



CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF PUNJAB MUSEUM

AN INTRODUCTION

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The Malwa region of Punjab—the plains lying between the rivers Sutlej and the Ghaggar—has a long and rich history. On the basis of archaeological excavations, the history of the region can be traced back to the Harappan period, i.e., more than four millenniums. But these traces of its history are fast falling prey to the unplanned development and avarice of the greedy people for land.

Although life styles have always been in a flux, the speed of change has accelerated during recent times. Old life styles are vanishing faster and faster. The artefacts, tools, vessels, people used a few decades back are rarely seen now. Although the change cannot be halted, a record of these life styles and specimens of objects must be preserved for future generations.



Keeping in view the significance of preserving the material remains of the past, Prof. (Dr.) Jai Rup Singh, the Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Punjab decided to establish a museum in the university to preserve the rich history and culture of the region. The main purpose of this museum is to 'acquire, conserve, research, communicate and exhibit, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.'

The CUPB Museum is housed in the Hall No. 1 of the Academic Block of the university, measuring 91 X 73.25 feet, covering a floor area of about 6600 square feet. The collection is organized in a number of sections, each dealing with a specific theme.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SECTION

The Malwa region of Punjab was inhabited as early as the Harappan period, i.e., in the third millennium BCE, as is attested by numerous archaeological mounds in the region. The site of Harappa itself is situated just 200 km east of Bathinda. Unfortunately, but for a few mounds like those at Ropar (now Rupnagar, 170 km northeast of Bathinda, Sanghol (155 km northeast of Bathinda), and Dhalewan (65 km east of Bathinda), none has so far been systematically excavated. Occasional diggings by local inhabitants for foundations or just for clay have brought to light valuable artefacts, showing how rich the artistic traditions of the region have been. The tenth century Vishnu sculpture accidentally dug from the mound at Janer (80 km north of Bathinda) is a breathtaking piece of art. Systematic excavations of more sites can throw valuable light on the early history of the region. But the recent urban sprawling is fast decimating these traces of history. The archaeological mound at Sunet (near Ludhiana) has already been built over. The mound at Hathur (District Ludhiana) has been sold as plots. The CUPB Museum has made an attempt to preserve some artefacts discovered from the following archaeological sites:



Terracotta Bangles and other objects from Kali Bangan

Kali Bangan (District Hanumangarh, Rajasthan), a town located 85 km southwest of Bathinda, although not a part of Malwa, is not far away from it. Its location on the southern bank of the Ghaggar River (a far greater river at that time) attracted people even before the Harappans (more than five millenniums ago) to select it for their settlement. The pre-historical and non-Aryan

character of the objects found from Kali Bangan was first identified by the Italian Indologist and Linguist Luigi Pio Tessitori (1887-1919) at this site. This led, although half a century later, the Archaeological Survey of India to carry out excavations at Kali Bangan for 9 successive sessions (1960-69) which proved that Kalibangan was a major provincial capital of the Indus Valley Civilization (later rechristened as the Harappan Civilization).

The artefacts from Kali Bangan displayed in the CUPB Museum, collected by the Vice-Chancellor himself during his visit, comprise terracotta bangles, pieces of perforated jars, numerous sherds, a handle of some terracotta vessel, etc.



Harappan Archaeological Objects found from Raja Sirkap

Raja Sirkap Situated some 3 km SE of Faridkot (55 km north of Bathinda), behind the now defunct Sugar Mill, only a small part of the mound is extant now. According to the *Annual Report of Indian Archaeology (1958-59)*, pottery representing the dish and perforated jar, triangular terracotta cakes and steatite disc beads, all recalling the Harappa tradition have been found here. The pottery bears geometrical patterns and festoons having affinity with those occurring on the vessels from Rang Mahal, a site on the dry bed of Ghaggar, 2 km north of Suratgarh in Rajasthan. Any avid researcher can still find much pottery on the site.

Maximum number of artefacts displayed in the CUPB Museum is from this site. These include pottery, two sets of grinding stones, a terracotta scrubber, a terracotta ball, two stone balls of different sizes, etc.

Bhana (50 km north of Bathinda), the mound near the village has been leveled. Still some objects are recovered from here and there. The terracotta tumbler and a small pitcher in the museum is from this site.



