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Appropriating Indo-Saracenic style: Bhai Ram Singh's contributions to the architectural identity of 19th century Lahore

Apropiación del estilo “indo-sarraceno”: La contribución de Bhai Ram Singh a la identidad arquitectónica del Lahore del siglo XIX

Apropriação do estilo “indo-sarraceno”: Contribuições de Bhai Ram Singh para a identidade arquitetónica de Lahore do século XIX

Keywords | Palabras clave | Palavras chave

Colonial India, Jeypore Portfolio, Contextualization, Identity Politics, Revivalism

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Abstract | Resumen | Resumo

After 1857, when India became a direct colony of the British Crown, was the architectural style adopted by the colonial masters an attempt at subverting the local identity and reasserting their supremacy via architecture or was its purpose to engage their institutions with their context? Was the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture anachronistic and reductive in nature or was it a way to draw on the past? What role did the *Jeypore Portfolio* play in negotiating colonial intent by appropriating traditional building culture? How did Bhai Ram Singh mediate an identity for 19th century Lahore by contextualizing Indo-Saracenic architecture? This exploratory study attempts to answer these questions using existing literary sources and by considering buildings designed by Bhai Ram Singh in the city of Lahore. The paper also critically evaluates the agency of the *Jeypore Portfolio* for Indo-Saracenic architecture, how it reduced the centuries-old local building tradition to a limited palette of details, and Bhai Ram Singh's attempts to re-inform it from the native's perspective.

A partir de 1857, cuando la India se convirtió en una colonia sujeta al control directo de la corona británica, ¿fue el estilo arquitectónico adoptado por la potencia colonial un intento de subvertir la identidad local y reafirmar su supremacía a través de la arquitectura o era su propósito integrar sus instituciones en el contexto? ¿Tuvo el estilo “indo-sarraceno” una naturaleza arquitectónica anacrónica y reductora o se trataba de una forma de inspirarse en el pasado? ¿Qué papel desempeñó el *Jeypore Portfolio* en la negociación de las pretensiones coloniales mediante la apropiación de la cultura tradicional de construcción? ¿Cómo propició Bhai Ram Singh una identidad para el Lahore del siglo XIX al contextualizar la arquitectura “indo-sarracena”? Estas son las preguntas que dieron lugar a este estudio preliminar, en el que se utilizaron las fuentes literarias existentes y se analizaron los edificios proyectados por Bhai Ram Singh en

la ciudad de Lahore. En el artículo también se hace una valoración crítica de la intervención del *Jeypore Portfolio* en la arquitectura “indo-sarracena”: cómo redujo una tradición constructiva centenaria a una paleta limitada de detalles, y los intentos de Bhai Ram Singh para darle forma desde la perspectiva autóctona.

Depois de 1857, quando a Índia se tornou uma colônia directa da Coroa Britânica, terá este estilo arquitectónico sido adoptado pelos mestres coloniais numa tentativa de subverter a identidade local e reafirmar a sua supremacia através da arquitectura, ou terá sido o seu propósito o de envolver as suas instituições no contexto? Será o estilo de arquitectura “indo-sarraceno” anacrónico e redutor por natureza ou foi uma forma de tirar partido do passado? Que papel desempenhou o *Jeypore Portfolio* na negociação da intenção colonial através da apropriação da cultura tradicional de construção? Como mediou Bhai Ram Singh uma identidade para Lahore do século XIX ao contextualizar a arquitectura “indo-sarracena”? Foram estas as questões que conduziram este estudo exploratório, utilizando as fontes literárias existentes, tendo em consideração edifícios concebidos por Bhai Ram Singh na cidade de Lahore. O artigo também avalia criticamente a acção do *Jeypore Portfolio* na arquitectura “indo-sarracena”, como este reduziu a tradição centenária de construção local a uma paleta limitada de detalhes, e as tentativas de Bhai Ram Singh de lhe dar uma nova forma a partir da perspectiva dos nativos.

Introduction

This paper investigates the links between “Indo-Saracenic” architecture and the ideology of “orientalism” as one of the hegemonic cultural tools employed by the British during their colonial rule in India. For this purpose, the paper reviews the historical and contemporary literature to understand this aspect of European adventurism in India and of the emergence of the British as the sole colonial power in the region. Unlike their contemporaries, the British used multiple “soft tools” to establish their rule in India. Among other administrative matters, the most significant hegemonic attempt to support their “civilizing” project was to introduce “Indo-Saracenic” architecture. This style, which for a time served as the official architecture of the Raj in India, was a fragmented adoption of the native Indo-Islamic architecture. In the hands of Colonial designers, who depended on the *Jeypore Portfolio*, it often produced caricatural results. However, there are more successful examples too. Under the aegis of individuals such as the native artisan Bhai Ram Singh, who understood and respected the ordering and proportioning system of traditional Indian architecture, this style produced buildings that left an indelible mark on the architectural landscape of cities like Lahore. This paper discusses Bhai Ram Singh’s attempts at re-informing the Indo-Saracenic from a native perspective. The pivotal role Bhai Ram Singh played in shaping 19th century Lahore’s architectural identity is also discussed.

Research Methodology

This paper adopts a purely qualitative approach to understand the colonial architectural history of Lahore and the works of Bhai Ram Singh, by reviewing the existing literature. It contributes to the knowledge of his work through first-hand on-site data collection on four of Bhai Ram Singh’s projects and the production of their respective drawings. The agency of the *Jeypore Portfolio* for Indo-Saracenic architecture and Bhai Ram Singh’s attempts to re-inform it from a native perspective are also critically analysed and evaluated, as well as its subsequent impact on the architectural identity of Lahore.

British in India: A Brief History

The British, like the French, Dutch, and the Portuguese, first came to what we now call the Indian subcontinent for trading purposes and “obtained permission to trade in India from [the Mughal Emperor] Jahangir in 1619” (Bose and Jalal 1998: 34). Gradually the East India Company started expanding its trading network, and the declining power of the Mughal Empire in the 18th century provided the British officials with a perfect opportunity to establish their hold over the Indian Territory. After the 1757 military victory at the Battle of Plassey (Bose and Jalal 1998: 41), the Company, by 1765, had gained a grant of the *Diwani* (right to collect taxes) in three provinces (Hashmi and Shuja 2020: 32).

