the most important centres to adopt the Buddhist Mahayana traditions coming from India and subsequently spreading within the kingdom. In Tibetan historical literature this historical phase is called the Later Spread of Buddhism in Tibet. Due to the destruction of the great monastic centres in northern India during the first 100 years of the second millennium of the Christian era, and the destruction of the monastic centres in Tibet by the Red Guards in the 1970s, the monasteries of Himachal Pradesh are now among the oldest, continuously functioning Buddhist monuments in the Indian subcontinent and the Himalayas. Therefore, the evidence they provide concerning not only religious and art historical developments, but also the sociology and culture of this period is enormous. It is often only as a result of the evidence that has survived from these early periods in the western Himalayas that later developments in Buddhist art and culture can be explained. Thus, the art of this region is important not only for the study of the cultural history of India and Tibet but also for research relating to Buddhism in general.

Ernst Bacher
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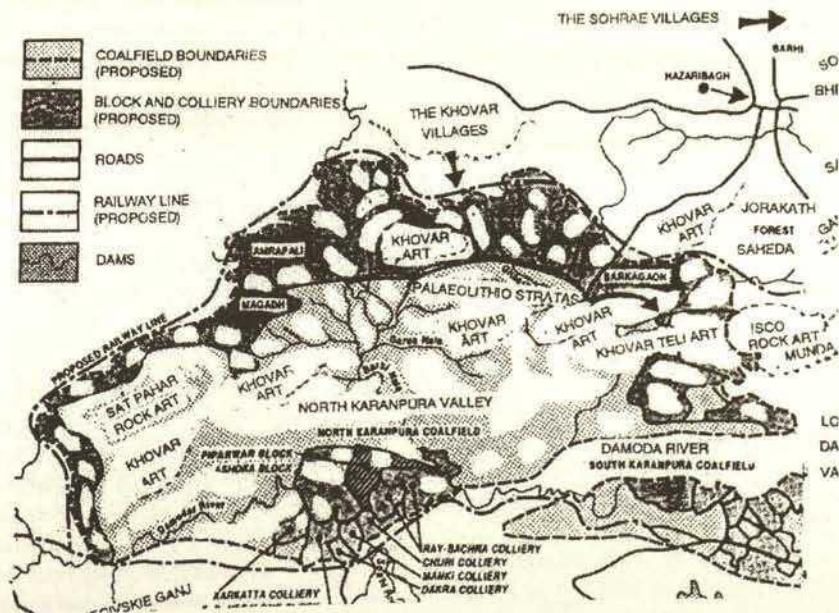
Report 2: Hazaribagh and the North Karanpura Valley

Heritage at Risk from Coal Mining

The Hazaribagh District originally covered the entire North Chotanagpur Division, or the entire plateau of Hazaribagh, which is the northern tract of the massif divided by the Damodar River from east to west, with the Ranchi plateau lying to the south. Today the region is part of the new tribal state of Jharkhand

(meaning Forest Land). This is an area rich in Palaeolithic deposits: Acheulian type stone tools such as hand axes and blades, habitation sites, Mesolithic rock art, Neolithic sites, Megaliths and Dolmens, Copper and Iron sites, rivers that are considered sacred such as the Damodar, and hundreds of sacred groves (sarana).

In 1987 a coal-mining project in the upper Damodar threatened over 2500 square kilometres of forests and agriculture, 203 tribal villages, hundreds of sacred groves, thousands of indigenous



Heritage at risk in the North Karanpura Valley in the catchment basin of the river Damodar in Hazaribagh

fruiting trees such as the mohwa (*Bassia latifolia*), which is the most sacred of all trees for the Tribals after the saal (*Shorea robusta*). Rich forests that are home and transit corridors between the forests of Palamau, Ranchi and Hazaribagh are filled with tigers, elephants, leopards, bears, and bison (*Bos gaurus*) moving through and living in over a dozen ranges of hills. Seventy-five opencast mines are planned throughout this pristine, peaceful area. Thousands of Adivasi families and their agriculture, livestock, and sacred sites will be wiped out of existence without a word in their defence. The process started in 1986 with the declaration of the North Karanpura Coalfields Project, which the author has contested from April 1987 to date. Initially Australian turnkey mining technology began the first mine, Piperwar Opencast Project, along the north bank of the Damodar, destroying one of the last remaining elephant corridors – since then, much of the south bank had been turned into a nightmare of mines covering thousands of square kilometres of once forested regions. Already hundreds of villages had been displaced, their Adivasis extinct by common definition – that is, ‘disappeared’. This is a common phenomenon in developing nations in the third world.

