The *rekhta* of architecture: the development of 'Islamic' art history in Urdu, c.1800-1950*

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Introduction

This essay offers a contribution to the 'history of art history' beyond—though not, as we will see, without—Europe.[1] The focus is on publications in Urdu, a major South Asian language that served as the chief lingua franca of colonial India at a time when it also became the main prose language of South Asian Muslims. This sense of dialogue between British and Indian scholars is important to establish from the outset. For not only did Urdu art historical writing develop through close engagements (and direct translations) of English (and occasionally French) works. The rise of Urdu as a language of learned prose and the introduction of printing were also outcomes of the cultural traffic of empire. Art history in Urdu was therefore part of a larger pattern of intellectual exchange that altered the ways in which Indian Muslims not only conceived their own past but also connected themselves to a shared heritage with Muslims elsewhere. The notion of a religiously defined 'Islamic' art history was crucial to this larger agenda that distinguished Urdu art history from nationalist formulations of 'Indian' art.[2]

[1] For important contributions to this field, see Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, 'The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field', *The Art Bulletin*, 85: 1, 2003, 152–184 and the discussion thereof in Yuka Kadoi, '20 Years After "The Mirage of Islamic Art": Marginalising Persian Art, Reinventing World Art', *Journal of Art Historiography* 28 (2023). See also Ahmet Ersoy, 'Architecture and the Search for Ottoman Origins in the Tanzimat Period', *Muqarnas*, 24, 2007, 79–102; Mohammad Gharipour, ed, *The Historiography of Persian Architecture*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015; Robert Hillenbrand, 'The Scramble for Persian Art: Pope and his Rivals', in Yuka Kadoi, ed, *Arthur Upham Pope and A New Survey of Persian Art*, Leiden: Brill, 2016; Yuka Kadoi and Iván Szántó, eds, *The Shaping of Persian Art: Collections and Interpretations of the Art of Islamic Iran and Central Asia*, Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013; and Stephen Vernoit, ed, *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2000. Comparatively, on non-Western art historiography, see Wenny Teo, ed, 'Modern and Contemporary Chinese Art: Historiographic Reflections', guest edited issue of *Journal of Art Historiography* 10, 2014.

[2] For fuller discussion of conceptions of 'Islam' in art history, see Wendy M. K. Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art? Between Religion and Perception*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

While the focus here will be on Urdu, we will also touch on Middle Eastern Arabic accounts of Islamic art from the same period, both as points of connection and comparison to developments in India. For as we will see, Urdu art history developed through dialogue with European, Indian nationalist, and Middle Eastern studies of art. The gradual outcome was the development of what was explicitly framed as an 'Islamic' (*islami*) art history in Urdu, a conception which was not merely the projection of European authors. Instead, the language was deliberately adopted by Indian Muslim authors to recover their distinct artistic heritage as Muslims in India and at the same time to link themselves to a wider 'Islamic civilisation', particularly in the Arab Middle East.[3]

Rather than describing these developments through the biological language of 'hybridity', to reflect the dual provenance of the new genre of Urdu architectural history this essay adopts a more literary label: the bilingual portmanteau 'architectural *rekhta*'. Meaning 'mixed' or 'blended', *rekhta* was the name for Urdu before, in apt architectural metonymy, it was renamed after the Red Fort or Sublime Garrison (Urdu-e Mu'ala) in Delhi.[4] This emic conceptual link between the palace of the last Mughal emperors and Urdu as its language points us from the outset to the importance of buildings for Indian Muslim authors who, in adapting the European genre of architectural history, were not mere colonised mimics. Rather, they selectively combined elements of European art historical practice with their own concerns and traditions to produce the 'mixed' new mode of historical writing we will call architectural *rekhta*.

Since the aim here is to chart the development of new Urdu genres in relation to European (and Middle Eastern) genres, it is important to provide clear parameters by defining what is meant by 'architectural history'. For the purposes of this essay, then, architectural history refers to distinct texts, whether books or articles, primarily devoted to the discussion of buildings and their architectonic features, and which include all or some of the following secondary characteristics: appreciation of aesthetic, cultural, or civilisational significance; attention to chronology and measurement; delineation of distinct aspects of style, design, or influence; and the use of visual illustrations. This will allow us to demarcate the Urdu texts discussed below from earlier writings (chiefly in Persian) that featured but did not primarily focus on buildings; still less on *architecture*, which—with its discrete attention to aspects of style, architectonic features, building materials, and

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[3] On the conceptual genealogy of 'Islamic civilisation', see Kevin van Bladel, 'A Brief History of Islamic Civilization from its Genesis in the Late Nineteenth Century to its Institutional Entrenchment', *Al-ʿUṣur al-Wusṭa* 28, 1, 2020: 150–173.

[4] On the linguistic origins, literary development and subsequent re-naming of *rekhta* as Urdu, see Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001.

so on—is distinct from the more general discussion of a building or buildings in aggregate.

Technologies, contexts, and collusions

Before turning to specific texts, it is important to recognise the technological adaptations that paved the way for the printed and illustrated Urdu book, because these adaptations formed the infrastructural basis of architectural *rekhta*. After the East India Company and Protestant missionaries jointly introduced Indian Muslims to typography in Calcutta around 1800, lithography was inadvertently introduced in turn, having been initially used by the East India Company as a means of reproducing maps. As local entrepreneurs recognised its potential to reproduce Arabic-script calligraphy, lithography subsequently became the preferred means of printing Urdu.[5] The easy inclusion of images that was also part of lithography's versatility meant that many lithographic books were illustrated, a development which in the mid-nineteenth century unfolded in both India and Iran.[6] Although chromolithography (or oleography) was rarely used for producing images in Urdu books (as distinct from popular stand-alone prints), by the 1900s a small number of Indian Muslim publishers also adopted newer technologies of image reproduction, including collotype for the printing of photographs.[7] These imported technologies of the image played an important part in the development of Urdu art history, showing how its 'mixed' or *rekhta* profile was a feature of the medium no less than the message.

These 'hard' infrastructures of textual and visual knowledge were accompanied by similar mixes of the 'soft' semantic dimensions of words and images. We will see obvious examples with translations of entire texts, but there was also the subtler adaptation of key concept-words via the use of calque neologisms, reposing earlier terms, or direct loan-words—whether 'civilisation' (*tamaddon*), 'heritage' (*warisa*), or even 'tile' (*ta'il*), and 'art' (*art*). This terminological traffic was two-way, as European writings on Islamic art similarly adopted terms

[5] Sayyid Muqit al-Hasan, *Kalkatta ke Qadim Urdu Mataba' aur unki Matbu'at: Ek Tazkira*, Calcutta: 'Usmaniyya Buk Dipu, 1982; and Graham Shaw, 'Calcutta: Birthplace of the Indian Lithographed Book', *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* 27, 1998: 89–111.
[6] Nile Green, 'Stones from Bavaria: Iranian Lithography in its Global Contexts', *Iranian Studies* 43: 3, 2010: 305–331; Amanda Lanzillo, 'Printing Princely Modernity: Lithographic Design in Muslim-ruled Princely States', *South Asian Popular Culture* 16: 2–3, 2018: 245–252; Ulrich Marzolph, *Narrative Illustration in Persian Lithographed Books*, Leiden: Brill, 2001; and David J. Roxburgh, Mary McWilliams, Farshid Emami, and Mira Xenia Schwerda, eds, *Technologies of the Image: Art in 19th-Century Iran*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Art Museums, 2017.
[7] On such (mainly Hindu) popular oleographs, see Partha Mitter, 'Mechanical Reproduction and the World of the Colonial Artist', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 36: 1 & 2, 2000, 1–32, and Christopher Pinney, 'The Nation (Un)pictured? Chromolithography and "Popular" Politics in India, 1878–1995', *Critical Inquiry* 23: 4, 1997, 834–867.

from Arabic, such as *mihrab*, *muqarnas*, and *minar(et)*. Drawings too were products of exchange. The training of Indian artists in techniques of draughtsmanship favoured by East India Company engineers not only enabled Indians to produce illustrations for British surveyors and tourists; it also established a cadre of local illustrators for subsequent Urdu architectural books that used this new mixed style of line drawing that was easily reproduced through lithography.

There were other cross-fertilisations too. With its debt to the earlier development of archaeology, the monumentalism that emerged as a key feature of the study of Islamic art in India (and the Middle East) in the early twentieth century meant that most Urdu publications focused on major buildings, especially those built by the Mughals. Consequently, the publications surveyed in the following pages focused overwhelmingly on architectural history rather than painting or applied arts, for reasons discussed in the conclusions. Yet, like other aspects of the dialogical discourse of architectural *rekhta*, this was not merely an external imposition of colonial concerns. Long before the British rose to power in India, Indo-Persian poetry and prose texts celebrated buildings as enduring 'memory spaces'— albeit, as we will see, in ways which were quite distinct from the new Urdu genre of art history that emerged from the mid-nineteenth century.[8] Here, monumentalism functioned not only in the sense of scale, but also in the etymological sense of a monument as 'something that reminds'.

This coalescence of concerns, both Muslim and British, around the monuments of the Mughals and earlier Muslim dynasties emerged from the complexities of life in the colony. Because the development of 'Islamic' art history in Urdu coincided with—and responded to—the promotion of a model of 'Indian' art history by such prominent figures as Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and A.K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) that was framed in exclusively Buddhist, Hindu, and occasionally Jain terms. Even as late as 1927, Coomaraswamy's influential *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* managed the considerable feat of excluding even the Taj Mahal let alone lesser Mughal buildings from the story of 'Indian' art. Indeed, the Mughals only received passing mention to brush away any question of their external influence on properly 'Indian' paintings of the Rajput kingdoms.[9] In

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[8] On such precolonial approaches to architecture as bastions of collective memory, see Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

[9] A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, London, Edward Goldston, 1927. Judging by his publication record, Coomaraswamy only took a belated interest in Islamic art works later in the United States, particularly after 1933 when his position at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts became 'Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian, and Mohammedan Art'. See James S. Crouch, *A Bibliography of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy*, New Delhi: Indira Gandhi, National Center for the Arts, 2002 and Laura Weinstein, 'My Dear Holmes: Arthur Upham Pope and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston', in Yuka Kadoi, ed, *Arthur Upham Pope and 'A New Survey of Persian Art'*, 308–325.

contrast to such exclusivist and dismissive approaches to India's Muslim artistic
heritage, a series of British scholars wrote admiring and enthusiastic studies of
Islamic architecture in both India and the Middle East, particularly James Fergusson
(1808–1886), James Burgess (1832-1916), and Ernest Richmond (1874–1955), along
with the French Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) in his laudatory *La Civilisation des
Arabes* (1884). We will see these works being translated into Urdu as buttressing
external supports for Indian Muslims' own celebratory defence of their artistic
heritage, along with its ties (*pace* Le Bon) to a wider 'civilisation' (a term rendered as
the neologism *tamaddon*).

Inevitably, such translations brought with them considerable baggage from
earlier conceptualisations of European architectural history. There was the keen
attention to establishing a firm chronology as the basis for subsequent historicist
analysis by way of stylistic developments, influences, and patronage. There was also
the European focus on religious and royal buildings, such as churches, palaces and
sepulchres, which found its natural counterpart in India's great mosques, 'red forts',
and mausolea. Gradually this cross-fertilisation seeded the conceptualisation of an
'Islamic art' as a counterpart to 'Christian art', replacing prior formulations of 'Arab'
(though not 'Persian') art.[10] Another influence was the determined Victorian
medievalism that led Fergusson 'to dismiss all post-medieval architecture as a
sham', priorities similarly exported from France to Egypt via the institutionalisation
of Viollet-le-Duc's corresponding medievalism, particularly through the leading
role of Max Herz (1856-1919)—a proponent of Viollet-le-Duc's stylistic restoration of
churches—on the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe.[11]

Yet these imports met a ready audience among Indian Muslims for whom
these were far from alien priorities. Indo-Muslim historical writing placed much—
albeit less—emphasis on calendrical precision. While out of genealogical concern for
the true lineages of saints and kings, this was primarily for people rather than
buildings, short poetic chronograms recording the completion of notable structures
were nonetheless a feature of manuscripts and buildings alike. The memorative
notion of a 'monument' similarly had a Muslim discursive equivalent in the Persian
and Urdu term *asar* (from the Arabic *athar*, 'remnants, traces, or remains of the
past'), a key term in precolonial Muslim antiquarianism that was adopted in
colonial period accounts of architecture in turn.[12] But intellectual exchange with

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[10] Watkin, *Rise of Architectural History*, 77–80, 105–111.

[11] István Ormos, 'Preservation and Restoration: The Methods of Max Herz Pasha, Chief
Architect of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, 1890–1914', in Jill
Edwards, ed, *Historians in Cairo: Essays in Honor of George Scanlon*, Cairo, The American
University in Cairo Press, 2002, 123–153.

[12] The *locus classicus* is the Arabic *Kitab al-Athar al-Baqiyya 'an al-Qurun al-Khaliyya*
('Remaining Signs of Past Centuries') by al-Biruni (973– after 1050), but the tradition of
athar/asar writing continued and evolved over subsequent centuries. See for example Nir

European scholars provided *athar* with a new range of meanings, particularly those
that clustered around the European concept of the monument – new meanings
exemplified in the Arabic title of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de
l'Art Arabe that sponsored them as the Lajnat Hifz al-Athar al-'Arabiyya.[13]
Attention to religious, royal and aristocratic buildings had also long been a feature
of Indo-Persian court histories, travelogues, and urban encomia. But here,
importantly, the similarities and continuities ceased. Because buildings—still less
their architectural components—had rarely formed the sole subject of Indo-Persian
books, whose illustrations of buildings invariably included people, as opposed to
buildings without figural decoration.

      Other aspects of European architectural historical practice that found their
way to India were external to texts, such as ties to architectural practice through
providing historical inspiration for new building designs.[14] In the Indian case, this
involved the 'Indo-Saracenic' style that, drawing on the publications of Burgess and
Fergusson, blended Victorian Gothic with Mughal and regional Indo-Muslim
architectural forms.[15] Enabling these practical potentialities were finely reproduced
drawings, plates, and plans, in the case of Fergusson's pioneering monograph on
the Bijapur Sultanate made by the military engineer 'Captain P.D. Hart, assisted by
A. Cumming and native draughtsmen' and in the case of Burgess's volume on
Gujarat incorporating new visual technologies such as collotype.[16]

      Yet British architects were far from the only designers of buildings in this
period, particularly in the Muslim-ruled princely states. The establishment of
engineering colleges at Madras (1794), Roorkee (1847), and Hyderabad (1869) reared
a series of Indian professional architects, including Muslims and other readers of

Shafir, 'Nabulusi Explores the Ruins of Baalbek: Antiquarianism in the Ottoman Empire
during the Seventeenth Century', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 75, 2022, 1–49, with the term *athar* on
19 and 37.