Over the following century, the British emerged as the sole territorial power in India, eventually establishing an “elaborate state apparatus” (Bose and Jalal 1998: 53). The British had little or no information about the country they were expanding their rule over (Metcalf 1994: 44). This lack of knowledge, coupled with a state apparatus implemented in India by the Company leadership, created widespread mistrust and discontent and led to the rebellion of 1857 (Metcalf 1994; Metcalf and Metcalf 2006). As a direct consequence, the Company was dissolved in 1858, and India became a direct Crown colony and thus began an 89-year period (1858 - 1947) that came to be known as the British Raj (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. British In India

Events	Years
East India Company as traders	1612-1757
East India Company rule in India	1757-1858
British Raj (Direct British Crown Colony)	1858-1947
Partition of British India (Formation of Pakistan and India)	1947

The Reflection of Colonial Culture in India

Colonial rule in the “oriental” Indian subcontinent can be read as a classic case of contestations, dialogues, appropriations, reconciliation, and bipolar tensions between the “occident” and the “orient”. While creating the East as an indigenous, traditional, and non-industrial entity, the West, in turn, asserted itself as a progressive,

Fig. 2. Top: 17th century buildings in Lahore: Sardar Jahan Mosque (Left), and Badshahi Mosque (Right); Bottom: 19th century buildings in Lahore: Aitchison College elevation and detailing, by Bhai Ram Singh (Left), and King Edward Medical College, designed by W. Purdon, Superintendent Engineer PWD (Right) (Punjab Archives)



modern, and industrialized enterprise (Said 1978). During European colonization, there was a real urgency to understand the colonies in order to establish hegemony over them (Porter 1994; Stone 1988). The same was the case with colonial hegemony over India, which, however, was not a straightforward “enforcement”.

Post-1857 British Colonials, while establishing themselves in India, were also in the midst of legitimizing their control over the Colony. Reflections of this legitimization or their “civilizing mission” were apparent in every sphere of their rule, be it political, educational, linguistic or in the areas of art and culture (Hashmi 2020; Hashmi and Shuja 2020; Baucom 1999; Mann and Watt 2012; Metcalf and Metcalf 2006; Metcalf 1989; Metcalf 2005).

Echoes of this hegemonic behavior reverberate, for example, in their linguistic policies. Muhammad Uzair Hashmi makes a strong case for the linguistic shift in his paper “Linguistic Colonization: A Comparison Between the British in India and the Soviets in Central Asia”, pointing out how the British employed “soft tools” instead of “coercion” to implement English as an official language (Hashmi 2020: 225).

The British “Orientalist” sociological construct of India, as a land of timeless traditions where religion alone had meaning, was also reflected in their outlook towards the architecture of the land, incomprehensible when viewed from the framework of European architectural principles (Arora 2010: 8). For this reason, the art of building also met with their “civilizing” attitude. Virtually unaware of texts such as the *Vastu Shastra* and *Shilpa Shastra*, that delineated the principles that formed the basis of traditional Indian Architecture, the British did not understand the

clear and precise logic of Indian buildings (Arora 2010: 7-8). They rejected the various distinct architectural styles recognized by multiple British scholars, especially James Fergusson, who identified thirteen distinct “Saracenic” styles that corresponded to various “ethnological” and political divisions in India (Metcalf 1984: 41). The Colonists, based on their dogmatic belief in the centrality of religious identity, reinforced the idea of only two types of traditional architecture in India: “Hindu” and “Saracenic”. This Colonial attitude towards Indian architectural heritage laid the foundation of an idiosyncratic style of building, the so-called “Indo-Saracenic” style, that was pre-eminently “Indian in appearance but Western in function” (Metcalf 1982) (Fig. 2).

British architects in general were divided between those who advocated the Palladian/Neoclassical or the Gothic styles. While they wrestled with the idea of an appropriate style for England; this conflict was accentuated in the Colony, where the supporters of the “Indo-Saracenic” style formed a third alternative (Mann and Watt 2012; Stamp 1981). As the style lent itself to the meshing of distinct “Hindu” and “Saracenic” forms, it suited the aims of the British, the “self-proclaimed masters of India’s culture”, who could thus “shape a harmony the Indians themselves, communally divided, could not achieve” (Metcalf 1984: 49-50). Thus, the British adopted the style to legitimize their rule and connect themselves to the natives of the colonized land (Metcalf 1989: 48).

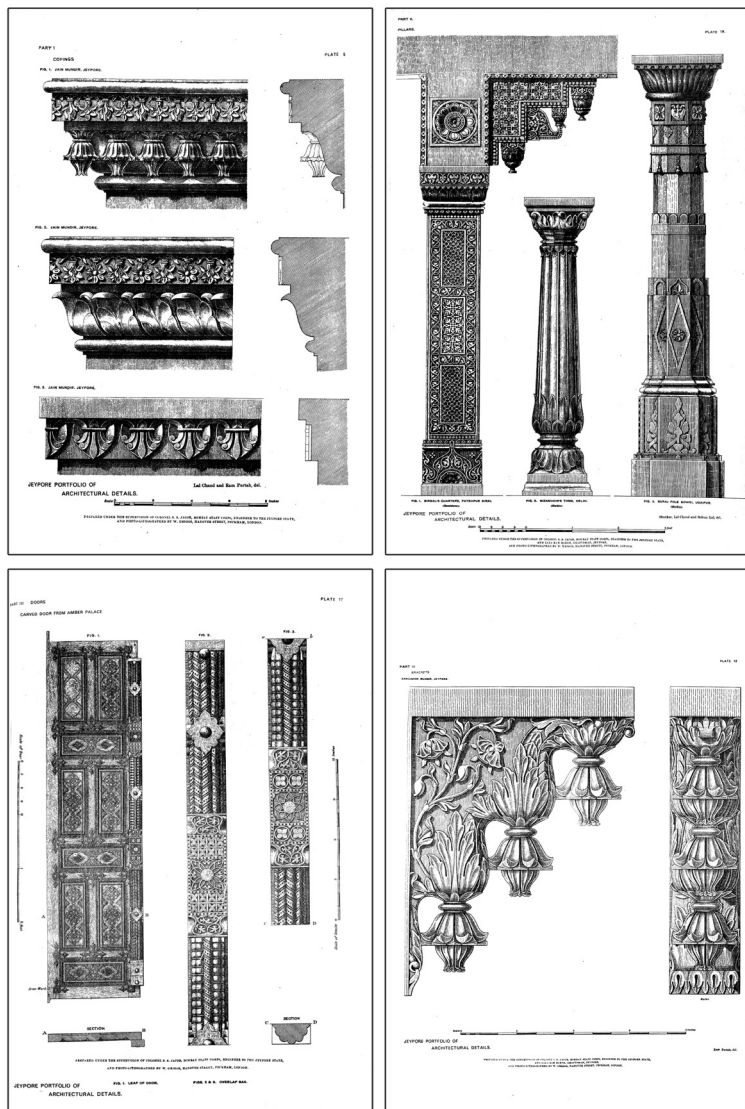
Indo Saracenic Style and *Jeypore Portfolio*: Recasting of the Native Architecture

