

Lahore of Pre Historic Era

It is very difficult to understand the route that the city of Lahore took to go through its evolutionary process due to lack of evidence. To understand it, we have to consider the region as well, so the scope of the research has been expanded to include Punjab.

Rig-Veda, the oldest religious text of the world, was compiled in Punjab in 1500 to 800 BC. In the text of this book the word *Sapta-Sindhvāh* is used to define the region more or less comprising of modern east and west Punjab. All the rivers of Punjab have settlements and cities on their banks and an important one is on the bank of *Iravati* i.e. Lahore.

This was a city of importance long before the arrival of Muslims and had a tradition of arts and crafts since ancient times. In the absence of any concrete evidence about the foundation of the city, two sources are employed, archaeological findings and stories, traditions and mythologies associated to this city, to chalk out the route of its evolution. In the present research both methods are employed to reconnoitre.

Lahore of Pre Historic Era

It is very difficult to understand the route that the city of Lahore took to go through its evolutionary process. What we have, are a few documents, and even they have not been updated for at least a hundred year. Twentieth century books are mostly copying what was written by the 19th century authors like Muhammad Latif, Thornton, Kenhya Lal, Noor Ahmad Chishty etc. Their writings contained some evidence that helped to come up with logical solutions but they did not give much detail about the history, culture, arts and crafts of ancient Lahore and no visual evidence of that era has been postulated.

Present research is based on literary references of many sources, some conclusions have been proposed and theories are supported with visual evidence, wherever it was located. There are many ambiguities and controversies shrouding the history, but I have tried to provide a few logical solutions to the age-old questions raised about the antiquity and significance of the city.

To understand Lahore, we have to understand its soil and for that, the scope of the research has been expanded and some glimpses of Punjab have been included.

The Story Begins from Punjab

About Punjab, famous poet Zeerak Kalanori, in 1859 writes:

¹ Assistant Professor, College of Fine Arts, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

Persian Verses

پنجاب بہ ناز خوش آلودگی
تیمی ست بہ دست دلربائی

Translation

“Punjab is a beautiful woman that holds sword in her hand with great charm and allurements.”ⁱ

Roots of any cultural and artistic activity of a particular area, lies deep in the fertility of its land. Evolutionary development of Lahore also depended on the level of fecundity of its region i.e. Punjab and it is important to understand what role the mother earth played. Historians and anthropologists have observed that the fertile areas of the world produced civilized societies that created great civilizations and gave birth to the traditions and arts of high merit. Main source of their progress was the affluence produced due to the fertility of that particular land, which depended on the rivers that flowed there, and the cities flourished on their banks. Classical examples are Egyptians beside river Nile, Mesopotamians between Tigris and Euphrates and Yellow River and Yangtze River of China.

In the present context we are going to discuss Punjab, a land of not only one or two, but of seven rivers in ancient times, and five rivers in the modern times.



(Fig. 1)

It is one of those rare regions of the world where we come across evidence of the existence of life in the earliest periods, which was initially in the form of plants and later on developed into animals. Presence of Dinosaurs have been proven with the availability of their fossils, which are in abundance in Potohar valley.

Since pro Aryan languages have not been deciphered so the concepts and names are picked from Aryan Period where we find lots of literary evidence about not only the life and culture but also related to the geographical features of the

land. Rig-Veda, the oldest religious text of the world, was compiled in Punjab in 1500 to 800 BC.ⁱⁱ In the text of that book the word *Sapta-Sindhvah* is used to define the region more or less comprising of modern east and west Punjab. *Sapta-Sindhvah* comprises of two Sanskrit words *Sapta* meaning seven and *Sindhvah* meaning river, the land of seven rivers. In one of the verses of the Rig Vedas, it is written, “Indra killed the ‘dragon’ Vritra, son of Danu, the first born’ of Vritra’s and Ahi’s, and disclosed the water and cleft the channels of the mountain torrents and released the *Sapta-Sindhvah* or seven rivers.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The question arises which were the seven rivers? A generally accepted answer is *Sarsavati*, *Stadru* (Satluj), *Vipasa* (Bias), *Chandrabhaga* (Chenab), *Vitasta* (Jhelum) and *Ariavati* or *Iravati* (Ravi).^{iv} For the seventh river some scholars argue between River Kabul and River Indus. Both meet at the point of Attock and they have been considered as separate or as one river also.

