

The city as it was—II

Lahore Dawn 10-1-05

LAST week I gave you an account of the early history of my city from the *Handbook of Lahore*, by J.L. Kipling and T.H. Thornton. It has been reprinted under the title, *Lahore As It Was* by the National College of Arts). The authors describe the city under the Pathans as follows:

But there is not only a total absence of old Hindu architectural remains. With the exception of two small mosques in the heart of the city, the Nimiwala Masjid and Shiranwala Masjid, and the ruins of one or two shrines, there are no architectural relics of an earlier date than the time of Humayan. This fact, coupled with the silence of earlier writers, leads to the conclusion that Lahore, at the period of the Pathan dynasties, though of considerable importance, was not remarkable for its extent or the beauty of its buildings. Amir Khosru, at the end of the thirteenth century, alludes to Lahore and the twin city of Kaur simply as inhabited spots in the midst of a desolate waste. Ibn Batuta, who travelled from Mooltan to Delhi in the middle of the fourteenth, did not think it worth a visit; Timur, at the end of the same century, left it to a subordinate to plunder; the Emperor Baber, who always took care to see what was to be seen, and in his *Memoirs* has left graphic descriptions of Kabul, Samarkand, and the environs of Delhi, leaves Lahore unnoticed; lastly Amin Ahmad Razi, author of a work called *Haft Aqlim*, dated AD 1624, states that, until the time of Akbar, Lahore was nothing more than a number of detached hamlets.

In an architectural point of view, therefore, Lahore is essentially a Mughal city; and its Muhammadan remains, with a few exceptions, are in the Mughal style; the exceptions being the tomb of Shah Mussa, by the railway station, which is Pathan; and the mosque of Miriam Makani or Miriam. To the Mughals we owe the introduction of what now form three striking characteristics of the principal cities of Upper India. In the first place, there grew up with them a new style of architecture, more splendid and elaborate, though less massive, than the later Pathan, from which it was developed. In the next place, to their love of the picturesque in nature, a pleasing feature in their character, we owe the construction of those regularly planned gardens, with their dense foliage, fountains and initiative cascades, which have excited the enthusiastic admiration of travellers to the East. Coming from the well-watered valleys and waving foliage of Ush and Andekan, Baber regarded with almost European disgust the dusty, treeless plains of the Punjab. In his *Memoirs*, he bitterly com-

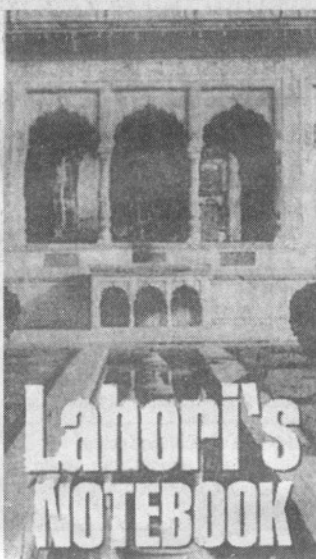
plains of Hindustan. 'They have no walled gardens,' he says, 'no artificial water-courses;' and he seems to have lost no time in setting them a good example, by laying out a magnificent garden at Agra. 'The men of Hind,' he continues, 'who had never before seen places formed on such a plan, or laid out with such elegance, gave the name of Kabul to the side of the Jumna on which these palaces were built.'

Lastly, the same appreciation of natural scenery, combined with a solicitude for the preservation of the dead, characteristic of Tartar races, led to the erection of the numerous garden-enclosed tombs, which form a picturesque feature of the

city with its usual characteristics of bulb-like domes, supported on elaborate pendentives, ogee arches, with feathered edgings, marble lattice windows, and brilliantly enamelled walls. As works of art none of them can perhaps bear comparison with the *chefs d'oeuvre* of Delhi, Agra, or Fatehpur Sikri; but there is one special feature in the Mughal buildings at Lahore which cannot fail to strike observers, namely, the profusion and excellence of the coloured tiling and enamelled frescoes used as an external decoration.

By it the architects of the day were enabled to compensate, to some extent, for the want of stone material and the consequent impossibility of sculpture, and to give to brick walls that appearance of costliness and durability which, in an aesthetic point of view, is essential to success. The native name of this species of decoration is *kashi* or *kashi*. It appears to have been introduced, in the form in which it is found in this part of India, from China, through Persia, by the Mughals. Tradition attributes its introduction to the influence of Tamerlane's Chinese wife. However that may be, the earliest instance, according to Fergusson, is the celebrated mosque of Tabriz, built about the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century of our era, just after the conquest of Persia by the Mughals. The next is the tomb of Muhammad Khudabandah, at Sultaniah, built by the successor of Ghazan Khan, the builder of the mosque at Tabriz. From this date, the use of glazed tiles became common in Persia; but it was not till upwards of two centuries from this time that it came to be so in Hindustan.

The earliest instance of this mode of decoration at Lahore is the tomb of Shah Mussa, built in the reign of the Emperor Akbar. The colours of this, the oldest specimen, are as vivid, and the decoration is as perfect, as in any of the later ones; but the art did not come into general use until the time of Shahjehan, when it took a new form. Encaustic tiles were, to a great extent, disused, and the designs were executed on a hard kind of cement. This process, being probably cheaper, led to the almost universal adoption of *kashi* designs as an architectural ornament. There is hardly a mosque, or a tomb, or a gateway, built during this period, the walls of which are not covered with them. Strange to say, after the reign of Shahjehan, it became almost entirely disused, and the art may now be said to be lost in the Punjab. Coloured tiles are still manufactured in Lahore and Mooltan; but the colouring is very poor, and the process of executing coloured design upon plaster is altogether



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REMAINS OF THE MUGHAL PERIOD — Lahore, with its numerous gardens, tombs and ornamental gateways, must have been in the days of its splendour, a fine specimen of an Indo-Mughal city; and though no city has perhaps suffered more from devastations and the hand of time, it can still show no mean specimens of architecture. In the old gateways leading to the fort, we have examples of the old and massive style of Akbar, contrasting remarkably with the elegant but somewhat fantastic architecture of later periods. In the two elaborately carved vestibules, with pillars of red sandstone, supporting a sloping entablature, in the quadrangle of the citadel, known as Jehangir's Khwabgah, we have good specimens of the Hindu-Moslem style of art, usually supposed to have been peculiar to the time of Akbar. In the tomb of Jehangir, at Shahdara; the mosque of Wazir Khan, on the south side of the city; the Pearl mosque; the Throne-room and marble pavilion in the citadel; the tomb of Asaf Khan; the gardens of Shalimar; the Gulabi Bagh, or 'Garden of Rosewater,' the gateway of Zeb-un-Nissa, and the Imperial Mosque of Aurangzeb, we have examples

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