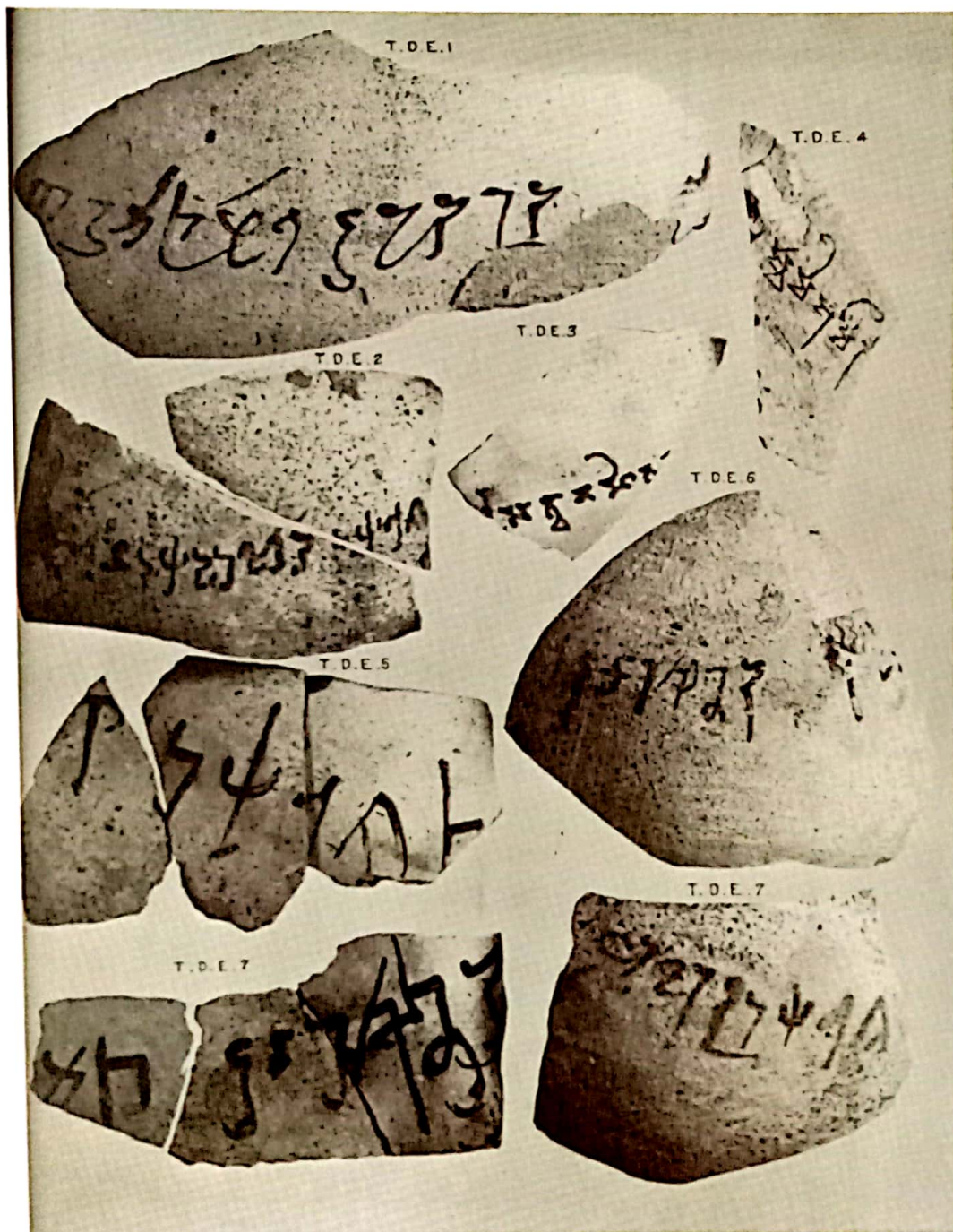


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Editorial Note

The authors are responsible for the linguistic and technical qualities of their texts. The editors only tried to ensure minimum coherence to the articles. The editors always reserve the right to make all the changes in the manuscripts to maintain the standard of the Journal.

Kūrri, Do not Let Bygone be Bygone¹

Mamoona Khan

Abstract

The article deals with the Early Modern urban site of Kūrri, in the surroundings of Rawalpindi. The study, based on archival materials as well as on field reconnaissance, introduces the first complete overview on that neglected (and now endangered) site, once the seat of a flourishing regional market town.

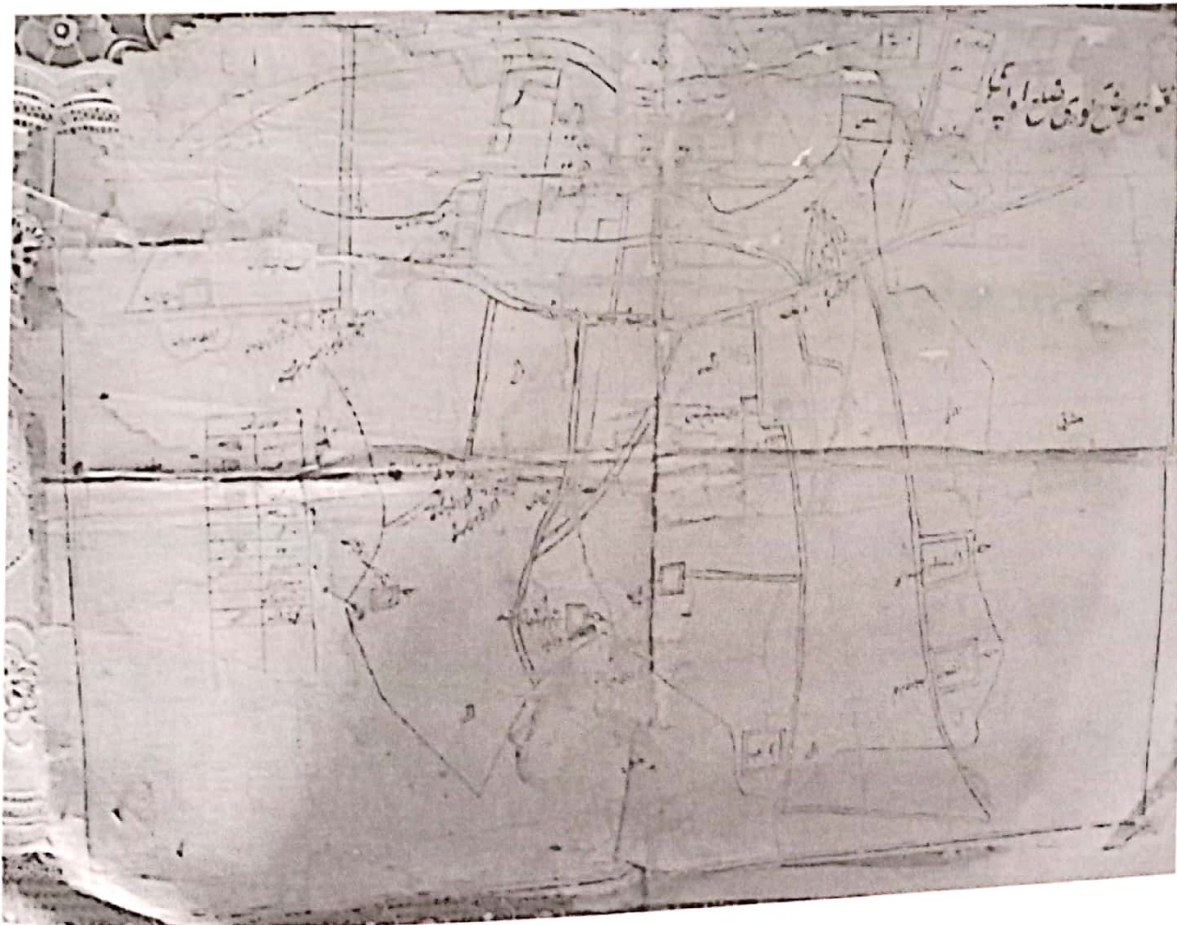


Fig. 1 - Map of Kūrri, called *Laiha* in local dialect, drawn in 1905.