The idea of appropriating and inserting the local architectural elements, motifs, and decorations into the buildings of the Raj had been advocated since the late 18th century. As already mentioned, this idea was developed into a distinct style, called “Indo-Saracenic” in the work of Robert Fellowes Chisholm (1840-1915) in Madras. The style, meant to shape “India’s conception of its own past” (Metcalf 1982), came of age with the publication of six large volumes on Indian architecture. The volumes, published from 1890 to 1913, brought together 375 plates of large-scale drawings of architectural elements taken from an array of North Indian buildings, built between the 12th and the 18th centuries (Metcalf 2005: 174, 1982). The volumes, titled *The Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details*, were compiled by Swinton Jacob, the Jaipur State’s English engineer, under the patronage of the Maharaja of Jaipur (Bowe 2011; Baucom 1999; Mann and Watt 2012; Metcalf and Metcalf 2006; Metcalf 1989; Metcalf 2005; Jacob 1890).

Jacob, like other Colonists, was dismissive of the principles elucidated in the ancient Hindu architectural treatises. These were centuries-old principles that had been appropriated by the Mughals to form an architectural language that infused the Timurid building tradition with the Hindu building tradition, hence were still in practice in 19th century India (Krusche et al. 2010: 158). Instead, Jacob saw Indian architecture and building crafts as two separate practices, and like most Indian arts and craft aficionados, “concentrated solely on the ornamental aspects of Indian architecture” (Arora 2010: 7).

The structure of the *Jeypore Portfolio* is reflective of Jacob’s concept, whereby the architectural “details” were grouped by function rather than chronologically or by region of origin. Jacob wrote in the preface that the volumes were meant “chiefly as working drawings for the architect and artisan” so that the intended designer might use the various features, “so full of vigor, so graceful and so true in outline,

Fig. 3: Sheets from the *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details*, by Swinton Jacob. Clockwise from top: Part I – Copings, Plate 5; Part II – Pillars, Plate 18; Part III – Doors, Plate 17; Part IV – Brackets, Plate 12 (for Part I & II: <https://archive.org/details/dli.venugopal.414>, for Part III & IV: <https://archive.org/details/dli.venugopal.415>)



and so rich in design”, in modern buildings (Jacob 1890). The intended use of the *Portfolio* was in line with how it was edited, as the drawings were “arranged together in parts - each sheet loose - so that different examples of architectural details may be compared, and selections readily made” (Jacob 1890) (Fig. 3). Jacob not only advocated this fragmented use of the architectural heritage of India, but also applied it in his buildings. Edwin Lutyens, the builder of New Delhi, visiting India for the first time in 1912, scathingly remarked that Swinton Jacob’s buildings “are all made up of titbits culled from various buildings of various dates put together with no sense of relation or of scale” (Metcalf 1984: 61).

The use of the *Portfolio* by British architects as a catalog of ornamental and decorative patterns while willfully ignoring the aesthetic, proportional, structural, and symbolic order of any period of India’s past provides a revealing insight into the way the Colonists perceived India’s traditional architecture. It can therefore be argued that “Indo-Saracenic” architecture represents an anachronistic and fragmented adoption of native Indo-Islamic architecture, unlike the Gothic revival and Palladian-Classical styles, whose principles the Colonists understood and respected, and until 1857 were the preferred styles for colonial building in India.

Furthermore, and following the edict of the day, local artisans were trained in modern skills of drafting, documenting, and in some cases, even designing, and Jacobs proudly acknowledges the educational and “civilizing” aspect of his endeavor. However, the writings of the period ascribe almost all buildings designed in the Indo-Saracenic style to Colonial engineer-turned-architects like Robert Fellowes Chisholm, Henry Irwin, Charles Mant, William Emerson, George Wittet, Frederick W. Stevens, and Swinton Jacobs, with minimal mention of native contributions.

Lahore: An Urban Palimpsest

The city of Lahore, located on the east bank of River Ravi, is Pakistan’s second-largest metropolis (Fig. 4). Although the exact beginnings of the city are untraceable, the discovery of “Indo-Bactrian coins” in the region is indicative of a settlement in the locality between “mid-300 BC to the 2nd century AD” (Peck 2015: 2).

Lahore was a Hindu principality until the incursion of Mahmood Ghaznavi in 1022 AD (Walker 1894: 269, Latif 1892: 1). The city gained widespread prominence after it became the imperial capital during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, in 1584 (Glover 2008: 6) and in the early half of the 17th Century was at the peak of its splendor (Latif 1892: 54). In fact, travelers from the period favorably compared Lahore to Constantinople (Glover 2008: 8).

As Mughal power started to wane, the city was subjected to periodic raids and was pillaged by invaders (Walker 1894: 283). In the early 19th Century, Ranjit Singh established a Sikh Empire (1799 – 1849) in Punjab, and after his death in 1839, the British capitalized on the “splits in Punjabi society and polity” (Bose and Jalal 1998: 51) and officially annexed Punjab in 1849.

After annexation, Lahore became the capital of the British Province. The British initially garrisoned in an area south of the walled city, later known as “Civil Station” (Qureshi 1997: 71), and commandeered the monumental buildings “from the Mughal and Sikh periods for new administrative and social functions” (Glover 2008: 18). While the old fortified city was left mostly unaltered, any building in the “Civil Station” not appropriated by the British was ransacked and destroyed for its building material.