[13] For fuller discussion of the institutional and intellectual contexts of this semantic shift, see
Alaa El-Habashi, 'Athar to Monuments: The Interventions of the Comité de Conservation
des Monuments de l'Art Arabe', PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2001.

[14] David Watkin, *The Rise of Architectural History*, London: Architectural Press, 1980.

[15] Pradip Kumar Das, *Henry Irwin and the Indo-Saracenic Movement Reconsidered*, New Delhi:
Partridge, 2014, with the impact of engineering discussed on 87–97; and Thomas R. Metcalf,
An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj, Berkeley: University of California
Press, 1989.

[16] James Fergusson, ed, *Architectural Illustrations of the Principal Mahometan Buildings of
Beejapore*, London: John Murray, 1859; and James Burgess, *On the Muhammadan Architecture
of Bharoch, Cambay, Dholka, Champanir and Mahmudabad in Gujarat*, London: W. Griggs &
Sons, 1896. On Fergusson's combined impact on architectural appreciation and practice, see
Watkin, *Rise of Architectural History*, 82–85. On the earlier importance of the oleograph for
Owen Jones's hugely influential study of architectural decoration in al-Andalus, see Kathryn
Ferry, 'Printing the Alhambra: Owen Jones and Chromolithography', *Architectural History* 46,
2003, 175–188.

Urdu who wrote, and read, such manuals as *Dastur al-Bana'* ('Rules of Building',
1869) and the journal, *Indyan Arkitekt* ('Indian Architect', founded 1884).[17] Blending
British engineering techniques with Indian tastes and skills, these too were
examples of architectural *rekhta*. Museums also played a part in this function of
architectural history as present-day inspiration, albeit more in the metropole than
the colony through the great collection of medieval and early-modern Muslim South
Asian applied and decorative arts at the South Kensington Museum (now the
Victoria and Albert Museum).[18] In a contrast whose consequences we will consider
in the conclusions, there was no comparably large collection in India, though there
were notable collections in the princely states, particularly those at the Baroda
Museum, assembled from 1939 by Hermann Goetz (1898-1976), and Hyderabad's
Salar Jung Museum, though the latter did not open to the public till 1951. There was
also the small but noteworthy collection at the Prince of Wales Museum (in 1998
renamed the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya) in Bombay (now
Mumbai). Completed in 1915, the building was itself aptly designed in Indo-
Saracenic style by John Begg (1866-1937), who had dispatched his assistant George
Wittet on tour of Bijapur, brought to prominence by Fergusson, and who also used
Burgess's monograph on the Gujarat sultanate as his other Indian inspiration.[19]

  The export to India of British practices of architectural history also had an
institutional dimension by way of the concerns for preservation inaugurated with
the founding by William Morris and others of the Society for the Protection of
Ancient Buildings in 1877. Such practices were also institutionalised in Egypt via the
aforementioned Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, founded
in 1881 by the Khedive Tawfiq Pasha (r.1879-92) in response to European scholarly
protests about his urban modernisation-via-demolition scheme.[20] Here, both
problem and solution were bound up with Europe, with the Khedive's remodelling
of Cairo inspired by Baron Haussmann's remaking of Paris and his subsequent
Comité modelled on the French Commission des monuments historiques.[21] In India,
the conservationist exporter-in-chief was George Nathaniel Curzon (1859-1925)

[17] Amanda Lanzillo, 'Between Industry and Islam: Stonework and Tomb Construction in
Colonial-Era India', *Modern Asian Studies* 55, 5, 2021, 1510–1543.
[18] Note, however, that Indian art of the Islamic period was constituted as a section of South
and Southeast Asia within the Department of Asia, whereas the Middle East (from Spain to
Iran) was displayed and curated as a separate section.
[19] Tim Stanley, with Mariam Rosser-Owen and Stephen Vernoit, 'Epilogue: Islamic Art in
South Kensington', in *Palace and Mosque: The Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art at the Victoria and
Albert Museum*, London: V&A Publications, 2006, 134–137.
[20] For detailed archival examination of the Comité and its *de facto* director, see István Ormos,
Max Herz Pasha (1856–1919): His Life and Career, Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie
Orientale, 2009.
[21] Donald Malcolm Reid, *Contesting Antiquity in Egypt: Archaeologies, Museums & the Struggle
for Identities from World War I to Nasser*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2015,
271–176.

who, during whose tenure as Viceroy of India between 1899 and 1905, pushed
through the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act of 1904 (prompting the bestowal
of an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal Institute of British Architects).[22] Blending
his own personal interests with the Raj's self-presentation as the heir to the
Mughals, Curzon had a particular concern for the latter's architectural legacy. He
oversaw the restoration of the Taj Mahal; donated a European reproduction of a fine
Cairene lamp to hang over the tomb of Mumtaz Mahal; and arranged with the
Nizam of Hyderabad for a marble screen to be placed round the simple grave of
Aurangzeb (r.1658-1707) in a Sufi shrine in Khuldabad.[23] Ensuing official attention
to Mughal architecture provided a political context for the publication of more
scholarly Urdu studies of Islamic architecture, many of which were the outcome of
partnerships between Muslim authors and colonial officials.

Such, then, were the confluences, contexts, and common technologies that
paved the way for the emergence of architectural history in Urdu as a distinct genre
characterised, as we shall see, by the appreciation of aesthetic, cultural, or
'civilisational' significance; by attention to chronology and measurement; by the
delineation of distinct aspects of style, design, or influence; and by the abundant use
of visual illustrations via the marriage of engineering draughtsmanship,
lithography, and indigenous tastes.

Having recognised this blend of enabling factors, we can now turn to the
texts themselves. In the following survey, we will look at both popular, market-
oriented works and the more scholarly tomes whose publication picked up pace
around 1920, coinciding with both the widening of Muslim university education in
India and the formalizing of a field of 'Islamic' architectural history in Europe.

From precolonial Persian to Company collaborations, c. 1800-1850

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[22] Ravi Prakash Rohtas, 'Archaeological Policy of the Raj Era, 1900–1923', *Proceedings of the
Indian History Congress* 62, 2001: 920–929; and Watkin, *Rise of Architectural History*, 114–115.
[23] On the lamp, based on an illustration Curzon had seen in Émile Prise d'Avennes's *L'Art
Arabe d'apres les monuments du Kaire* (1869–1877) and finally installed at the Taj Mahal in 1909,
see Yuka Kadoi, 'From China to Denmark: A "Mosque Lamp" in Context', *Journal of the
David Collection* 4 (2014), 210–211. However, Curzon was far from the first Briton to make
such a donation to the Taj Mahal. Back in 1829, John Theophilus Boileau (1805–86), the
Company's garrison engineer at Agra, had been involved in the repair of the Taj Mahal,
during which he hanged "strings and strings of ostrich eggs" from the vaulted ceiling. See
Ann Cavendish, 'Major General J.T. Boileau, F.R.S., R.E.', *Journal of the Society for Army
Historical Research* 73, 296, 1995: 225–233, with the eggs on 228. On the wider use of such
decorative eggs in Indian and Mediterranean buildings, see Nile Green, 'Ostrich Eggs and
Peacock Feathers: Sacred Objects as Cultural Exchange between Christianity and Islam', *Al-
Masāq* 18, 1, 2006: 27–78. On Aurangzeb's grave, see Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism,
History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*, Albany: State University of New York, 1992,
223–225.

To point to the development of art (and especially architectural) history as a new Urdu genre in the century after 1850 is not to say that the rich earlier literary culture of Indo-Persian had ignored the discussion of buildings or other art forms. Far from it. The genres of history (*tarikh*), biography (*tazkira*), travel writing (*safarnama*), narrative poetry (*masnavi*), and the paired poetic genre of urban encomium and urban misfortune (*shahr-ashob*) had all invoked or described art objects and especially buildings. But these were not single texts devoted to either individual art works or to buildings as historical, analytical, or categorical objects of attention in their own right.[24] Discussing several works focusing on Delhi from the early nineteenth century, the distinguished Urdu literature scholar C.M. Naim has noted how, while many buildings were listed, 'descriptions are extremely brief. Architectural and historical details do not matter'.[25]

This was less a lack of interest than the expression of a cultural logic by which buildings were primarily of significance insofar as they related to important *Kulturträger*, particularly the saints, poets, and sultans around whom historical memory was configured in the aforementioned genres in which buildings and other symbolic items of material culture were mentioned.[26] Consequently, Indo-Persian *tarikh*, *tazkira*, *safarnama*, and *masnavi* texts devoted far more attention to significant persons, often detailing their vertical and horizontal genealogies to explain the webs of social and spiritual relations that enabled readers to navigate cities as living human environments rather than aesthetic-historic ones.[27] Similarly, the *shahr-ashob* was concerned with urban misfortune as either human misery or the degradation of manners more than with the systematic documentation of architectural destruction. Conversely, the urban encomium celebrated flourishing cities as alive with the dazzling notables and diverse subject peoples of rulers to whom such panegyrics were often presented.[28] Their depictions of living buildings could not be further from the focus on emptied monuments that characterised European architectural histories.

There was also the issue of illustration. Being hand-produced manuscripts before the Indo-Muslim adoption of printing gained momentum in the 1840s, few of these Persian texts included the illustrations that would become a feature of Urdu architectural history. Producing (let alone reproducing) manuscript paintings required the costly additional skills of artists rather than individual copyists of text.

[24] For a discussion of several such works, see C.M. Naim, 'Syed Ahmad and his Two Books Called "Asar-al-Sanadid"', *Modern Asian Studies*, 45:3, 2011, 15–23.
[25] Naim, 'Syed Ahmad', 19.
[26] Green, *Making Space*.
[27] R.D. McChesney, *Four Central Asian Shrines: A Socio-Political History of Architecture*, Leiden: Brill, 2021.
[28] See the discussion of the celebrated *Moraqqa'-ye Delhi*, written in the 1730s, in Chanchal B. Dadlani, *From Stone to Paper: Architecture as History in the Late Mughal Empire*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018, 73–80.

This pre-print scarcity of images helps explain the huge demand for illustrated
prints as well as books that followed the introduction to India of lithography then
oleography.[29] As Abbas Amanat has written about the contemporaneous appeal of
lithographic illustrations in Iran (many imported from Bombay), 'these were the
earliest images seen by the Iranian public (beyond manuscript illustrations of
Persian literature accessible only to the privileged elite).'[30]

However, between these popular prints and prior Persian manuscripts stood
an interstitial period which was crucial to the emergence of architectural history in
Urdu after 1850. As Nicolas Roth has shown through his comparative research on
North Indian watercolour paintings and Urdu narrative poems from the 1790s, 'a
heightened interest in the representation and reproduction of architecture across
media', whereas 'earlier treatments of architecture tend[ed] to provide little stylistic
or formal specificity, with architectural subject matter ultimately used to further
poetic goals'.[31] From around 1800, there was also a new political context at play. In
1803, the East India Company assumed administrative control over the Delhi region,
including Agra.[32] This brought about a new form of 'Anglo-Muslim' education via
the inception of the Delhi (or 'Anglo-Arabic') College in 1828 with a syllabus in
Arabic, Persian, English, and later Urdu—the latter often a medium for translations
of English textbooks.[33] Another consequence was that, by the 1830s, British visitors
to both Delhi and Agra began buying sufficient numbers of paintings and prints by
local artists—and pioneer lithographers—to create demand for the spread of such
skills. These were not quite traditional paintings, but rather a blend of tastes and
skills informed by the Delhi school of late Mughal painting and the

[29] Mitter, 'Mechanical Reproduction', and for a later period, Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, *The Friends of God: Sufi Saints in Islam: Popular Poster Art from Pakistan*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006.
[30] Abbas Amanat, 'Court Patronage and Public Space: Abu'l-Hasan Sani' al-Mulk and the Art of Persianizing the Other in Qajar Iran', in Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung, eds, *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, London: Routledge, 2011, 431. More fully, see Roxburgh et al, *Technologies of the Image*. On the material links between Indian, Iranian, and European lithography, see Green, 'Stones from Bavaria'.
[31] Nicolas Roth, 'Verbal (Re)constructions: Reading Architecture in the Urdu Masnavī', *Journal18: A Journal of Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture*, 11, 2021: https://www.journal18.org/5553.
[32] On subsequent early nineteenth century preservation efforts of Company officials and engineers toward the Taj Mahal and other Mughal monuments, see Anne-Julie Etter, 'Antiquarian Knowledge and Preservation of Indian Monuments at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century', in Daud Ali and Indra Sengupta, eds, *Knowledge Production, Pedagogy, and Institutions in Colonial India*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 75–95.
[33] Margrit Pernau, ed, *The Delhi College: Traditional Elites, the Colonial State and Education Before 1857*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.

draughtsmanship of Company military engineers.[34] This tourist market reared a
generation of Indian architectural artists whose skill-set was in place when
illustrated books about the buildings of Agra and Delhi began being issued by
Delhi's Muslim-owned publishing houses from around 1850.

