



HUM 117

Pakistan Studies

Lecture 3

Introduction to Pakistan

Historical Background and Ancient Civilisations

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Lecture roadmap

Five segments

- 1. Geography and historical setting
- 2. Mehrgarh and the Indus Valley civilisation
- 3. Gandhara and Taxila
- 4. Islam, Muslim political traditions and the Mughal period
- 5. Colonial rule, Muslim political mobilisation and 1947

Core question

- How did the territory of present-day Pakistan develop as a zone of settlement, exchange and political interaction?
- How should ancient heritage and modern state formation be connected without treating them as the same historical process?

Learning outcomes

- Locate Pakistan within South Asia and explain the historical importance of the Indus system, mountain corridors and Arabian Sea.
- Distinguish Mehrgarh, the Indus Valley civilisation and Gandhara as different historical formations.
- Identify major political and cultural transitions from antiquity to the Mughal period.
- Explain the development of Muslim political mobilisation under colonial rule.
- Assess the creation of Pakistan in 1947 as the outcome of a long political process rather than a single event.

Key takeaway: The lecture links geography, civilisation, political history and state formation.

SECTION 1

Pakistan's geographical and historical setting

Locate Pakistan, explain the Indus system and connect geography with settlement, trade and strategic interaction.

Pakistan in its regional setting

Pakistan: geographic setting and selected historical sites



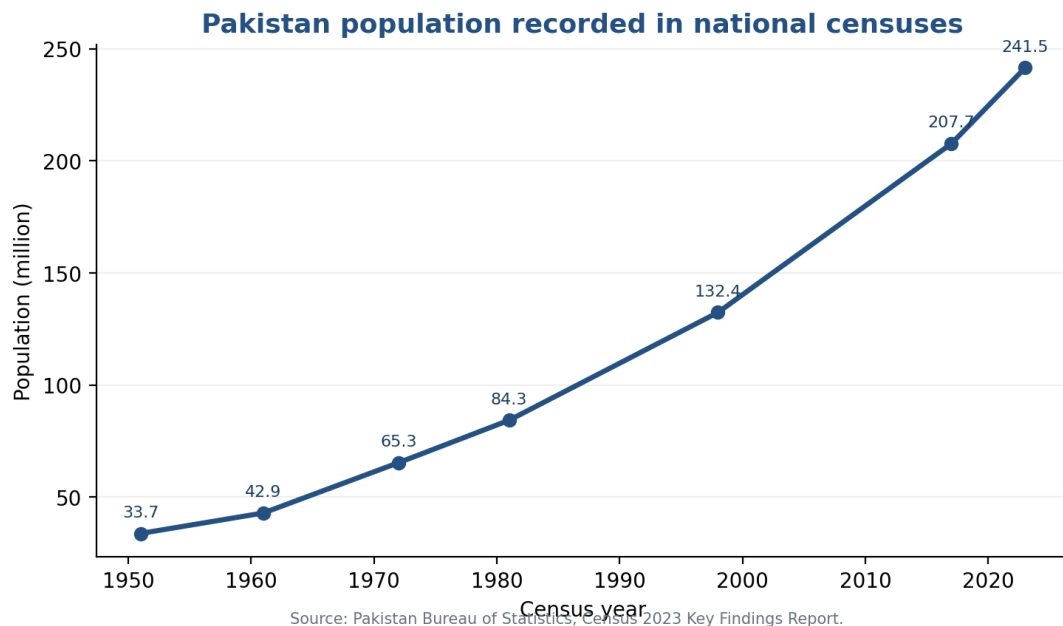
Schematic teaching map. River paths and site markers are simplified; not for boundary delimitation.

Geographic anchors

- South Asia, Central Asia, Middle East and Arabian Sea
- Borders: India, Afghanistan, Iran and China
- Indus basin as the main historical settlement zone
- Khyber and Bolan corridors as routes of movement
- Selected archaeological sites show long-term settlement and exchange

**2023 Census: 796,096 km²;
241,499,431 people; 1,046
km coastline.**

A long historical space, a modern state



Why begin before 1947?

- Pakistan became a state in 1947, but the territory contains evidence of human settlement extending back thousands of years.
- The 2023 Census records the modern population at 241.49 million.
- The historical task is to distinguish territorial heritage from the political history of the modern state.

Key takeaway: 1947 marks state creation, not the beginning of the territory's history.