Medieval Pottery from village Bhana

Marahar (70 km northwest of Bathinda), the mound near the village has also been leveled and ploughed. The sand has been heaped at one edge of the mound. From this disturbed mound were found numerous terracotta and agate beads. All these artefacts and those from Bhana and Raja Sirkap were personally collected by the author.



Harappan Terracotta, agate, and ivory beads, and other objects from Marahar

Dhalewan is one of the 25 sites of early, mature and late-Harappans in the area of Mansa, explored by the renowned archaeologist Dr. Jagatpati Joshi in 1984. These mounds indicated in this region the former existence of some river, may be a branch of Ghaggar.

Of these 25 sites, only one at Dhalewan was excavated in 2002 by the Archaeological Survey of India which revealed the well-known grid-plan of the Harappan towns. It also provided evidence that it was inhabited during the

Kushan and Gupta periods also. The habitat was fortified with a six-metre broad wall.

The exhibits from the site, again from the personal collection of the Vice-Chancellor, mostly comprise lumps of slag, and animal remains. Through the analysis of such faunal remains, one can address the questions pertaining to four major topics: pre-historic subsistence, paleo-environmental conditions, processes of animal domestication, and seasons of occupation.



Grinding Stone and a terracotta vessel from Lakhmirwala

Lakhmirwala (60 km south-west of Bathinda) is another significant early Harappan archaeological site which can shed a lot of light on the transition to the mature phase of the Harappan civilization in the region (or conversely on antecedents to the mature phase).

This site spread over 22 hectare is in the territory mentioned as 'Harappan eastern domain' by the anthropological archaeologist Gregory Possehl (1941-2011) and Dr. Jane McIntosh of the Cambridge University. In this eastern domain, very size of Lakhmirwala mound makes it as important as Farmana (190 km southwest of BTI), and the second only to Rakhigarhi (150 km southwest of BTI). Unfortunately, most of the sites identified in past decades but still unexcavated, are not protected and are likely to disappear at any time. So whatever can be preserved from these archaeological mounds will serve as valuable source for writing the ancient history of the region.

HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURAL REMAINS OF BATHINDA

Today Bathinda is the fifth biggest city of Punjab. Not only large in size, it has a long history dating back to at least two millenniums.