¹ All the photos are by the Author or belong to the Author's archives.

1. Introduction

Kūrri, now a small town in the vicinity of Rawalpindi and part of the federal area is 13.8 km away from the [former] Islamabad Airport (Benazir Bhutto International Airport). Ages back Kūrri was a splendid city; still it is called and written Kūrri *shahar*², although now it has turned to a very small town. When Kūrri was at its meridian, Rawalpindi was only a small place inhabited by a few number of people. But a reversal turn took place and now Kūrri is in oblivion while all among us are familiar with Rawalpindi, where a densely populated area keeps a busy old road named Kūrri Road which passes through heart of the city. It is a reminder of the splendour and hustle and bustle of the city named Kūrri.

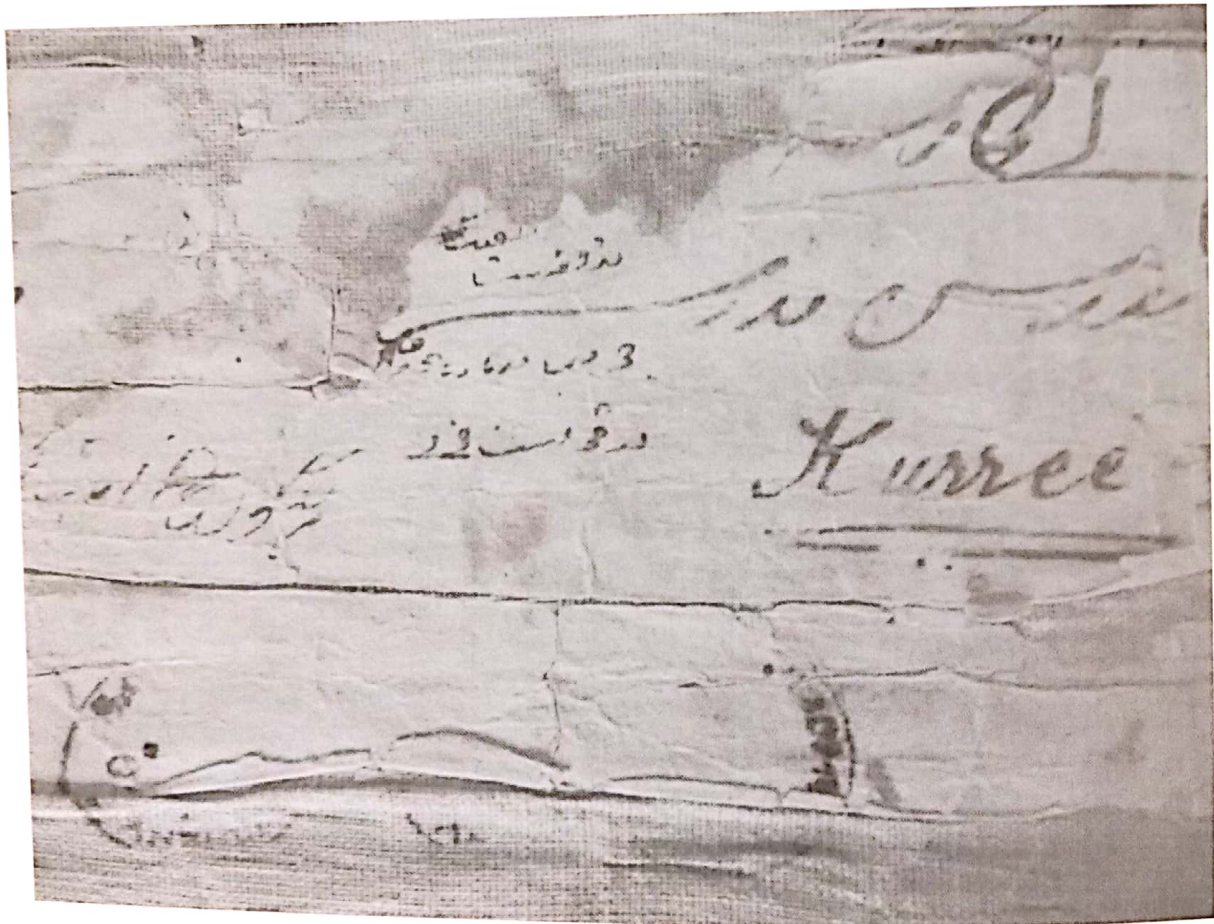


Fig. 2 - Back side of *Laíha*.

² *Shahar* means city, and Kūrri is called city from the days when Rawalpindi did not even exist.

Living nations never break links with their past. If it is splendid it pulls them up to the same vainglory and if it is not so fabulous, still it becomes a lesson to attain a better position. But the history of Kūrri is a bit neglected domain, although it still keeps remains of a fort, a *Gurdawāra*³, a legendary *Masjid*, along with ancient wells and a few other mosques. Moreover, archaeological sites like Hindu Temples, *Dharmāshālas* and indication of many wells that have got extinct, are pointed out in an authentic map of Kūrri [Kurree] (Figs.1-2) drawn in 1905. It is regrettable that modern plans of the government of Pakistan to allot plots to the Federal Govt. officials at this place can become a cause to vanish the dissipating oddments of the history of Kūrri.

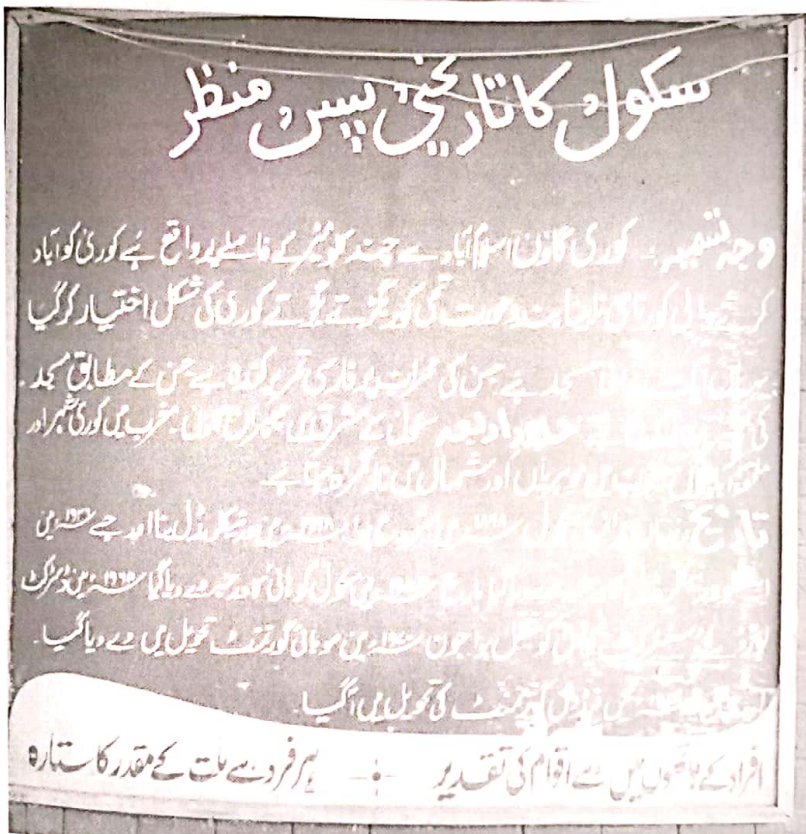


Fig. 3 - A board at Kūrri School narrating its history.

Etymology of the word Kūrri is variously interpreted. Some associate it with the word *Kūr* of Puṭhūhāri language that means blind, while Sikhs use word *Kaur* for woman (a large number of Sikh populations, before

³ A Sikh temple is called a *Gurdawāra*.

partition, inhibited at Kūrri, Fig. 3)⁴.