Geography as a historical framework

Physical geography

- Indus and tributaries provide water and fertile alluvial soils.
- Mountain corridors connect the region with Central Asia.
- Arabian Sea links the Indus basin with maritime networks.
- Deserts, mountains, plains and coasts create varied local environments.

Historical consequences

- Agriculture and urban settlement
- Trade and movement
- Migration and cultural exchange
- Political competition and strategic interaction

Key takeaway: Geography helps explain both Pakistan's diversity and its repeated connections with surrounding regions.

Section 1 conclusion

Three points to retain

- Pakistan occupies a historically connected position between major regional zones.
- The Indus system supported settlement, agriculture, exchange and urban development.
- The territory's history predates 1947 by thousands of years.

Key takeaway: The physical geography of Pakistan provides a framework for understanding its civilisational and strategic history.

SECTION 2

Mehrgarh and the Indus Valley civilisation

Move from early settled life to mature urbanism, with emphasis on Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, sanitation, crafts and exchange.

Mehrgarh: early settled life

What the evidence shows

- Located in the Kachi Plain of Balochistan near the Bolan Pass.
- Evidence of early farming, settlement and craft production.
- Represents a long developmental process before mature urbanism.
- Archaeological evidence spans the Neolithic (New Stone Age) and later phases.

Why it matters for Pakistan Studies

- Shows that the region's history includes early experiments with settled life.
- Connects the history of Balochistan to the wider Indus cultural region.
- Provides context for later urban developments.

Verified location: 29°12'45"N, 67°40'15"E

The mature Indus urban tradition

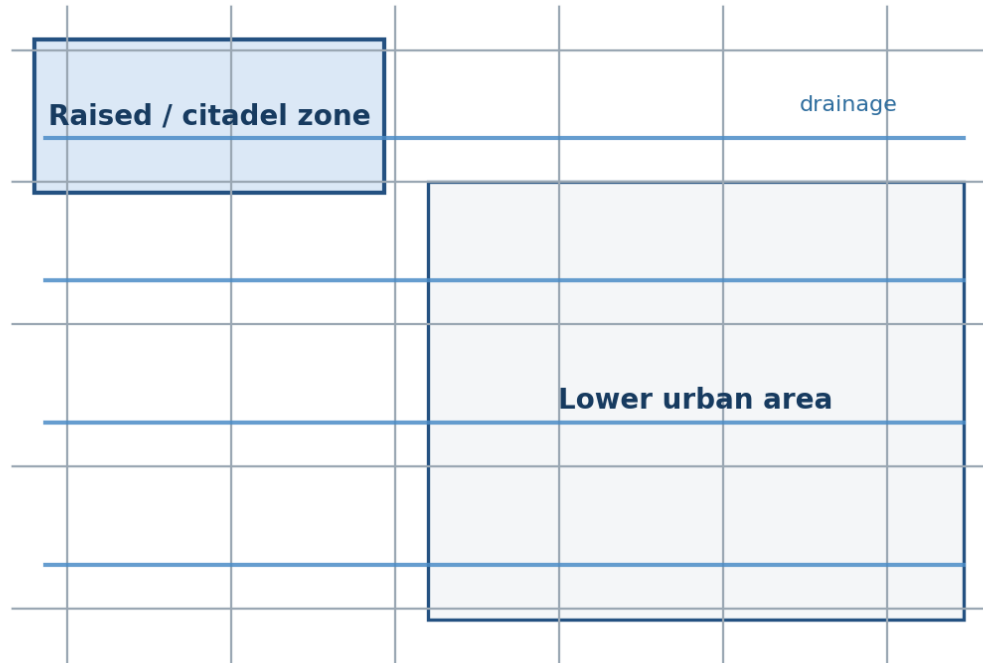
- The mature urban phase developed during the third millennium BCE (Before Common Era) i.e. 3000 BCE and 2000 BCE.
- Mohenjo-daro is one of the major urban sites of the civilisation.
- Planned streets, baked-brick construction, wells, drainage and public architecture indicate organised urban life.
- The evidence supports sophisticated civic organisation, while many questions about political authority remain unresolved.

UNESCO: Mohenjo-daro property = 240 hectares; only about one-third of the property has been excavated.

Key takeaway: Archaeology shows urban sophistication without providing a complete picture of political institutions.

Mohenjo-daro: urban planning as evidence

Schematic of urban organisation



Teaching diagram based on archaeological evidence from Mohenjo-daro; not a site plan.