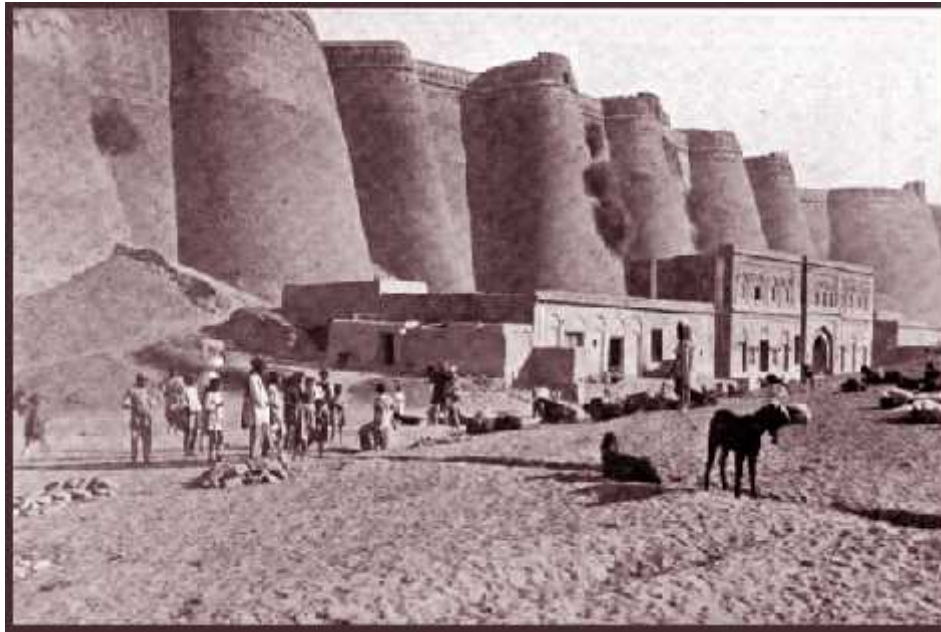
Main Gate of the Bathinda Fort

Some trial diggings in the historical fort in 1954-55 by the ASI, showed that even up to the depth of 50 feet, natural soil was not reached. On the basis of the pottery recovered from the excavation the ASI reached the conclusion that the site went back to the early medieval times (circa 12th-13th centuries). But the large sized bricks (14 X 9 X 2.5 in), lying in and around the Bathinda fort prove greater antiquity of the site (one such brick is displayed in the museum). The excavations also revealed a mud-brick wall with a burnt brick revetment in the lower levels.

The second major section of the CUPB Museum documents the history of the city of Bathinda through photographs displayed on the western and northern walls. The first picture shows a 10th century inscription (now in Lahore Museum) discovered more than a century back from the thirteenth century tomb of Haji Ratan. The partially legible text of the inscription gives the erstwhile name of the town as 'Tribhandanapura' and the name of the erstwhile ruler as 'Raja Shtrughanadeva'. During the medieval period, Bathinda comes into limelight due to its location on the route to Multan, via Abohar and Ajodhan (Pak Pattan). In chronicles of the Sultanate period it is mentioned under the name *Tabarhinda*. The monumental relic of the medieval period at Bathinda is its fort, situated in the heart of the city. This fort is one of the most significant historical monuments not only of Malwa region but the whole of Punjab.

Its architectural details, and present condition forms the subject matter of the other pictures on the western wall of the museum. During the late 18th

century the region of Bathinda had come under the control of the Patiala rulers who substantially repaired the fort. In fact, but for its ramparts, the other surviving architectural details date from this period, i.e., the 19th century.



Ramparts of the Bathinda Fort (c. 1906)

The thirteenth century tomb of Baba Haji Ratan in the city is another relic of the past which is the oldest surviving medieval tomb in the Indian Punjab. The name of Haji Ratan is known all over the Islamic world as he claimed having seen Prophet Muhammad (570-632) in person. As Haji Ratan lived during the early thirteenth century, his claim could be true only if he lived up to an improbable age of 700 years. There is no dearth of Muslims who believed in the claim. Sikh traditions further extend the age of Haji Ratan by narrating that Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) had also met him, making the Haji more than a thousand years old. The great antiquity of the tomb of Haji Ratan is proved by four Persian historical and one Arabic Quranic inscription which formerly existed on its walls. Fortunately, the author had photographed them. Two of the historical inscriptions dating from the reigns of the Mughal emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan, recorded the repairs of the tomb by Hindus named Bidey Chand son of Girdhar Lal Oppal, and Todar Mal, a testimony to the communal harmony in contrast to the popularly believed communal tension between Hindus and Muslims. These inscriptions are now preserved only in the photographs displayed on the northern wall of the CUPB Museum. During the period of Patiala rulers, the town attracted Marwari businessmen from Rajasthan who brought with them their life styles, customs as well as architectural style.



Persian inscription (not extant now) dated 1011 Hijri
(1602-03CE) on the tomb of Haji Ratan

The two havelis in the city, the haveli of Seth Bhana Mal, and the haveli of Seth Sohan Lal, are specimens of this style of architecture. The main characteristics of these havelis are—carved wooden door-frame, carved stone pillars, and wooden balconies at the upper storey, extending all along the façade, and supported on carved stone brackets. The CUPB Museum exhibits the beautiful details of these two as well as some other havelis in the city.



Haveli of Seth Bhana Mal, Bathinda



Haveli of Seth Sohan Lal, Bathinda

The late 19th century witnessed the coming of the railway in this region. With the railway also came some British officers. The Methodist church and the so-called Nach-Ghar (actually club) were built for them.

A huge water-tank was constructed by M/S Richardson & Cruddas of Bombay. In 1940, the Patiala rulers built the Rajindra College for the educational advancement of the region. The photographs of these structures, displayed in the CUPB Museum, bring alive the story of the period.