In 1993 the author met the Director General of UNESCO, Dr. Federico Mayor, in New Delhi. Dr. Karan Singh, our permanent Governor to UNESCO, was present at the meeting. According to Dr. Mayor's advice, INTACH formally filed an appeal to UNESCO to declare the North Karanpura Valley an Endangered World Heritage Site. The appeal was formally routed, in accordance with the proper guidelines, through the Indian National Commission to UNESCO, New Delhi, in July 1993. Despite several reminders and visits to UNESCO the matter received no further attention. Shall we say ‘it died a natural death’. This scenario is standard in India. Whether it will remain ‘standard’ in a new era of globalisation is to be seen. I think it must not. Change is necessary.

Since 1993 three mines have gone into operation, and two other mines have been held up waiting environmental clearance from the Ministry. How much longer this deferral can hold out is a moot question. In 1987 the Maneka Gandhi government refused clearance for a super thermal power station at Tandwa, near to the two new proposed mines, but the thermal power station with a dam was recently cleared by the BJP government and foundation stones laid. Unfortunately the mines will destroy the last remaining forest corridors for tigers and elephants between the four districts of Latehar, Chatra, Ranchi, and Hazaribagh.

Eastern North Karanpura Valley

Rock Art Sites

The village of Isco sits in the north-easternmost corner of the valley. Densely forested and temporarily inaccessible, this picturesque village and its Munda tribal inhabitants face eviction by the Rautpara mine. Isco contains Lower Palaeolithic deposits and deep underground caves inhabited by humans during the ice ages, leaving one of the richest collections of the Middle Palaeolithic stone tool industry in South Asia. It has been recommended for listing as a World Heritage site by India's leading archaeologists. Acheulian hand axes have been picked up from the bed of the Isco River, which flows through the Marwateri Cave. Borers, scrapers, strippers and hammerstones have been collected in large numbers in the cave and its surrounds. The deposit has been officially certified by the prehistory department of the Archaeological Survey of India (S.B. Ota, 1995).

About 1 kilometre southwest of the Marwateri Cave are the famous Isco rock paintings. Over 100 feet in length, this mam-

moth rock art site is called ‘kohbara’ by the local Munda and Oraon tribals, whose mud houses come to within a few hundred yards of it. Located deep in a cleft of a sandstone sheet several hundred yards wide and over a kilometre in length, the kohbara divides the jungle from the village. The rock art has been dated by the leading expert on India's prehistoric rock art, Dr. Erwin Neumayer of Vienna, to the meso-chalcolithic period, so it is anywhere between 7000 and 4000 BC. There is an earlier level of rock art that could be much older.

In Isco, microliths of the Vindhyan type, the so-called ‘surgical microliths’ have been found in large numbers, as well as hammer stones and core stones. Copper objects have also been found during rice cultivation, and the houses are in some instances located on deep iron slag beds. In the hills near the village, huge mines have been gouged into the hills, reminiscent of the Bargunda copper mines 65 kilometres to the east, which are India's oldest copper mines. Today, a rich copper smelting tradition and production of copper figurines continues in these jungle villages, with the unique copper work of the Malar tribe.

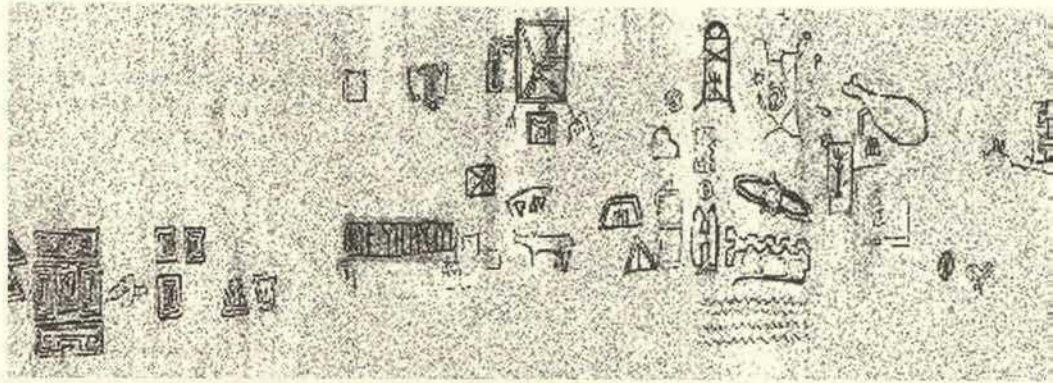
This complex of copper figurines and their sacred representations continues from the Hazaribagh Plateau and Damodar Valley to the hill ranges of Bastar in Chhatisgarh. A bright red pottery has been found throughout the area, some examples with traces of hand coiling. In the hills about Isco a pebbled shoreline is suggested, with finds of pebble single and bi-face choppers. At the uppermost level, on the plateau, huge hand axes and pebble choppers have been found at Chapri, while a wonderful series of flake tools have been found in the Dudhi Nala, a small cataract flowing to the east. Today, the entire region has become famous for the painted houses of the Kurmi and Ganju tribals, whose origins have been traced to the sacred tradition of the rock paintings.