Fig. 4: Lahore in its regional context, showing the location of Pakistan in reference to the world

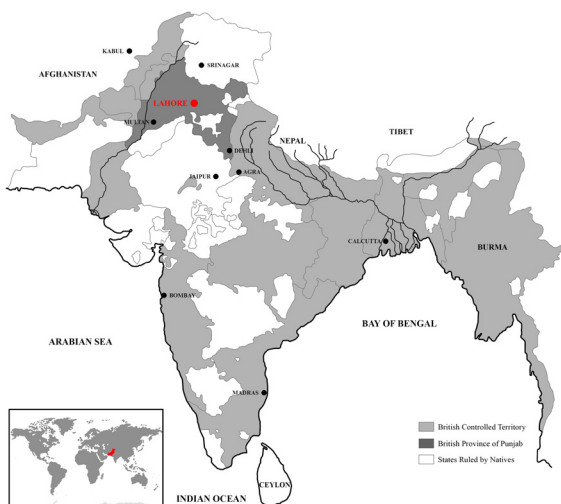
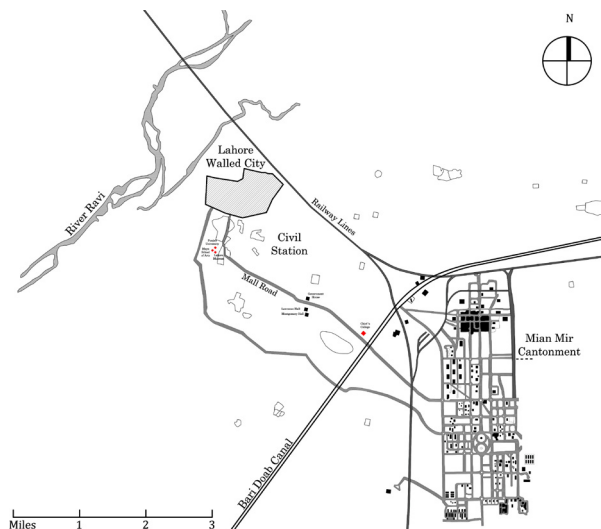


Fig. 5: Spatial relationship of Mian Mir Cantonment with the Walled City



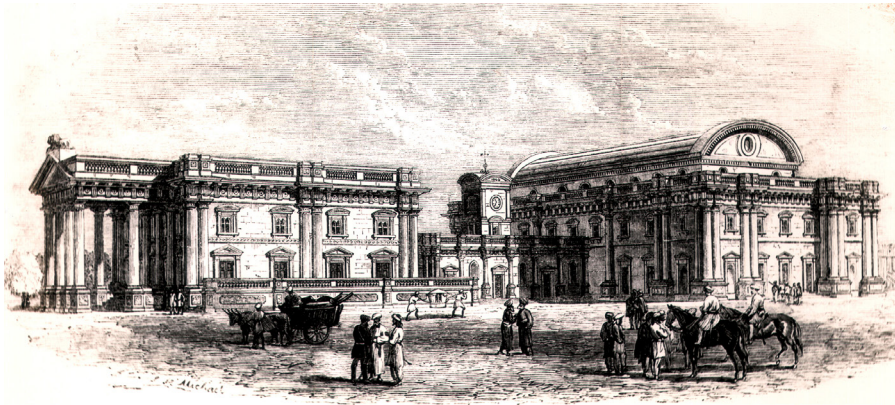


Fig. 6: Lawrence Hall (Left) and Montgomery Hall (Right) conjoined by a hallway and built in Neo-Palladian style (Punjab Archives)

As early as 1851, the British constructed a grand boulevard, The Mall, that connected the “Civil Station” to the newly established cantonment at Mian Mir (Goulding 1924: 30) (Fig. 5). However, only after the events of 1857 did the British truly set about creating a new spatial order for Lahore. It was by then that a transformative wave of urbanization took over the city.

The earliest example of a purpose-built Colonial building, the railway station built in 1859, was a “castellated structure” that looked like a medieval fortress (Latif 1892: 287). Other examples of early prominent landmarks from this period include: the Lawrence Hall (1861) and the Montgomery Hall (1866), built in the “Neo-Palladian style of British country houses” (Bryant 2020: 5) (Fig. 6); the Government College (1873) and the Lahore Cathedral (1887), built in Gothic style; and the General Post Office (1887), that combined a Palladian façade with baroque domes (Latif 1892: 286).

Early colonial Lahore was thus a *mélange* of architectural styles, and it was only after John Lockwood Kipling, a strong proponent of the Indian Arts and Crafts movement,

arrived in Lahore in 1875 that the debate on a suitable style for the architecture of the Raj received a fresh impetus. Kipling, inspired by Lahore’s heritage and a desire celebrate local sources, began training native students like Bhai Ram Singh, who played a crucial role in shaping the city’s “Indo-Saracenic” identity.

The saga of Bhai Ram Singh

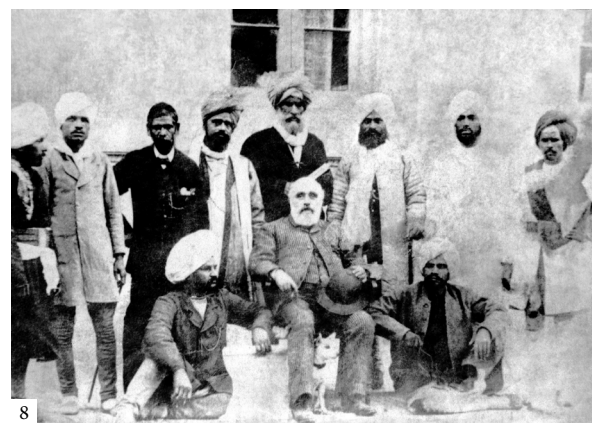
Bhai Ram Singh, born in 1858, came from a community that was renowned for its carpentry skills (Fig. 7). Being a hereditary craftsman, he had attained considerable skill before joining the Lahore School of Carpentry as a student. In 1875, the Carpentry School was incorporated into the newly established Mayo School of Industrial Arts, and Singh became a member of its first batch (Vandal and Vandal 2006: 126-127). His innate design talent soon brought him to the notice of the Principal, John Lockwood Kipling, who, in his 1875-76 report, wrote: “Amongst the most promising students may be mentioned (...) Ram Singh of the School of Carpentry” (Vandal and Vandal 2006: 127).

Kipling, who sought to integrate European Art theory with a thorough study of the extant Indian heritage of art and architecture, viewed the School more as an atelier. Hence the students were involved in the “ornamentation of



Fig. 7: Bhai Ram Singh at work in the Darbar Hall (NCA Archives)

Fig. 8: Teachers and students of the Mayo School of Art, 1880: Seated from left to right: Bhai Ram Singh, John Lockwood Kipling, and Sher Muhammad (NCA Archives)



several public works projects and elite residences” (Dutta 2007: 74). This integration of theory and practice was the cornerstone of Kipling’s philosophy of art education (Vandal and Vandal 2006: 118) (Fig. 8).

Bhai Ram Singh participated in all the practical work that the School was commissioned to do, and as Kipling’s protégée, he was given every opportunity to carry out original work (Vandal and Vandal 2006: 127). Although Singh’s initial work was mostly in furniture and interiors, he carried out his first architectural project, i.e., the design of the new building for the Mayo School, under Kipling’s supervision in 1881 (Peck 2015: 161). Singh stayed on at the School for eight years as a student and then joined it as an assistant drawing and carpentry master (Bryant 2020: 7).

