

Facts and fiction about Naugaza

Is it not surprising to find that there are hardly any remains of pre-Mughal Lahore visible? True, that the City of Lahore, was mainly the achievement of the Moghuls. It was already there in the days of the Lodhis, the Ghaznaves and, of course, Jaipal and the Hindus Shahis, the Chachs and even earlier.

Of the pre-Muslim period the temple of Loh in the Citadel and the 'Bhairon di thaah' in Ichhra are perhaps the only remains of any importance that exist. The absence of old monuments of the pre-Muslim, or Buddhist and Greek period, in Lahore, does not mean that this City never existed before the times of the Muslims, the scant remains, we witness, can be explained by the fact that firstly, there was a lack of building material strong enough and of a permanent nature e.g. stone etc. in the immediate vicinity, naturally mud being freely available was used, which, sadly, does not have a long life. Secondly, the place, in all probability, was ruthlessly destroyed and plundered by the multitude of marauding hordes that, unfortunately, descended upon the place from time to time.

Lahorites, are proud of the cultural ambience of their City, its' lanes, gallees and bazaars, of their Colonial Lahore, the suburbs and mohallas. Even of the magic of its' outskirts, Shalimar, Baghbanpura, Mian Mir, Ichhra, all now very much part of the life of Lahore, all of that has contributed its bit, which put together, goes to make the disposition and temper of Lahore. Nevertheless, there is something that has helped garnish the cultural make-up of this place. This garniture, though in small measure, was tasted, relished and welcomed by the Lahorites and missed when deprived of. This addition was provided by the 'cultural centres' of the old City.

In the north-west of the City is the Taxali Darwaaza, the place is much less colourful in comparison to Rangmahal or



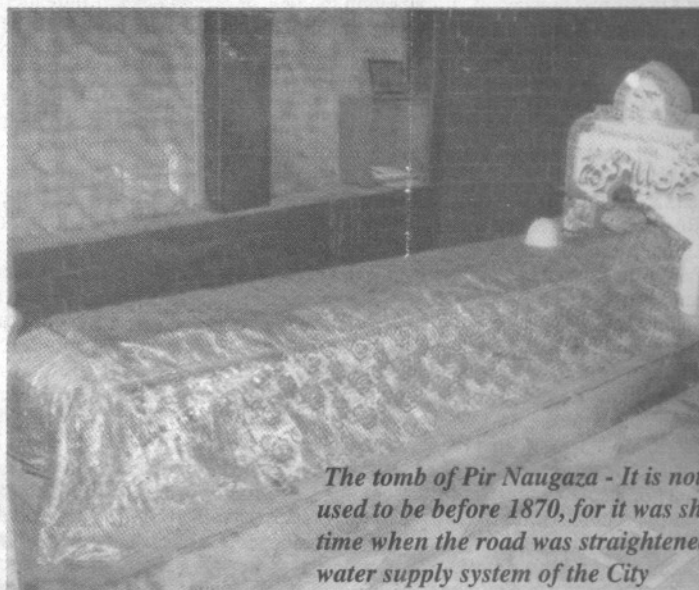
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A view of mazar Naugaza in Har

SAJID ABBAS visits an old quarter of Lahore and relates an interesting story of a notable site in that place

Shahalami Bazaar. Once the place was very busy as it was the way out of Lahore on the road to Multan to the south and to the Ravi and then to the north and onwards to Peshawar, Kabul and Central Asia.

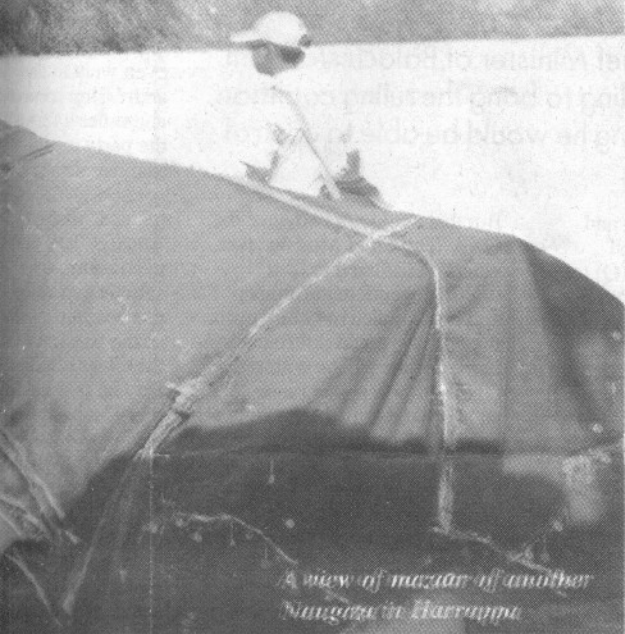
The Royal Mint was located here and so were the residences of many a courtier. Once the residence of Nawab Wazeer Khan, the builder of the well-known Mosque of the City, was located in the vicinity. The place, around Taxali Darwaaza, has now changed completely and taken on an entirely different and