The present state of Kūrri is exactly like other small towns of the country, though a recently repaired paved road exists there, but not for its natives, rather for its future dwellers (see below). The people of Kūrri are educated, civilised and hospitable, mostly having simple and clean dwellings, along with deep rooted reverence for this place. Nannad Kishaur Wikram, a renowned Indian writer belongs to this soil and still yearns for it, calling it a beautiful and attractive valley⁵. Despite the historical value, it is a completely neglected town and instead of allocating funds to save its artefacts that connect us to the ancient past of Puṭhūhār, decisions are made for replacing the indigenous into modern dwellings not for the natives but for higher officials of the federal territory. It may turn this beautiful piece of land into a replica of some European city, but at the cost of its precious heritage, and still it lacks basic facilities of the modern era. Electricity was provided in 1970 but water and facility of gas for domestic use is still lacking.

Kūrri being on the cross roads, was once a gold market and a supplier of goods to the surrounding settlements including Kahūta, Murree and Kashmīr. Salt besides oil and *guṛ*⁶, were the major commodities supplied through this path to the Kashmīrites. But now there are very few familiar with its magnificent past, and not even a single monograph is attributed to this place. For being in the region of Puṭhūhār, some of the writers have mentioned it in their treatises on Puṭhūhār, but at a cursory glance, allocating only one or two lines to it. It should be documented before its history completely vanishes even from the minds of its own dwellers, living here from generations.

2. Puṭhūhār

The term Puṭhūhār, according to Azīz Malik is a combination of two words of the native language: *puṭh* and *āṛ*. The former means *back* and the

⁴ Another possible link can be attempted with Kurū, the name of a famous tribe or *mahajanapada* which established a flourishing kingdom in Punjab across mid-1st Millennium BCE.

⁵ His book *Unīswān Adhīyā 'ay* also narrates about the past of Kūrri, in which he yearns to return to the place of his infancy.

⁶ *Guṛ* is raw form of sugar.

latter stands for *like*, so it connotes *back like*. It defines the undulating surface of earth of this region, which is neither plain nor fully mountainous; rather there are plains and ridges or rugged terrains combined (Malik 1987: 11). Some associate it with *Bhattiwār* or *Pupe hār* twisted to *Puthūhār*⁷. Whichever meaning is attached with the word *Puthūhār*⁸, *Kūrri* is part of it.

The perimeters of *Puthūhār* are also variously given. Some people limit it to the *taḥṣīl* *Gujar Khān*, while others restrict it to the region between the river *Sawān* and *Nāla Kānsi*⁹. But *Minhās* in *Tārīkh-i Puthūhār* allocates a vast land to the region: from *Mardān* to *Jahlum* River, and on the other side, from mountains of *Kutli Pūnchh* in *Āzād Kashmīr* district, including *Murree* to the *Indus Kaisar Mountains* in *Sargudha* district (*Minhās* 1978: 40).

3. *Mandi Kūrri*

Prior to the advent of Pakistan *Kūrri* was inhabited by Hindu clans, Sikhs, Jain and Muslims. But with the divide Hindus and Sikhs migrated to India, and now Muslims are the only inhabitants of this region while marks of cultures of the other two, once dominant are now disappearing rapidly.

Locals narrate that there were three major markets in Asia: *Mandi Amratsar*, *Mandi Baha al-Dīn*, and *Mandi Kūrri*. The market of *Kūrri* was

⁷ *Rāḥat Chightā'i* also agrees with the previous interpretation (*Chightā'i* 1990: 61). Another source attributes it to the *Bhatti* tribes of *Rājput* clan, still scattered all over this region, which was called *Bhattiwār*, twisted to *Puthwār* and then turned to *Puthuhār*⁷ (*Minhās* 1978: 33). An interesting account is written in *Kai Goharnāmah* that *Rā'i Pithura* while defeating *Ghaurid Sultān Shāhāb al-Dīn* chaised him till river *Sindh*. On return he stayed with *Gakhars* near *Daingli* that was replete with a variety of flowers. He was so pleased that he exclaimed the region with joy *Pupe hār*, meaning *garland of flowers*. In Hindi *Pupe* is flower but the natives being unaware with the word *pupe* called it *puthe*, so it got famous as *Puthehār* (*Dūni Chand* 2004: 51-52). Another source traces origin of this word from the Hindu god *Ardhanārī Īyshawrītha*, was half man and half woman called *Putā* in Sanskrit of *Kashmīr*. So the land where *Putā* god was worshiped was called *Puthuhār* (*Naqvi* 1995: 10-11).

⁸ Date of origin of the word *Puthūhār* is unknown, but according to *Minhās* it is present in the books of *Sultān Gakhar Shāh*, also famous as *Gakharīn Shāh*. He started ruling *Puthūhār* in 412/1022, which is not more than twelve hundred years back (*Minhās Tārīkh* 31). In *Tuzk-i Jahāngīrī* boundaries of *Puthuhār* are defined from *Haith* to *Margalla*.

⁹ *Nāla Kānsi* starts from *Kalar Sayidān* and falls in river *Jehlum* near *Mangla*.

very large, but main importance lies in the fact that it was covered from all around. All sorts of goods were available there, including a huge area for the selling and purchasing of gold. So, it was famous as gold market too. People from the surrounding settlements used to come to this place to purchase anything they needed. Residents of Malut, Bhaigaiwāl, Karu', Kahūta, Murree, Kashmīr, etc., used to visit this place to buy commodities of daily utility along with objects for ceremonial usage. At the time of marriages, religious festivals or on other similar occasions visit to this market was essential, for, it fulfilled all their required needs¹⁰ because everything was available from this single place. It was like today's Rāja Bāzār of Rāwalpindi that keeps each object of utility, from eatables to utensils, cloths, gold and silversmiths, etc. Moreover caravans of traders used to move twice a week from Kūrri *Mandi*¹¹ to Murree and then to Kashmīr. Goods were transported on *karainchīs*¹², donkeys, mules or horsebacks. It was a favourite place of grain merchants. Landlords of the surrounding regions used to come to the Kūrri market to sell their crops¹³: grains, corn or cotton, etc., for all sorts of goods were sold and purchased there. Murree under the British Rāj had almost a similar market; goods were brought from the plains to Kūrri, then to Murree and from there to the adjacent settlements.

Kūrri Bāzār was almost 1km long and all covered. It started from *Qil'ah wāli Dhakki*¹⁴ (Fig. 4) and continued very long, keeping all the

¹⁰ The account is given by Amjad Ḥafīz, a resident of Kūrri. His father Abd al-Azīz was a teacher at Kūrri School, who got retired in 1994, and grandfather Maulvi Abd al-Ghani was retired as headmaster from the same school. Map of Kūrri of 1905 was provided by the same source.

¹¹ *Mandi* is a market place.

¹² In the language of Puṭhūhār *Karainchi* is a bull cart, from plains goods were brought on *Karainchis* to Kūrri.

¹³ Prof. Khālida Parvīn of Political Science at Postgraduate Govt. College of Women, Satellite town, Rawalpindi, belongs to Kahūta town, gave valuable account of Kūrri narrated by her father, while making her beloved daughter familiar with their ancestors of Puṭhūhār. He was a landlord and told that they used to come to the market of Kūrri to sell their cotton crops. It is interesting that the natives of this region have some pride for the rugged terrains, Puṭhūhār language and their customs and traditions. They never let their children speak at home any language other than Puṭhūhār.

¹⁴ *Qil'ah* is a fort and *dhakki* is a higher place that covers something underneath. It means the market started from the place which is quite high from its surroundings and which keeps the traces of a fort underneath.

goods of necessity. From pulses, grains, vegetables, fruits, sugarcane, to oil, and leather goods, for oil merchants and leather merchant were in abundance there. A proof of it is still existing *Masjid-i Khatīkān*¹⁵. Herds of animals were brought from the plains of the lower Punjab and their skins were utilised and even sent to Murree and Kashmīr. Two folded path led from Kūrri to Kashmīr: from *Qil'ah wāli Ḍhakki* to *Chhapprān*, *Bhaigaiwāl*, Murree road,¹⁶ Angūri to Murree, and the other path starting from the similar place to 'Ali Pur Farāsh, Karur to Murree and from there to Kashmīr. From Thāna¹⁷ Wārith Khān in Rāwalpindi to Kūrri, there was 8 km long paved road named Kūrri road still exists there. It starts from Rājābāzār, crossing Murree Road at Nāz Cinema, passing through *Chāh Sultān*, it crosses Rāwal Road that is a present addition, didn't exist before. It then moves to *Ṣādiqābād*, crossing *Chirrah* Road at *Hāji Chawk*, passes through transformer *Chawk*, *Tarlā'i*, *Trāmri*, 'Ali pūr Farāsh, *Pindurīān* to Kūrri. Despite the present state of Kūrri, the road bespeaks its previous splendour.