The School’s systematic and rigorous training and Kipling’s mentorship provided Bhai Ram Singh the opportunity to grow beyond his traditional training as a carpenter and achieve a deeper understanding of architecture and design (Shuja 2018: 35). He often worked in conjunction with Kipling, and together the two collaborated on the design competition entry for the Aitchison College (1885) and the design of the Lahore Museum (1889). The duo also designed the billiard room and hallway for His Royal Highness, the Duke of Connaught’s home, Bagshot Park, in England (1885–87) (Glover 2008: 90). Moreover, Singh worked on a commission from Queen Victoria herself, for “a room in the ‘Indian’ style” (Dutta 2007: 74), now known as the Durbar Hall, at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight (Fig. 7). According to Arindam Dutta (2007: 74), the job was “delegated to and executed by Kipling’s trusted assistant and successor, Bhai Ram Singh”, who traveled to England in 1891 to oversee the construction of the Hall (Glover 2008: 90).

Bhai Ram Singh’s contributions to the public architecture of Colonial Lahore also include projects such as the Lady Aitchison Hospital for Women (1886-87), the Prince Albert Victor memorial wing added to the Mayo Hospital in 1890, the boarding house of Government College (1889–1904), the Punjab University Senate Hall (1905), the Main Building and Infirmary of the Queen Mary College of Lahore (1910), as well as the *chatri* at Charing Cross for the bronzed seated statue of Queen Victoria, now in the Lahore Museum (1902) (Vandal and Vandal 2006: 244 -248; Bryant 2020: 8).

He also applied his design skills to projects that went beyond the confines of British interests, such as the Dayanand Anglo Vedic College in Lahore (1886) and his most critically acclaimed work, the Khalsa College in Amritsar (1892). Singh’s use of Hindu sources for the design of the former and Sikh sources for the latter (Bryant 2020: 8) was not a rejection of Kipling’s teachings but rather a sign of a growing belief that buildings were reflections of cultural

identity and of the people who made them (Glover 2008: 91).

His career at the College was capped when he was “appointed Vice-Principal (of the school) in 1896 and served several times as officiating Principal” (Peck 2015: 161). In 1892 Kipling referred to Bhai Ram Singh as “our most accomplished architect” (Bryant 2020: 7).

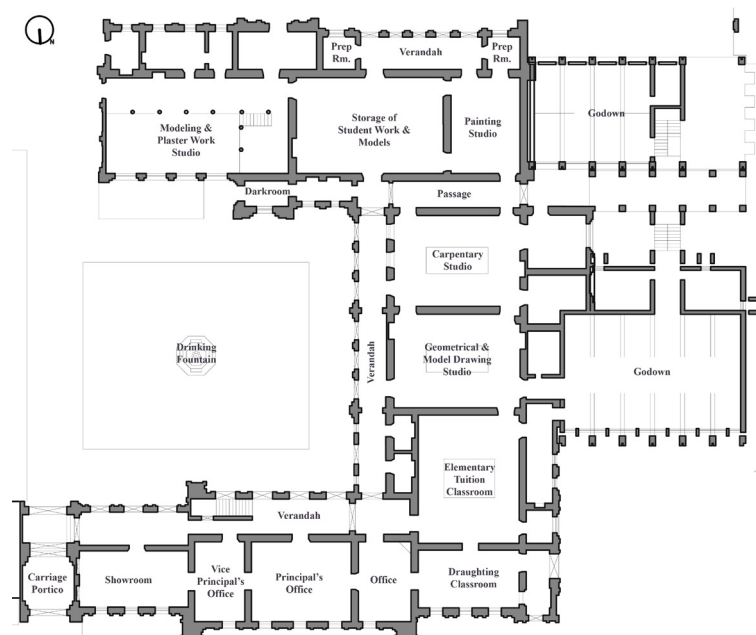
The four projects discussed here reflect Bhai Ram Singh’s career progression and the maturing of his ideas as he carried out more commissions.

Mayo School of Industrial Arts (National College of Arts)

Mayo School, established in 1875, got funding for the construction of its new premises on The Mall from the Mayo Memorial Fund (Latif 1892: 274). In 1881, Bhai Ram Singh, still a student at the School under Kipling’s supervision, designed the new building that “shall be of plastered brick and Saracenic in style” (Bryant 2020: 6). The school “built in the late Mughal Style” (Department of Education 1911: 168; Latif 1892: 304) owes its overall design to the close-by Wazir Khan’s *baradari* (open pavilion) (Bryant 2020: 6).

At the time of its construction, the brick-faced School building comprised three wings wrapped around an open courtyard with the partially double-storied north wing facing the Mall. A veranda ran all along the building’s inner side to protect the rooms from the harsh summer sun, while large windows were placed on the northern side to bring in the north light (Department of Education 1911: 168) (Fig. 9). Kipling also had a kiln built within the school premises

Fig. 9: Ground Floor Plan of the Mayo School of Industrial Arts



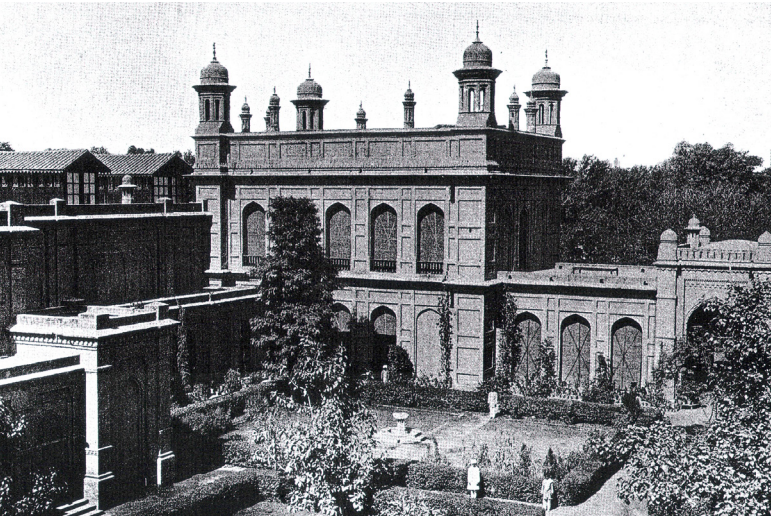
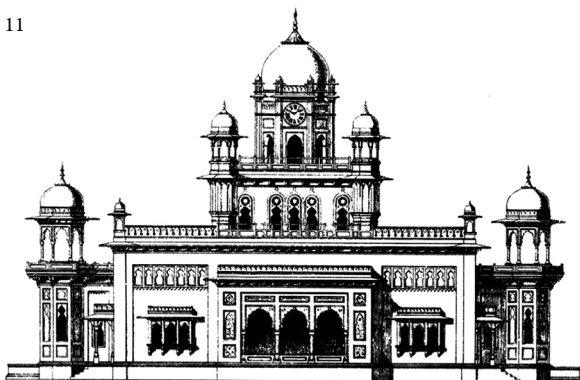


Fig. 10: Mayo School of Industrial Arts building, designed under the supervision of J. L. Kipling. It was the first major architectural work by Bhai Ram Singh (NCA Archives)

“to direct terra cotta as the future decorative material for official buildings in the Punjab” (Bryant 2020: 8).