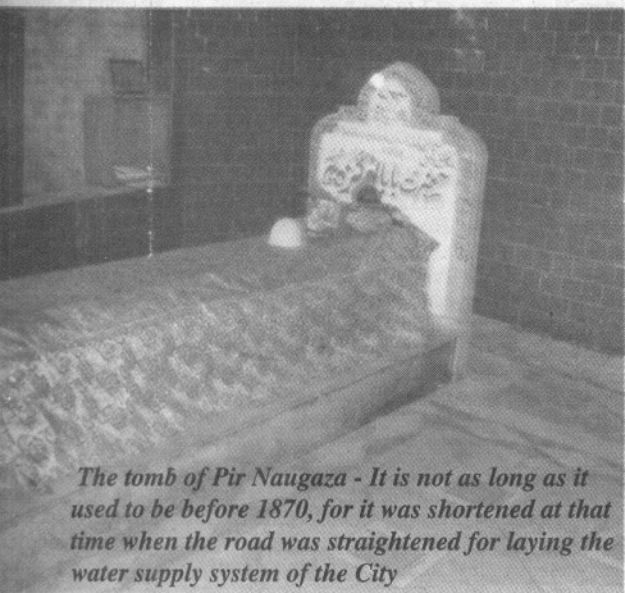
The tomb of Pir Naugaza - It is not used to be before 1870, for it was shown time when the road was straightened water supply system of the City

fiction Naugazas

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A view of mazar of another Naugaza in Harappa



The tomb of Pir Naugaza - It is not as long as it used to be before 1870, for it was shortened at that time when the road was straightened for laying the water supply system of the City

unsightly look. The Bazaar and shops lack the cheer and vitality that is found in some other parts of the City. Some of the shopkeepers do not exhibit the same geniality and mirth as those in other bazaars do and display a different disposition, perhaps, on account of not being typical Lahorias or City dwellers.

Proceeding east towards Rangmahal or Dubbee Bazaar from Taxali Darwaaza one reaches a well-known spot, the Chowk Naugaza and the Tomb of Naugaza, this is another spot, origins of which are shrouded in mystery. There are no dates or plaques to go by. But there are interesting stories about Naugazas, that is, nine yards tall people which make the round.

According to the fable, that used to be related by the late Hayat Bibi. A Hindu Raja of some place near Sialkot, commenced building his fort, but the structure did not last and used to fall down. Repeated attempts did not succeed. So, the Raja summoned all his courtiers and bade them to ponder over the problem and find a solution.

The Pundits got busy and the Astrologer Royal came to the conclusion with his horoscopes and figures that the structure could only be raised if the mortar is mixed with human blood and that, too of a Muslim! "But, we do not have such a person as a Muslim in the entire country". The soothsayer got to work again with his crystal and after considerable gazing declared that there is one Muslim who comes to a particular

stream around midday and performs some kind of exercise. "But how could we be certain about the person that he is a Muslim and the wanted man", said the Raja. "Before he carries out his drill" said the astrologer, "he washes his hands, his face, his arms and his feet, then he stands always facing the west and begins his ritual".

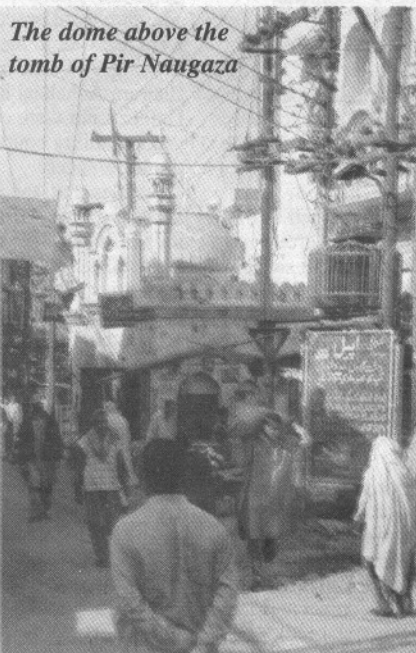
Armed with this information, a contingent was despatched to the likely spot. Soon a person fitting the description given by the seer, was seen and nabbed and brought before the Raja. "What is my fault? O Raja, I am just a peaceful hermit, I have done nothing wrong", pleaded the Musalman. "We just need a little bit of your blood for mixing with the mortar, without which the fort won't stand", said the Raja. "In that case, make a scratch on my finger and take a drop or two", replied the man.

No sooner were the drops of blood mixed with the mortar and used in the wall of the fort that was being built, the wall turned stonehard to everybody's bewilderment. Seeing that the Raja, though dumbfounded and struck by awe, thought that if a few drops of the man's blood could make such a difference, all his blood would certainly make the walls of the fort as hard as steel, he signalled his men to behead the poor Muslim and mix all his blood in the mortar.

When word reached the man's mother that her son has been murdered on the orders of the Raja, she made for the Court of the Caliph for help. The latter, on hearing the old lady's complaint, despatched a company of Naugazas to avenge the brutal and violent death of the Musalman and reduce the fort to rubble. This was no arduous job for them, that is, the Naugazas, since they being nine yards tall faced no difficulty in scaling the walls of the Raja's stronghold and making short shrift of the Hindu mischief makers. One of those Naugazas ultimately reached Lahore to rest in peace in the Chowk.

The story is obviously a yarn. Naturally such myths are only passed on from father to son and will not be found in history books, they just help remove boredom out of the life of many in the City. Hayat Bibi is no longer with us. She passed away about five or six months ago. Her place has been taken over by her grandson Muhammad Iqbal who runs a tea shop now instead of selling earthenware pots and pans which the old lady used to do. ■

- Pix by the author



The dome above the tomb of Pir Naugaza