Barwadi Punkhri

This is perhaps Hazaribagh's pre-eminent megalith site: a calendrical archae-astronomical observatory that is the axis of a plethora of major megalith sites throughout the Hazaribagh plateau. It is located in the middle of the valley, 6 kilometres before the little town of Barkagaon. The megaliths stand on a circular sloping mound whose surface is strewn with flake tools and microliths. A kilometre to the east, in the opposite direction, are the remains of a Buddhist sanctuary with marvellous sculpted stone monuments. Barwadi Punkhri site is in the middle of a series of concentric circles having a major megalithic cluster on the rim. These sites in turn are aligned through other sacred sites to a number of more distant sacred sites. Barwadi Punkhri lies in the middle of the proposed Barkagaon Mine Block, which will destroy the entire area over 20 square kilometres.

Western North Karanpura Valley: Sat-Pahar rock art sites

Rock art sites in the valley have been brought to light over successive years, beginning with the Isco rock art in 1991. Their Palaeolithic origins are complemented by evidence of continuous civilisation and a continuing mural painting tradition by the Adivasi villagers. The Sat-pahar consists of a series of seven triadic ranges. Both the Thethangi and Sariya rock art sites face directly onto the Piperwar, Ashoka-I and Ashoka-II open-cast coal mines. The border of the mine blocks was initially to be kept several kilometres to the south, but it has been brought right up to the hills, with an attendant railway for coal haulage being built along their base. The



Isco, rock art paintings

rock art covers a large, grey sandstone expanse over 50 feet long and 30 feet high, which is painted with zoomorphs, anthropomorphs, geometrical designs in boxes, very realistically painted spotted deer (*Axis axis*), mandalas, cattle, and ritually arranged frogs. Both the Thethangi and Sariya rock art caves are threatened by the coal expansion project to the base of the hill. Huge dynamite blasts from the construction of the new railway line being constructed under the hill are already causing cracks in the cave walls, and the rock art is in danger of collapsing.

Sariya

Discovered by Erwin Neumayer in 1994, this is the most picturesque of the rock art sites, perched 3000 feet high on an eyrie overlooking the bifurcation of the new railway line being built from McCluskiegunj to Mangardaha washery. This is by far the oldest rock art in the region, believed to date to around 15,000 BC. It includes the first horned deity, shamanistic figures with sacred tasselled barbs, geometric upright fish, which appear much later in Indus and Susa, ritual frogs, deer, grasshoppers, votive pyramid, and fishes and small running animals resembling rodents. The blasting for the railway line directly below is in danger of destroying the site.

Khandar

Khandar is a small, precious rock art site about 3 kilometres along the side of the range towards its western end. It is located on a high level of a side stream gorge emerging from the Satpahars. Erwin Neumayer has suggested that it includes the only butterfly in Indian rock art. Also depicted are an Australian Aboriginal type

of honey-bag, a bush-bag Mandala, honey hive, gourd flask, deer, and hunter with bow and throwing-sticks. It is intended that the railway line that has reached Sariya will go right past Khandar.