Another interstitial development was textual, comprising a series of Persian
and Urdu descriptions of the Mughal buildings of Agra which were composed in
the first half of the nineteenth century. Over the course of 224 folios, one such
Persian manuscript work, *Tafrih al-'Imarat* ('The Pleasure of Buildings'), detailed the
Mughal palaces, mosques, mausolea, and gardens of Agra, paying particular
attention to their inscriptions.[35] As a student at the recently-founded Agra
Government College, the author, Lalah Sil Chand, was sponsored to compile it by
James Lushington, who was serving as the East India Company's collector and
magistrate for Agra in 1825-26. *Tafrih al-'Imarat* was by no means the only such
work. Several other manuscript accounts were written about Mughal Agra, and the
Taj Mahal especially, recording the many Arabic and Persian inscriptions on
gateways, mosques, and gravestones, as well as around the 'luminous burial
garden' (*rawza-ye monawara*) of Mumtaz Mahal.[36]

This attention to inscriptions not only anticipated what we will see as a
continuing interest by later Muslim readers in the Persian poems and Quranic
verses that added multiple layers of meaning to such buildings. It also prefigured
the subsequent key role of learned Indians (and elsewhere Egyptians and Iranians)
with Arabic and Persian educations as epigraphic specialists enabling European
studies of Islamic architecture, not least through providing information on patrons
and construction dates (the latter often concealed in chronogrammatic verses based

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[34] On this 'tourist trade', see C.M. Naim, 'Syed Ahmad', 13–14. For examples, see the
illustrations of Fatehpur Sikri, the Taj Mahal other buildings in Agra produced between
c.1808 and 1820 in William Dalrymple, ed, *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India
Company*, London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2020, 148–152 and J.P. Losty, 'The Delhi Palace
in 1846: A Panoramic View by Mazhar 'Ali Khan', in Rosemary Crill, Susan Stronge, and
Andrew Topsfield, eds, *Arts of Mughal India: Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, Ahmadabad:
Mapin Publishing, 2004, 286–302. On the wider context, see Geoff Quilley, 'The Cries of
India: Colonial Power, Classification, and the Diffusion of Knowledge', in *British Art and the
East India Company*, Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020, 201–242. On the traffic in
manuscript descriptions and illustrations between late Mughal elites and French and British
Company officials, see Dadlani, *From Stone to Paper*, chapters 4 and 5, particularly the
discussion of the 1815 *'Amal-e Salih*, a Persian manuscript history embellished with
architectural illustrations presented by Akbar II (r. 1806–37) to the Company magistrate, J.T.
Roberdean.
[35] Maulavi Abdul Muqtadir, ed, *Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian Manuscripts in the Oriental
Public Library at (Bankipore), Patna*, 34 vols, Patna: Superintendent, Govt. Printing, 1921, vol 7,
208–211 (ms #648). I have not been able to inspect this manuscript directly. An illustrated
manuscript of *Tafrih al-'Imarat* is briefly discussed in Dadlani, *From Stone to Paper*, 169.
[36] British Library, ms IO ISL 4741 and Or. 6558.

on the *abjad* numerological system). The Agra Persian manuscripts, then, were the early forerunners of the *Epigraphia Indica* series initiated by James Burgess in 1882—especially its *Arabic and Persian Supplement* begun in 1907 and subsequently edited by Ghulam Yazdani (1913–40) and Mawlvi Muhammad Ashraf Hussain (1949–53)—as well as the *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum* directed by the Swiss scholar Max van Berchem (1863–1921) with the aid of such Arab epigraphers as 'Ali Baghat (1858-1924) and Hasan Muhammad al-Hawari (*fl*.1920-40).[37]

The last of the Indian transitional works would become far better known than any of these predecessors, partly through its sheer originality; partly through the fact that it was printed. This was the first edition of *Asar al-Sanadid* ('Relics of the Notables') by Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-98), which was published in 1847 at the Delhi press of *Sayyid al-Akhbar*, an early Urdu newspaper owned by his brother.[38] As the title *Asar al-Sanadid* suggested, its contents brought together descriptions of buildings with biographies of the living and dead 'notables' who made these architectural 'relics' meaningful to Muslim readers, be those notable inhabitants of Delhi princes, saints, courtiers, poets, scholars, musicians, or even such humbler heroes as celebrated kebab-sellers. While continuing the concerns and conventions of earlier Persian works, the rigour and scale of Sayyid Ahmad's book were unprecedented in their attention to a single Indian city (even Delhi). For he not only employed two talented artists who drew in the new 'engineer' style, along with Mawlvi Imam Bakhsh Sahba'i, head of the Persian department at the Company's Delhi College, to read the many difficult inscriptions scattered around the erstwhile capital of various Muslim dynasties. He also made use of an astrolabe to provide more accurate dimensions for some of the 232 buildings he described. This was a marked improvement on the aforementioned Persian account of Agra, which provided rough dimensions along the lines of 'two *kroh* long and one *kroh* wide.'[39] Featuring over 130 illustrations of buildings drawn in European perspective and

[37] On Baghat's career, see Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003, 229–234.

[38] For discussions of this celebrated work, see Dadlani, *From Stone to Paper*, 169–172; Naim, 'Syed Ahmad'; David Lelyveld, 'The Qutb Minar in Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *Asar us-Sanadid*', in Indra Sengupta and Daud Ali, eds, *Knowledge Production, Pedagogy, and Institutions in Colonial India*, New York: Palgrave, 2011, 147–168; and C.W. Troll, 'A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan: *Asar al-Sanadid*', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 104: 2, 1972, 135–146. On the author's other writings on Mughal history and his family ties to the dynasty, see David Lelyveld, 'Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Mughal Past', in A. R. Kidwai, ed., *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: Muslim Renaissance Man of India*, New Delhi: Viva Books, 2016, 153–164.

[39] British Library, ms Or. 6558, f.25r. A *kroh* is 'a road measure of about two miles' (Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1892, 1026).

devoid of people, it is reasonable to claim of *Asar al-Sanadid* that 'no other book
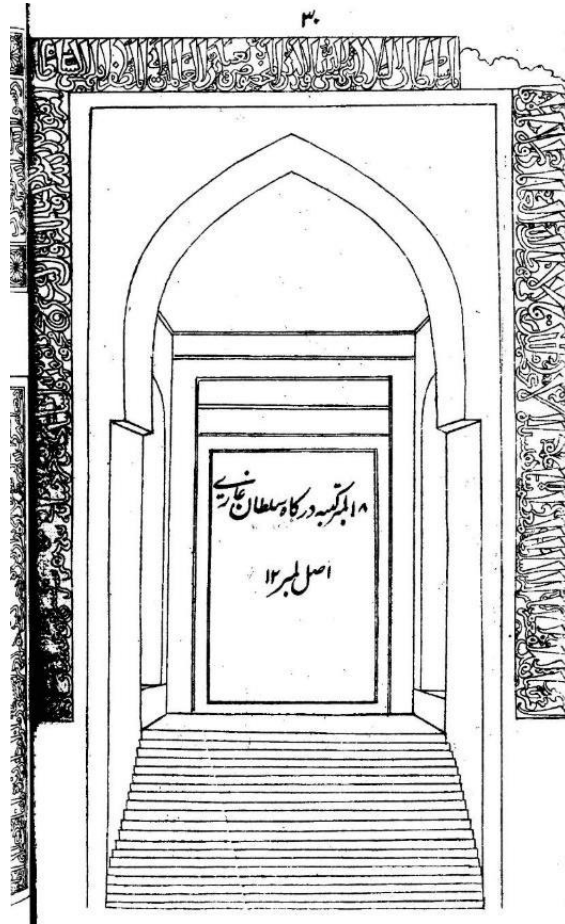quite like it then existed in either Persian or Urdu.'[40]

Figure 1. Epigraphy in its Lithographic Context (from Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar al-Sanadid*, 2nd edition, 1854).

Mughal architecture in the market of print: c.1850-1900

Nearly a decade before this first edition appeared, Sayyid Ahmad had entered the
service of the East India Company as a *sar-rishtidar* (clerk). By 1841 he had been
promoted to the position of *munsif* (subordinate judge) of Fatehpur Sikri, then five
years later of Delhi. During this period, he became increasingly involved with the
circles of British officials who in 1847 founded the Archaeological Society of Delhi.
The stated aims of the society were to investigate 'by means of plans, drawings and
elevation, by inscriptional, traditional and historical researches, and, if possible, by
publications of the ancient remains, both Hindoo and Mahomedan, in and around
Delhi.'[41] To include the learned Indians with whom its British members already
worked closely, the society's meetings were conducted in Urdu. By the summer of

[40] Naim, 'Syed Ahmad', 1.

[41] *Journal of the Archaeological Society of Delhi*, 1850, Appendix, i, cited in Troll, 'A Note', 141.

1852 Sayyid Ahmad had been formally elected a member; thenceforth, he became a
regular participant in its activities.[42] The society's discussions, especially their
attention to chronology as the basis for archaeological history, paved the way for a
second and much revised edition of *Asar al-Sanadid*, which was published in 1854.

Written in the much plainer Urdu style used for the translations issued for
the Delhi College, as well as for the Muslim tracts and sermons that print also made
possible, this second edition also significantly differed in content from its
predecessor. The long chapter on the people of Delhi was cut to focus the book more
squarely on buildings, while oral traditions were largely removed as unreliable
sources. Instead, Sayyid Ahmad drew on a wider range of textual sources, which
now included a translation of an English geography manual and the journals of the
Archaeological Society of Bengal and the Royal Asiatic Society.[43] (The latter
responded by making Sayyid Ahmad an honorary fellow). This enabled greater
chronological detail and precision, as Sayyid Ahmad's historical thinking was
sharpened through discussions with numismatists, such as his judicial colleague in
Delhi, Edward Thomas (1813–86), whom he thanked in his new preface. Published
just after the *first* edition of *Asar al-Sanadid*, Thomas's 1848 study of Ghaznavid
coinage was a pioneering transfer to medieval Indo-Muslim history of the methods
which James Princep (1799–1840) of Calcutta's Asiatic Society had developed to
reconstruct India's pre-Islamic ancient history.[44] With title pages and prefaces in
both Urdu and English, even the format of the second edition testified to its dual
intellectual origins.

If, in C.M. Naim's words, *Asar al-Sanadid* 'emerged out of … the presence of
foreigners in Delhi, and their increasing demand for historical information about the
city', then the book also found a large Indian audience.[45] For, as Urdu commercial
printing took off in the second half of the century, *Asar al-Sanadid* was reissued
numerous times: by Delhi's Gopal Malik in 1876; by the great Lucknow publisher
Naval Kishor in 1876, 1895, and 1900; and by Kanpur's Nami Pres in 1904. Its appeal
in this new print marketplace was helped by its simplified prose style and abundant
illustrations.

The half-century that followed the second edition of Sayyid Ahmad's book
in 1854 also saw the appearance of other lengthy architectural histories in Urdu. Part
of the new culture of popular print, these were not aimed at scholars, whether
Indian or British, but instead at the larger commercial book market that emerged
between 1850 and 1900.

[42] Troll, 'A Note', 142.
[43] Naim, 'Syed Ahmad', 29, 39.
[44] Edward Thomas, 'On the Coins of the Kings of Ghaznī', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*,
9, 1848, 267–386.
[45] Naim, 'Syed Ahmad', 37.

One such popular Urdu work was *Gharabat Nigar* ('Distant Depictions') by the otherwise obscure 'Abd al-Haq, which was completed in Delhi in 1874 and published there two years later.[46] Squeezed into its 180 pages were short descriptions of around 550 buildings, located not only in Delhi but across Punjab, Rajasthan, the Deccan, and Gujarat, thereby incorporating sites in princely states as well as British India. If in this respect 'Abd al-Haq was more ambitious than Sayyid Ahmad—perhaps because he was competing for the same book-buying public— then as a result of cramming more than twice as many buildings into a considerably shorter book, his entries were often (though not always) shorter than Sayyid Ahmad's.[47] Nonetheless, *Asar al-Sanadid* was clearly the model for *Gharabat Nigar*. It was also one of its most regularly cited sources, along with the *Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India*.

'Abd al-Haq also shared his predecessor's empirical concerns. On his very first page, 'Abd al-Haq advertised the reliability of his book, assuring readers that he had drawn on history books written in Persian, English, and Urdu, and had also inspected many of the buildings with his own eyes.[48] As for his goal, he stated that it was to describe India's important historical buildings, be they forts, palaces, pools, bridges, mosques, mausolea, temples, towers, minarets, Sufi shrines, or step-wells.[49] Moreover, he pledged to do so in straightforward and easy-to-understand Urdu. In this, *Gharabat Nigar* was also heir to the second edition of *Asar al-Sanadid*, in which Sayyid Ahmad relinquished the complex Persianised prose of his earlier first edition.

'Abd al-Haq was true to his word, describing the architectural elements of each building he surveyed, mentioning materials (especially when these included marble or semiprecious stones such as agate, or coral) and different decorative techniques, such as carved stone screens (*jali*). But taken to the point of obsessiveness, his particular concern was to provide measurements for each of these elements, whether gateways, minarets, courtyards, or whatever else. The focus was squarely on buildings, then—indeed, on architecture. In a stark contrast to the older genres of the *tarikh* and *tazkira*, humans received little mention (especially the living people who continued to use most of these buildings). When people were

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[46] 'Abd al-Haq Dihlavi, *Gharabat Nigar; bih fazl Qadar Zu al-Jalal Hindustan ki Nami 'Imaraton ka Hal*, Delhi: Akmal al-Mataba'i, 1876. The date of completion is given in the printed colophon on 180. The author is not to be confused with the Mughal era scholar, 'Abd al-Haq Muhadith Dihlavi (1551–1642), whose works included *Akhbar al-Akhyar* ('Reports of the Righteous'), a detailed traditional *tazkira* of Muslim saints and their burial sites.
[47] By contrast to *Gharabat Nigar*'s 180 pages, the 1854 second edition of *Asar al-Sanadid* comprised 317 pages (excluding the English sections), though the former had around 25% more lines of text per page on average, presumably to reduce the page-run and thence cover price.
[48] Dihlavi, *Gharabat Nigar*, 1, with the additional mention of Urdu books on 180.
[49] Dihlavi, *Gharabat Nigar*, 1.

mentioned, they were usually deceased and historical, whether as the interred or the patron, as with the mausolea of Princess Jahanara and Emperor Humayun in Delhi and the madrasa of Shaykh Chilli in Punjab commissioned on the latter's death in 1650 by the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh (a report of the Archaeological Survey of India was cited here as the source).[50]

Established in 1861, some thirteen years before 'Abd al-Haq completed his book, the Archaeological Survey was a major inspiration. Not only were its reports and founder—the former military engineer Alexander Cunningham (1814–93)—explicitly mentioned as sources of details, dates, and measurements (including of Delhi's lofty Qutb Minar).[51] 'Abd al-Haq also adopted its quantifying methods. The Archaeological Survey's titular primary task of *surveying*—of carefully measuring every element of a site—found expression in 'Abd al-Haq's massive provision of measurements, always in miles (*mil*) or feet (*fut*). These details often comprised most of his information on a building. And when dates were provided, these not only reflected the historical concerns of Sayyid Ahmad and his interlocutors at the short-lived Archaeological Society of Delhi. They were also usually given in the Christian rather than the Islamic calendar.