Main points

- Street organisation
- Water access and wells
- Drainage and sanitation
- Raised and lower urban areas
- Public architecture
- Civic coordination

Harappa and wider exchange networks

Harappa

- Located in present-day Sahiwal District, Punjab.
- A major Indus urban site with a long archaeological sequence.
- Excavations began systematically in the early twentieth century.
- Its location near the Ravi placed it within a productive agricultural landscape.

Beyond the Indus basin

- Archaeological evidence indicates contact with regions to the west.
- Crafts, materials and seals indicate long-distance interaction.
- Ancient Indus communities were part of wider economic and cultural systems.

Harappa: 30°06'N, 72°08'E in UNESCO's tentative-list record.

Explaining transformation,

The evidence supports a long process of regional change.

- Climate variability is one factor discussed in scholarship.
- River-course changes and changing water availability are relevant.
- Ecological pressures and settlement reorganisation matter.
- Changes in trade networks and social organisation also receive attention.
- The evidence does not justify reducing the transformation to one cause.

Key takeaway: Good historical explanation distinguishes established evidence from unresolved scholarly debate.

Section 2 conclusion

- Mehrgarh demonstrates early settled life and agricultural development.
- Mohenjo-daro and Harappa demonstrate mature urban organisation.
- Indus communities participated in wider networks of exchange.
- Archaeological evidence is substantial but incomplete, so claims about political structures require caution.

Key takeaway: The Indus civilisation is a central part of Pakistan's ancient heritage because of its urban, technological and exchange networks.

SECTION 3

Gandhara, Taxila and the cultural crossroads

Explain Gandhara as a historical region and Taxila as a centre of learning, trade and cultural exchange.

Gandhara: a cultural crossroads

- Gandhara was a historical cultural region centred broadly on parts of present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and adjacent areas.
- Its position between South Asia, Central Asia and the Iranian world encouraged sustained interaction.
- Different political powers influenced the region at different times.
- The result was a layered cultural history rather than a single, uniform tradition.

Analytical idea **Pakistan's territory has repeatedly functioned as a bridge between cultural zones.**

Taxila: urban evolution and learning

UNESCO evidence

- Serial archaeological site including Saraikala, Bhir, Sirkap and Sirsukh.
- Located on a branch of the Silk Roads linking China with the West.
- Influenced by Persian, Greek and Central Asian traditions.
- Important Buddhist centre of learning from the 5th century BCE to the 2nd century CE.

The Focus should be on

- Urban change across successive settlements
- Trade routes as channels of cultural exchange
- Interaction between local and external traditions
- Religion, learning and commerce operating together