Fig. 4 - *Qilq wāli Ḍhakki*, a place of ancient Kūrri market.

¹⁵ *Khatīkan* are leather workers: leather dyers and processors.

¹⁶ The old Murree road that passed through the region where Rawal Dam exists now. Remains of this road still get visible in dry seasons when scarcity of water in the dam causes the ground under water visible.

¹⁷ *Thāna* is a police station.

4. A bit of history

History of Kūrri is very old, even the Mughal Emperor Jahāngīr mentions it in *Tuzk-i Jahāngīri*. He writes that after suppressing the revolt of Khusrau in 1607, he decided to visit Kābul. On 7th Dhī al-Hajj, 1015 hijra, he moved from Lahore Fort, passing through Jahāngīrpūra, present day Shaikhūpūra then Ruhtās, he moved to Bhakhra, then to Pakkāh, he stayed at Kūr, ascribed as very near to a pond famous for crocodiles, a little away from the Rāwal town, present day Rāwalpindi and then to the Kharbūza, moving to Attock. The place Kūr is definitely present Kūrri, for all adjacent lands mentioned by Jahāngīr, directs to this place, and the pond is present day Rāwal Dam. But history of Kūrri is even older than that, for Chhapprān: land surrounding Kūrri from north-east, keeps a variety of sculptures of Buddha, many excavated but still requires to be searched out from under the earth. Abd al-Azīz, a teacher of the school of Kūrri once kept those sculptures which were taken over by the Pakistani government and placed in the Taxila Museum. Jahāngīr also mentions that word Kūr in the Gakhar dialect stands for destruction or dissipation. The Kūrri fort and ancient Buddhist edifices might not be intact even at his time!

Among the tribes of Kūrri, at the time of partition, there was no royal family, various clans, all living together. All spoke Puṭhūhāri language, even Hindus and Sikhs used pure Puṭhūhāri. Trade was in the hands of Hindus of Kūrri who were educated and very rich at that time. An authentic source of information is the map of 1905 that points out a large number of chāh¹⁸, dharamsāla¹⁹, marghat²⁰, khānqāh²¹, school, and masjid. Each clan had his dharamsāla and chāh, such as dharamsāla qum Bandrāsi, dharamsāla qum Dham, etc. It shows that Kūrri was an important place, keeping all the requisites of a civilised society. Cleanliness seems to be an essential part of their living, for presence of a chāh after very short intervals, and each clan owing an independent chāh, proves this.

¹⁸ Chāh in Puṭhūhāri language is a pit-well.

¹⁹ Dharamsālah or Dharamshālah is a building used for a pious purpose by Hindus; a place where alms are distributed, or a rest house for travelers or pilgrims.

²⁰ Marghat is a place where Hindus burn the ārthi that is dead bodies.

²¹ Khānqāh is dwelling place of saints or pious persons.



Fig. 6 - Remains of the Kūrri fort.

5. Topography

The Fort

Kūrri is situated at 33° 68' N and 73° 18' E. Once it had a fort. A thin *badrau* (moat) still surrounds it, an essential feature of fortified places. A few marks of fortification are still visible from underneath the school which is now very high from the moat. Two decades back, walls of the fort were visible as part of the boundary marks of the school (Figs. 5-6). Minhās, while discussing forts of Puṭhūhār says that account of Kūrri Fort is variously given by different writers for being almost in oblivion. Some refer it to the fort of Kūrri *Shahar*, while others locate it on the mount opposite Taxila, because remains of both are so inconspicuous that cannot narrate their past (Minhās 1978: 163). But reasoning minds will relate it with the former, on the ground that a fort which is named after a place cannot be situated at a distance of miles from the place whose name it bears. So the Kūrri Fort mentioned by Minhās is very much the one which once surrounded Kūrri *Shahar*. The *Lambardār*²² of Kūrri Mr. Muḥammad Sharīf²³ told about a *mut ka kunwān*²⁴ on the NE wall of the fort, because courts of justice were held there and criminals hanged in the death-well. His ancestors told him that the courts of Justice in Kūrri were far older than that of Rāwalpindi.

The School

The school now named, *Islamabad Model School for Boys (VI-X), Kurri, Islamabad* is more than a hundred years old. A respected old man of Kūrri, Qāḍi Muḥammad Aṣḥraf Ṣāḥib²⁵; ninety-two years old, was a student and later a teacher of that school, who got retired in 1980. Qāḍi Abd al-‘Azīz

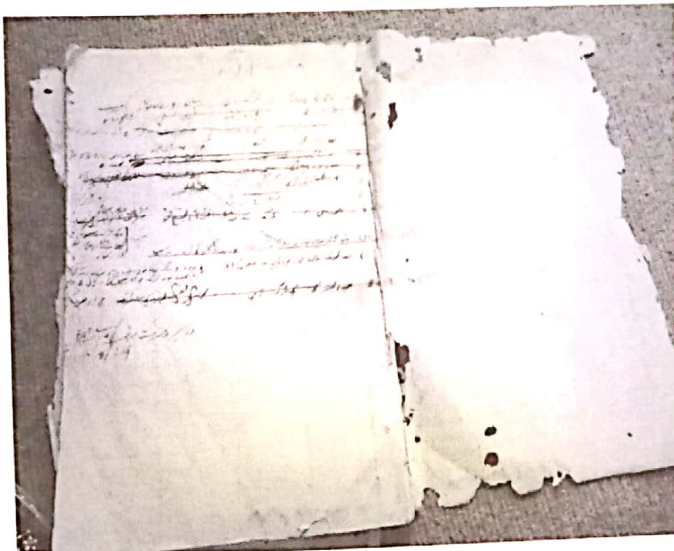
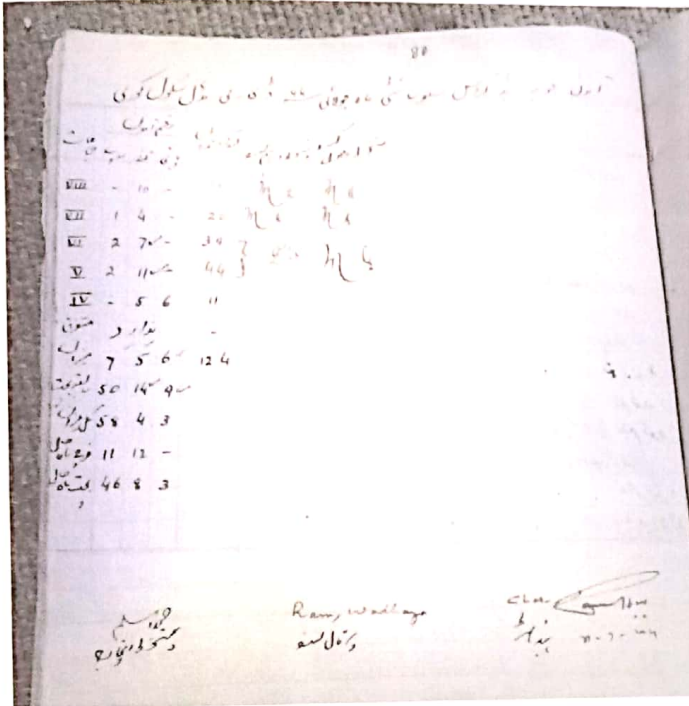
²² *Lambardār* is the headman of a village.

²³ His family has given *lambardār* to the village for five generations: the first among his family was *Lambardār* Nūr, then Faḍal Illāhi, Bustān, Muḥammad Ṣaddīque, and then Muḥammad Sharīf.

²⁴ It is a "death-well".

