

MAPPING LAHORE TRACING HISTORIC GEOGRAPHY OF A CITY THROUGH MAPS

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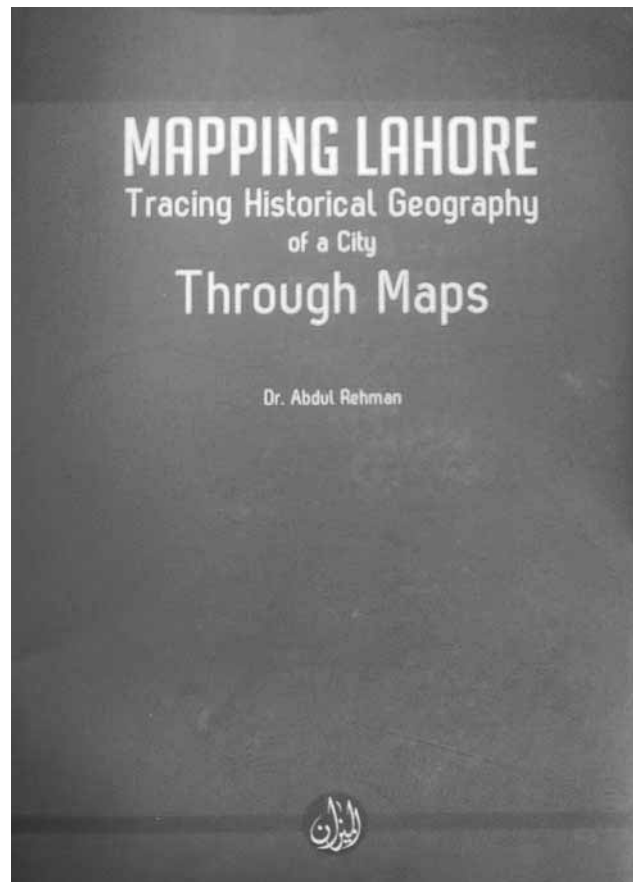
*Dr Abdul Rehman**

A Review by
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The city of Lahore having glorious historical background is acquainted with architectural legacy of the splendid cities built by the Mughals (1525-1749) and the British Colonialists (1849-1947). However, the city experienced unprecedented development after independence (1947). The city layout and its growth pattern, traced from Mughal Empire to Post-Independence era, is documented and narrated in a recently published book; 'Mapping Lahore; Tracing Historic Geography of a City through Maps' by Dr. Abdul Rehman, Professor, Department of Architecture at UET Lahore. The city of Lahore documented with merely textual evidences by historians, archaeologists and architects inspired the author to extend his research objectives towards tracing historical geography of Lahore, through maps, as a new direction for creating knowledge and understanding about Lahore. The author claims to have undertaken and introduced a new subject of urban historical geography, which is not well known as a subject in Pakistan.

The book comprises of six chapters. The opening chapter of the book links the historical city of gardens to various routes connecting the city. The book having historical narrative about geographical interventions of Lahore however lacks mention of archaeological evidences about origin of Lahore as a small settlement. The second chapter concisely documents historical context of Lahore and its spatial growth. The following chapters analyze early maps of Lahore and the detailed maps produced with the passage of time. A critical account of recently proposed planning and development maps of Lahore is included in the final chapter. The table of content lists titles of chapters; however including sub headings would better elaborate the core discussion and narratives of each chapter.

As the title of the book suggests, research findings of this book are based upon maps and sketches of great significance



which were produced during different eras such as pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence phase. The documented text is profusely illustrated with numerous maps and images which act as evidences for morphological analysis of growth pattern of the city of Lahore. The author mentions legendary architectural heritage buildings as threads that locate, describe and explain the layout plan of the city. Hindu, Mughal, Sikh and Colonial rulers together laid the religious topography of Lahore with several lasting architectural masterpieces in the form of mausoleums, tombs, shrines, mosques, temples, gurdwaras and churches of old English and Roman Byzantine style.

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The history of Lahore encompasses the Ghaznavid reign (1059-1186), Mughal empire (1525-1749), Sikh invasion (1749-1849), British rule (1849-1947) and Post-Independence period (1947 to onwards). For the very first time provincial divisions (subas) were done by Mughal Empire. Lahore became a 'suba' and remained a capital of the Mughal Empire for fourteen years from 1584 to 1598. During the reign of Shah Jehan it was entitled as the city of gardens since the Walled city was surrounded with suburbs of gardens. It was considered as the finest city of Mughal Empire in South Asia. The Sikh invasion brought the period of decline and destruction. However, a large number of gardens were built in the south and south east of walled city. British arrival in the sub-continent brought reforms, in the built environment. The provincial boundaries were redefined by the British. For administrative purposes Lahore acquired the status of the a capital city of Punjab province. Being acquainted with finest works of architecture during British Period, Lahore was endeavored with a new perspective of European influence in architecture and urban design. A city with a new flavor emerged in the south and south east of the Walled city. During this period surveys were conducted and maps of towns were drawn and many cities were documented for planning and administrative purposes. These maps also show that the old names of localities were changed or forgotten. The author in his interpretation of the relationship between architecture and physical planning of Lahore mentions the names of Patrick Gedders, Basil M. Sullivan, Bhai Ram Singh and L. Kipling as eminent figures who brought urban and architectural reforms in Lahore.

After independence in 1947, Lahore took a new phase of development which was deprived of effective management of land. Several new settlements sprang up in the outskirts of the city and were burdened by immigration and internal migration. The finest city of South Asia became a city with several problems caused by rapid growth in population and socio economic fluctuations. Urban problems such as congestion in central areas of the city with expanding markets and unprecedented suburban sprawl were experienced due to increasing population, aggravated traffic jams, inadequate infrastructure and industrial development. To counter the increasing pressure on housing and infrastructure, several master plans, structural plans and infrastructural development plans were prepared. These maps along with policies are discussed by the author with necessary measures that should be taken to achieve sustainable urban development. The author concludes with the following remarks; 'Cities flourish and decline and therefore, require a periodic review of their existing condition to cope up with the demands and challenges of the time' therefore 'the built environment must address

psychological, aesthetic, environmental, physical and social aspects of the masses'.

The book unveils layers of interesting historic facts and information found over the centuries regarding urban planning, history of growth pattern, configuration of roads as linking the city with its environs, formulation of policy guidelines and the role of institutions in development and improvement of the urban fabric of Lahore. There are compositional flaws in the book regarding alignment and adjustment of maps sizes and images. The book not only illustrates geographical expansion and transformation phases of Lahore but simultaneously draws another extensive research direction towards socio economic factors, cultural and political influences through interpreting the built environment under which Lahore experienced rapid urban growth.