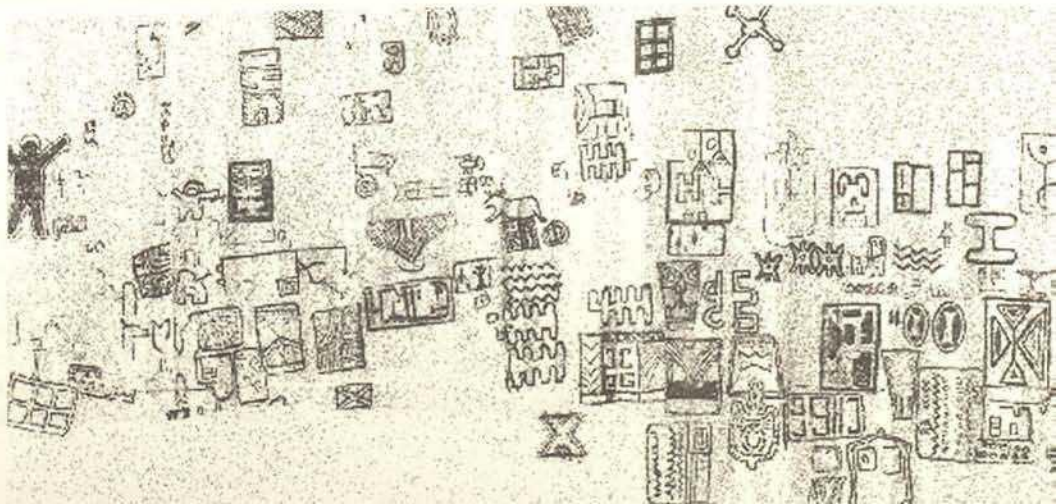
Raham & Sidpa

On the opposite side of the Satpahar Range, on its north facing side, are three major rock art sites facing the triple threats of a dam on the Tandwa river, the effects of the super thermal power project to shortly commence, and the opening of the Magadh and Amrapalli mines. Raham will stand on the edge of the submergence zone, being the easternmost of the three sites.

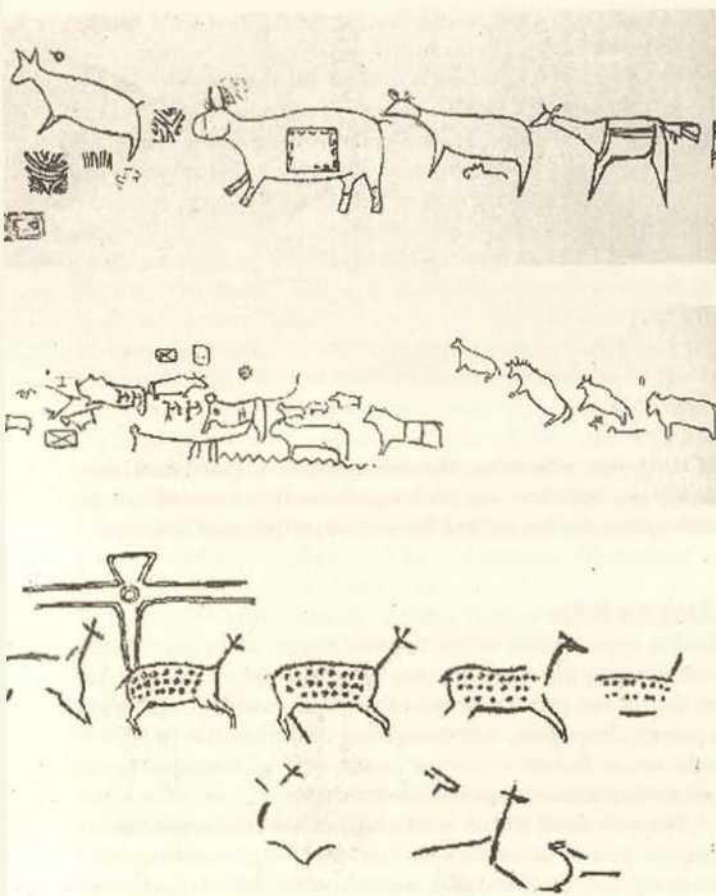
The rock art of Raham is on a high perpendicular/vertical rectangular wall of sandstone with wonderful boxed mandalas painted in red haematite. The cave was believed to have been a refuge for the Tana Bhagats during the end of the 19th century, from which period some graffiti remains on the lower edges. About 6 kilometres to the west is the Sidpa rockshelter with its enigmatic drawings of deer and bull. Also found here is a perfect tattoo design from the meso-chalcolithic still used in women's body decoration in almost all the tribes.

Satpahar-I, Satpahar-II, Satpahar-III

In a row, on the east-west ridge of the Satpahar massif are these three unparalleled rock art sites. The first is Satpahar-I, which presents us with the only examples of deer with bandaged feet – Erwin Neumayer notes this is a sign the art was painted during the Ice Age (10,000 BC). The site includes a bison in the X-ray style, and deer painted in an almost identical style to the Likhanya rock art of the Kaimur range of Mirzapur.



