

7.1.1.2. Origin and Development

Agra is the city of the inimitable Taj Mahal. The story of Agra begins much earlier than the Taj, However it finds mention in the epic Mahabharata when it was called Agravana or Paradise. Ptolemy, the famous second century A.D. geographer, marked it on his map of the world as Agra. Tradition and legend ascribe the present city to Raja Badal Singh (around 1475 A.D.) who built the Fort, Badalgarh, and stood on or near the site of the present Fort. However, the 12th century A.D. Persian poet Selmān, too, speaks of a desperate assault on the fortress of Agra, then held by one King Jaipal, by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. It was the Mughals who finally nurtured Agra with the finest monuments architects could design: The Taj Mahal of Shah Jahan, Agra Fort of Akbar, Itmad-Ud-Daulah and neighboring Sikandra are but few of the many that spangle the city, each of which stands in mute testimony to the city's grandeur over the ages.¹