Another feature of *Gharabat Nigar* was its echo of the increased involvement of the colonial state as the custodian of important monuments (especially after the Company's destruction of so much of Mughal Delhi in repressing the Great Rebellion of 1857). A generation after Sayyid Ahmad's *Asar al-Sanadid*, 'Abd al-Haq thus articulated the nascent formal association in India between architectural history and preservation. Thus, in his account of the Qutb Minar, he recorded how, when the minaret had broken in 1818, the British government's engineer was assigned the vast sum of 17,000 rupees for the repairs; and how, when the minaret was subsequently split by a lightning strike in 1863, the government again repaired it, adding an iron lightning conductor to prevent further damage.[52] Such positive remarks on colonial policies, along with 'Abd al-Haq's apparent visits to so many buildings and his access to so many measurements, suggest that he may have been one of the Indian assistants whom the Archaeological Survey employed, particularly to take measurements and decipher inscriptions. By his own testimony, he certainly knew English. This in turn occasionally lent his writing a delectably mixed flavour, as when he described the decoration on the cenotaph of Mumtaz Mahal as 'tip-top' (*tip-tap*).[53] Truly, 'Abd al-Haq's *Gharabat Nigar* was an expression of architectural *rekhta*.

Even though it shared many elements in common (and drew directly on) the second edition of *Asar al-Sanadid*, there remained important differences between the

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[50] Dihlavi, *Gharabat Nigar*, 138, 161.

[51] Dihlavi, *Gharabat Nigar*, 173.

[52] Dihlavi, *Gharabat Nigar*, 173.

[53] Dihlavi, *Gharabat Nigar*, 27.

two books, published twenty years apart as they were. Whereas Sayyid Ahmad
drew on the skills of a professor at the Delhi College to decipher many Arabic and
Persian inscriptions (as well as several in Indic scripts), employed two talented
draughtsmen to copy the inscriptions as they appeared in situ, then reproduced
them as lithographs in his book, 'Abd al-Haq generally ignored inscriptions.[54] Even
for such magisterial examples of monumental epigraphy as the Taj Mahal and Qutb
Minar, he merely stated 'there is a fine Quranic inscription in large, legible letters'.[55]
Another difference was the far smaller number of illustrations in *Gharabat Nigar*,
whether of inscriptions or buildings. Still, those that were included—predictably the
Taj Mahal and Qutb Minar, but also the Adinatha Jain temple on Mount Abu—were
of notably high quality.

Perhaps the explanation here lies in 'Abd al-Haq's intended audience,
readers of unembellished Urdu for whom copied Arabic and Persian inscriptions
would have been illegible. This was no longer the dual readership of British official
patrons and ordinary Indian book-buyers to whom Sayyid Ahmad and his
commercial publisher brother had jointly pitched *Asar al-Sanadid.* Instead, *Gharabat
Nigar* was aimed solely at the commercial book market that had matured by the
time it came out in 1874. Since Urdu readers in this period still included many
Hindus (and perhaps also Jains), this may also explain 'Abd al-Haq's decisions to
exclude long Quranic quotations, but to include even more Hindu (and Jain) sites
than Sayyid Ahmad. Expanding the geographical ambit of places beyond Sayyid
Ahmad's Delhi would also have made the book more appealing to a larger
audience. 'Abd al-Haq and his commercial publisher also presumably recognised
the greater production costs of employing epigraphers, artists, and art-
lithographers, which may well explain the far smaller number of illustrations.
Although as time went on, more texts were produced for a specifically Muslim
readership, the broader readership of Hindus and Muslims which 'Abd al-Haq
sought for his *Gharabat Nigar* continued to exist into the twentieth century, at least
for some genres, such as the guidebooks to which we will now turn.

Such commercial works played an important part in the development of
Urdu art history. In many respects they were the textual counterpart to the black-
and-white photographic postcards of Mughal monuments which Indian
entrepreneurs began publishing in the 1900s, particularly the rival firms of H.A.
Mirza and Lal Chand, who specialized in postcards of Mughal Delhi and Agra.[56]
Drawing not only on the colonial technology of the camera, but also on the
photographic styles and architectural postcards published by British firms such as

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[54] Dozens of careful drawings of inscriptions in Arabic and other scripts appeared as a
separately-numbered appendix in Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar al-Sanadid*, Delhi: Matba'a-e
Sultani, 1270/1854, 1–62.

[55] Dihlavi, *Gharabat Nigar*, 27, 173.

[56] Omar Khan, *Paper Jewels*: *Postcards from the Raj*, Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 154–175.

Raphael Tuck & Sons, these too were expressions of architectural *rekhta*.
Accompanying such visual souvenirs, in 1903 a popular guidebook to the
monuments of Delhi appeared by way of Muhammad Mas'ud Shah's *Dihli Ga'id, ya
Rahnuma-ye Dihli* ('The Delhi Guide, or Pathfinder of Delhi').[57] In contrast to Sayyid
Ahmad's and 'Abd al-Haq's earlier texts, *Dihli Ga'id* framed the city in more
explicitly Islamic terms. In part this was because its author was a Muslim cleric who
had previously written a biography of the Prophet.[58] But this was also a response to
the increasingly important role of Delhi as a space of Indo-Muslim collective
memory in the aftermath of the 1857 Rebellion and the exile of the last Mughal
emperor. With its special attention to the Delhi palace of the Mughals that lent Urdu
its name, the *Dihli Ga'id* was an architectural companion to such panegyric histories
of the last two emperors' courts as Munshi Faiz al-Din's *Bazm-e Akhir* ('Final
Gathering'), first published in 1885 and immensely popular thereafter.
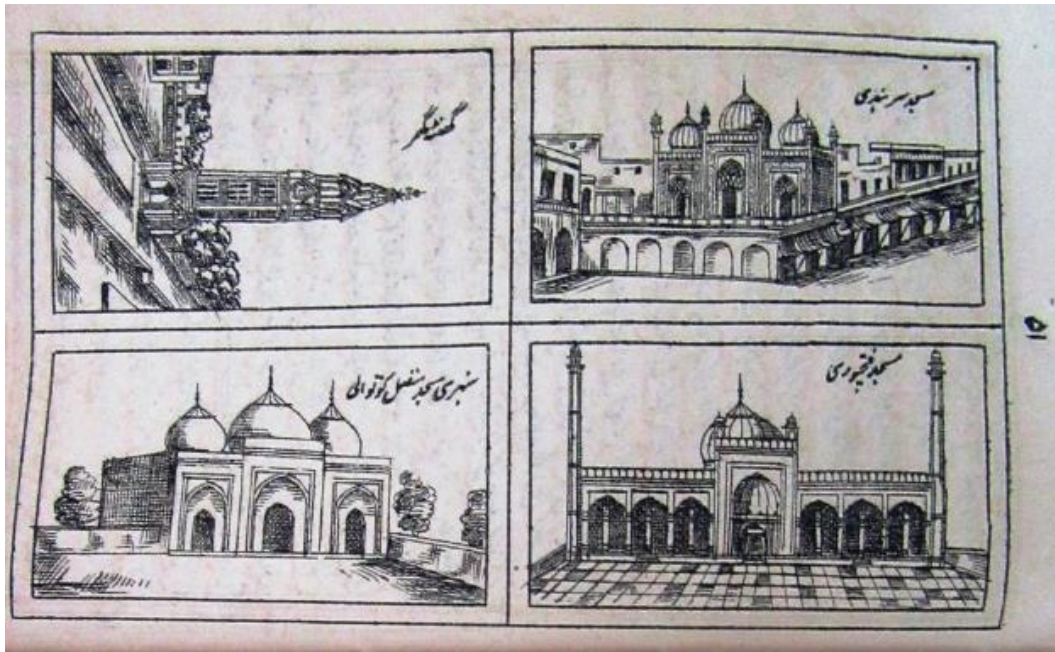

Figure 2. Delhi's Mughal and British Monuments (from Delhavi, *Dihli Ga'id*, 1903).

Yet in other respects, Shah's *Dihli Ga'id* continued the template established
by *Asar al-Sanadid*, whether through the keen attention to dates (including
chronological tables of the city's rulers) or the numerous lithographs of perspective-
based line-drawings of buildings.[59] While there were fewer English loan-words than

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[57] Muhammad Mas'ud Shah Dihlavi, *Dihli Ga'id, ya Rahnuma-ye Dihli: jis mein Qadim Dihli ki
Mabsutt o Mustanad Tarikh, Salatin-e Hind ki Shahanah Shan-o-Shaukat ke 'Azzim al-Shan
Karname*, Delhi: Afzal al-Matabi', 1903.
[58] Dihlavi, *Dihli Ga'id*, front cover.
[59] Tables on Dihlavi, *Dihli Ga'id*, 38–45.

in 'Abd al-Haq's *Gharabat Nigar*, it used both Islamic and Christian dates, gave
measurements in feet, and included British buildings, such as St James Church and
the Gothic *ghantaghar* (clock tower) erected in 1870 at the centre of the Chandni
Chowk market.[60] In such ways, the Delhi guide was another expression of
architectural *rekhta*.

Shah divided his guidebook in two parts: the first dealing with the
noteworthy buildings of 'Old Delhi' (*qadim Dihli*), that is, the several capitals of the
various Delhi Sultans; and the second with the buildings of 'New Delhi' (*jadid Dihli*),
that is, the Mughal capital founded by Shah Jahan rather than the colonial city
designed later by Edwin Lutyens. While Shah included more historical detail (and
fewer measurements) than *Gharabat Nigar*, he gave similar attention to the
architectural components of each building, along with their building materials and
decorative elements. But insofar as his guidebook enabled visitors to connect
themselves to a glorious Muslim past by linking buildings to the sultans or courtiers
who patronised them, it also offered meditations on loss, whether by way of the
Peacock Throne (*takht-e tawus*) carried off to Khurasan by Nadir Shah or the
destruction wrought by the British reconquest in 1858.[61]

The popular profile of 'Abd al-Haq's *Gharabat Nigar* and Shah's *Dihli Ga'id*
does not place them beyond the categorical pale of architectural history.
Guidebooks to significant buildings and monuments were an important part of
European architectural history publishing, whether with the famous German
Baedeker series founded in the 1850s or the Victorian English architectural guides
that paved the way for Nikolaus Pevsner's more systematic series.[62] By the time
Gharabat Nigar was published in the 1870s, the earlier British tourist trade in Agra
and Delhi had expanded to include Indian tourists and pilgrims, whose journeys
were enabled by the expanding railway network. In some Urdu books, as with
Baedekers, these ties to the railway were explicit. Such was the case with *Sayr-e Ajmer*
('Journey to Ajmer'), an 1892 guide to the Sufi mausoleum of Mu'in al-Din Chishti
(d.1236) and the Hindu temples of nearby Pushkar, whose Hindu author, Munshi
Sivanath, began with instructions on how to walk to the shrine complex, much
embellished by the Mughals, from Ajmer's train station.[63] By the time Shah's *Dihli
Ga'id* appeared in 1903, India's rail network had expanded even further, placing
Delhi in easy and inexpensive reach of people from all over India. Like Sivanath,
Shah too provided directions from Delhi's railway station.[64]

[60] Dihlavi, *Dihli Ga'id*, 48–51, 53–54.
[61] Dihlavi, *Dihli Ga'id*, 36–37.
[62] Watkin, *Rise of Architectural History*, 110–112.
[63] Munshi Sivanath, *Sayr-e Ajmer*, Ajmer: Matba'a Printing Company, 1892, 7.
[64] Shah, *Dihli Ga'id*, 46, opening the section on 'New' (i.e. Mughal) Delhi, which was nearest
to the railway station.

The most explicit links between architectural history and the railway appeared in *Tuhfah-e Dihli* ('The Gift of Delhi'), another guidebook by a prolific Muslim author by the name of Ghulam Nabi.[65] Its first thirty pages consisted entirely of railway timetables detailing the schedules of trains to Delhi from every corner of the subcontinent.[66] The immediate reason was the Delhi Durbar of 1903, a series of Mughal-modeled pageants to mark Edward VII's coronation as Emperor of India. Having safely delivered his readers to Delhi's railway station, Nabi then explained the historic significance of some twenty-five monuments, including what had clearly become a canon of the Qutb Minar; the Ashokan pillar in the Firozabad fort; the ruined city and mausoleum of Ghiyath al-Din Tughlaq (r.1320-25); the mausoleum of the emperor Humayun (r. 1530-40, 1555-56); the Red Fort (or Urdu-e Mu'ala); Shah Jahan's Friday mosque; the shrine of Nizam al-Din Awliya (d.1325); the Jantar Mantar observatory; and the splendid late Mughal mausoleum of Safdar Jang (c.1708–54).[67] Nabi provided descriptions of architectural features and materials; recorded the occasional inscription (such as the Persian verse on the poet Amir Khusraw's tomb); gave measurements (mixing feet with the old Indian unit of *gaz*) and dates (usually in the Christian calendar but sometimes in *hijri*).[68] In these elements, no less than the subsequent section on the Durbar's ceremonial fusions, Nabi's *Tuhfah-e Dihli* was another expression of architectural *rekhta*.[69]

Before moving on to the more scholarly Urdu texts that appeared in the decades after 1900, it is worth briefly mentioning another work by Ghulam Nabi, entitled *Dunya ki 'Aja'ibat aur Qabil-e Did Mashhur Maqamat* ('The World's Wonders and Worth-Seeing Famous Places').[70] An extraordinary feat of lithographic art, it included around two hundred perspective-based drawings. Though likely inspired by imported books and oleographs, these were in a more lively and playful style than the 'engineer school' draughtsmanship that the East India Company had promoted.[71] In displaying and describing not only the many sacred buildings of

[65] Ghulam Nabi, *Tuhfah-e Dihli, ya'ni Rahnuma-e Darbar Jashn Tajposhi-e Dihli*, Lahore: Hakim Ghulam Nabi, 1902.

[66] Nabi, *Tuhfah-e Dihli*, 2–33.

[67] Nabi, *Tuhfah-e Dihli*, 34–55.

[68] For Khusraw's tomb, see Nabi, *Tuhfah-e Dihli*, 43.

[69] For the Durbar section, see Nabi, *Tuhfah-e Dihli*, 56–71, and the subsequent map which is the book's sole illustration.

[70] Ghulam Nabi, *Dunya ki 'Aja'ibat aur Qabil-e Did Mashhur Maqamat*, Delhi: Matba'a Afkhar, 1901.