Isco, rock art paintings



Satpahar I, II, III, rock art paintings

Satpahar-II is slightly removed and on the west facing slope of the hill. Here we find record of a hunter's paradise: a string of animals from right to left – a pair of huge humped bison or gaur, a pair of nilgai or bluebull (a type of Indian antelope), a pair of tigers, the male behind accompanied by three wild boar, then a langur monkey facing a pair of hunters with bows and arrows (one hunter is shown in its stomach), a wild buffalo, and a horned rhinoceros, with some more figures of x-ray animals.

Satpahar-III is famed for possessing perhaps the oldest crucifix form (Great One), set over a double line of racing spotted deer.

Gonda

Gonda is a new rock art site, recently brought to light by Neeraj Vagholikar. It contains deer and elephant drawings.

The Satpahar range and its surrounds is facing the threat of permanent damage. The continuance of the rock-art tradition as folk art in the Khovar and Sohrai villages – where it is painted in hundreds of villages by tribal women in the marriage season January to June, and during the harvest season from October to November – must be seen as a precious and threatened heritage.

Forts and their adjoining Monuments At Risk

Badam Fort and Gondalpur Shiva Temple

Attributed to the Ramgarh rajas, a tribal dynasty, sometime in the middle of the second millennium, the Badam Fort is a precious

example of fort building at the time. The fort is located on the Badam River, across from which are several interesting relics and shrines. Mention may be made of a small Shiva temple and stone Nandi, and a Shiva temple on a tributary of the Badam River, all of which will be destroyed in the planned Badam mine.

Remains at Sidpa

Located beside the narrow metal road to Sidpa is an exquisite Mauryan period site with hundreds of huge stone blocks weighing several tons, carved with various designs such as that of a female deity sitting on lion's tail, woman churning butter, and a hunter on horse spearing a stag. The site is within a half kilometre of the Sidpa rock art and is within the submergence area of the dam.

Sariya Kushan Fort

The remains of a Kushan period fort constructed of large unbaked bricks are located below the Sariya rock art. It was first identified by the author in 1993, and brought to the attention of the Bihar Department of Archaeology, who surveyed the site in 1994. With a new railway being planned, Central Coalfields Limited was alerted to not damage the site. Despite the early warning notice, CCL has dug a 200 metre-wide trench through the forest, 30 kilometres in length, and brought it through this major site, dumping 40 feet of overburden over it. It is now buried and destroyed. Fortunately local tribal resistance has stopped the railway line trench, saving megaliths to the east at Thethangi village, and the approach to the Thethangi and Sariya rock art sites.

Satpahar

Lying on the hill face of the valley of the Satbohia (Seven Springs) River, beside a large ring-stone, are a series of stone walls – now collapsed and overgrown, the remains of one of the old stone forts that the Asurs defended themselves against the thunder-bolt hurling wrath of Indra...

Threatened Sites in the North Karanpura Valley: Megaliths

Bhagwantanr, Benti & Thethangi

In 1989 Bhagwantanr was facing destruction as part of the Mangardaha coal washery grounds. Faced with hard resistance, CCL constructed a wall around the megaliths and tiny grove of trees. Due to the coal miners removing one of the megaliths to put in a pillar (which was subsequently prevented) we found a large earthen ghara filled with cremated remains. Pieces of Kushan period statuary were also found immediately outside the walls. The Piperwar mine block comes within 100 feet of this site on one side, the washery immediately along the boundary to the north, and a four-lane coal extracting highway to the south. Where do we go from here?

The 30 large upright megaliths on the sloping hill of the little hamlet of Benti are surrounded on one side by the Piperwar mine, and on the other by the Ashoka mines. The megaliths are believed by local tradition to be a small wedding party, with the 'King' represented by a small round-head megalith in the middle. It is a matter of time only before the coal mines completely enclose this tragically beautiful space.

The Megaliths of Thethangi are at the base of the hill, about 500 yards to the north of Bandey Bhagat (Oranon's) house, on the

path leading toward the rock art. In all there are over 30 megaliths, which include a unique square example, and another about 20 feet long, lying in a horizontal position. Red vermilion on the stones indicates current usage. If the railway line, which has reached Sariya 3 kilometres away, is allowed to continue, the megaliths will be buried under over-burden and the track to the rock art will be obliterated.

Sisai & Urda

The erstwhile capital of a small tribal state called Ramgarh stands on the way to Simaria from Tandwa. Here we find megaliths that are part of an earlier Chalcolithic and Mesolithic period. Located in the area of the newly planned series of mines in the north rim of the valley, the two sites of Sisai and Urdu represent only two of at least twenty such sites of major megalithic importance facing imminent destruction from the huge coal mines planned for the area.