But why Aryans christened the land with this name? A very interesting justification is given by Sir N. G. Desai when he writes that there is in Central Asia, in Russian Turkistan, a country which is even now called ‘land of the seven streams’ and later all these streams flow into one lake. So when the first Aryans came and settled in Punjab, they observed the similarity and might have transferred many of their original geographical names to this new land.^v Later, in one of the songs of the aboriginal people of India, these Aryans were addressed in this manner, “Who would free (us) from the ruinous woe or from the Arya (enemy) of the seven rivers, though O, valiant hero, bend the Dasa’s weapon down.”^{vi}

The earliest mention of five rivers in the collective sense was found in Yajurveda and a word *Panchananda* was used^{vii}, which is a Sanskrit word to describe a land where five rivers meet. The locality where five rivers meet is still called *Panchnad* and a *Panchnad* Head works is constructed there.

In the later period the word *Pentapotamia* was used by Greeks to identify this land.^{viii} (*Penta* means 5 and *potamia*, water ___ the land of five rivers) Muslim Historians implied the word “Punjab” for this region. Again it was not a new word because in Persian speaking areas, there are references of this name given to any particular place where five rivers or lakes meet. There is a Punjab in Afghanistan and almost eight hundred years ago a small town in Iran was also called Punjab.^{ix} This is the word, which is used to define, more or less, the same area even today.

Punjab has the fifth biggest hydraulic system in the world^x and availability of water through rivers is a permanent feature. Apart from rivers, there is plenty of underground water and frequent rains have made it agrarian's paradise on earth.

Many researchers believe that wheat, cotton, sugar cane and probably rice were first harvested in Punjab. A few Russian scientists including Vasilov believe that the wheat germinated on its own accord on the strip of mountains that is lying between Hindu Kush and Himalaya in Punjab. It was from here that it spread to central Asia, Europe, America and the rest of the world.^{xi} The fertility of Punjab and its ability of producing wheat can be found in Rig Veda also. It says, “This place (*Sapta-Sindhvah*) is happy with the treasures of sweet plants.”^{xii}

Traces of First Human

The evidence of proto human Dryopithecus was found in Shawalak Mountains in Punjab. It resembled African Ape greatly. Famous historian Dr Radha Kumud Mukherji in his presidential speech of *Majlis e Lahore*, referred the archaeologist Mr Barrel who claimed that at the end of Miocene age, almost 15 million years ago Humans and Himalaya Mountains appeared at the same time in this region.^{xiii} Africa and Punjab are the two places where these types of humanoids were discovered.

Many archaeologists and historians believe that this type of human species was found only in Africa but Professor William Howells of Harvard University contradicts it, "Can we believe that Africa is the only place where Ape man was born? Definitely not. The main reason that we find so many skeletons in Africa is just because there is plenty of Lime in that area that has helped to preserve those ancient skulls and bones so perfectly. Otherwise we come across evidence that proves that large groups of Ape-Man lived in Asia and in Asia, Punjab is on the top of the list."^{xiv}

There is no specific time assigned to when the modern human evolved. Some historians declared that it happened 20 million years ago and others say just 500 thousand years ago. In the Subcontinent it was called Rama Pithecus, which was named after the Indian god Rama because it was discovered in Ram Chandra's land i.e. Punjab. The complete lower jaw of this specie was found nine miles away from an oil well of Khor and the Government of Pakistan officially named it Potohar Ape.^{xv}



(Fig. 2)

Some later remains in Soan Valley show that he used tools, hunted animals, wore dresses made from animal skin, stored his food, and had started worshipping natural forces. He did not build proper houses but had started taking steps towards the formation of the first civilization that flowered as Indus Valley Civilization.