[71] On the impact of imported oleographs and their adaptation by Indian popular print firms, such as the Calcutta Art Studio (founded 1878), the Bombay New Press, the Poona Chitrashala Press, and the Ravi Varma Fine Art Lithographic Press (founded 1894), see Mitter, 'Mechanical Reproduction', 13–30. Mitter also notes that 'Ravi Varma (1846–1906), the man who transformed the whole print culture' drew on 'the help of a German technical assistant' (Mitter, 'Mechanical Reproduction', 26). It is worth adding that the same technical

India, but also those of the Middle East, Burma, China, Japan, and Europe, Nabi's *Dunya ki 'Aja'ibat* was an Indian popular counterpart to James Fergusson's earlier illustrated survey of world architecture.[72]

Fig. 3. Statues Outside a Burmese Temple (from Ghulam Nabi, *Dunya ki 'Aja'ibat*, 1901).

Teamwork, translations, and Indian tourists, c.1900-1950

While such market-oriented books on Urdu architectural history didn't disappear after 1900s, they were gradually joined by a more scholarly bookshelf. In some respects, these were heirs to Sayyid Ahmad's *Asar al-Sanadid*. But in other respects, they tipped the balance in the blend of *rekhta* towards European ingredients by including outright translations of English and French books. Yet such texts were not only carefully selected for local purposes. As acts of linguistic translation and cultural transmission, they also served to provide Indian Muslims with otherwise scarce detailed information on the distant architecture of Middle Eastern coreligionists. Such translations performed important intellectual tasks at a time when many Indian Muslim reformists were trying to renew their connections with what they saw as the Arab roots of their civilisation. These reformists included the heirs of Sayyid Ahmad who graduated from the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College he founded in 1875.

Perhaps the most important of these translations was *'Arabon ka Fann-e Ta'mir* ('The Architectural Art of the Arabs'), a 1910 rendition of the chapters on art

advances, Indian cities, and German collaborations also shaped the development of the picture postcard in India, many of which featured architectural sites.

[72] James Fergusson, *Illustrated Handbook of Architecture; Being a Concise and Popular Account of the Different Styles of Architecture Prevailing in All Ages and Countries*, 2 vols, London: John Murray, 1855. On its impact, see Watkin, *Rise of Architectural History*, 82–85.

and architecture in *La Civilisation des Arabes* by Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931).[73] The
latter was already very popular among Muslims in the Middle East.[74] After all, in
the heyday of European imperialism, it was no small thing for a famous French
intellectual to declare that 'if we must judge the value of men by the greatness of
their works, then we can say that Muhammad was the one of the greatest men ever
known to history.'[75] His Indian translator was Sayyid 'Ali Bilgrami (1853-1911?), a
prominent civil servant, educationalist, and author whose earlier works included a
guidebook to the Hindu and Buddhist cave temples at Ellora.[76] Bilgrami had begun
his career as a student of engineering, graduating from the Thomason Civil
Engineering College in Roorkee, before rising through the Nizam of Hyderabad's
mine and railway administration, then retiring to England with a lectureship at
Cambridge. These sources of employment echoed the intellectual genealogy of
British historians of Islamic architecture, including such prominent figures as the
sometime architect James Fergusson and the colonial civil servant Ernest Richmond,
whose works we will also see being translated in the wake of Bilgrami's version of
Le Bon.

      Perhaps Le Bon's most important service to Indian Muslims, and to the
development of Urdu art history specifically, was to promote the idea that
architecture was evidence of grand civilisational achievement. In this formulation—
with the crucial *rôle* of buildings as the *mise en scène* for Le Bon's case for Arab
civilisation—medieval mosques and palaces were not merely religious sites or relics
of defunct despots, nor even monuments of antiquarian curiosity. Instead, they
were aesthetic evidence that the sophisticated Arabs belonged to the highest tier of
'civilisation'—that European system of human classification that found its way into
various Middle Eastern and Asian languages. Since many members of colonial
India's Muslim elite claimed Arab ancestry (Bilgrami himself descended from noble
Arab émigrés from the Iraqi city of Wasit), Le Bon's championing of Arab
civilisation was no foreign affair, but rather a personal validation of family lineages

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[73] Gustave Le Bon, *La Civilisation des Arabes*, Paris: Fermin-Didot, 1884, livre 6, chapter 1 and
livre 5, chapters 7–10; translated into Urdu by Sayyid 'Ali Bilgrami as *'Arabon ka Fann-e
Ta'mir*, Lahore: Rifa-e 'Am Steam Press, 1910 and Amritsar: Vakil Trading Company, 1910.
[74] Martin Kramer, *Arab Awakening & Islamic Revival: The Politics of Ideas in the Middle East*,
New Brunswick: Transaction Publishing, 1996, 63–64. Nonetheless, Le Bon's emphasis was
on *Arab* rather than Islamic civilisation, in which the former shaped the latter. See Albert
Hourani, *Europe and the Middle East*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, 65–66.
[75] Le Bon, *La Civilisation des Arabes*, 93: 'S'il faut juger de la valeur des hommes par la
grandeur des œuvres qu'ils ont fondées, nous pouvons dire que Mahomet fut un des plus
grands hommes qu'ait connus l'histoire.' My thanks to Sara Eckmann for tracing this
quotation for me.
[76] Syed Ali Bilgrami, *A Short Guide to the Cave Temples of Elura* [*sic*], Madras: Asylum Press,
1898. This work preceded by several decades—and quite possibly enabled—the later visits
and studies of the caves by Bengali and Japanese artists associated with Rabindranath
Tagore.

Nile Green
The *rekhta* of architecture: the development of 'Islamic'
art history in Urdu, c.1800-1950

from a renowned European writer. Further cementing these Indo-Arabian ties, the sections of Le Bon's book that Bilgrami translated included that dedicated to the Arab architectural style in India. This served as material testament to the genealogical links to India of *sayyids* of Bilgrami's book-reading class.[77] As a final fillip to this vindication of Indian Muslim *qua* Arab civilisation, Le Bon's book also made a case for the influence of Arab architecture on its European counterparts, thus reversing the terms of the colonial civilizing mission.

Yet it would be banal to reduce Le Bon and Bilgrami's collaboration to the cultural politics of colonialism. Because *'Arabon ka Fann* also played an important role in the intellectual development of Urdu art history into a more distinct discipline—not least through the provision of a more precise technical vocabulary and analytical schema. In some cases, this came through the adaptation of existing words, with 'style' being rendered as *tarz* (a word previously used to distinguish literary forms) and 'gallery' as *ghulam gardish* (literally a slaves' ambulatory). The Parisian art school notion of the 'fine arts' was translated as *fonun-e zarifa* ('delicate crafts/arts') by redeploying the older Arabic term *fann* as an equivalent to the European concept of 'art.'[78] Some of these Urdu terms were sufficiently unfamiliar for Bilgrami to feel the need to add an appendix to clarify their meanings. This complex conceptual mélange rendered *'Arabon ka Fann* more than a simple translation. It was instead another example of architectural *rekhta*.

Despite being an indubitably learned work, Bilgrami's Le Bon was not without appeal in the book market, having an initial print run of a thousand copies, followed by several reprints and expanded editions over subsequent decades.[79] Nonetheless, it bore one notable difference from both the popular Urdu works discussed above and from its French source book: Bilgrami's version of Le Bon had none of the many illustrations in the 1884 original. The likely reasons were economic and technical: issued in what was at the time perhaps the world centre of art publishing, Le Bon's Parisian imprint made extensive use of intaglio *gravure* and chromolithography, as well as photographic plates. Even when Bilgrami made his translation in 1911, few if any Urdu publishing houses had comparable technical capacities.

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[77] Bilgrami, *'Arabon ka Fann*, 18–31. A *sayyid* is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.
[78] On these earlier literary uses of *tarz*, see Shahla Farghadani, 'A History of Style and a Style of History: The Hermeneutic of *Tarz* in Persian Literary Criticism', *Iranian Studies* 55, 2, 2022: 501–519. *Ghulam gardish* was also a much older term, used by the poet Amir Khusraw (d.1325) among others to refer to the space guarding a harem. However, it was being used here to translate Le Bon's much broader use of *gallerie* in describing mosques and various other structures. On the complex semantic exchanges that rendered the Arabic term *fann* equivalent to 'art', see Adam Mestyan, 'Arabic Lexicography and European Aesthetics: The Origin of *Fann*', *Muqarnas* 28, 2011: 69–100.
[79] This initial print-run of the 1910 Lahore edition is mentioned on the front cover.
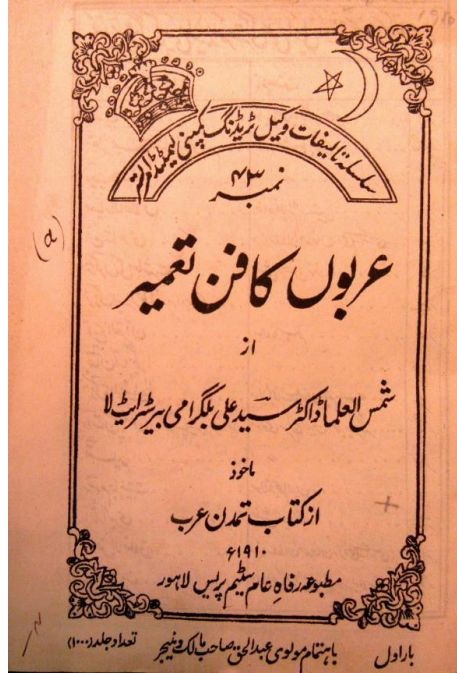
Figure 4. Le Bon's Arab Arts in Urdu (Cover of Bilgrami, *'Arabon ka Fann-e Ta'mir*, 1910).

The next notable Urdu work was written by Sayyid 'Ali Asghar Bilgrami (1884-1961), another member of the distinguished Bilgrami clan in the service of the Nizam of Hyderabad. Between 1923 and 1924, Asghar Bilgrami was acting director of the Nizam's department of archaeology (founded in 1914) and it was towards the end of this assignment that his *Ma'asir-e Dakan* ('Memorials of the Deccan') was issued by the publishing office of Hyderabad's Urdu-medium Osmania University (founded in 1918).[80] The book was in every sense a monumental survey, systematically scrutinizing seventy-six Islamic buildings in the city and suburbs of Hyderabad. To do so, Asghar Bilgrami used what had become the three key datasets of Indian archaeology: site surveys, inscriptions, and literary sources. While drawing on European methods, English textbooks, and Orientalist editions of Persian texts—all freely acknowledged in his introduction and footnotes—he built on these foundations through his vast knowledge of Indo-Islamic literature, his professional site surveys, and his deciphering of faded inscriptions.[81] Far from

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[80] Sayyid 'Ali Asghar Bilgrami, *Ma'asir-e Dakan: Mutazammin bar Halat-e 'Imarat va Asar-e Baldah-ye Haydarabad va Muzafat-e Balda*, Hyderabad: Matba'a-e Dar al-Tab'-e Jami'ah 'Usmaniyya-e Sarkar-e 'Ali, 1924.

[81] See the acknowledgement of previous surveys, methods, and publications in Bilgrami, *Ma'asir-e Dakan*, 'Muqaddima'. The scale of Bilgrami's mastery over the traditional corpus is attested in the manuscript catalogue he previously compiled: Sayyid 'Ali Asghar Bilgrami,

colonial mimicry, the resulting tome set new standards of thoroughness for the study of India's Islamic architecture, especially beyond northern India. The book also set new standards for Urdu art history publishing, whether in the clarity of its textual layout; the consistency of its scholarly apparatus (footnotes, bibliographies, appendices); or its fifty-eight photographic illustrations.

The illustrations in *Ma'asir-e Dakan* were important interpretive assets. For the 1920s was a decade when photography was also becoming a crucial tool of Islamic architectural history in Egypt and Iran through the respective surveys of K.A.C. Creswell (1879–1974) and Arthur Upham Pope (1881–1969).[82] Such photographs were also very costly to reproduce. What made this possible in Asghar Bilgrami's case was the financial support of Hyderabad's government, which was readily forthcoming in a decade when, following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the Nizam's State was increasingly posing as the protector of not only its own Muslim heritage, but of that of Muslims far and wide.[83]

In a continuation of the intellectual exchanges we have seen surrounding the birth of Urdu architectural history in Sayyid Ahmad's *Asar al-Sanadid*, Bilgrami's book was reissued in 1927 in an English translation funded by the Nizam's finance minister.[84] A few decades later, this Hyderabadi to-and-fro between Urdu and English would see the reverse translation of a groundbreaking monograph on the architecture of the Malwa Sultanate. Its author was Ghulam Yazdani (1885–1962),

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Fihrist-e Kutub-e Qalami Mawjuda-e Kutubkhana-e 'Alijanab Shams al-'Ulama' Mawlavi Sayyid 'Ali Sahib Bilgrami, Hyderabad: Matba'a-e Shamsi, 1901.

[82] Teresa Fitzherbert, 'The Creswell Photographic Archive at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford', in Oleg Grabar, ed, *K.A.C. Creswell and his Legacy*, special issue of *Muqarnas* 8, 1991, 125–127; Nile Green, 'New Histories for the Age of Speed: The Archaeological–Architectural Past in Interwar Afghanistan and Iran', *Iranian Studies*, 54, 3–4, 2021, 349–97; Yuka Kadoi, 'Persia through the Lens: Poetics and Politics of Architectural Photographs in Pahlavi Iran', *Iranian Studies* 50, 6, 2017: 873–893; Yuka Kadoi, 'The Myth-Making of the Masjid-e Jami' of Isfahan: Arthur Upham Pope, Architectural Photographs, and the Persian-Gothic Thesis in the 1930s', in Gharipour, *Historiography of Persian Architecture*; and Keelan Overton, 'Filming, Photographing, and Purveying in "The New Iran": The Legacy of Stephen H. Nyman, ca. 1937–42', in Kadoi, *Arthur Upham Pope*. On prior developments in Europe, where art historians began using photographs from the 1860s, see Anthony Hamber, 'The Use of Photography by Nineteenth Century Art Historians', in Helene E. Roberts, ed, *Art History through the Camera's Lens*, London: Gordon & Breach, 1995.

[83] On the direct links between the Nizams, the late Ottoman Empire, and the latter's exiled royals, see Omar Khalidi, 'Ottoman Royal Family in Hyderabad, Deccan, India', *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 46, 3, 1998: 89–97.