Shahbazgarhi: writing, authority and routes

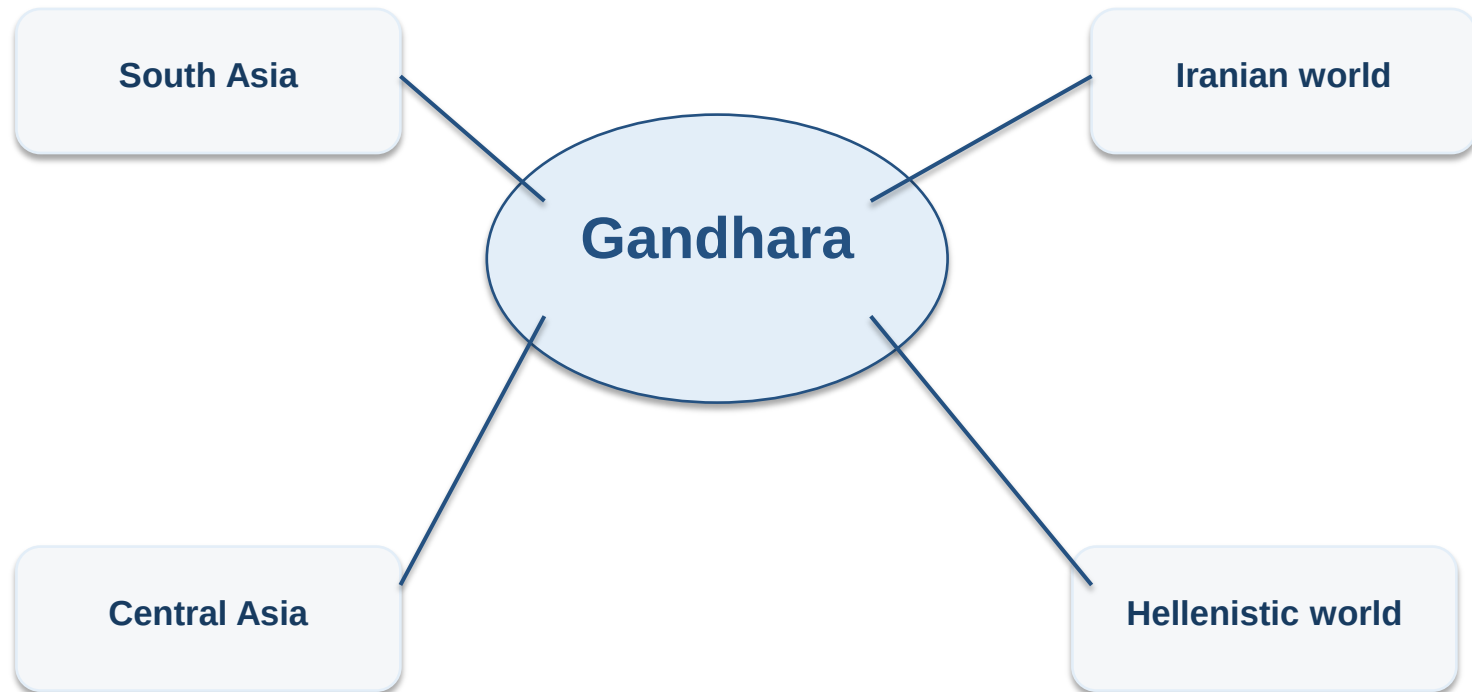
The rock edicts

- Fourteen edicts associated with Mauryan emperor Ashoka.
- Date to the third century BCE.
- Written in Kharosthi script from right to left.
- UNESCO describes them as the earliest irrefutable evidence of writing in South Asia.

Why the location matters

- Situated beside an ancient route through the Peshawar Valley.
- Shahbazgarhi was located near important ancient routes linking the Peshawar Valley with the wider regions of Gandhara, Swat, the northern valleys and Taxila.
- Political authority, literacy, religion and trade intersected at the site.

Gandharan culture: interaction and adaptation



Cultural synthesis emerged through contact, adaptation and local practice.

Section 3 conclusion

- Gandhara demonstrates sustained interaction across South Asia, Central Asia and the Iranian world.
- Taxila shows how trade, learning and urban development were connected.
- Shahbazgarhi demonstrates the interaction of political authority, writing, religion and routes.
- Gandharan heritage should be presented as part of Pakistan's broader civilisational inheritance without projecting the modern nation backwards onto ancient societies.

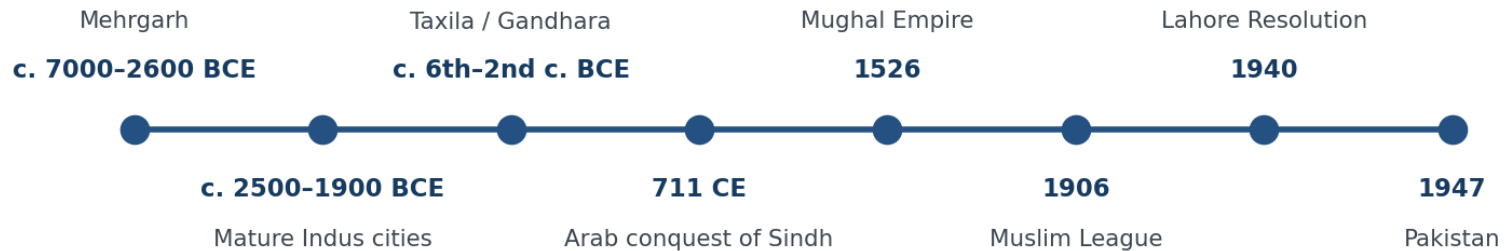
Key takeaway: The strongest Pakistan Studies argument is one of historical continuity of place and interaction, not a claim that ancient societies were identical to the modern state.

SECTION 4

Islam, Muslim political traditions and the Mughal period

Trace the development of Muslim political and cultural influence across several centuries.

From early Muslim rule to the Mughal period



Key dates

- 711 CE: Muhammad bin Qasim's campaign in Sindh
- Early 13th century: Delhi Sultanate
- 1526: Babur establishes Mughal rule after the First Battle of Panipat
- 1707: death of Aurangzeb and a major transition in Mughal history

Muslim political influence was regionally varied

Political history

- Sindh experienced early Muslim political rule.
- The Delhi Sultanate connected large parts of northern South Asia.
- Mughal institutions expanded across much of the region.
- The territories of present-day Pakistan followed different political trajectories.