²⁵ He also has a valuable register, keeping a record of funds and materials of the school from 1927 to 1947. Funds given by the Red-Cross to students and materials for the school like *tāt* (Jut rug), *qufal* (lock), and *ṣandūq* (boxes), etc collected from other places, fig. 7-8. It is signed by a headmaster named Ch. Rām Wīdhāya along some other teachers.

and his father also studied from this school and became the *Qāḍi*²⁶ of the region from Khanna Shakrīyāl to Sunth village. Since professions of people were labeled as their casts, so his grandfather *Qāḍi Ghulām Nabi* and great grandfather *Qāḍi Quṭb al-Dīn* were *Qāḍi al-Qaḍḍa*²⁷. So the family got the nomenclature of *Qāḍi*.



Figs. 7-8 - Register of the School keeping record from 1927 to 1947.

²⁶ *Qāḍi* is a judge.

²⁷ *Qāḍi al-Qaḍḍa* is a Chief Justice.

The old man gave very interesting account of the school when he was a student there. The headmaster was a Hindu named Bakhshi Chait Rām, was qualified as masters in Mathematics and English. The school had boarding quarters as well and every student had to live there for at least six months, where he had to get up by 4 AM and kept engaged by twelve at night. Moreover, schools of Cherrah, Kirpa, Jagyut, Tarlā'i, Bārākahu, Pind Bigwāl, Malpūr, Khanna Dāk etc. all were under the Kūrri middle school.



Fig. 9 - Akbari Masjid after the renovation (1994).

He tells that there were two types of schools at that time: Anglo Vernacular Schools and Vernacular Schools: the former taught English along with other subjects and the latter, other subjects without English, while Kūrri School was Angelo vernacular. Monthly fee of the Anglo Vernacular was Rs.3.50 and of Vernacular was Rs.1.30. when daily wages

of a labourer was only two *ānās* ²⁸.

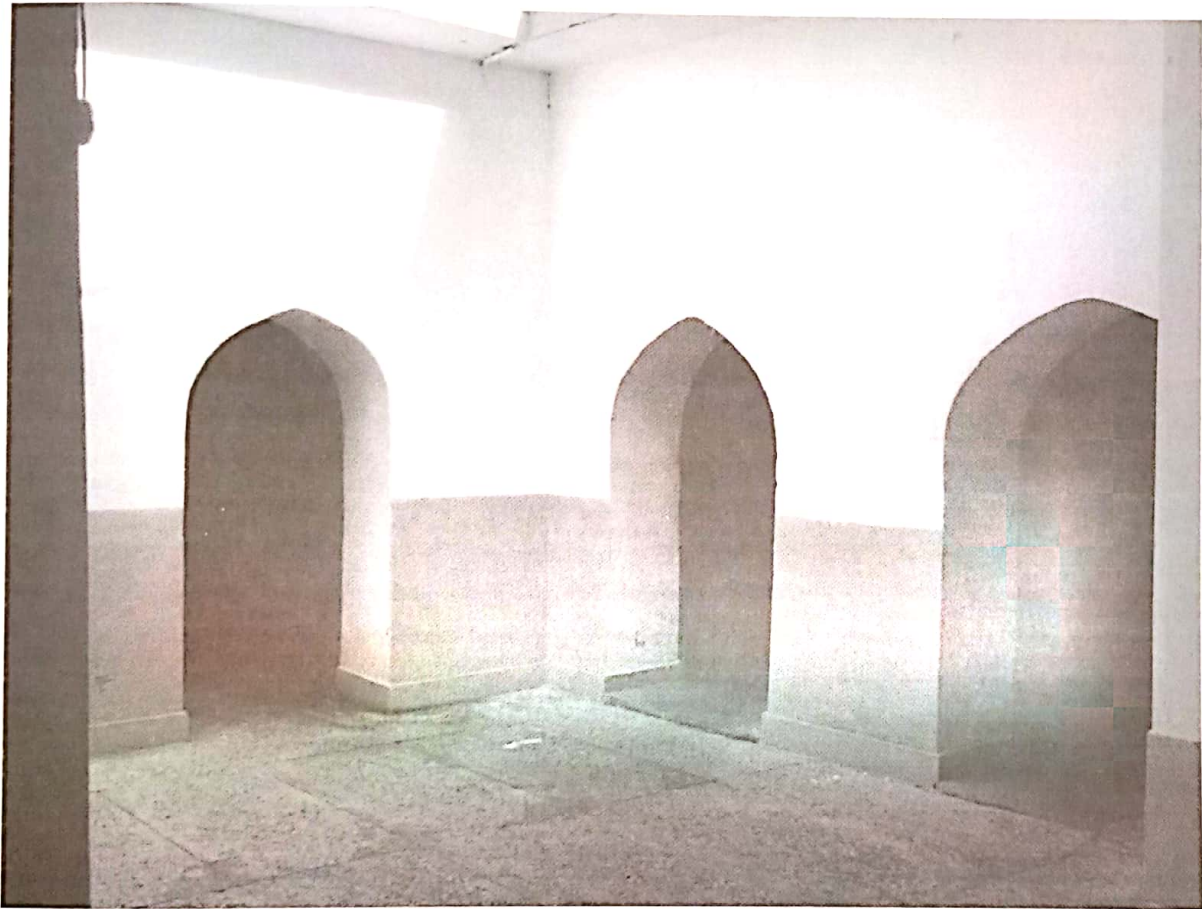


Fig. 10 - Small arches flanking the courtyard of the *Masjid*.

The Masjid

Two most ancient places of Kūrri are *Jāmi'āh Masjid* and *Gurdawāra*, called by the natives of Kūrri as *Akbari Masjid* and *Bārādari*. *Masjid* is thought to be constructed in 198 Hijra and *Gurdawāra* in the Sikh era. The former is now orb'd in new attire where it has completely lost its original state and the latter is in complete dilapidated condition but both are at their original places. A poetic inscription on the spandrels of central *mihrāb* of the mosque defines that an Iranian trader came here and laid its foundations in 198 Hijra (Javadi 173-75) that is 815 A.D. (Fig.11).

But usually, a building is hard to survive for thirteen centuries; moreover

²⁸ One rupee had sixteen *ānās*.

its present structure is not so old. It is also famous among the natives as Akbari Masjid, but it is questionable whether the mosque has any link with the Mughal emperor Akbar or not? History deciphers that Akbar came to Rāwalpindi to settle issues of the Gakhar Clan, who always remain friendly and helpful to the Mughals. He stayed for a few days, in a camp at the bank of River Sawān. There he went on a lion hunt trip on the hills of Saidpūr with Sardār Said Khān, and also extended matrimonial ties of Jahāngīr with his daughter (Azīz 130). It means that Mughals used to visit this region. There are similar accounts of other Mughal emperors too, who visited Puṭhūhār. Thus Akbar's visit to Kūrri is not out of question.



Fig. 11 - Spandrels of the central *Mihrāb* with poetic inscription, defining its date as 198/815 (photo taken in 1994).

Furthermore, the structure of the mosque at many places resembles buildings of Akbar's period. Shapes of arches around the courtyard that are not monumental in their scale but have less than human scale, is also visible in the period of Akbar (Figs 10 and 15), because Hindu elements is most conspicuous in the Mughal art and architecture of Akbar's regime.

Architecture being plastic art, its decoration is usually two or three dimensional. Akbari *Masjid* too, once kept both types of ornamentation. The former in Fresco and the latter in relief form. It is unfortunate enough that Fresco has been engulfed by white paint of modern renovation of the *Masjid* whereas three dimensional is still visible through paint (see Figs. 12-14). The original layout of the mosque is unknown but it has columnar and trabeated style of construction, also having arches around the small courtyard, and central part of the sanctuary is covered with a dome. Entrance is trabeated structure but decorated with soffits of a false arch, surrounded by panels formed into rectangles, topped by projected thin cornices. Skyline forms interesting pattern of two non-functional minarets with seven cupolas in between²⁹. Entrance door opens up in a thin corridor with small scale pointed arches flanking the courtyard that are six in number. From inside these are simple pointed but facing courtyard these are three tiered; the pointed arch is most recessed, little projected is spandrels of the foliated arch and a bit more projected is the rectangle surrounding all, similar to the entrance door. It forms interesting pattern of light and shade.