[84] Syed Asgar Ali Bilgrami, *Landmarks of the Deccan: A Comprehensive Guide to the Archeological Remains of the City and Suburbs of Hyderabad*, Hyderabad: Government Central Press, 1927, with funding mentioned on 2.

the longtime director of the Archaeological Department of H.E.H the Nizam's
Dominions, for whom Bilgrami had deputised while writing *Ma'asir-e Dakan*.[85]

Such Anglo-Urdu joint enterprises continued in Hyderabad with the 1932
translation of a revised edition of James Fergusson's survey of Indo-Islamic
architecture, which included Ferguson's many sketches and ground plans.[86] Issued
by Osmania University Press, the translation was linked to the expansion of higher
education in Hyderabad. Its translator, Sayyid Hashimi Faridabadi (1890-1964),
worked for the university's translation office (Dar al-Tarjuma), translating other
English history books.[87] While the Urdu version of Ferguson was no match for the
thoroughness of Asghar Bilgrami's study of Hyderabad's architectural heritage, it
was probably the broadest survey of Indian Islamic architecture as a whole then
available, taking in Ghazna, Jaunpur, Gujarat, Malwa, Bengal, Gulbarga, and
Bijapur, as well as the Mughal dominions, before turning briefly to the wooden
constructions of Kashmir.

Marching swiftly across time and space, Fergusson's key concern was with
the identification of 'style', which, in line with the standardisation of Urdu
architectural vocabulary, Faridabadi rendered as *tarz*.[88] By this stylistic criterion, for
Ferguson the content and aesthetics of inscriptional calligraphy, let alone its
religious substance, were irrelevant to the point of being absent from his book. Even
though the building type he most often selected was the mosque, the result was a
paradoxical diminishing of their Islamic dimensions. But then, it wasn't Ferguson
himself who classified such art as 'Islamic'. As a Victorian writing before the rise of
'Islamic art history' around the 1910s, his chosen category was 'Saracenic'

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85 Ghulam Yazdani, *Mandu: The City of Joy*, London: Oxford University Press, 1929;
translated into Urdu by Mirza Muhammad Bashir as *Mandu Shadi Abad*, Delhi: Anjuman
Taraqqi-e Urdu, 1943.

86 James Fergusson, translated into Urdu by Mawlvi Sayyid Hashmi Sahib Faridabadi, *Islami
Fann-e Ta'mir Hindustan mein*, Hyderabad: Jami'a Usmaniya, 1932. Judging by a comparison
of the contents, of the various editions of Fergusson, the source text appears to have been:
James Ferguson, revised and expanded by James Burgess and R. Phené Spiers, *History of
Indian and Eastern Architecture*, 2 vols, London: John Murray, 1910, vol 2, book vii, chapters
x–xi.

87 Kavita Datla, *The Language of Secular Islam: Urdu Nationalism and Colonial India*, Honolulu:
University of Hawai'i Press, 2013, chapter 3. The state-funded translation bureau was a
major enterprise, employing fifteen full-time translators by the time Faridabadi was working
on Fergusson's book. Of the 395 translated books which were published in Urdu, 306 were,
like Fergusson's, from English. See Datla, *Language of Secular Islam*, 65.

88 On the origins of this approach, see Peter Kohane, 'From Scotland to India: The Sources of
James Fergusson's Theory of Architecture's "True Styles"', *ABE Journal: Architecture Beyond
Europe*, 14–15, 2019: http://journals.openedition.org/abe/5551, with *A History of Indian and
Eastern Architecture* discussed on 16–19.

architecture.[89] It was only in Hyderabad that in 1932 his survey was reclassified by
his translator as 'Islamic architecture' (*Islami fann-e ta'mir*).

Nor was this development peculiar to India. Three years after Faridabadi's
rebranding of Ferguson was published in Hyderabad, in Cairo Zaki Muhammad
Hasan (1908-57) published his Arabic monograph *al-Fann al-Islami fi Misr* ('Islamic
Architecture in Egypt').[90] Educated at the Egyptian University (now Cairo
University) then the Sorbonne, where he wrote a doctoral thesis on the Tulunids,
Hasan was back in Cairo by the mid-1930s as assistant curator to Gaston Wiet
(1887-1971) at the Musée Arabe (also called the Antikkhana 'Arabiya).[91] As part of
the wider engagements with Europe that also shaped the development of 'Islamic'
art history in Urdu, Hasan's publications in Arabic, French, and English, and his
lectures for Creswell's program in Islamic archaeology at the Egyptian University,
further contributed to this reframing of 'Arab' as 'Islamic' art. By the early 1940s,
Arabic and Persian editions of his detailed monograph on the arts of the 'Islamic'
period in Iran had been published in Cairo and Tehran.[92] In 1952, his efforts
culminated when, as Wiet's successor as director of the Musée Arabe, Hasan
renamed it the Museum of Islamic Art (Mathaf al-Fann al-Islami).[93]

There were also related developments in Iraq, where in 1937 the Museum of
Arab Antiquities (Mathaf al-Athar al-'Arabiyya) was established in the Khan
Murjan, a fourteenth century caravanserai in Baghdad.[94] Although the Museum of
Arab Antiquities would not be renamed like its counterpart in Cairo, it owed its
very existence to the determination of local intellectuals—especially Iraq's first
director of antiquities, Sati' al-Husri (1880-1968)—to found an institution that
celebrated not only the pre-Islamic past prioritized by the British-sponsored Iraq
Museum inaugurated fourteen years earlier, but that instead promoted Iraq's
Islamic heritage.[95] Consequently, the collections of the new museum differed greatly

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[89] For example, the title of book vii, which contained the eleven chapters on Indo-Muslim
architecture, was 'Indian Saracenic Architecture'. See Ferguson et al, *History of Indian and
Eastern Architecture*, vol 2, book vii, 186.

[90] Zaki Muhammad Hassan, *al-Fann al-Islami fi Misr*, Cairo: Imprimerie de la Bibliothèque
Égyptienne, 1935.

[91] Reid, *Contesting Antiquity in Egypt*, 183–187, 190–191.

[92] Zaki Muhammad Hasan, *al-Funun al-Iraniyya fi'l-'Asr al-Islami*, Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1940
and Zaki Muhammad Hasan, *Sana'i'-ye Iran Ba'd az Islam*, translated into Persian by
Muhammad 'Ali Khalili, Tehran: Kitabfurush va Chapbhana-ye Iqbal, 1941.

[93] Reid, *Contesting Antiquity in Egypt*, 187–191, 194.

[94] Lisa Cooper, *In Search of Kings and Conquerors: Gertrude Bell and the Archaeology of the Middle
East*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2016, 235–237. I have given the museum its usual English name
rather than render *athar* as "monuments".

[95] Eric Davis, 'The Museum and the Politics of Social Control in Modern Iraq', in John R.
Gillis, ed, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 2018, 93–95.

from the ancient Mesopotamian objects displayed in the nearby Iraq Museum
which, as the brainchild of Gertrude Bell (1868-1926), reflected Euro-American
interests whose origins lay in Victorian Biblical archaeology.[96]

  While the growing interest of learned Indian Muslims in 'Islamic'
architecture was part of these wider developments, it is important to recognize that
al-Husri was a committed Pan-Arabist for whom 'Islamic' art in general, and his
museum in particular, served as an expression of a collective 'Arab' heritage.
Clearly, then, the meanings and significance of 'Islamic' art varied in different
contexts. But given the increasingly close interactions between Indian and Middle
Eastern Muslim intellectuals in this period, and the development of a notion of
"Arabness" (*'Arabiyya*) based more on shared language and culture than on a
narrowly nationalistic model of blood and soil, the Iraqi conflation of 'Islamic' and
'Arab' may not have been antithetical to Indian Muslim concerns.[97] This was all the
more so for members of the Arabophone Indian intelligentsia, such as Sulayman
Nadvi (1884–1953), who wrote extensively on this shared Indo-Middle Eastern
heritage of *'Arabiyya* and whom we will encounter below publishing articles on
architectural history in his *Ma'arif* journal.[98] Given this post-1900 renaissance of
Arabic-learning in India in which Nadvi played so key a role, it is important not to
automatically concede ownership of either 'Islamic' or 'Arabness' to the Middle
East. For despite al-Husri's promotion of a Pan-Arab identity, having been raised
through the late Ottoman educational and administrative systems, his primary
language was Turkish and he later spoke Arabic with a strong Turkish accent.[99]

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[96] On al-Husri and his conjoined activities as Iraq's minister of education then director of
antiquities, see Magnus T. Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past: Archaeology and Nation
Building in Modern Iraq*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005, 118–127, 186–208. For the
early collections of al-Husri's new museum, see the early guidebook which al-Husri himself
oversaw: Directorate of Antiquities, *Dalil Mathaf al-Athar al-'Arabiyya*, Baghdad: Matba'a al-
Hukuma, 1938. On Bell's central role in founding the Iraq Museum, see Cooper, *In Search of
Kings and Conquerors*, ch. 6 and J. Eva Meharry, 'Gertrude Bell: The Making of Iraq's
Antiquity Law and National Museum', in Mark Jackson and Andrew Parkin, eds, *The
Extraordinary Gertrude Bell*, Newcastle: Tyne Bridge Publishing, 2015. Consolidating this
museological dichotomy between Bell and al-Husri, as soon as the Museum of Arab
Antiquities was established, the previous small display of Islamic-era objects in the Iraq
Museum was removed. See Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past*, 202.
[97] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'Arabic, the Arab Middle East, and the Definition of Muslim
Identity in Twentieth Century India', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 8, no. 1 (1998): 59–81.
[98] For important recent studies of these Indo-Arabic intellectual circles, see Mohsin Ali,
'Modern Islamic Historiography: A Global Perspective from South Asia' (PhD diss.,
University of California, Los Angeles, 2022) and Roy Bar Sadeh, 'Islamic Modernists
between South Asia, the Middle East, and the World, 1856–1947' (PhD diss., Columbia
University, 2022).
[99] Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past*, 119–120.

Languages—including their sociolinguistic and political aspects of who used and owned them—were very much in flux in this period.

This was no less the case for particular words. As the names of the new museums in Cairo and Baghdad demonstrate, the terms *athar* and *fann* were being used in new ways to mean 'monuments/antiquities' and 'art' respectively. Still, this was not an overnight or single-handed shift, particularly in the case of *fann*. In Egypt, from around 1830, the classical Arabic term *fann* (type, kind) was gradually used to translate the European (and primarily French) notion of arts (as distinct from sciences), then, from around 1880, as art in the more singular and aesthetic sense of fine art.[100] Similarly, the conceptual replacement of Le Bon's 'Arab civilisation' with the notion of 'Islamic civilisation' had already been underway by the 1900s, when Jurji Zaydan (1861–1914), an influential Lebanese scholar at the Egyptian University, published his *Tarikh al-Tamaddun al-Islami* ('History of Islamic Civilisation', 1901-06).[101]

This religio-civilisational rubric also became a feature of the increasing number of journal articles on 'Islamic' art in Urdu from the 1910s onwards. A major case in point is the aforementioned Indo-Muslim cultural journal, *Ma'arif*. The journal was associated with the Nadvat al-'Ulama seminary in Lucknow, whose founders sought to renew their links with the Arab Middle East by reviving Arabic studies in India, an orientation that even influenced the style of calligraphy the journal adopted. *Ma'arif*'s articles on art and architecture began in its very first issue in 1916 via an account of the Mosque of the Prophet (Masjid-e Nabavi) in Medina— a site which, being inaccessible to non-Muslims, never entered the European architectural history of Islam.[102] The article's North Indian author, 'Abd al-Salam Nadvi (1883-1956), drew on the language skills he acquired as a student at the Nadvat al-'Ulama by combining classical Arabic sources with on-site description. (He subsequently also published a book on the holy sites of both Medina and Mecca.)[103] Adopting into Urdu the new Arabic use of *fann* (plural *fonun*) as 'art', articles in subsequent issues of the journal focused on such new conceptual topics as the 'fine arts of Islam' (*fonun-e latifa-e Islam*) and 'the Islamic art of architecture' (*islami fann-e ta'mir*), as well as specific monuments, such as the mausolea of Shah

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[100] Mestiyan, 'Arab Lexicography', 74–91.

[101] Van Bladel, 'Islamic Civilization', 158.

[102] 'Abd al-Salam Nadvi, ''Imarat al-Islam, Harim-e Quds, ya'ni Masjid-e Nabavi', *Ma'arif* 1, July 1916, 18–25, September 1916, 17–24, and October 1916, 17–22. Nadvi also contributed a four-part article on the philosophy of Gustave Le Bon to the 1917–18 issues of the *Ma'arif* journal. On articles on architecture in *Ma'arif* and other Indian, Afghan, and Iranian journals over the next few decades, see Green, 'New Histories'.

[103] 'Abd al-Salam Nadvi, *Tarikh al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn*, Rawalpindi: Baha al-Din Sufi Printing and Publishing Company, 1923. On this and his many other writings, see Ghazanfar Ali Khan, 'Abd al-Salam Nadvi and his Contribution to Islamic Studies', M.Phil. dissertation, Aligarh Muslim University, 1996, chapter 2.

Begum in Allahabad, of Shah Rukn-e 'Alam in Multan, of Muhabbat Khan near Lahore, and of Qutb al-Din Aibak in Delhi.[104] Other articles in *Ma'arif* were translations from English, a strategy of historiographical capacity-building that also saw the pioneering Afghan journal of cultural history, *Aryana*, translate articles by the likes of Sir Thomas Arnold (1864–1930), sometime Dean of the Oriental Faculty at Punjab University and teacher of *Ma'arif*'s editor, Sulayman Nadvi.[105]

Combining Indian concerns and research with European concepts and sources, the *Ma'arif* articles offer further examples of architectural *rekhta*. For example, the articles on the mausolea of Muhabbat Khan and Qutb al-Din Aibak were written by Muhammad Shuja' al-Din, also of Punjab University. In the latter's library, he presumably accessed the Orientalist editions of Persian texts, the English translations thereof, and the translated travelogue of Niccolao Manucci (1638-1717) that featured alongside manuscripts and Indian imprints in his footnotes. Similarly, the author of an article on the tomb of Shah Begum (c.1570-1604), wife of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, engaged with English studies from the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* and reports of the Archeological Survey of India, while providing measurements in both feet (*fut*) and the latter's domestication as *qadam*, a calque translation of 'foot'.[106]

Not only was Shah Begum's tomb and the surrounding imperial edifices of Allahabad's Khosrow Bagh among the earliest Indo-Islamic buildings to be carefully drawn by European draughtsmen—in this case by the famous Thomas Daniell (1749-1840). The latter's illustration was also explicitly discussed in the *Ma'arif* piece.[107] But it was not reproduced. This suggests a deliberateness in *Ma'arif*'s

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[104] In chronological order: Mirza Ehsan Ahmad (trans.), 'Fonun-e Latifa', *Ma'arif*, February 1917, 25–33, March 1917, 17–22, May 1917, 27–32; U.C. Gangoli (?), 'Fonun-e Latifa aur Islam', *Ma'arif*, October 1929, 302–305; 'Abd al-Salam Nadvi, 'Islami Fann-e Ta'mir', *Ma'arif*, September 1933, 146–148; Mawlvi Sayyid Maqbul Ahmad, 'Maqbara-e Shah Begum', *Ma'arif*, November 1933, 355–367; Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdullah, 'Maqbara-e Shah Rukn-e 'Alam', *Ma'arif*, November 1935, 374–376; Muhammad Shuja' al-Din, 'Muhabbat Khan ka Bagh aur Maqbara', *Ma'arif*, June 1943, 432–441; and Shuja' al-Din, 'Sultan Qutb al-Din Aibak ka Maqbara', *Ma'arif*, January 1946, 52–63.

