

LOST SETTLEMENT OF SIND: ARORE, THE FIRST MUSLIM CAPITAL IN THE INDO-PAK SUB-CONTINENT

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In this paper an attempt has been made to discuss the rise and fall of the great city of Arore and find causes of its decay which ultimately turned it into ruins.

Arore has been one of the most, or rather the most controversial place from politico-historical point of view in Sind. No place has altered the course of history of Sind as this one. It was the capital of Sind when Mohammad Bin Qasim came from Arabia, being the first Muslim ever to defeat, the Hindu Raja Dahar in 712 A.D. and thus established Muslim rule for the first time in the part of region generally known the Indian sub-continent. And thus 'Sind' came to be known as Gateway of Islam to India.

This settlement was situated on Rohri Hills on the left bank of the river Indus, 4 miles east of the present town of Rohri and 7 miles east of the present city of Sukkur (on the opposite side of the river). Surprisingly the settlement still exists in the form of a small village of about 40 to 50 houses with the same name of Arore. The remnants of ruined and completely dilapidated fort still exist. Some signs of the base of the main gate are also visible. A very small part of the minaret-like wall is also there which, according to some historians is remnant of a mosque built by Muhammed Bin Qasim.

The Name of the Settlement: Many names similar to one another, such as Al-Rore, Alore, Arore and Arore are found in historical literature which probably all refer to one and the same place Arore. Ibne-Haukal, the famous historian has mentioned Al-Rore in Arabic script. Shamusddin Qureshi discussing this in details says that its letter "J" is considered silent in الرور then it can be pronounced as ارور or simply Arore. This name Arore was the last prevalent name but during its usage over the centuries in Sindhi language it has come to be pronounced as Arore ارور and as such this continues to remain so till to-day. ¹) However in its transliteration in English it is written as Arore. Qureshi further says 'Ibne Haukal's location of Al-Rore in his map coincides with the present location of the ruins of Arore. Ibne Haukal's Al-Rore also sounds familiar with Alore. Alore, according to Chachnama, was the capital

of Sind during the rule of Rai Dynasty and it coincides with the location of present ruins of Arore. 2) It can, therefore, be concluded that the location of Alrore, the capital of Sind during Rai Dynasty of Brahmin period, is one and the same place which has been given these somewhat different names in the long period of history.

Antiquity: This city was contemporary of Inderparista (Delhi), Pataliputra (Patna) and Ayudhia (Oudh). 3) During the Ramayana period, Sind was the only country which disintegrated into 4 parts at the time of invasion of Greeks but it was united again by the Rai Dynasty. 4) It is, therefore, possible that Arore was the capital of this region during Ramayana period. 5) After the Ramayana period this city was ruled and developed in the year 1100 B.C by the sons of Raja Balaka of Syndhia who belonged to the Soorajvansi Rajputs. (6 Rajputs had two branches known as Soorajvansi and Chander-vansi. The Soorajvansis were also called Arorevansis because of their connection with Arore. 7) Like the other cities of Aryavart, this city was also very rich. In the hills surrounding the city there were gold and silver mines. Huan Tang named this city as 'Peshan Yucholo' and other historians too have described this city as very rich and prosperous and called it Rore Yur or Roranagar. 8)

After the decline of Rajput rule, Sind was occupied by Iranians from whom Alexander the Great, took its control. Greeks have mentioned Sind as Moseqanis. They have not mentioned the name of capital though they have mentioned that the capital is situated in the region of Sind which begins below Uch in Punjab frontier and then spreads to entire northern Sind. 9) It is, therefore, presumed that the capital would have been Arore. It is confirmed by Lambrik also. He says that there can be no doubt that the capital of Moseqanis (Sind) of the Greek period is Arore. Greeks have also praised the economic richness and arts of the city. The city was full of palaces and gardens and it was so peaceful that there was hardly any court of law sitting there. People were brave, fearless and great craftsman. 11

The Arore region which is historically referred as Northern Sind, was occupied by a tribe of Sathians around 140 B.C. At that time this region of Sind was known as 'Abhetia' and capital of this region was also known as Arore. 12) Then Sind came under the rule of Parthians and it is most probable that their capital too was Arore.

In the first half of the 1st Century A.D., Parthians lost north-western India to Maharaja Kaushik of Kushan Dynasty. During this period Sind's northern portion and the southern portion of the pre-

sent Punjab i.e: Bhawalpur were merged into a single province and the Viceroy of this province was living in Arore.