Singh used his skills and knowledge of details to humanize the scale of the exposed brick surfaces by using molded ornamental bricks and terracotta *jalli* work (latticework) in the arched veranda openings. The building façades were subdivided into panels, and the plinth, cornice, sill, and lintel levels were accentuated using intricate brick detailing. The ornamental embellishment continued in the roofline, where turrets and *chattris*, based on Hindu temples and Sikh

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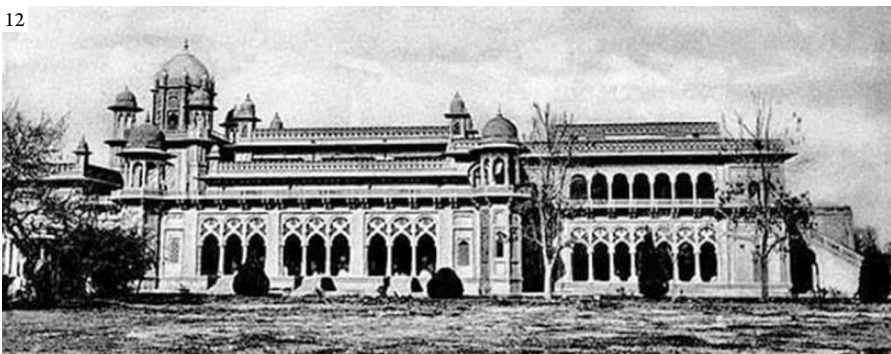


Fig. 11: West Elevation of Aitchison College's Main Building (Punjab Archives)

Fig. 12: South Elevation of Aitchison College's Main Building (Punjab Archives)

gurdwaras, were among the finest examples of carved and molded brickwork (Khan 2014: 84) (Fig. 10).

The building, completed in 1883 (Latif 1892: 304), was the first public building on The Mall built in the “Indo-Saracenic” style. It largely remains unchanged today partially because of the decision to leave the red brick exposed, unlike the Mughal buildings, which were rendered with plaster.

Punjab Chiefs' College Lahore (Aitchison College)

In 1886 an India-wide competition was announced for the design of the main building of the College (Vandal and Vandal 2006: 169). A total of 29 anonymous submissions received by the selection committee were narrowed down to two: *Justicia* for its “unusually pleasing and graceful” elevation and *Non nobis solum* for its efficient “ground plan and general arrangement of buildings” (Glover 2008: 72). The first scheme was jointly conceived by Bhai Ram Singh and John L. Kipling, while the second was from Swinton Jacobs, the author of the famous *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details* (Glover 2008: 72; Bryant 2020: 7; Vandal and Vandal 2006: 172). After much deliberation, it was decided that Jacob’s plans were to be adjusted to accommodate the elevations and architectural features of the scheme submitted by Singh and Kipling (Fig. 11).

The main building included the main hall, a library and reading room, a science laboratory, a playroom, a theatre or speech room, and classrooms along with offices (Latif 1892: 297). The composition appeared as a three-tiered building with the centralized hall, like a church nave with tall neo-Gothic clerestory windows (Bryant 2020: 7). Rows of classrooms formed the second tier and the veranda completed the composition. Octagonal turrets based on the Sufi shrine in Multan (Bryant 2020: 7) and surmounted by domes marked the central block’s comers, and the domed octagonal tower at the center of the building featured a large bronze clock manufactured in England (Glover 2008: 72). The central dome had a composition of smaller domes around it to control the proportioning and visual effect of the composition. Other design sources include the pre-Mughal *chattris*, the Mughal-inspired *jalli* work, shallow-relief patterns in the brickwork and the marble *jharoka*

(overhanging enclosed balcony). The exposed red brick façade, with its elaborate brick detailing, reflects the finesse of woodcarving which was Ram Singh's forte (Fig. 12).

The "Indo-Saracenic" style of the main building with its "picturesque mélange of 'oriental' and 'Muhammadan' features that worked together to evoke an ecumenical 'Indic' building" (Glover 2008: 72) is in complete consonance with the genesis of the College, linked to the "civilizing mission" of the Raj.

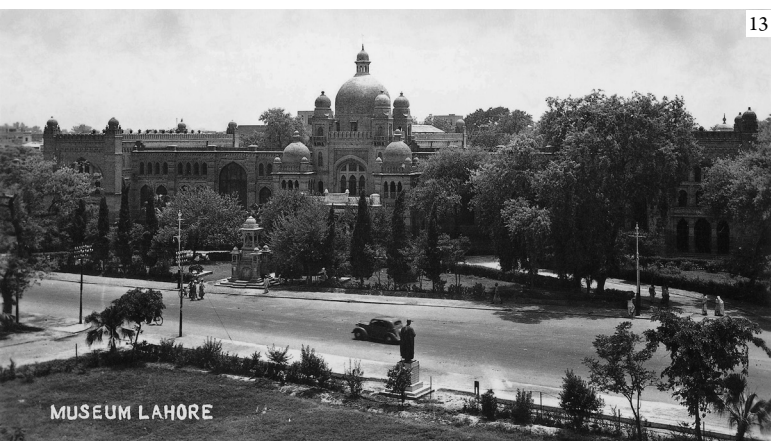
Lahore Central Museum and Technical Institute Lahore (Lahore Museum)

The origin of the Museum and the Technical Institute can be traced back to the first Punjab Exhibition of 1864, and its aim was to develop and promote the arts and industries of the Province (Latif 1892: 273). A building in the "English Belgian Gothic" style (Bryant 2020: 4) was hastily constructed on The Mall to hold the exhibition. After the exhibition, the building became home to Lahore Central Museum, and from 1875 it was also Kipling's place of work. In his dual role as the curator of the Museum and the Principal of Mayo School, Kipling encouraged the amalgamation of the two institutions (Chaudhry 1998: 271). The School, constructed a decade earlier, was connected to the purpose-built premises of the Museum and Technical Institute via a carriage portico. They became "indeed part of the same architectural composition" (Latif 1892: 274) (Fig. 13).

