

## Group of CGPWA Members at Srinagar Visit Burzahom Archaeological Site on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2019

**Location:**The Burzahom site is a prehistoric settlement in the village of the same name in the [Srinagar District](#). It is 16 kilometres to the northeast of Srinagar on the Naseem-Shalimar road. The elevation of the site is 1,800 metres (5,900 ft) above sea-level. It is the northernmost excavated Neolithic site of India. The site is on an ancient [Pleistocene](#) lake bed. The location is in a high terrace which is part of the [floodplain](#) of the [Jhelum river](#) and has Karewa soil (clay) formation. The site has a commanding view of the [Dal lake](#) which is about 2 kilometres away. In the [Kashmiri language](#) 'Burzahom' means "[birch](#)", a tree species (that generally grows in the elevation range of 3,000 to 4,200 metres (9,800 to 13,800 ft) in the [Himalayas](#)), which is found in the excavated housing area in the form of roofing material, and thus confirming the existence of the tree even in the pre-historic Neolithic times.

**History & Description:**The first excavation at the Burzahom site was a limited exercise in 1936, carried out by the Yale–Cambridge Expedition headed by [Helmut de Terra](#) and Dr. [Thomson Paterson](#). The Frontier Circle of the [Archaeological Survey of India](#) made detailed investigations of the site between 1960 and 1971; these were carried out by T.N. Khazanchi and his associates.

The extensive excavations done at this site, unearthing stratified cultural deposits, were the first of their type in Kashmir. In 1944, [Mortimer Wheeler](#), Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India had conducted the first stratified archaeological excavations on the lines of geological model at other sites. Based on a similar model the Burzahom site has been named as the Northern Neolithic Culture in view of its distinctive structural features with profusion of tools made of bones and stones and tools representing the ritualistic practices.

The Burzahom Archaeological excavations have revealed four phases of cultural significance between 3000 BC and 1000 BC. Periods I and II represent the [Neolithic](#) era; Period III the Megalithic era (of massive stone [menhirs](#) and wheel turned red pottery); and Period IV relates to the early Historical Period (Post-megalithic period). The findings, recorded in stratified cultural deposits representing prehistoric human activity in [Kashmir](#), are based on detailed investigations that cover all aspects of the physical evidence of the site, including the ancient flora and fauna.

The Burzahom site revealed the transition from the subterranean and ground level housing features of the Neolithic people to the mudbrick structures of the Megalithic people. The large cache of tools and implements made of bone and stone found at the site shows that the inhabitants were hunting and farming. The unearthed [Antiquities](#) (of art, architecture, customs and rituals) indicate that the prehistoric people of the Burzahom established contact with [Central Asia](#) and South [West Asia](#) and also had links to the [Gangetic plains](#) and [peninsular India](#). The interaction of local and foreign influences is demonstrated by the art, architecture, customs, rituals and language demonstrated by some engravings on pottery and other artifacts.

Some of the photographs taken at the site during the visit are given below:-



At the entrance of Burzahom Archaeological Site near Srinagar, J&K



Archaeological Excavations Showing Artifacts of IV Periods in layered Cultural Deposits spanning 3000 B.C. to 1000 B.C..

Sd/- 17.07.2019

(J.K.Vaid, GSI-Retd)

General Secretary, CGPWA J&K Jammu