The City of Lahore

In 1741 Shah Faqeer ullah Lahori writes about Punjab and Lahore

Persian Verses

چہ پنجاب برشش جت سکد زن چون پنج آیت مصحف پنجین
ز پنجاب دارد جمال ابتهاج کہ از پنج حس شد نظام مزاج
در آن ملک لاہور عین سرور ہشتی است لبریز جور و قصور
چہ لاہور' زمگد روم و چین چوں بجی بود زیب روئی زمین

Translation: “The currency of Punjab is effective in six dimensions; it is the representative of five verses of Mushaf’s five bodies. Punjab has given happiness to the whole world because the system of human nature consists of five senses. In this country, there is also a delightful city of Lahore, which is full of beautiful women and human errors. What is Lahore? A city that refreshes you like Rome and China and beautifies the earth the way nose beautifies the face.”^{xvi}

All the rivers of Punjab have settlements and cities on their banks and an important one is on the bank of *Iravati* i.e. Lahore. According to Hindu mythology, *Iravati* is one of the names of Hindu goddess Durga. She is wife of Rudra, the god of rage, anger and fury, who brings terrible storms to the mortals. This, perhaps, is a reference to so many disasters, which this river has been inflicting on Lahore for so many centuries.^{xvii}

River *Iravati* is now Ravi, a major river of Punjab running a full 450 miles from its source of Berha of Bengal, in Kangra District of Himachil. Ravi is *Adris* of Ptolemy, *Hydrates* of Strabo and *Phaudis* of Pliny. In Vedic literature, it has also been called *Purushiniâ* or *Parushani*.^{xviii} In the Gazetteer of Lahore District, published in 1883-84, Ravi has been described as the smallest of the five rivers of Punjab.^{xix}

Located in latitude of 31*-34* degree North and Longitude of 74*-20* degree East, 702 feet above sea level, Lahore is one of those cities in the world that has no record regarding its foundation date so it is very difficult to locate its origin.



(Fig. 3)

In the absence of any concrete evidence, two sources are employed, one is the archaeological findings and the other is stories, traditions and mythologies associated to this city, to chalk out the route of its evolution. In the present research both methods are deployed.

Muhammad Baqar in his book *Lahore, Past and Present* wrote that the first literary reference of Lahore was found in a book by an Arab historian Ahmad Bin Yahya who lived under the rule of the Abbasid Caliph Mu'tamid towards the middle of the 9th century. He lived in Baghdad and died in 892 AD. He is one of the earliest Arab chroniclers and in his book *Fatuhul Buldan*, he mentions Lahore by the name of *al-Ahvar*.^{xx}

Another authentic reference of this city was found in a compilation 'Hadood ul Alam' written by an unknown author in 982 AD. He wrote,

« لاهور شہر لیت با ناحیت بسیار و سلطانہ اش از دست امیر قمانست
 و اندر و بازار با دوت خانہاست و اندر درخت چلغوزہ و بادام و چوزہ ہندی
 بسیارست و ہر بت پرستند و اندر وی ہنرمندان ہینت »

Translation: "Lahore is a city with vast area. It is under the government of the ruler of Multan. This city has many bazaars and temples. The trees of *chalghoza* (the kernels of the pine, a small nut like pistachio) walnuts and almonds are in abundance. The whole population consists of idol worshipers and there is not even a single Muslim in this city."^{xxi}

These late references of the city do not mean that it never existed before. Lahore was a city of importance long before the arrival of Muslims. Basic logic is very simple that a land as fertile as Lahore, on the bank of a river, must have been

a great attraction for the prehistoric inhabitants of this area. In one of his articles Khawaja Abd ul Rashid writes, "Lahore is one of the oldest cities of this continent (Asia). Its time period is that of Mohenjo Daro and Harrapa. But this city has supremacy among other ancient cities and that it was never completely or irrevocably destroyed. Historians give the name of two cities Damishq and Arabil that fall in this category, but we believe that there was a third city that shares the same honour and that is Lahore".^{xxii} He gives 3000 BC as the time when mortals inhabited this highly fertile region.^{xxiii}