The new building, when it opened to the public in 1893, was referred to as "an ornament to the city" (Department of Education 1911: 166). At the opening, the building committee president stated that the building was "wholly designed in the School of Art and principally by Bhai Ram Singh under the superintendence of Mr. Kipling" (Bryant 2020: 8) (Fig. 14).

The Museum housed in the eastern wing was accessed through an intricately carved white marble entranceway, while the western wing, approachable through a separate entrance, included a Lecture Hall, a room for storage of glass slides and for the preparation of gas for the lanterns, and two additional rooms that were used by the School of Art for repoussé and blacksmith classes (Department of Education 1911: 166). The Museum originally had three display areas, besides the three-storied vestibule and a library, an office, and a salesroom for the "objects of Punjab art workmanship" (Latif 1892: 273) (Fig. 15).

The exposed red brick Museum building, with its composition of cupolas, was crowned with a 70-foot-high dome that resembled a stupa (Peck 2015: 160). The building façades were subdivided into panels and the plinth, windows, and the parapet were highlighted through the intricate use of ornamental and molded bricks, while *chattris* and cornices were used to accentuate the ends of the building.

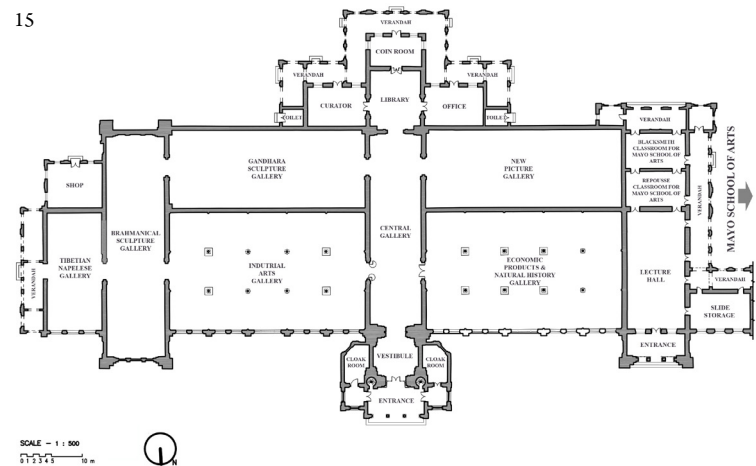


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Fig. 13: Lahore Museum, 1938 (Punjab Archives)

Fig. 14: North Elevation of the Lahore Museum

Fig. 15: Spatial Configuration of the Lahore Museum in 1929



15



14

Punjab University Senate Hall

In late 19th century Lahore, the “civilizing mission” of the Raj, which extolled Western education as the symbol of progress, led to the establishment of many institutions. A Punjabi middle class emerged from them, which disproportionately held sway in public life. One such institution, which allowed entrance to this middle-class milieu, was Punjab University, established in 1869 (Glover 2008: 80). In 1905, Punjab University commissioned Bhai Ram Singh to design the University Hall, which was to be used for University convocations and examinations (Department of Education 1911: 45). The foundation stone records Bhai Ram Singh as the architect of the building, and, according to Pervaiz and Sajida Vandal (2006: 109), it is the only example from the colonial era “where a building has been credited to the native architect” (Fig. 16).

The Senate Hall building, designed in the “Mughal Style” (Department of Education 1911: 45), stands across the Mall from the Lahore Museum and the Mayo School. The building, with its generous setback from the road, had a centrally placed portico and vestibule. The building consisted of a large main hall with double-storied wings



Fig. 16: Punjab University Senate Hall (Punjab Archives)

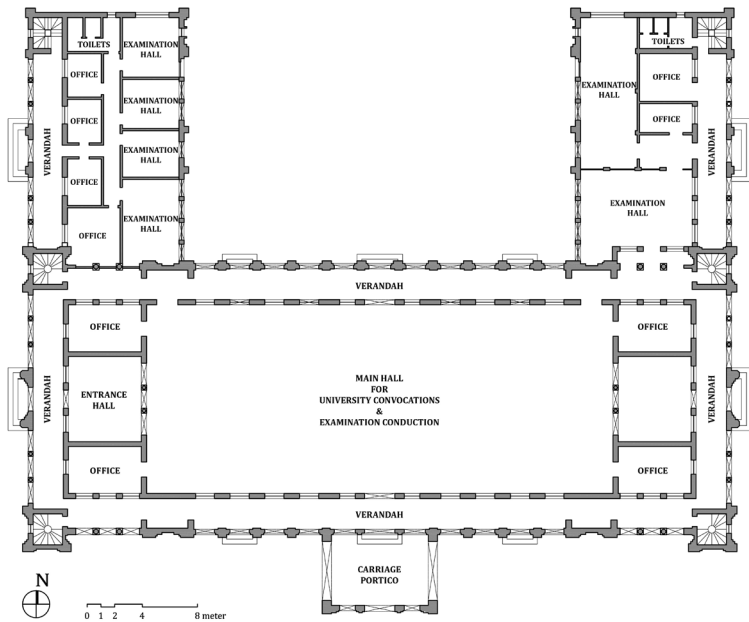
attached to both its east and west ends and surrounded by a two-storied verandah on all sides (Department of Education 1911: 45; Vandal and Vandal 2006: 212). In 1935, two wings were added at the eastern and western ends, which gave the building its current U-shape (Fig. 17).

For the façade, Bhai Ram Singh created a compositional masterpiece by employing the same vocabulary that he had developed for the Khalsa College’s main building in Amritsar (Vandal and Vandal 2006: 213) (Fig. 18).

For the building’s central vestibule, he designed a 65-foot-tall domed tower that proudly featured a large clock, a prominent symbol of British technology, while the verandahs on either side of the tower were embellished with wooden balustrades and terracotta *jallis* in the multi-foiled arched openings. He highlighted the eastern and western wings as well as the corners of the buildings by increasing their height and capping them with domed *chattris*, as well as by adorning them with *jharokas* supported on sandstone brackets. Additionally, for this highly articulated façade, Singh created a textured brick surface by employing different sized bricks in conjunction with ornamental and molded bricks.

