

King Porus - Raja Paurava

Written by W.J.Pais

King Porus (from [Latin](#) Pōrus from [Greek](#) Πῶρος from [Sanskrit](#) ; [Sanskrit](#) : puru/purushottama ; **Raja** ;

Puru ;

also

Rai Por ;

Raja Paurava

; or Parvatka) was the King of

[Paurava](#)

, an ancient state within the territory of

[Punjab](#)

located between the

[Jhelum](#)

and the

[Chenab](#)

(in Greek, the Hydaspes and the Acesines) rivers, and later of dominions extending to the

[Beas](#)

(in Greek, the Hyphasis).

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Its capital may have been near the current city of

[Lahore](#)

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Porus fought

[Alexander the Great](#)

in the

[Battle of the Hydaspes River](#)

in 326 BC.

King Porus was said to be "5 cubits tall", which could mean either 2.3 m (7½ ft) assuming an 18-inch [cubit](#) , or 1.8 m (6 ft) if a 14-inch [Macedonian cubit](#) was meant.

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King Porus seems to have held the position of a Hellenistic [satrap](#) for several years after Alexander's departure. He is first mentioned as satrap of the area of the [Hydaspes](#) in the text of the [Partition of Babylon](#) on 323 BC. His position was confirmed again in 321 BC at the [Partition of Triparadisus](#).

After his assassination, his son [Malayketu](#) ascended the throne with the help of Eudemus. However, Malayketu was killed in the [Battle of Gabiene](#) in 316 BC.

In 44 CE, [Taxila](#) was visited by a Greek philosopher named Apollonius. The philosopher's account (kept by his diarist) tells us of two temples, one outside the city walls and the other by the main street leading to the king's palace. Both temples had large copper plate murals adorning their walls. The murals depicted scenes of battle from the struggle that had taken place on the banks of the Jhelum River three hundred and sixty-seven years earlier.

The account marvels at the finesse of the renditions: the colours and the forms were as though one were watching a real scene frozen in time. The murals in both the temples depicted Raja Paurava in defeat. The account goes on to tell us that these murals were commissioned by Raja Paurava when news of the death of Alexander arrived in Taxila. Consider: Alexander was dead in distant Babylon, his Greek garrisons in the Sindhu Valley had deserted and Paurava was now the unquestioned master of this country. As sole sovereign, he could have ordered the murals to turn history around and depict him in glorious victory and Alexander in abject and shameful defeat.

But the Punjabi king was not just great in physical stature; he possessed also a soaring spirit and largesse of the heart. The king ordered the murals, so it is recorded by Apollonius' diarist, in order not only to acknowledge his friendship with Alexander, but also to preserve history as it had actually unfolded. In his wisdom the king knew that the creative passage of time was

bound to alter history.

When the murals were put up, Taxila was what we today know as the [Bhir Mound](#) . Two hundred years later, the Indo-Greeks shifted it to the remains we today call

[Sirkap](#)

. It is evident that the murals were admired to be moved to the new city. In the subsequent two hundred odd years the city was rebuilt several times as the various cultural layers show. Each time the murals were safely removed to a new site or they would not have survived three and a half centuries. Finally, in 25 CE Taxila was levelled by a severe earthquake. And when nineteen years later Apollonius arrived, the city was being rebuilt under a Parthian king and the murals had faithfully been reinstalled at the brand new temples.

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