

# RANI KOT FORT

By  
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Today there is serious controversy on the antiquity of Rani Kot fort and its builders. Who so ever built it and whenever they built it was never occupied. The map enclosed shows a small stream passing through its centre from the west to the east of it. It enters the fort at Mohan gate and exits through Sann gate. This simple unassuming stream turns into a mighty destructive channel much bigger than even Nara canal for 6-12 hours and 3-5 times in every century. It can even be more frequent and once in a decade. The Mohan river before entering the fort has catchment of about 32,000 acres. The fort it self has catchment area of about 13000. We have experience of 7 inches rain fall in Hyderabad with 18 hours on September 8, 2006. The possibility of 5 inches rainfall within a day once in 10 years exists in Rani Kot – Nawabshah zone. Even if half of this rain water flows down the Sann riverand would about by 9,375 acre feet. If this passes through the Mohan and Sann gates in 6 hours, the average discharge at Sann gate would be about 19,000 cusses and 13,500 at Mohan gate, but peak can be more than 40,000 cusses. Such rains would certainly breach both Mohan and Sann gates however strong and fort could not have been occupied even for more than a decade.

There is another evidence of its antiquity that the original construction was for bow and arrow warfare, later on modified for cross bow and finally circular bastions or towers were added for artillery fire. Later on probably in 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century, additions, and modifications were made for muskets. All these periodic changes in construction are visible at the site and easily recognised even by laymen. While adding these bastions, the later builders, used sand stone against lime stone in original walls. The two are visible to naked eye. Artillery guns were developed by Chinese but copied by Mongols and Timur (Mongol) used them in the last quarter of fourteenth century AD. Bahman dynasty of South India had then been using it about the same time and Babur used it in 1525/26 AD during the conquest of Delhi Sultanate from Lodhis. They were in common use since then and therefore bastions were added any time in or after the sixteenth century AD and before British conquest of Sindh in 1843 AD. Cross bow was used by Rajput soldiers even in Mughal era, but after 1700 AD they also used muskets. Thus modifications to fort for muskets belong to 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Of two forts inside the main Rani Kot fort, the lower one is called Miri and is a word used in Seistan for small fortress. It has nothing to do with Mirs of Sindh. Miri fort Landhis were used by Geological Survey of India from 1865 to 1879 and they may have put roof over the walls of Landhis probably already existing, but stone of Landhi walls stone is the same as of the original fort wall. Date of their construction therefore is doubtful. They must

have been there before the British, conquest as British had standardised on the designs of quarters for them and never used Sindhi Landhi type roofs in construction.

Rani Kot hills are 53- 65 million years old. Fossils found there in are: fish, and long fish but no mammals. Fossilised trees found in Rani Kot hills are 53-62 million years old, when it has tropical climate and Sindh in its movement along with Gandavaland towards Asia was close to equator with heavy rain and vast forests. The coal deposits of Lakra belong to the same period.

Rani Kot fort is being conserved now by Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation, but rules of conservation are not understood totally and are neglected. The original material used in the fort is dark brown hard lime stone. PIDC has used soft white Laki lime stone. Binding medium used is cement concrete, which has limited life of 100-150 years against thousands of years of lime plaster, which builders of Rani Kot fort had used. Lime plaster gains strength as time passes and ultimately turns into hard lime stone, while cement concrete keeps losing strength and turns into powder. There is such a contrast in two colours of original and repair work, that the latter appears to be like a patch of white cloth a fine coloured suit. It is very much desirable that proper conservation models replace this type of faulty work already executed and be handed over to appropriate organisation for execution and supervision, at cost of those who have made mockery of it.

Latest findings by archaeologist Mr. Shaikh Khursheed Hasan may also be noted that; tomb near the gate has similarly with mosque at Giri near Txila, built by Gaznavids of Lahore in 1050-1180 AD, shows that fort existed before those dates and also a grave inside the fort has lion, peacock and buffalo engraved on it. Lion was emblem of Seljuks (12-13<sup>th</sup> centuries), buffalo may have represented Sindhi buffalo breeders or Jats and peacock a symbol of local non-Muslims. This in brief reflects on antiquity of fort. Dr. G. Allana of Sindhology fame, said that Mughal coins were found from the fort. All these reflect on antiquity of fort.

Exploration of fort has to be under taken by archaeologists and without proving its antiquity UNESCO will not protect it as World Heritage, even though it may be world's largest fort. Pakistan Archaeologists are afraid to work specially in Thar and Kohitan deserts of Sindh, after murder of Mujamdar in 1938 AD. Archaeology Department of Kharipur University with help of some foreign archaeologists can be assigned the task of exploration.