Fig. 15 -
Shape of arches
flanking the
courtyard of the
masjid.

²⁹ The minarets are a later addition and part of renovation because a few decades back they did not exist.

Central part of the sanctuary is square and covered with a dome. It is extended north-south having flat roofs. Covering a square with a round needs some addition to fill in zone of transition which is provided here with simple usual squinches, in the four corners. The central *mihrāb* is within a blind arch, spandrels of it are divided into three sections; the central one is in the shape of a small foliated blind arch which now keeps the above mentioned poetic inscription, surrounded by half D-shaped panels. Central *mihrāb* has two small niches on each side to place small oil lamps within, but now keeping the Holy Qur'ān. Going with the general decorative scheme, small niches too are surrounded by blind foliated arches. These are slightly recessed from rectangular panels around them. Upper part of inner side of *mihrāb* too, have similar slightly recessed panels with the same foliated blind arches, while lower part of it have just rectangular panels, five in number (Fig. 14). It is the only surviving decoration. A few decades back, it was fully decked with floral ornamentation on the spandrels of the central *mihrāb*, and pillars but all lost in the guise of renovation, under the thick white paint (Fig. 13). Though, at places it peeps through the sections where white paint is chipped off. Moreover, embossed designs of frescoes are faintly visible through the white paint. The structure is a mixture of arch and beam styles. Combination of both the styles of construction was started by Ghiāth al-Dīn Tughlaq in the subcontinent. Here decorative and constructive elements are combined together.

The *masjid* is a witness of history that viewed many phases of reverence and disrespect. Anjum Ḥafīz gives a valuable account narrated by his father that a Bodhi tree was adjacent to the *masjid*. At the time of prayer Sikhs started jingling bells, tied with the tree and incanting mantras, which disturbed those absorbed in prayers. One night Muslims pulled the tree and threw it away somewhere, although it was very huge, that seems miraculous. People were astounded in the morning to see that the ground was plain without any mark of roots or stem of the tree. In consequences, his grandfather Maulvi Abd al-Ghani and his elder brother Ghulām Qādir had to go to jail because it was Sikh rule and the tree was sacred to them. Another sacrilegious act in the Sikh Rāj, was conversion of the *masjid* into stable where Sikhs used to tie their horses. After partition it was cleansed by digging deep, to clear the smells of feces of the horses, tied there.

The ḥammām, the chāh and the Gurdawāra

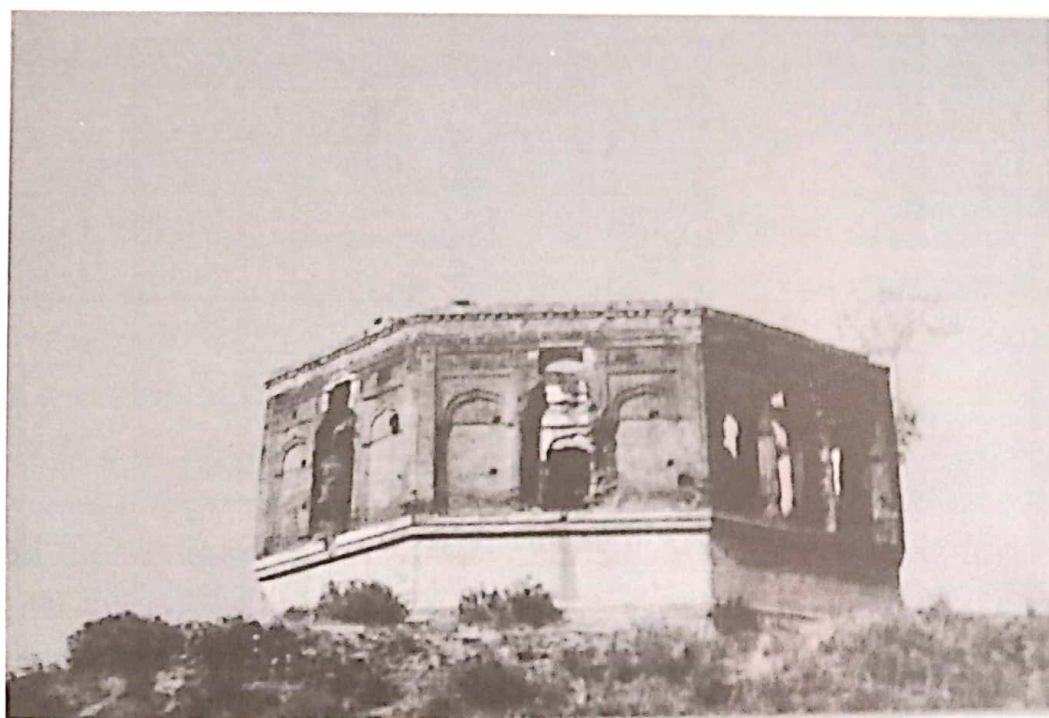
There was a ḥammām along with a chāh (pit-well), outside western wall of the mosque that supplied water to the *masjid*. In chilled weathers a metal *dīya*³⁰ was used, to get it warm: a Mughal device to warm water. The well is constructed of fine stone masonry with an epitaph stone, still visible, but without inscription, for it is flaked out due to the ravages of weather and climate (Fig.16).



Fig. 16 - Epitaph stone of the well of Akbari *Masjid*.

The other surviving ancient building is a *Gurdawāra* decaying rapidly, also popular among the locals as *bārādari* (Kalhoro 2010, Id. 2012) (Figs.17-18). It is an octagonal structure of thin bricks, placed on a raised plinth of twelve stairs with eight arched entrances, one on each side. Inside its centre is another smaller octagonal structure, with four entrance arches.

³⁰ *Dīya* is an oil lamp made up of baked clay.



Figs. 17-18 - Present state of *Gurdwara* or *bārādari* of Kūrri. The same in 1982.

that made the natives call it a *bārādari*. It is regrettable that the outer structure is completely demolished and now only the inner structure survives, placed on an octagonal plinth and covered with a dome which is not pronounced from outside, visible only from the inside (Fig. 19). But closer view deciphers remains of the surrounding walls, and at corners of the plinth, minor remains of pilasters still survive that once adorned the structure.

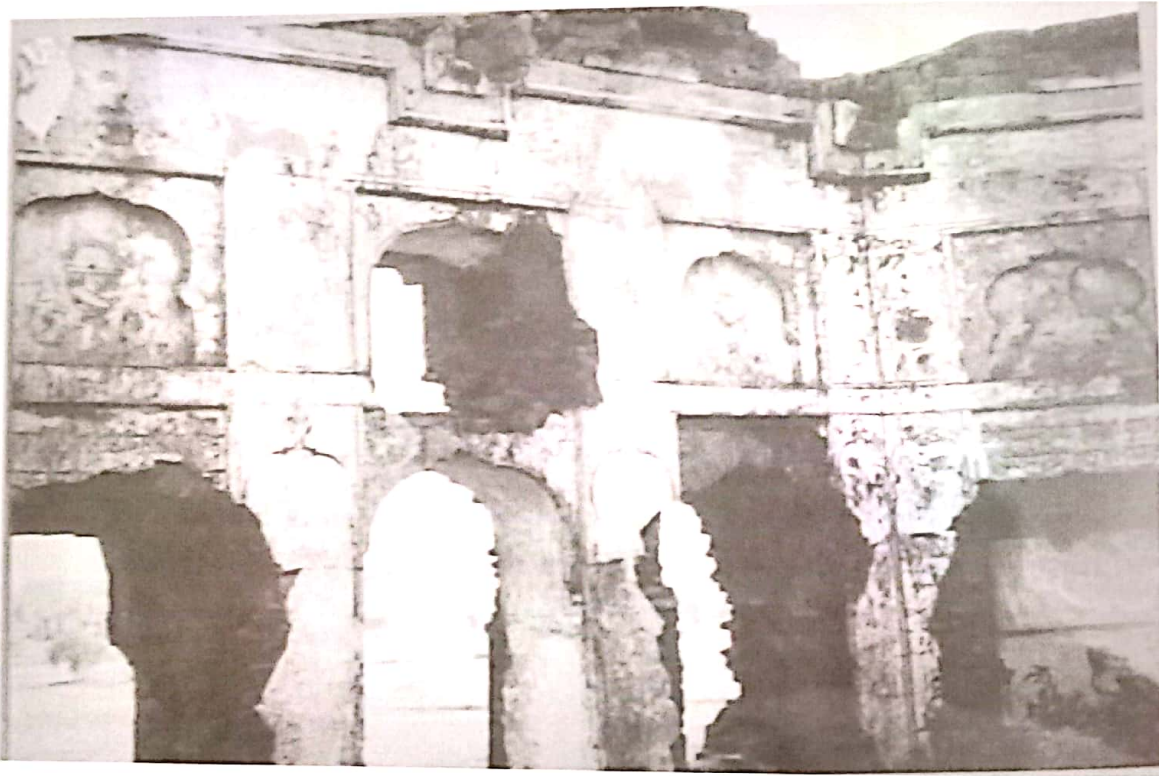


Fig. 19 - Inner side of outer octagon of the *Gurdawāra*.