Fig. 17: Spatial Configuration of Punjab University Senate Hall

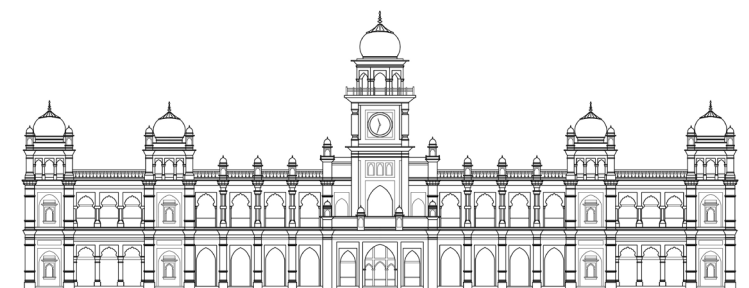
Fig. 18: South Elevation of Punjab University Senate Hall



Bhai Ram Singh Mediating an Identity for the City of Lahore

The projects discussed above place Bhai Ram Singh, passingly mentioned in Colonial writings, as one of the key players in transforming 19th century Lahore. Disassociating Kipling’s role in molding Singh and directing the Arts and Crafts movement in Lahore would be injudicious; however, negating Singh’s contributions towards mediating an identity for Lahore is also unwarranted.

As pointed out earlier, Colonial and later writings show that the British were by then strong advocates of the “Indo-Saracenic” style, especially for the public buildings that were to be used by the natives. However, in Lahore, the beginning of the “Indo-Saracenic” style is marked by the arrival of Kipling in the city and the Mayo School’s collaborative design by his mentor and protégé Bhai Ram Singh.



Furthermore, and as mentioned above, although Kipling was aware of the potential of Lahore's brickwork, he favored the stucco plaster and fresco work of the Mughals. Therefore, it can be argued that the exposed and ornamented brick details that Singh applied to his architecture were his idea and consequently led to the evolution of the Lahori Indo-Saracenic. This argument further gains strength when one considers his hereditary background in carpentry and his proclivity for teasing out of brickwork the carved texture of wood.

Another accomplishment of Singh, a native artisan, was his command over proportions and geometry. He was skillfully able to reconcile the needs of Western building typologies with traditional elevations by treating them as a compositional whole, something the contemporary British working in India were mostly incapable of. This claim is further supported by the images of two 19th century buildings seen side by side in figure 2: the elevation of Aitchison college designed by Singh (bottom left) appears as an euphony of the central dome and smaller cupolas perched at the center of the main façade, and the eye flows from the higher point to the lower in a triangular composition. Purdon façade for the King Edward Medical College building (bottom right), with its high corner domes, high ogee arched niches, slightly Gothic-esque, framing the fenestration, and the subordinate central entrance lacks the graceful flow of elements which is a trademark of traditional Indian architecture. These therefore reveal a native mediating the "Indo-Saracenic" style while maintaining the traditional aesthetics of proportionality, compared to a British attempt to combine multiple elements, but failing to articulate them as a proportioned whole. It can be argued that the British, who were not convinced that order and proportioning systems existed in India's traditional architecture, took immense liberties in taking fragmented elements and pasting them wherever they saw fit, supported in this task by Jacob's *Portfolio*.

If one attempts to postulate a comparison between Jacob and Singh, both working under the Indo-Saracenic dictum, their approaches appear different too. Jacob kept an upper hand dictating the terms and conditions of applying the heritage that the British were apparently salvaging. On the other hand, Singh, while working within a colonial system, used his own local knowledge to grow beyond the Indo-Saracenic style as practiced by the British. This argument further gains credence when one looks at the aforementioned anonymous design competition for Punjab Chiefs College, where the façade entry of an unknown native artisan (Singh) was favored over that of a well-known British architect working in the Indo-Saracenic style. As the competition was anonymous, it's reasonable to assume that the façade that appealed to the selection committee offered compositional clarity and proportional harmony and was considered to be more in tune with the traditional architecture of the land.

While debating the identity for 19th century Lahore, the scales further tilt in favor of Singh when one looks at his independent commissions, especially after Kipling's exit from Lahore's scene in 1893. Projects such as the Punjab University Senate Hall and Library buildings, the Queen Mary College, and the Dayanand Anglo Vedic College in Lahore and the Khalsa College in Amritsar carry a distinctive imprint of Bhai Ram Singh; expressed both through the masterful use of exposed brick, and via their geometry, proportions, and ornamentation. These buildings are not only a testament to the growing acumen of Bhai Ram Singh as an architect, but also to his belief that buildings should be representative of the cultural identity of both the people and the place.

Bhai Ram was an aesthete, a term reserved only for the British during colonial times, and his encounter with Kipling probably only strengthened his capabilities.

Echoes of the Lahori Indo-Saracenic style, which has its roots in Bhai Ram Singh's work, still reverberate today and can be seen in all the contemporary public buildings and even the residential architecture of Lahore.

Conclusion

The "Indo-Saracenic" style propagated in the Colony was the British way of letting the natives know that they, the natives, were incapable of reconciling themselves with their own heritage. This idea is refuted by studying the works of Bhai Ram Singh, who was able to go beyond this Indo-Saracenic style and avoid producing a mere caricature of Indian architectural heritage. His knowledge of the ordering and proportioning system, inherent to traditional Indian architecture, is visible in the compositional strength and ornamental details that he applied to his exposed brick buildings. His work un-substantiates the *Jeypore Portfolio*, which propagated the use of traditional building elements as mere ornamentation, a concept diametrically opposed to the traditional ordering system of architectural details. Furthermore, his buildings are proof that inspiration from the past can respect the architectural order in its entirety without fragmenting it.

Is Bhai Ram Singh then an anomaly, a singular instance in the history of British rule in India? Although there were other innately talented people like him, they were a meager handful who left their mark on the Indian Colonial architecture and, in Singh's case, on the Lahori landscape. They transcended the Indo-Saracenic style, brought their local skill and knowledge to light, and left the British with no choice but to acknowledge their prowess, with miserly undertones. This assertion is supported by the fact, mentioned in this paper and stated by Pervaiz Vandal and Sajida Vandal (2006), that the foundation stone recording Bhai Ram Singh as the architect of Punjab University Senate hall is the only instance where a native was credited

with designing a Colonial building. However, the question remains whether Bhai Ram Singh's architectural approach in the 19th century should be called "Indo-Saracenic", or whether the time is ripe to re-appropriate the nomenclature and free the 19th century Lahori architecture from the shackles of residual Colonialism.

His legacy continues, and the red exposed brick architecture of today's Lahore still somehow re-evokes the 19th century as shaped by Bhai Ram Singh.

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