Banks of Ravi were inhabited by prehistoric man and we come across innumerable settlements that have traces of human existence. Afzal Khan, curator and archeologist at Lahore fort, corroborates this fact in one of his interviews by saying that there is evidence of settlements near and around the city of Lahore that belongs to *Harrapan* era and before.^{xxiv} Even today the study of the mounds of the locality strengthens the concept.

This point of view is confirmed by the finds of the excavation of Lahore Fort in 1959, it is here that we learn about the debris of the oldest mud fort that was conquered by Mahmud Ghaznavi years later.

Excavation of 1959

The city as old as Lahore has a tradition of arts and crafts since ancient times. Evidence was found during the excavation carried out at Lahore Fort in 1959 in the lawn in front of *Deewan-i-Aam*.



(Fig. 4)

The digging went on for three months and a trench measuring 180 by 60 feet was dug for this purpose. It was stopped only when the archaeologists encountered virgin soil. In the report printed in *Pakistan Archaeology* Number 1-1964, it was written, "In all, twenty stratified cultured layers were encountered which

represented, from top to bottom on the natural soil, four distinct periods: the British and Sikh, Mughal, pre-Mughal, _____ and the most important _____ pre-Muslim periods.”^{xxv}

Period I, from the top

These are the remains of buildings constructed by the British and Sikhs. Most of the bricks found here are re-used and it looks as if they were taken from old buildings of the fort.

Period II

This level is all Mughal showing intensive building activity. Here the bricks are solid and of a high quality with good finish. Not from this digging but from another location of the fort, a pitcher was discovered that belonged to Mughal era. Its beautiful intricate design and high aesthetics indicate that it belongs either to Jahangir or Shahjahan’s period.



(Fig. 5)

Period III

From the Ghaznavide layer, not much building activity was evident but the most important find of this layer was a gold coin of Mahmud Ghaznavi, struck at Ghazni during the time of the Abbasid caliph, al-Qadir Billah.



(Fig. 6)

Period IV

Still lower is a seven feet thick layer of debris with fallen mud bricks that indicates a great disturbance. "The clearance of this thick deposit revealed a 12 foot high wall of mud bricks against which much cultural debris had accumulated. This may represent the non-Muslim mud-brick fort, which is recorded to have been sacked by Mahmud of Ghazni during his Indian campaigns in 11th century AD."^{xxvi} Discoveries from the lowest levels in the period IV are of non-Muslim origin.

The artefacts found at this level are very interesting. Pottery consisting of jugs, plates, small utensils, oil lamps and round terracotta pieces that look like measuring weights are of great significance.





(Fig. 7, 8)

Detailed study of these objects, reveal the high standard of craftsmanship of the early inhabitants of Lahore.

Some other intriguing findings of this layer are the animal figurines. Their finish is rough and form is simple but they are very convincing. A small animal figure that resembles donkey or rabbit was discovered and quite interestingly it has some kind of collar around its neck.



(Fig. 9)

Figurine of a horse with missing saddle has beautiful shape. Same can be said about the marked horse.



(Fig. 10)

It seems that these horses were decorated with some materials that are lost now.

Marked horse of the same style was recovered at a mound only twenty miles away from present day Lahore. This place is called Ratti Tibi and in rainy days very interesting objects are unearthed. A few animal figurines were acquired along with some round shaped weights that were used for fishing nets. **(Fig. 11)** These are terracotta objects. Humaira Alam, ex curator and in charge of Indus and Gandhara Gallery at Lahore Museum, confirmed that they belong to *Harappan* period. This is another location that needs to be excavated and studied. If we compare these animal sculptures with the findings of Indus Valley cities, we will notice that stylistically they resemble a lot.