[105] Tumas Arnuld, 'Bihzad u Naqqashiha-ye u dar Zafarnama', *Aryana* 2, 5, 1323/1944, 28–36. This was apparently a translation of the pamphlet by Sir Thomas Arnold, *Bihzad and his Paintings in the Zafar-Namah Ms.*, London: Bernard Quaritch, 1930. Nonetheless, other architectural articles in the Afghan journal were original, including the evocative description of the highland village of Chisht, which included a transcription of the twelve-couplet *qasida* at the mausoleum of Shaykh Mawdud Chishti (d.527/1132 according to the article). See Muhammad Hashem Pardis, 'Chisht-e Sharif', *Aryana* 3, 4, 1324/1945, 23–26.

[106] Ahmad, 'Maqbara-e Shah Begum', 365.

[107] Ahmad, 'Maqbara-e Shah Begum', 356–357. The aquatint in question was originally published as 'Mausoleum of the Ranee, wife of the Emperor Jehangire, near Allahabad', in Thomas and William Daniell, *Oriental Scenery*, third set, London: [Robert Bowyer], 1801, plate 4.

eschewal of illustrations, hinting that theological as much as technological factors
may have shaped its editorial policy of avoiding illustrations in the many articles on
both Islamic and non-Islamic art that featured in the journal over the decades.

Since the journal's editor and many of its contributors (including the author
of the Shah Begum article) were Muslim clerics (*'ulama*), *Ma'arif*'s studious
avoidance of illustrations seems to reflect a certain theological caution about
representations. If so, this would imply that its articles were not only *about* Islamic
architecture; they were also *Islamic* studies of architecture—or at least attempts to
transpose European methods of architectural history into acceptably Islamic terms.
Together with the linguistic training of the many seminarian contributors to *Ma'arif*,
this may also have contributed to the emphasis on Arabic calligraphic inscriptions
in many of its articles.

Such epigraphic, and explicitly Islamic concerns, also became a feature of
Urdu publications pitched toward the popular marketplace. A case in point is
Tarikh-e 'Imarat-e Shahan-e Mogholiya, ma'ruf bih Agra Ga'id ('History of the Buildings
of the Mughal Emperors, Known as the Agra Guide'), published in 1933.[108] It
included what had by then become such standard features of architectural *rekhta* as
the sequential presentation of architectural parts, precise measurements in both feet
and *gaz*, dates given alternatively in the Christian and Muslim calendars, and tables
classifying building materials. But the most distinguishing feature of *Tarikh-e 'Imarat*
was its focus on inscriptions. In each case, these were provided in the Arabic or
Persian original, along with an accompanying Urdu translation. The author,
Kalikhan Akbarabadi, pointed out that, many of these were 'a new Urdu translation
only available in this book', though like many a European researcher, he too had to
draw on the deciphering skills of a traditionally-educated local scholar, Khwaja
Sadiq Husayn.[109] Although the resulting guidebook was pitched towards Muslim
tourists to the former Mughal capital (with directions given to various buildings
from Agra's railway station), like the articles in *Ma'arif*, it too eschewed illustration
entirely.[110]

This attention to inscriptions also characterised an Urdu travelogue on
Afghanistan published in 1933, the same year as Akbarabadi's guidebook to Agra.[111]
The travelogue author was Khvaja Hasan Nizami (1878-1955), a prominent Sufi
scholar based in Delhi and associated with the famous shrine of Nizam al-Din
Awliya that we have seen appearing in Urdu guidebooks. Making use of the new
motor transport system that enabled the contemporaneous tour of Afghan

[108] Munshi Kalikhan Akbarabadi with Khwaja Sadiq Husayn, *Tarikh-e 'Imarat-e Shahan-e
Mogholiya, ma'ruf bih Agra Ga'id*, Agra: Agra Akhbar Press, 1933.
[109] Akbarabadi, *Tarikh-e 'Imarat*, 31.
[110] Akbarabadi, *Tarikh-e 'Imarat*, 164.
[111] Khvaja Hasan Nizami, *Qadim-o-Jadid Afghanistan ke Do Safarnama, ba Tasvir*, Delhi:
Masha'ikh Buk Dipu, 1933.

architectural monuments by Robert Byron (1905-41), Nizami carefully recorded the
Arabic and Persian inscriptions he found (unlike Byron), while also (like Byron)
making use of a handheld camera to take the photographs he similarly included in
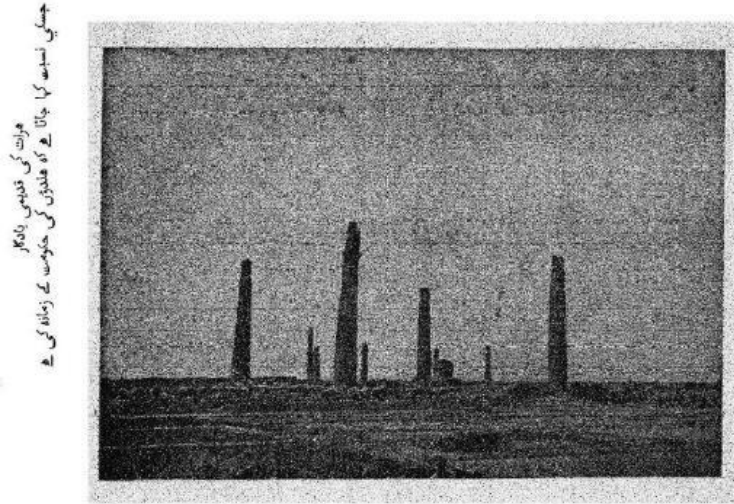his book.[112]

Figure 5. Collotype of the Timurid Musalla of Herat (from Hasan Nizami, *Qadim-o-Jadid Afghanistan*, 1933).

        Nonetheless, through the 1920s there were still new books being written that
can be characterized as 'Islamicate' insofar as they also continued to include aspects
of India's non-Muslim architectural history. A case in point is the Urdu history of
the various Shalimar Gardens—in Lahore, Srinagar, Rajouri, Kapurthala, and
elsewhere—completed in 1924 by Muhammad al-Din Fauq (d.1945), an Urdu
litterateur who had previously published books on the poetry of Rumi but now
turned his attention to the gardens, pavilions and other associated architectural
features.[113] Fauq's *Shalamar Bagh* was indubitably a work of architectural *rekhta*: the
list of sources he included in his preface began with *Lahore: Its History, Architectural
Remains and Antiquities* by the colonial judge Muhammad Latif (c.1845-1902),
followed by the travelogue of the East India Company veterinarian and explorer
William Moorcroft (1767-1825), while later in the book Fauq described the Shalimar
Garden in Jammu which Maharaja Ranbir Singh (r.1856-85) founded in honour of
the visit of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) in 1875.[114] Latif too had

[112] On Nizami and Byron's overlapping architectural ventures, see Green, 'New Histories'.
Since Nizami's tour only covered eastern Afghanistan, he seems to have relied on other
suppliers for his photographs of Herat.
[113] Muhammad al-Din Fauq, *Shalamar Bagh*, Lahore: Khadim al-Ta'lim Barqi Pres, 1924. I am
most grateful to Saima Nazar for bringing this work to my attention and supplying me with
a copy.
[114] Syad [sic] Muhammad Latif, *Lahore: Its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities with
an Account of its Modern Institutes, Inhabitants, their Trade, Customs, &c*, Lahore: The New
Imperial Press, 1892, and William Moorcroft, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan*

brought together Mughal and British imperial history in his subsequent book on
Agra, recounting the Prince of Wales' tour of Agra's monuments later on the same
trip, where like his Mughal predecessors the prince held a darbar attended by a
dozen maharajas.[115]

Returning to Fauq, he also recounted the role of the Sikh rulers of the
nineteenth century in maintaining Lahore's famous gardens, along with the garden-
founding efforts of other non-Muslim elites, such as the aforementioned Hindu
ruler of Jammu, and Fateh Singh Ahluvalia (r. 1801-37), the Sikh ruler of
Kapurthala.[116] In part, this perhaps reflected the status of Urdu in Punjab, where it
remained the official language of instruction in colonial government schools for
Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs alike. Nonetheless, the chief focus of Fauq's book was
on the great Shalimar Gardens of Lahore that flourished under the Mughals. And
like other Urdu architectural histories, his served to transfer to a wider readership
his understanding of Persian manuscript sources and inscriptions, such as the
quatrain of the emperor Aurangzeb's daughter Zeb al-Nisa (1638-1702) inscribed on
the marble 'throne' (*takht*) in the Lahore garden.[117] Yet despite its rich
documentation and detail, Fauq's *Shalamar Bagh* was another example of an
architectural history without illustrations.

This had not been the case with Latif's 1892 English account of Lahore's
historical buildings, which in its nearly fifty lithographic line-drawings no less than
its deep learning took inspiration from the *Asar al-Sanadid* of Sayyid Ahmad Khan,
into whose family Latif had married.[118] Nor was it the case with another English
work—a guide to Delhi's Mughal-era Jama Masjid—written in 1936 by Aziz-ur-
Rahman, a local 'instructor in Oriental languages', which included numerous
photographs of both architectural features and inscriptions.[119] Showing the two-way
movement of architectural knowledge between English and Urdu, it reflected in
reverse what we have seen of the translation of Burgess. For in his authorial
foreword, Aziz-ur-Rahman explained that he had written the book in English for the

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and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara, ed. H.H.
Wilson, London: John Murray, 1841, cited in Urdu translation in Fauq, *Shalamar Bagh*, 6. On
the royal visit, see Fauq, *Shalamar Bagh*, 64.

[115] Syad Muhammad Latif, *Agra: Historical and Descriptive; with an Account of Akbar and his
Court and of the Modern City of Agra*, Calcutta Central Press Co., 1896, 69–70.

[116] Fauq, *Shalamar Bagh*, 64–66.

[117] Fauq, *Shalamar Bagh*, 25. The inscription is also mentioned in Sadaf Fatma, 'Gardens in
Mughal India in the Light of Inscriptions', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 74, 2013:
297–304 and Latif, *Lahore*, 188–90.

[118] Latif subsequently wrote a history of Agra that similarly included many architectural
drawings: see Latif, *Agra*: *Historical & Descriptive*.

[119] Aziz-ur-Rahman, *History of Jama Masjid and Interpretation of Muslim Devotions*, Delhi: Roxy
Printing Press, Jama Masjid, 1936, with the author's professional title provided on the
frontispiece.

'European visitors and American tourists coming to the Jama Masjid (Grand
Mosque) at Delhi, on a sight-seeing expedition to look at its marvelous structure.'[120]
After thanking 'Mrs. Brooke (wife of G.P.H. Brooke) for her kind and most valuable
literary aid … [and] diligent attention to the fidelity and veracity of the English
phraseology', he then explained that, like churches and temples, mosques are
'invaluable text books of History'.[121] Then, he proceeded to enumerate the
measurements and materials of the mosque's various elements, before focusing, like
the authors of the Urdu guide to Agra, on its Arabic and Persian inscriptions. Here,
then, architectural *rekhta* was coming full circle from its origins among British
tourists in Delhi and Agra a century earlier.

       The late 1930s also saw the publication of popular guidebooks in
Hyderabad, whose ruling Nizam, aristocracy, and Muslim officials ensured the rich
patronage of not only architectural history but also of preservation and neo-
traditional construction.[122] The most detailed was *Delchesp Maqamat* ('Fascinating
Places'), a multi-volume guidebook to the architectural and archaeological
monuments of Hyderabad State as a whole written by the son of the royal
physician, Nawwab Arastu Yar Jung (1858–1940).[123] As its preface explicitly stated,
the guidebook was designed to provide Hyderabadi tourists and students with
information during their excursions to the titular 'fascinating places'.[124] *Delchesp
Maqamat* presented a vivid contrast to Akbarabadi's Agra guidebook and especially
the *Ma'arif* journal. For not only did it commemorate the grand Mughal architectural
legacy of Awrangzeb's capital in Aurangabad and the royal and saintly mausolea in
Khuldabad. It also included details and illustrations of the Hindu sculptures and
Buddhist paintings in the Ellora and Ajanta caves, including a lithographic line-
drawing of the voluptuous, bare-breasted 'wife of Buddha' from Ajanta.[125] With its
links to the colonial Indian archaeological practices imported to Hyderabad State by
Ghulam Yazdani, this was certainly an expression of architectural *rekhta*. But it was
one adapted to the distinct cultural politics of Hyderabad, where Urdu remained
the shared educated language of the Nizam's Hindu and Muslim subjects.

       The coming of Indian and Pakistani independence in 1947 (and Nehru's
invasion of Hyderabad a year later) did not put an immediate end to the
developments traced in the previous pages. Rather, the founding of Pakistan set in

[120] Aziz-ur-Rahman, *History of Jama Masjid*, 1.

[121] Aziz-ur-Rahman, *History of Jama Masjid*, 3, 5.

[122] Lanzillo, 'Between Industry and Islam.'

[123] Asghar Husayn, *Delchesp Maqamat*, 5 vols, Hyderabad: A'zam Steam Press, 1936–1939.

[124] Asghar Husayn, *Delchesp Maqamat: Subah-e Aurangabad Riyasat-e Nizam Haydarabad*,
Hyderabad: A'zam Steam Press, 1939, unnumbered preface (*Chand Guzareshat*).