After the Kushan Dynasty, India came under the Guptas and it seems that in their times too it Arore occupied a position of great importance. Gupta Dynasty, had expanded its borders beyond the rivers of Sujota-Sindhu but it seems that they neither appointed any Viceroy in Sind nor they perpetuated their occupation and only received tax from the Raja of Arore. ¹³

In the year 6 A.D Sind was occupied by Iranians and from them the Rai Dynasty wrested power and started their rule over Sind. The Buddhist Raj Dynasty continued with Arore as their capital. The old region of Mosequanis, Sibi and Cutch were also under Arore. ¹⁴

After Rai Dynasty, Sind came under the rule of Hindu Brahmin Dynasty and Arore flourished as its capital. The second ruler of this Dynasty, Raja Dahar, was defeated by the invading Arab forces under Muhammed Bin Qasim and the era of Muslim rule began and thus Arore became the first capital of Muslims in the entire region of the sub-continent. It was during this period that the decline of Arore started. The reasons for the decline of Arore were not only socio-political but also natural hazards: *Arore's Geographical Conditions* During the reign of Rai Sahasi II of the Rai Dynasty, Arore faced a great famine and the people were not in a position to pay the taxes. Instead of tax, Rai Sahasi asked the people to put earth at the Arore Fort and five other forts to raise them up. It can, therefore, be inferred that Arore Fort was so old that its walls needed earth filling because the earth at the base of the fort had come up due to the weathering of the walls. This process of weathering and base filling takes quite a few hundred years. It can be thus said with fair amount of certainty that Arore Fort is about 2500 years old. ¹⁵

But it is surprising indeed that no detailed information is available about this city before the reign of Rai Sahasi. The information which is available, is of the reigns of Rai and Brahman dynasties, which speaks of the fact that this city had its grandeur since the days when this region was known as Mosequannes. Chachnama says 'this city is capital of Hind and Sind and is situated on the banks of Sehuan (Mehran) river. This city abounds in tall buildings, palaces, pastures, flowers, gardens, ponds and streams. In this grand city lived a Raja by the name of Raja Seharas who had abundant treasures including hidden ones. He was famous throughout the world and was known for his charity.' ¹⁶ This shows Arore was a place of great beauty and grandeur, and its residents were very prosperous.

Now a days this region comes under hot climate but in those days climate was definitely moderate. 'Chachnama' says that Raja Dahar used to live here for four months of the summer season and four months of the spring season, and for the four months of winter season he used to stay in Brahmanabad. ¹⁷ This shows that the climate in and around Arore was very enjoyable and invigorating. That's why this city from all aspects enjoyed fame throughout the world. This can be verified from the letter of Hajaj-Bin-Yousif to Muhammed-Bin-Qasim: 'The pillars to the rule of Hind and Sind, are Multan and Arore which are not only capitals but abound in treasures. If you capture them (Multan and Arore) it means you have captured Hind and Sind. ¹⁸ Chachnama also depicts Arore as the largest city in the region.

As late as in the reign of Mughol Emperor Akbar, Mir Masoom Bakhri wrote what may be called an obituary on Arore. He says in his book 'Tarikh-e-Masoomi' that Arore was a very big city on the banks of Mehran, which was full of palatial buildings, fruit orchards and streams and a great centre of culture. It had every thing which a resident or tourist can dream of. ¹⁹

The Decline of Arore: There are natural as well as socio-political causes which resulted in the ultimate ruin of the city. In fact after a few years of Arab rule, the process of decline of Arore started. As was the practice in those days, the cities and regions experiencing war and alien rule were deprived of their treasures, arts and crafts on one side and craftsmen, learned people and intellectuals on the other. This happened to Arore also. Top level men and material were sent to Basra and other Arab towns. But the real decline of the city started when Umar Bin Muhammed Bin Qasim was made Governor of Sind who built a new city Almansoorah and shifted the capital from Arore to it. This gave a very big jolt to Arore from socio-economic point of view. But there was more in store for it. In the 10th century A.D. the region suffered a terrible earthquake which changed the course of the river from Arore to Bakhar. Arore was no longer a commercial centre and people started moving out of the city which caused its decay. There are different opinions about the dates of the occurrence of earthquake such as 962 A.D (Bherumal Meherchand ²⁰ and 941 A.D. (Raverty ²¹), but all agree that it was in the 10th Century A.D. Thus the shifting of capital from Arore to Almansoorah ended its political importance and the shifting of the course of river ended its economic and commercial importance. ²² But surprisingly Arore kept on fighting for its survival for a pretty long

time. Mir Masoom Bakhari came to Arore and got repaired the mosque of Muhammed Bin Qasim outside the fort of Arore. ²³ This action of Mir Masoom Bakhari suggests that one mosque sufficed the then population of Arore.

The last blow to Arore was given by the Arghun ruler of Sind, Shah Beg, when during the period of turmoil in his days, he razed the Arore Fort to use its bricks to consolidate the Bakhar Fort. This he did to contain the uprising of Dharechas. With this Arore lost its defences and ultimately vanished.

Present Position of Arore: At the site of Arore now exists a village of 40 to 50 houses. Except for a few remnants still seen to confirm the existance of Arore it is completely ruined. One can still see bricks and fire-clay utensils littered all over the place. Alexander Burns wrote a small book in 1835 about the remnants and ruins of Arore. This book tempted Mir Rustam Khan to excavate the ruins in the hope of finding hidden treasures but he could not find any thing and ultimately gave it up. ²⁴ In the 1920s, Department of Archaeology started the excavation work at the site but soon it was stopped. Surprisingly till the Partition of India in 1947, Arore was a typical Indian one bazaar village. But now this one bazaar has also vanished. Now a days, villagers keep on plucking bricks from its remnants to make their houses and use its weathered earth as a fertilizer.

It is feared that in a few years time there will be left no trace of it to remind one of the grandeur that Arore was.

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