(Fig. 12)

There is no evidence of painting in this or any other layer but there are many pieces of pottery that have designs painted on them. Lines, curves, squares and other simple forms are used to decorate them.



(Fig. 13)

Some of the motifs are very familiar because even today, they can be seen on the pots used in Punjab. The patterns and styles of the pottery also resemble the Indus Valley pots.



(Fig. 14)

Abu Rehan Muhammad Bin Ahmad Albaruni was a famous scholar, mathematician and historian, who accompanied Mahmud Gaznavi to India. He lived here for many years and wrote his famous book ‘Tareekh ul Hind’ that was completed between 1013 and 1017 AD. He wrote that Lahore is not a city but a region whose capital is Mandakukur.^{xxvii}

This city is an intriguing mystery for the students of history. Its legendary role in different mythological events has made it an all time curiosity for researchers. The story seems to begin by Ram, king of Ayodhya (Oude), the hero of Ramayana, who belonged to Rajput clan, a highly honourable solar race but “No one knows precisely when and how the Rajputs first came to India. ‘History’ as usual, blends myth with fact. Rajputs, whose name in Hindi is for sons (*putras*) of kings (*rajans*), are legendary descendants of the sun and the moon.”^{xxviii} (*Suraj Bansi and Chandar Bansi*)

As the legend goes, one of these Rajput Rajas, Ram, 7th Avatar of Vishnu, was exiled from his kingdom of Ayodhya and spend a period of 14 years in exile in the forests of Dandaka and later Panchavati. His wife Seeta and brother Lakshman willingly renounced the comforts of the palace and joined him. It was here that Seeta was abducted by Ravan, rescued by Hanuman and rejoined her husband after one year of captivity. There is a story told and retold by the old men of the city, about Ram’s night time walks in the streets where he over heard a dialogue between a washer man and his wife. She had spent the night outside her house and the husband is throwing her out under the pretext that he is not Ram

who accepted Seeta, his wife, who spent a year with *Rakshis* Ravan. Hearing this reviling, Ram reacted and sent Seeta for another exile. Lakshman was ordered to take her to some forests. He obeyed his brother and left her in the thick forests that were near the river Ravi.^{xxix} (These forests existed as late as Mughal period when the kings used to come for hunting.) On his way back, Lakshman rested in the area of present day Icchra, spent the night there, delivered a long sermon to the local people and went back to Ayodhya. Famous temple named *Chand Raat Mandir* in Icchra exists even today to mark the event.

During the second exile Seeta was alone and pregnant. She met Rishi Valmiki who gave her refuge in his hermitage. The traces of the house of Valmiki existed as late as till 19th century.^{xxx} It was here that she delivered twin sons named Kush and Luv or Loh. But some traditions say that she gave birth to triplets and the third one was Achhu.^{xxxi} It is the same Valmiki who compiled Ramayana in later years.

Later on the sons rejoined the father and Seeta proved her chastity by performing *Agni Pariksha* (walk on the fire). She was successful in her trial but felt so embarrassed due to her husband's mistrust that she requested the mother earth to contain her, because that was how she was born. The earth abides her appeal and Seeta was accepted in realm of the underworld. This folklore of hiding in the under world for the sake of virtuousness is again found in the local story of *Bi Bi Pak Damnan*, a famous shrine of Lahore. It is believed that the ladies associated to the tomb used to live in Lahore and when their honour was in danger, the mother earth contained them just like Seeta. Traditions do have a way of appearing and reappearing.

Writers like James Tader 1838, Bota Shah 1847, Chishty 1867, Kenhya Lal 1886, Sir Richard Temple 1884, Gulab Singh 1884, Thornton 1873, all agreed that Loh son of Rama, was the founder of Lahore,^{xxxii} Kasu is associated with Kasur and Acchu with Icchra.^{xxxiii} It is also accepted by all these historians that no specific date can be assigned for the foundation of this city because according to the ancient Hindu mythology Ram was born about 1.2 million years ago, during the Treta Yuga age that lasted 1,296,000 years^{xxxiv} but apart from oral testimony, no evidence has been found to confirm these dates. Another date associated to Ram is 967 BC^{xxxv} when he was born and ruled for almost a thousand year. Later on Loh founded Lahore but the city was already in existence, may be not in a very grand manner.