Along with the sacred sites, such as megaliths (*pathalgada*) and the sacred groves or *sarna*, the damage by the coal mines will destroy hundreds of villages which contain a rich archaeological heritage. For example, the entire small township of Tandwa, perched on the right bank of the river they plan to dam, is sitting on 5-10 feet of iron slag. This heritage town will become the nucleus of the super thermal power project and the coal mines fringing the project. The submergence of a huge area under the dam that is to be built on the river will destroy an unbelievable wealth of archaeological heritage, as well as breaking the forest continuity used by migrating elephant herds coming from Palamau and into the Hazaribagh forests in the Bokaro, Konar, and Barakar catchments.

Natural Sacred Sites, Landscapes, Burial Grounds & Dancing Grounds

The entire upper valley of the Damodar River is tribal, forested and pristine, having largely avoided the impact of the destructive mining-development of the past 53 years. The North Karanpura Valley is agriculturally rich, gathering the silt of three major rivers and thirty-three hill streams that flow year round. Ringed by green and blue hill ranges, it is dominated by vertical sandstone walls of its rift formation, and capped or covered with stands of dense soaring saal trees. Throughout the year there is a constant presence of large wild animals such as tigers and elephants. Many of these fauna have found their way into village paintings, in a tradition that spans back to prehistory. These jungles are also the last home of the Indian peafowl – the national bird – which is the most important icon in the village arts of Hazaribagh, called locally *Mayur* or *Mor*.

The Satpahars lie 45 kilometres west of the Sati Range, and form a mighty triadic massive rising from the valley floor, replete with rock paintings in one of the greatest rock art galleries in the world, deemed to be a World Heritage site. UNESCO was apprised of this, but nothing has been done to protect them, and they lie unprotected awaiting certain destruction in the developer's wake. Sacred Groves or *sarna* are found in the middle of agricultural plots – they are dedicated to the goddess of the jungle, *Jhair Era*, and have been left as shrines to her memory when the first forests were cleared for agriculture. Alongside every village are the burial grounds and dancing grounds known as the *pathalgada* and *akhara* respectively. This complex social network is today endangered and is most definitely heritage at risk.

The Mohwa (*Bassia latifolia*) is the most threatened living heritage in the entire North Karanpura Valley – it is a food tree of the Tribals that takes hundreds of years to fruit and is being destroyed by the thousands in the new coal mines. The flowers are eaten raw or cooked, the pearly corollas collect in mounds beneath the trees overnight, and gathered in the early morning by the village women. The flowers are distilled to make a fine spirit. The mohwa seeds are crushed to produce an oil called *dori-tel* used for cooking, lighting lamps, mixing with buttermilk, the residual oil cake making a valuable manure. Hundreds of age-old mohwa trees are being dynamited in the valley to make way for opencast mining. It is not a pleasant sight.

Nomadic Sites

The valley is home to the Nomadic Birhor, a small population of hunter-gatherers resembling the Hadzabe of Tanzania, who move about twice a year to new camp sites – there are as many as 45 pairs of campsites in Hazaribagh. As a result of the introduction of government concrete housing, and attempts to impose a sedentary lifestyle on this little-known nomadic tribe, these campsites are being destroyed. The Bihors complain bitterly of the loss of their nomadic way of life, including the loss of practices such as the rich gathering of forest products at which they are very adept. A tentative list of such sites includes Hathiari, Lugu, Jhumra, Badwar, Chalanga, Konar, Gomia, Potmo, Churchu, Jamdeha, Pouta, Banhe, Holong, Khamma, Panimako, Boudha, Khorar, Padma, Ichak, Sijwa, Gomdhara, Tarwa, Dato, Rajderwa, Bhuswa, Kausar, Baseria, Katkomsadi, Petij, Itkhour, Ghoparan, Balwa, Jori, Hendia, Kunda, Lawalong, Kari, Samaria, Paradih, Salgah, Tutilava, Sultana, Adra, Hudwa, Phatha, Satbohia Karma, Lukra, Dhingua, Matakdera, Demotand, Tumba, Marhand. Each of these places adjoins an iron-age or earlier work site, explained by the fact that the Bihors have traditionally camped close to more technological habitation sites in order to exchange forest produce for agricultural produce.

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(INTACH)

Nomadic sites