It is not very far that outer walls of the octagon were intact. Pictures of earlier part of 1980s keep valuable record of it ³¹. The whole structure was originally covered with a huge ribbed dome which was onion shaped but a bit compressed (which was visible till the 1970s) ³². This means the central part had a double dome.

³¹ For providing these valuable pictures, I am thankful to the Rawalpindi based artist and educationist Zarrar Haider Baburi.

³² It is also described by Zarrar Haider Baburi, the artist of Rawalpindi, who was a frequent visitor to this place.



Fig. 20 - Niche of inner side of the outer octagon of *Gurdawāra* with pictures on panels and an epitaph in Gurmukhi.



Figs. 21-24 - Illustrating the inner octagon with the portrait of Bābā Gūru Nānak on SE wall (now and in 1982), and the soffits.



Figs. 25-29 -
Illustrating the
pilasters and
jambs of
decorative arches
in the inner
octagon.

Such an impressive structure, in its original state! The dissipated remains narrate that it was adorned with two and three dimensional ornamentations: fresco painting and brick laying designs. Each arched entrance of outer octagon had an arched ventilator on its top and two blind arches, one on its each side. Blind arches are three tiered: the inner rectangular part is surmounted by a pointed arched shape, little projected from it, is foliated spandrels of arch, surrounded by a further projected rectangle. On both sides of ventilators blind arches are framed by pilasters. Each side of the octagon is topped by a thin projected cornice with rick-rack placing of bricks underneath that forms interesting pattern of light and shade.

A similar division is repeated on inside walls, where blind arches are in the form of niches, perhaps to keep sculptures. These are surmounted by smaller blind arches of the size of the central ventilators, also three tiered: inner most keeping painting of vases, fruit dishes, peacocks or portraits, etc. (Fig. 19). A little bit projected are spandrels of foliated arches, recessed from the outer most square. In between upper and lower blind arches there are small rectangular epitaph in Gurmukhi. It is surmounted by parallel double cornices in undulating geometric movement, and the whole very symmetrical in design. Inner structure with four arched entrances is symmetrically decked like the outer. Entrance arch is pointed, surmounted by foliated blind spandrels, horizontal rectangular panels for epitaph in Gurmukhi (Figs. 20-21), and delicate undulating geometrical cornice. Blind arches on the other hand, were fully bedecked with fresco paintings.

The vertical rectangular panels portraying, according to Kalhoro (2010, 2012), Bābā Gūru Nānak and his companions, Bāla and Mardāna. The south-eastern walls still have traces of it. Dome also once kept floral designs (Kalhoro 2010, Id. 2012). Pilasters supporting foliated spandrels are placed at edges of the octagon have delicately carved bases and tops with lotus and acanthus petals, mixture of Buddhist and Greek traditions (Figs. 25-29). Soffits too, are bedecked with floral and vegetal ornamentations in fresco (Figs. 24). On the north-eastern side a well still survives, though not functional now. The whole structure is decked and designed symmetrically.

The residences

Old residential buildings of Kūrri worth mention too. All are of chiseled and carved stone masonry, while doors are specimen of beautiful wood carving, although wear and tear of ages has engulfed their crispness. Column, beam and arch are combined in construction that plays the role of constructive and decorative elements. Most of the doorways, though having column and beam style are provided with arched entrances, projected from the doors (Fig. 30).



Fig. 30 - Entrance gate of a house known as *Hindū'un ka chubāra*.

Arches used are multi-foiled, with wedge-shaped stones laid in radiating manner. The wedge of the key stones is holding structures for more than a century. A residents of a house, known as *Hindū'un ka chubāra*³³, told that upper storey of it was demolished in the earthquake of 1935. It means the house is more than a hundred years old. Its wooden doors are delicately carved in geometric and floral patterns. Frame of the entrance door has three strips of carving, bearing separate designs, composed of leaves and flowers (Figs. 30-32). While the inner door of the main room called *dālān*³⁴ is intricately carved, having geometric, floral and vegetal patterns, (Figs. 33-36).

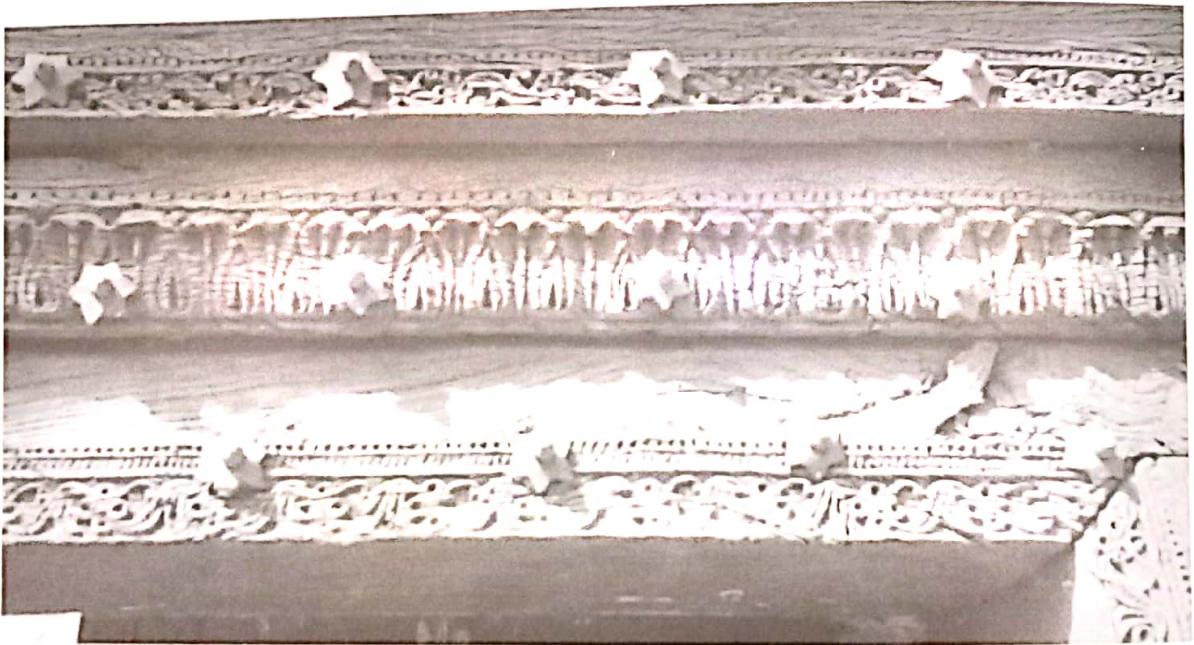


Fig. 31 – Details of Fig. 30.