So we can fairly assume that Loh of Rajput clan instituted the present day city in the memory of his mother who spent years of turmoil in this region. According to ancient Rajput Chronicles a mud brick fort was built by him that existed at the same location of the fort, even today. Fort and the area nearby were called Mandakukar and the site was surrounded by smaller settlements called Lohpur, Lohawar and Lohkot, meaning fort of Loh.^{xxxvi} This theory is supported by the fact that there is a small monument inside the fort, which is known as *Loh Ki Samadh*.

Samadh of Loh

Recently there has been a big question mark about the association of Ram, Seeta and Loh with the city of Lahore and many modern scholars have repudiated

any connection to these Hindu icons. But no one can deny the existence of a very interesting monument, the *Samadh* of Loh inside Lahore Fort.



(Fig. 15) Although it is a modern structure that was built during Sikh era but the tradition says that it belongs to pre Muslim times. The level of the *Samadh* is far lower than the rest of the Fort, which is yet another proof of its antiquity. If we compare the level of *Samadh* with excavations done in 1959 at Lahore Fort, we discover that it is almost at the same level of pre Muslim layer.

The existence of a *Samadh* is a convincing factor because if it was Loh's *Mandir* or temple of Loh, one could give it a benefit of doubt but not any place is called *Samadh*, until or unless it does not have some bases of reality. This theory is also strengthened by the fact that the Rajputs used to bury or cremate their dead inside their forts and this is yet another example of that tradition.

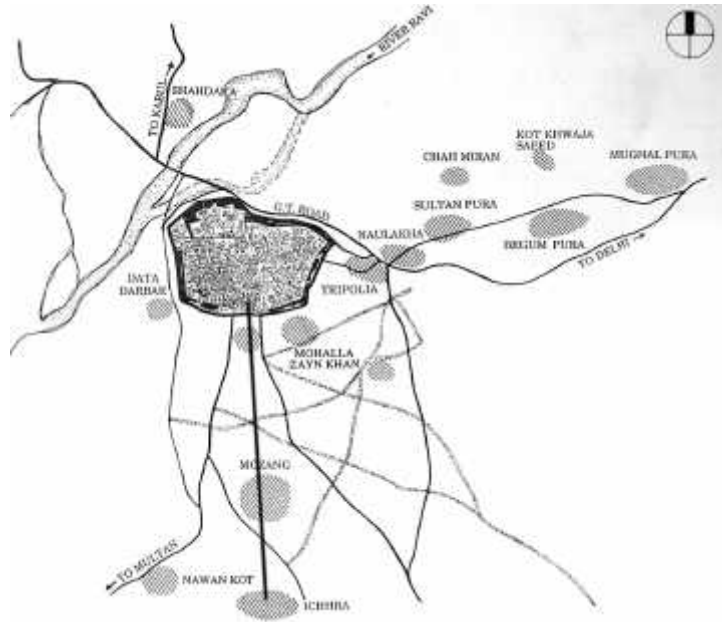
Some might consider the story of Loh and Kasu a myth, but later on there are frequent references of Lahore and its brave *Suraj Bansi* Rajput Rajahs in different ancient chronicles. These old records also show existence of a city on the east of

the river *Iravati*, i.e. Ravi. “In the Raja Tarangini the ancient chronicle of Kashmir, Lahore is mentioned as dependency of the great Lalitaditya.”^{xxxvii} In the *Desh-vi-bhaga*, a compilation from the *Puranas*, drawn up by order of the learned Raja Jai Singh Sawai of Jaipur, it is recorded, “At the end of the Dwapar or Bronze Age, Bhim Sen fought Ban Mal, Raja of Lahore, a mighty prince, with an army of 10,000 horsemen, and after a conflict that lasted for three days, took him prisoner and made his kingdom tributary.”^{xxxviii} It can therefore be fairly assumed that Rajputs of the Solar Race were living in Lahore.