Methodist Church, Bathinda



Nach-Ghar, Bathinda

NUMSMATICS SECTION

Coins are a valuable primary source of history. Numerous medieval, British, and modern Indian coins and coins of other countries like UK, USA, Australia, Canada, The Netherlands, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Nepal, also form a part of the CUPB Museum collection.

The earliest Indian currency dates from the Mauryan period when punch-marked coins were in circulation. This currency actually had real value equal to the price of the metal. Gradually, casting metal into coins became the privilege of the ruler. Nobody else, howsoever powerful he may be could not issue coins in his name. The legends inscribed on coins have filled many gaps in Indian history. There are some ancient Kushana rulers whose names are known only from their coins. Up to medieval times, the intrinsic and extrinsic value of a coin was the same. What we use today is token currency.



Coins Cabinet in the Museum



Three coins of Muslim rulers of India

The history of the Indian rupee can be traced back to 15th century, when the first 'rupee' is believed to have been introduced by Sher Shah Suri (1486-1545), based on a ratio of 40 copper pieces (paise) per rupee. The origin of the word 'rupee' is from the Sanskrit word 'rupa' meaning 'silver'. The original rūpaya was a silver coin weighing 175 grains troy (about 11.34 gram).

The silver coin remained in use during the Mughal period as well as in British India. During the Mughal period, together with the silver Rupiya were issued gold coins called the *Mohur* weighing 169 grains and copper coins called *Dam*.

During British rule, and the first decade of independence, the rupee was subdivided into 16 annas. Each anna was subdivided into either 4 paisas or 12 pies. In 1957, decimalisation occurred and the rupee was divided into 100 Naye Paise (Hindi for *new paisas*). After a few years, the initial "Naye" was dropped.

For many years in the early and mid-20th century, the Indian rupee was the official currency in several areas like East Africa, Southern Arabia and the Persian Gulf, which were controlled by the British and governed from India.

PRE-MODERN LIFE STYLES SECTION

Life styles are always in a flux. However, the speed of change has accelerated during recent times. Old life styles are vanishing faster and faster. The artefacts people used a few decades back are disappearing. The earthen, brass, and copper vessels, paper-mache baskets, coiled baskets which were so commonly used just a few decades back are rarely seen now. Although the

change cannot be halted, a record of these life styles can be preserved for future generations.



Old Copper and Brass Utensils in the Museum

The CUPB Museum has made an attempt to preserve the specimens of such gradually disappearing artefacts. Most of the objects of this section were graciously donated by a private collector Mrs. Savita Goyal of Barnala. Ten almirahs in the museum display the old metallic vessels comprising tumblers, water pots, ewers, jugs, teapots, bowls, drinking vessels etc.

Also displayed in the museum are some handicrafts like coiled baskets or mats, and paper-mache baskets which were in common use up to a few decades back. Common household ladies were adept in preparing such objects of daily use.



A Coiled Basket

The museum also displays the popular spinning wheels around which so many Punjabi folk songs have been composed. Besides this some other artefacts related to the process of weaving cloth can also be seen.



Spinning Wheels

Besides these handicrafts, photographs of many other things of everyday use but artistically created, like embroidered cloths, vegetable-cutter etc. are displayed in the museum. Also included in the exhibition are some hand-tools.

HISTORY OF THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF PUNJAB

The Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, founded on 28th February 2009, has a history of its own. The campus where it is working now was originally a defunct Spinning Mill, virtually a jungle. How this desolate site was converted step by step into a state of the art educational centre, equipped with modern classrooms, laboratories, library, hostels, forms the subject matter of the first section of the Museum.

This photographic record so carefully maintained, forms valuable archive of the university. Select photographs from this archive are displayed on the southern wall. These pictures exhibited in pairs comparing the past and present of a specific part of the complex, narrate the story of the journey towards excellence.

Also exhibited in the museum are the models for the proposed campus of the university at the village Ghudda, submitted by various architectural studios. A look at these models can help the visitor to visualize what a wonder the university will be, when complete.



University Campus (2009)



Academic Block (2011)

All this is just a beginning. The collections in the museum are expected to grow richer as private collectors come forward and contribute to its development.



Administrative Block (2009)



Administrative Block (2011)



Traditional Tumblers of various sizes and shapes



Knitting Draw-string Frame



Central University of Punjab Museum