In 1990, before the internet made planning easy, I spent some time in Pakistan, first in Sind Province and then in Punjab. I made notes and pictures and the below are retyped notes and retaken pictures and I have added hyperlinks and updates in [...]. I had been the coordinator for Pakistan (and South Asia) for Amnesty International (CSES) for a while and was eager to see what the country looked like and what its people thought. Benazir Bhutto had been the Prime Minister since 1988 but would lose in October 1990. She would again become the PM in 1993 and, after a very tumultuous political life, be assassinated in 2007.

**21 May – Karachi and Thatta**

A lovely day! I don’t think I’ve ever seen and smelled so much in my life! (I am now waiting for the phone to go through ... That is still the most frustrating part of this trip: no contact!) The driver, Baluch, was marvellous. He loved all the mosques etc. Even when we just left the hotel, I thought this is worth it: the driving on the left, the blowing of horns, the painted busses, the old toyotas and suzukis (some locally assembled at a steel factory where 14000 people work), and the chaos.

We first went to the very modern Mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam, dedicated to Muhammed Ali Jinnah, the ‘father’ of Pakistan, and then through older Karachi, where the roads are generally good but which has lots of traffic jams. There are thousands of small shops, food carts, and cow dung smells everywhere. Some pictures give an impression. I rode a camel on Clifton Beach (close to Benazir Bhutto’s house) but the camel below was along the road to Thatta.
The town of Thatta lies a little outside of Karachi, with a lovely bazar, the Shah Jahan mosque, Mekli Hill, and the Chaukundi Tombs.
After that day trip, I had an exciting evening with two people who live in Karachi, who I knew through my Urdu tutor in Kingston, Ontario. We went to the beach, to shopping malls, and ate street food. As you can see, our dress is pretty casual. There are even people (men and women) in shorts on the beach.

22 May – Mohenjo Daro

Off to Mohenjo Daro today. I am writing these notes as I go along. Lots of security at the airport and loads of people smoking.

Mohenjo Daro was one of the cities of the Indus Valley Civilization and dates to about 4500 YBP. The civilization is also interesting for its (as yet) undeciphered script. It may be that these were Dravidian people later pushed further south by the Indo-European speaking peoples.

After landing, there was a bit of a walk to the actual sites and it was pretty warm (over 40 C), walking around the streets of this ancient site, but impressive!
And everyone loves to take pictures!

The tablets that have the writing

22 -23 May – Karachi

My acquaintances, who are Parsi, showed me around the city a little and I got more of a sense of what the lives of (upper middle class Pakistanis) looks like. They work in business and design, and seem to have a great social life: out to dinner with friends every evening, etc. We ended one day with crabfishing in the Arabian Sea! Karachi is ethnically and religiously very diverse. The Parsi minority is very succesful in business [a 2016 comment appears here http://www.dawn.com/news/1204890 so change is coming].

24 May - Lahore

I am on the flight from Karachi to Lahore. This time, all batteries had to be removed from alarm clocks and cameras before boarding. I just heard that there had been a bomb threat on this same flight yesterday so that may have been the reason.

Lahore has its historical museum, now located on The Mall, made famous by Rudyard Kipling’s novel Kim. It has beautiful miniature paintings and (too) many Buddha statues, which I suspect were part of the divide-and-conquer policies of the British Raj.
The afternoon involved a trip to Shalimar Gardens, built by Shah Jahan in 1641 but later taken over by Sikhs who took a lot of the marble out. I thought it had lost a lot of its splendor (which I assume it once had). Then through the Wazir Khan Mosque to the Kashmir Bazar. Also of interest were Aibak’s Tomb, Anarkali Bazar, and the Alhambra Art Centre.
25-26 May – Lahore

Today, I saw Badshahi Mosque, finished in 1673, a jewel of Mughal architecture, Jehangir’s Mazar, and Lahore Fort. I later went to the Berkeley Urdu Language Program [which I see is still active] to leave a note for my friend from Montreal who is studying there but who I hadn’t yet reached by phone. The rickshaw driver found it relatively easily although streets don’t have numbers, of course, and everything is behind walls. I also went to a lot of bookstores on The Mall and have loads to read.

There are so many stories of corruption that I’ve heard in my three days here (so far) and reading Emma Duncan’s recent book is eye-opening: the flaunting of riches, the excesses of alcohol, feudalistic attitudes, nepotism, etc. [Reading the recent book by Saba Imtiaz suggests not so much has changed].

27-28 May - Lahore

I found my friend from Montreal; she had been on a trip to the north and had gotten ill. I am now staying at BULPIP as well where it is very hot at night (no AC). We went to a Sufi Mazar, shopped in the old city, looked at the Persian miniatures next to Faletti’s, to ASR, and Simorgh [I am amazed the latter two are still operating]. Lots of posters on the Pakistani women’s movement. Interesting to find out about men that have earrings (when a wish was granted) and their frequent hugging and handholding (even of soldiers in uniform).

28 May - Karachi

I am on my way back. Acquaintances had invited me for a shopping ‘spree’ (of rugs). That didn’t work out and, currently, I am ‘locked in’ a house in Karachi, while they went to a funeral of a relative who was murdered yesterday (or even today). The deceased was a mohajir, one of the Muslim refugees after India and Pakistan were divided, and a senator. I am alone in the house and there is banging on the windows and doors by people who want to come ask about the events (I suppose). There are sirens all the time and I hope (very selfishly) that I get to the airport on time.
References


Imtiaz, Saba 2014. *Karachi, you are killing me*. Random House India.