Location of the City

Another controversy related to Lahore is the actual location of the city. It has been mentioned in some documents that a part of ancient Lahore was located in Icchra. Thornton floated the idea but many historians contradicted it. A point given to advocate this belief is that the sacred Hindu shrine of *Chand Raat Mandir* is in the same vicinity. A few modern writers like Anjum Rehmani, former director Lahore Museum; refuses to accept this theory of an old Lahore but a statement strengthens this view. Captain Von Orlich, who saw Lahore during the reign of Maharaja Sher Singh, towards the close of 1842, thus writes of it, “We had a fine view of the city and its environ from the platform of General Ventura’s house.....To the south of the city are hills of debris formed of the ruins of the ancient Lahore.”^{xxxix} This is the direction of the present day Icchra.

Conclusive evidence was identified with one of the gates of the walled city of Lahore. It is said that *Lahori Darwaaza* got its name because some *Lohars* (blacksmith) used to live there. What about *Lahori Darwaaza* of Delhi and Multan? They were given the names because they faced the city of Lahore in the same manner that Lahore has *Kashmiri Darwaaza*, *Delhi Darwaaza*, and *Multani Darwaaza* etc. Even today on the map of Lahore, if a straight line is drawn from *Lahori Darwaaza*, it will touch Icchra by passing through Mozang.



(Fig. 16) We can fairly assume that the Lahori *Darwaaza* of Lahore faced a part of ancient Lahore i.e. the locality of Ichhra.

Foundation Date of the Present Day City

Above mentioned dates and events associated to the foundation of the city is primarily based on oral traditions that has some conviction but it is a general belief by most of the historians that this city was founded as late as in 2nd or 4th century AD.^{x1} Sayyad Muhammad Latif writes that no Greek coin was discovered from Lahore or any other area in its vicinity so this city did not exist during Greek period.^{xii} It is not correct.

Conclusive evidence was found that the city existed as early as in 150 BC and before. In 1873, we come across a report written by a British Government officer, who writes, “On the other hand, from the number of coins of the Manendar dynasty of Indo-Bactrian kings discovered among its ruins, it would appear that Lahore was a place of importance at that period.”^{xiii}



(Fig. 17)

Manendar was a Greek general who managed to remain independent in Punjab. Shakala was the capital of his prosperous and peaceful Indo-Greek kingdom. He was the only westerner to be recorded in Indian history through literature.^{xliii} He had temporary conquest of North-Western India, westwards to the Jamna and southwards to the sea.^{xliv} This includes almost all the territory of Punjab including Lahore. He died in 130 or 150 BC and the coins with his name were found in the vicinity of Lahore. It gives us a solid proof that Lahore was in existence as early as 150 BC, contrary to general belief of 2nd or 4th century AD.

The Name

A very interesting fact about Lahore is that there is more than one city named Lahore in the Subcontinent. “There is a Lahori Bandar in the Hyderabad, District of Sindh, Lahoar in Mewar state of Rajputana, Lahari or Lahayar near Gawaliar in India, Lahore in Mardan District etc.”^{xlv} It is a strange phenomenon but with a convincing logic. “The common name of these towns, situated in the different parts of the country and all associated with Rajputs of Solar Race, the descendants of Loh, indicates that these homonym towns were founded not by one person at one time but possibly by the descendants of one person, i.e. Loh, at different times.”^{xlvi}

The name ‘Lahore’ appears in a 10th century book called *Hadood ul Alam*. From then on it was mentioned in different books written by the travellers, poets, geographers, historians etc. We find different variants of the same name and they are:

1. *Lahoor*
2. *Lohawar*
3. *Lohoor*
4. *Lohpur*
5. *Lohkot*
6. *Lahanoor*
7. *Lohawoor*

8. *Lawohor*
9. *Lawhoor*
10. *Lanahor*
11. *Lahawar*
12. *Lahowoh*
13. *Lohar*
14. *Lahar*
15. *Lohowoor*
16. *Lowhor*
17. *Lahaur*
18. *Laho*
19. *Lahore*

Ancient Lahore primarily consisted of idol worshippers and evidence was again found in the 1959 excavation where many terracotta plaques were discovered representing different Hindu female deities. An exceedingly lively panel shows three women, one is dancing while the other two are playing *Dholki* (tambourine).



(Fig. 18) Central figure is wearing large earrings along with bangles. Lines of the design on her dress are going according to the shape of her figure. Other two women have elaborate hairstyles. The sumptuous figures of these dancing women remind us of Yakshis. There is a simplified head of an animal at the background. This seems to be representation of a religious ritual performed by these women who are dancing for an animal deity.

Another interesting high relief represents a woman sitting with a small child in her lap.



(Fig. 19) There is a halo behind her head that shows her religious importance. She is decorated with heavy jewellery and her figure also has all the sensuousness of Khajuraho women. The face of the child in her lap has been eroded. His hand is raised towards the face of the mother while her hand is on the head of the child. It is a very sensitive gesture reminiscent of the sculptures and paintings of Virgin and Child.

A small panel containing a female figure was also discovered.



(Fig. 20) She looks like a goddess holding garland in her hands.

Another piece associated to pre-Muslim layer is an amphora. It was found in a very deplorable condition but had been preserved by a team of experts.



(Fig. 21) Today we can appreciate the beauty of its shape and the flow of the line of figures and design on it. It has an intricate geometric pattern with simplified figure of man, woman, peacocks and spotted cows. The craftsman has used black pigment on light coloured background. Although it has been labelled of Hindu period but the designs and the style of the figures resemble greatly with the early Muslim art so there is a possibility that it belongs to Early Muslim Period in Lahore.

Detailed study of the objects discovered in excavation points to one conclusion that the people of ancient Lahore were sophisticated and their artists and craftsmen were very skilled to produce pottery and sculpture of such quality. Main material used was clay because the plains of Punjab offered no other material in such abundance. Unfortunately evidence of painting was unavailable so we have to rely on the sculpture and pottery to understand the art of Lahore in ancient times.

Conclusion

People have been living in this region since times immemorial. Loh founded the present day city but it was inhabited long before that. Fort was built that has his *Samadh* and the whole locality was called Louh awar (as in Peshawar, Mewar, Rajwar etc) meaning the fort of Loh, with its capital called Mandakukur. It was not the name of one location but the name of a big area around Ravi, which was quite a huge river where ships used to sail as late as in the Mughal Period.^{xlvii} The river changed its course very frequently and since the ancient population preferred to settle only near the rivers, they also shifted locations. That's why it is no strange a phenomenon that so many settlements are found around the river and the word Lahore was used along with their own names e.g. Icchra Lahore, Mozang Lahore etc. but the most important among those ancient locations was Mandakukur, capital of Lahore at one point. Its present day location is *Deewan i Aam* of Lahore Fort,^{xlviii} which was conquered many times and reconstructed.

This location used to have a wall all around and we find the evidence when the act of *Jauhar* was performed by Raja Jai Pal after his successive defeats against Mahmud Ghaznavi in the 11th century.^{xlix} The whole event took place outside the wall of the city. Every time any individual who was associated with its development, the population respected him a lot e.g. Malik Ayyaz of 11th century who is considered the founder of modern day Lahore.

This city went through many ups and downs in the history. It witnessed prosperous days and destructions of invaders and natural calamities but it was never abandoned completely by its inhabitants who have been faithful to the soil even in the worst of times till today. Perhaps they believed *Lahore Lahore Ay* since ancient times.

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