The most common design of the structures of Kūrri is a combination of pointed arch, attached with foliated arch, rectangular panels and frames, whether the structures are wooden, of stone or of brick masonry. Designs of the door also follow the same pattern. Most unusual design is on the underside of the spandrels that form a sort of architectural representation,

³³ *Hindū'un ka chubāra* means house of a Hindu

³⁴ A sort of lounge

with huge double corbelled arches having thick pillars and smaller arched entrances below. A plant is also growing through pillars, and huge bells or cages hanging in the centre of the arches. All this is carved on the panel underneath the spandrels of the *dālān* door (Figs. 33-35). Upper most part of it have three sections with perfect geometric patterns, the central concentric to twelve-petal flower and the side ones on six pointed star. It is exactly similar to the Islamic designs and carvings. Frame of the door is huge and has marvelous variety of intricately carved beautiful designs that bespeak the skill of their creators. Even nail-heads that join thick pieces of wood are star shaped, not simple nails, called in the native dialect as *Kuka*.



Fig. 32 – Details of the door of another residence.

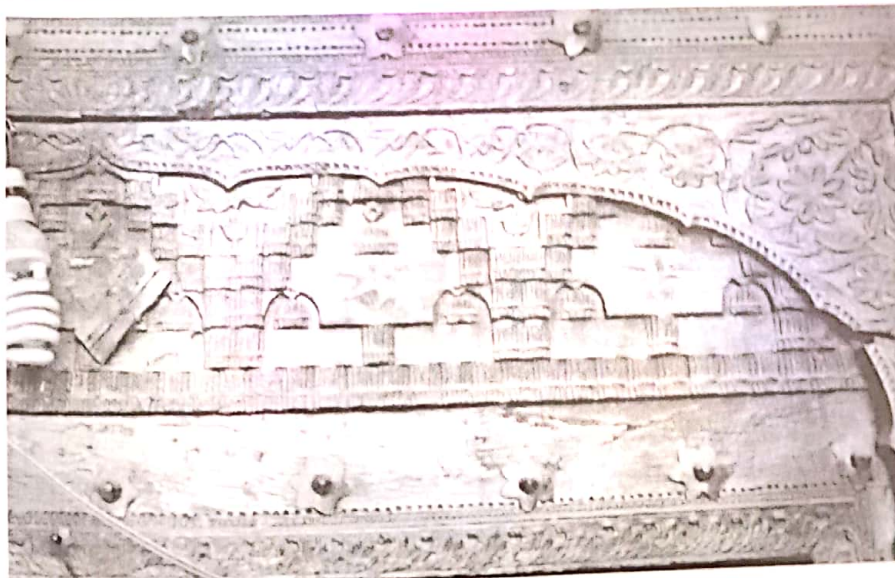
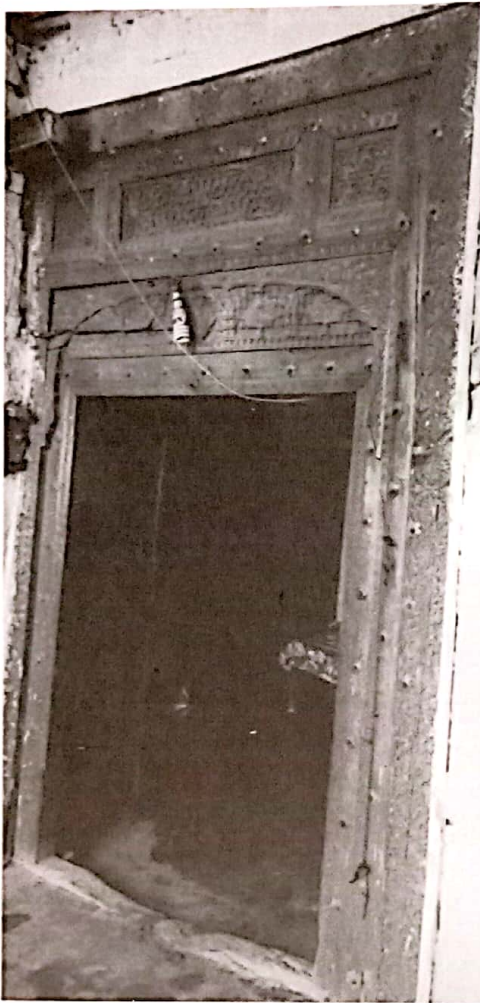
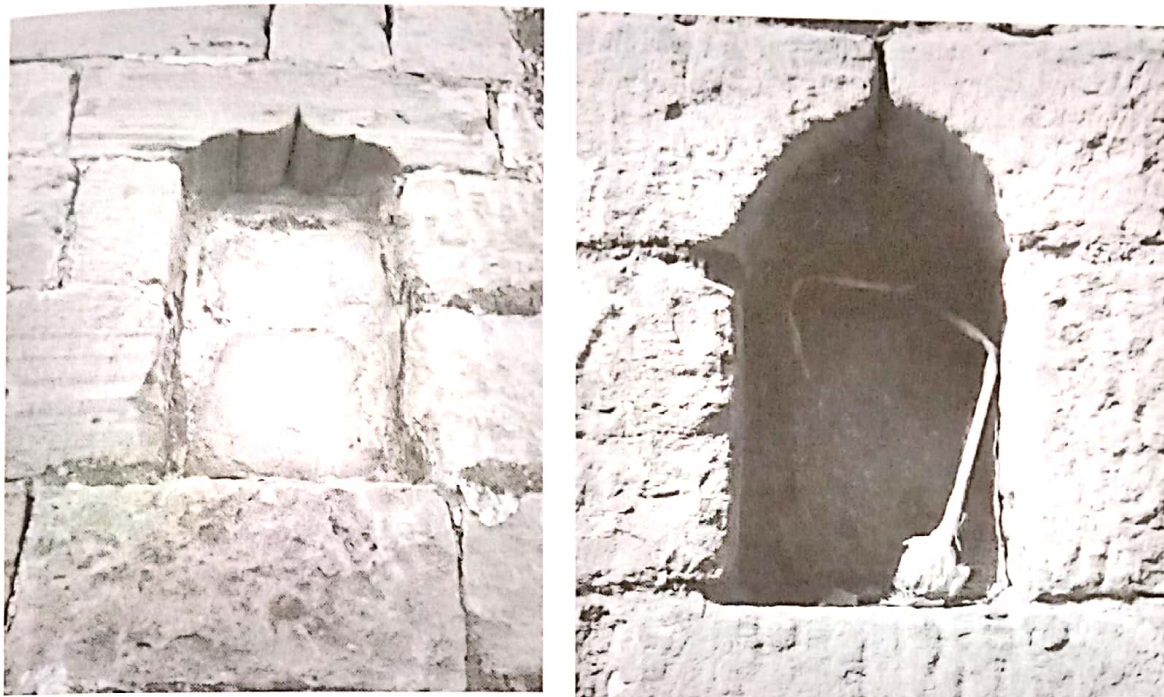


Fig. 33 - Pattern of the arch on the door of a *dālān* (see Fig. 34).



Figs. 34-35 - Dhe door of a *dālān* (see Fig. 34), and details of the upper panel.





Figs. 36-37 - Niches at the entrances of houses, shaped with skillfully chiseled stone.

Old residential buildings and wells are in stone masonry, bricked symmetrically in circular structures of wells, horizontals of walls and diagonals in radiating arches. Façade of every house has a small niche on each side of the entrance door, usually covered with a single stone, beautifully chiseled like the finial of a dome (Figs. 36-37). It was used to keep *dīya*³⁵ in it that was lit at night. Moreover, houses were faced *dakhan-uttar* that is south-north, which is align to the natural flow of wind that keep these structures airy, fresh and cool, a device frequent in ancient buildings of this region but now, long forgotten. Doors in the ancient structures were faced *dakhan* that is south and ventilators on *uttar* that is northern side. It is closer to nature but modern builders have not concentrated on these facts.

It is said that the craftsmen at Kūrri were all Muslims and business was in the hands of Hindus. The remaining old buildings signify expertise of craftsmen not only in the domain of construction but in their aesthetics as well. It is amazing that symmetry is maintained in designs whether

³⁵ *Dīya* is an oil lamp, made up of baked clay.

working in stone, on wood or at bricks. It is well said that artefacts provide firsthand knowledge of past, as John Ruskin (1877) says about Venice and its history:

Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts- the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others; but of the three, only quite trustworthy is the last.

[St. Mark's Rest: History of Venice]

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