Social and cultural history

- Sufi networks
- Mosques and shrines
- Scholarship and learning
- Persianate court culture
- Literature and local languages

Key takeaway: Islamic history in the region was political, social and cultural, and it developed over centuries.

Mughal institutions and cultural legacies

- Administrative and revenue institutions shaped agrarian governance.
- Persianate court culture influenced administration, literature and elite life.
- Lahore became an important imperial city.
- Architecture, gardens and urban development remain visible in Pakistan's heritage.
- Religious and cultural networks continued to interact with local traditions.

Lahore Fort

Imperial architecture

Shalimar Gardens

Garden and hydraulic design

Multan

Shrine and Sufi traditions

Section 4 conclusion

- Muslim political influence developed through multiple routes and over several centuries.
- Mughal rule left institutional, architectural, literary and urban legacies.
- Sufi and scholarly networks contributed to social and cultural interaction.
- The region remained religiously and culturally diverse throughout these periods.

Key takeaway: The Muslim heritage of present-day Pakistan is both political and cultural, and it forms part of the historical background to later Muslim political mobilisation.

SECTION 5

Colonial rule, Muslim political mobilisation and 1947

Move from British expansion to Muslim political organisation, the Lahore Resolution, partition and state formation.

Colonial expansion and political change

- British power expanded across the subcontinent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
- Sindh was annexed in 1843 and Punjab in 1849.
- The 1857 uprising was followed by the transfer of power from the East India Company to the British Crown.
- Colonial rule introduced new administrative, military, economic and constitutional structures.
- These changes altered the political environment in which Muslim political demands developed.

1843 Sindh annexed

1849 Punjab annexed

1857 Uprising

From political representation to Muslim mobilisation

- The All-India Muslim League was founded at Dhaka in 1906.
- Muslim political demands developed around representation, constitutional reform and provincial autonomy.
- Muhammad Ali Jinnah became the central political leader of the Muslim League.
- The political debate increasingly focused on the future constitutional position of Muslims in a united India.
- The process was gradual, involving changing demands and political negotiations.

1906



Muslim League

1930



Allahabad Address

1937



Provincial politics

1940



Lahore Resolution

The Lahore Resolution, 23 March 1940

What the resolution said

- Muslim-majority areas in the north-western and eastern zones were to be grouped into “Independent States”.
- Constituent units were described as autonomous and sovereign.
- The resolution demanded safeguards for religious, cultural, economic and political rights of minorities.
- Its wording did not set out the exact constitutional form of Pakistan as it emerged in 1947.

Teaching caution: explain the resolution on its own terms, then explain how its political meaning evolved between 1940 and 1947.

1947: independence and state formation

10 Aug

First Constituent Assembly session

11 Aug

Jinnah elected President

14 Aug

Transfer of power

15 Aug

Jinnah sworn in as Governor-General

Pakistan inherited major institutional and humanitarian challenges after partition.

The first challenge: turning independence into a functioning state

Immediate difficulties

- Large-scale refugee movements
- Administrative shortages
- Economic disruption
- Boundary disputes
- Kashmir conflict

Institution-building

- Constituent Assembly
- Government departments
- Diplomatic representation
- Constitution-making
- Integration of diverse territories

Key takeaway: Pakistan's early history combines severe constraints with rapid institution-building after independence.

Section 5 conclusion

- Colonial rule transformed the political and institutional environment of South Asia.
- Muslim political mobilisation developed over decades rather than appearing suddenly in 1940.
- The Lahore Resolution was a major political turning point, while its constitutional wording requires careful historical reading.
- Pakistan emerged in August 1947 amid major humanitarian, economic and institutional challenges.

Key takeaway: Pakistan's creation is best understood as a long political process shaped by colonial rule, Muslim mobilisation, constitutional disputes and decolonisation.

Lecture synthesis

Five layers of understanding

- 1 Geography** Indus basin, mountains, passes and Arabian Sea
- 2 Ancient settlement** Mehrgarh, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro
- 3 Cultural crossroads** Gandhara, Taxila and long-distance exchange
- 4 Muslim historical experience** Political rule, Sufism, scholarship and Mughal institutions
- 5 Modern state formation** Colonial rule, Muslim mobilisation and independence in 1947

Discussion Points

Three questions

1. How did the Indus system shape settlement and political interaction?
2. What does Gandhara tell us about cultural exchange in the territory of present-day Pakistan?
3. Why is it important to distinguish ancient civilisational heritage from the political history of the modern state?

Key takeaway: Use the discussion to connect evidence from archaeology with the political history of modern Pakistan.

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