[125] The 'wife of Buddha' (*Buddha ki bivi*), attributed to Ajanta cave #1, is on Husayn, *Delchesp
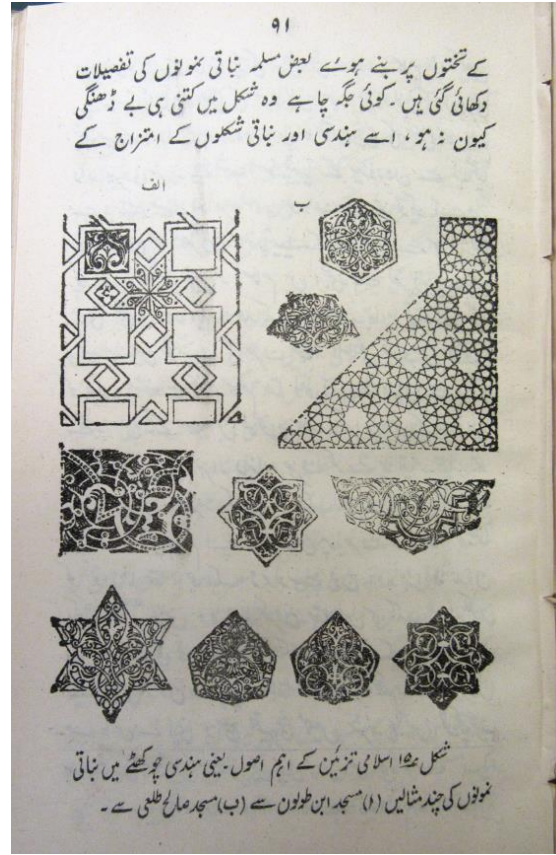Maqamat: Subah-e Aurangabad*, 97.

Fig. 6. Cairene Architectural Decor (from Ernest Richmond, *Islami Fan-e Ta'mir*, 1952).

motion a complex series of policies attempting to construct a history for the new nation, which included incorporating the ancient Buddhist and Gandharan no less than the more recent Muslim and Mughal past.[126] Meanwhile, in 1952, the Republic of India's most prominent Urdu cultural institution issued a translation of *Moslem Architecture* by Ernest T. Richmond (1874-1955) under the title *Islami Fann-e Ta'mir* ('The Islamic Art of Architecture').[127] Like his counterparts in India, Richmond had begun his career as an architect and engineer. It was while serving in related

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[126] Andrew Armstutz, 'A Pakistani Homeland for Buddhism: Displaying a National History for Pakistan beyond Islam, 1950–1969', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42, 2, 2019: 237–255 and Pervez Hoodbhoy and Abdul Hameed Nayyar, 'Rewriting the History of Pakistan', in Mohammad Asghar Khan, ed, *Islam, Politics and the State: The Pakistan Experience*, London: Zed Books, 1985. The Urdu studies of Lahore's architectural history by the aforementioned Muhammad al-Din Fauq were also edited and finally published in full in a 1962 special issue on *ma'asir-e Lahur* in the Pakistani journal *Nuqush*. My thanks to Saima Nazar for this information and for supplying a copy of the special issue.

[127] Ernest T. Richmond, *Moslem Architecture, 623 to 1516: Some Causes and Consequences*, London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1926; translated into Urdu by Sayyid Mubariz al-Din Rif'at as *Islami Fann-e Ta'mir*, Aligarh: Anjuman Taraqqi-e Urdu, 1952.

administrative positions in Egypt then Palestine that he developed his historical
interests. Just as the earlier Urdu translation of Le Bon channelled information to
Indian Muslims about the 'Arab' arts of the Middle East, so Richmond's book
funnelled more recent findings from Egypt, the Levant, and Spain, while framing
their buildings as being both 'art' and 'Islamic'.[128] The translator—an MA from
Hyderabad's Osmania University called Mubariz al-Din Rif'at—was by now well
equipped with an Urdu art historical lexicon, requiring hardly any Romanised loan-
words (a rare exception was 'gesso').[129] This may well have been a result of the
deliberate effort in previous decades by Hyderabad's Translation Bureau to create a
new Urdu lexicon to cope with translations of European works on the arts and
sciences being prepared for Osmania University.[130]

Yet there was one other startling loan worth mentioning in closing. For when
it came to the discussion of ceramic decoration, Richmond's translator still found
himself facing a conundrum: the lack of an Urdu term for 'tile'. After deciding to
transliterate the English term as *ta'il*, Rif'at added a justificatory footnote, explaining
that while the Iranians used the Persian word *kashi*, this was actually derived from
the place-name Kashan, so they too had no proper term for 'tiles' as such.[131] If this
Urdu lexical lacuna seems startling, then it is worth remembering that south of
Thatta and Multan, India had never developed an ongoing tradition of architectural
ceramic. And so, when this 'Islamic' artform was rediscovered in India through an
English account of Middle Eastern architecture, it required the borrowing of a term
from English—a language which, by the end of colonial rule, had become more
familiar than Persian. This subtle traffic of terms is a fitting point to end our survey
of architectural *rekhta*.

Conclusions

As Mohammad Gharipour has written, European and American studies of 'Persian'
architecture in the first half of the twentieth century, 'challenged the Eurocentric
views of the architectural history of the Near East and advanced historical
understandings of the region which were not simply projections of a European
mentality.'[132] Yet Gharipour goes on to note how 'these studies … rarely involved

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[128] The Urdu translation included, *inter alia*, Richmond's summaries and citations of such
scholars as van Berchem (135), Creswell (54, 165), Dozy (113), Lane-Poole (136), and de
Vogüé (196). In describing the Mamluk mausoleum of al-Nasir in Cairo, Rif'at used the
Urdu word *aviza* ('hanging pendant') to describe the *muqarnas* squinch that had become such
a key concern of European architectural historians. See Richmond/Rif'at, *Islami Fann-e
Ta'mir*, 200.
[129] Richmond/Rif'at, *Islami Fann-e Ta'mir*, 190, 230,
[130] Datla, *Language of Secular Islam*, 77–78, noting that no fewer than 6,288 new Urdu words
were coined for arts subjects (and 56,407 for scientific ones).
[131] Richmond/Rif'at, *Islami Fann-e Ta'mir*, 65.
[132] Mohammad Gharipour, 'Introduction', in Gharipour, *Historiography of Persian Architecture*,
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local archaeologists and historians.'[133] In a striking contrast, born from the complex
exchanges of India's colonisation, Urdu materials point to a dialogical discourse
through which, in some if by no means all cases, Indians also contributed to
European understanding of India's Islamic artistic heritage.

While indubitably taking place in the colony, this reflects the situation
Ahmed El Shamsy describes in his account of the recovery of an Islamic textual
heritage in Egypt, in which the writings of local scholars 'cannot be reduced to a
reaction to colonialism, nor was Orientalism something they simply experienced
passively. Instead, they excavated their own intellectual heritage for their own
reasons, sometimes in dialogue with, informed by, or even in opposition to Western
scholarship.'[134] Neither wholly original nor wholly derivative, the works of Urdu
architectural history perused here involved the skills of Indian lithographic printers,
artists, calligraphers, epigraphers, historians, translators, source critics, and, above
all, shapers of public memory who produced books and articles that gave meaning
to visible—and visitable—buildings.

Far from being the products of narrowly Indian or colonial developments,
Urdu publications reflected the adaptation of European art history in other regions
of Asia in the same period. Looking east from India, we might point to *Kokka*
('Flower of the Nation'), the pioneering Japanese art history journal founded in 1889
to promote the study of indigenous art forms in the face of the Westernising *Yōga*
style that gained prominence in the early Meiji period. Yet like the Urdu works
examined here, *Kokka* had a similarly mixed origins through the many exchanges
with European and American scholars of its co-founder, Okakura Tenshin (1863–
1913), a highly influential intellectual who worked the preservation of pre-modern
Japanese art and culture while collaborating with Tagore and other Indian
intellectuals who reappraised Buddhist art as Asia's common "classical" heritage,
from India to Japan.[135] Subsequently, Okakura became the first curator of the Asian
art section of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Looking west from India, we might
point to *Mir'at-ı Sanayi'-ı Islamiye/ Le Miroir de l'Art Musulman*, the bilingual Turkish-
French journal founded by the late Ottoman dealer-collector Ismaïl Hakky-Bey
(1844-1903).[136] Moving between Paris and Istanbul, Hakky-Bey filtered into his

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[133] Gharipour, 'Introduction', 3.

[134] Ahmed El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture
Transformed an Intellectual Tradition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020, 237.

[135] On the role of Okakura, Tagore and others in promoting these pan-Buddhist links, see
Nile Green, *How Asia Found Herself: A Story of Intercultural Understanding*, New Haven: Yale
University Press, 2022, ch. 3 and 4. On the tangible architectural impact of these
collaborations, see Sebastian Conrad, 'Greek in Their Own Way: Writing India and Japan
into the World History of Architecture at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *American
Historical Review*, 125: 1, 2020, 19–53.

[136] Deniz Türker, 'Hakky-Bey and his Journal *Le Miroir de l'Art Musulman*, or, *Mirʾat-e ṣanayiʿ-
e islamiye* (1898)', *Muqarnas*, 31, 2014, 277–306.

journal readings from the Bibliothèque nationale (including Le Bon's *La Civilisation des arabes*) and sourced its engravings and phototypes from Fermin Didot, a specialist publisher of books on Islamic art.[137]

This mirroring of terminology—'art' as '*fann*' in Arabic then Urdu, and '*Sanayi*' in Turkish—that was in turn conceptualised as 'Islamic' was not only a transnational and transimperial process. The emergence of a distinct field and formulation of 'Islamic' art history was also a broadly contemporaneous development, particularly in the interwar period that saw the founding of the journal *Ars Islamica* in 1934 no less than the rapid growth of scholarly publications we have seen in India and Egypt during these decades. Yet there were important distinctions and emphases. Since Western-defined Islamic art effectively comprised the art of the Middle East and North Africa (including Spain), *Ars Islamica* featured very little on India, with only five short contributions in its first five years—only slightly more coverage than Islamic art in Poland![138] (Correspondingly, India also played a minor role the Francophone Iranian journal *Athâr-é Iran*, founded by André Godard in 1936.)[139] While it may seem obvious that Urdu works would emphasise Indian art, there was more to the matter than meets the eye. For as we have seen, the rapid uptick in scholarly and educational publications coincided with (and in some measure responded to) influential Anglophone Indian nationalist formulations of 'Indian' art as essentially Buddhist and Hindu. Correspondingly, the increasing attention to Middle Eastern Islamic art signalled by the translation of Le Bon sought to bolster the cultural capital of India's Islamic art by tying it to a larger civilisation being celebrated by prominent European writers. The Indian authors and translators we have discussed did not therefore merely coincide, still less baldly imitate, an alien and external European conception of 'Islamic' art. They adapted it to their own circumstances and self-conceptions.

For as much as the development of a self-consciously *Islamic* art history by Indian Muslim authors in Urdu was an outcome of dialogue with European scholars, it also emerged from a 'trialogue' in which the unmentioned third partners were the Indian (and Ceylonese) nationalists who promoted Buddhist and Hindu traditions as the acme of 'Indian' art. Even such celebrated promoters of an all-encompassing 'Asian' art as Coomaraswamy, Okakura and Tagore largely excluded the arts of Islam from the fold, with Coomaraswamy prioritizing Hindu and Buddhist art in his many influential publications, while Okakura's *Kokka* placed a strong emphasis on Buddhist art which was echoed in the pages of Tagore's *Visva-*

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[137] Türker, 'Hakky-Bey', 285, 288–289.

[138] The four articles in question were by Hermann Goetz; Ananda Coomaraswamy; Basil Grey on Mughal painting; and Nabih A. Faris and George C. Miles on an inscription from Bengal. Statement based on *Index to Volumes 1–16*, *Ars Islamica*, 15–16, 1951.

[139] On the development of architectural history in 1920s and 30s Iran through similar intellectual exchanges, see Green, 'New Histories'.

Bharati Quarterly founded in 1935.[140] Meanwhile, the spread of nationalist
formulations of art history across the Middle East and India not only furthered the
essentialisation of 'Indian' art as Buddhist, Hindu, and occasionally Jain. It also
fostered a tension between 'Islamic' and 'Arab' formulations of Middle Eastern art,
as well as the promotion of the notion of a distinct 'Persian' art by a closely-knit
coterie of Iranian, American, and European scholars in the 1930s.[141] One possible
consequence of this removal of Iran from the developing picture of 'Islamic' art was
the way Urdu works on Islamic architecture paired India with the Arab lands rather
than Iran (let alone Central Asia). While this requires further research, not least in
the Urdu journals of the period, the Urdu texts that have been examined here show
that their authors largely ignored the arts of Iran, whether seen as 'Persian' or
'Islamic'.

As for what we have seen as an overwhelming emphasis on architecture, the
links between Urdu art history and the preservation-cum-promotion of an Indian
Muslim cultural identity may help us explain this. If this partly emerged from the
legacy of prior archaeological approaches to India's past (particularly through the
grand institution that was the Archaeological Survey of India), then the
corresponding monumentalist emphasis in Urdu also expressed Indian Muslims'
own concerns with their sites of collective memory. Even as some Urdu writers
drew on European studies, their stress on buildings associated with the Mughals
and their special attention to grand mausolea represented a continuity with
precolonial Persian texts in which buildings were important insofar as they were
linked with important figures, preferably sultans or saints.

Here lay an irony. For the same colonial power that had bombarded Delhi's
Red Fort then banished the last Mughal emperor also rendered such palaces
accessible to the public then funded their upkeep through Curzon's Ancient
Monuments Preservation Act. Such public access was an important factor in the
development of Urdu architectural tourist guides to Agra and Old Delhi, those
definitive memory spaces of the vanquished precolonial order. Colonial policies,
both military and cultural, were therefore key factors in the monumentalisation of
Indian Muslim cultural memory. Another factor was the relative lack of museums

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[140] For further discussion, see Green, *How Asia Found Herself,* ch.2 and 4 and Yuka Kadoi,
'Embracing Islam: Okakura Tenshin and Alternative Orientalism', *Journal of Transcultural
Studies* (forthcoming).
[141] Talinn Grigor, 'Recultivating "Good Taste": The Early Pahlavi Modernists and Their
Society for National Heritage', *Iranian Studies*, 37:1, 2004, 17–45; Mostafa Hussein,
'Scholarship on Islamic Archaeology between Zionism and Arab Nationalism', in Susannah
Heschel and Umar Ryad, eds, *The Muslim Reception of European Orientalism: Reversing the
Gaze*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2019; and Reid, *Contesting Antiquity in Egypt*, chapter 6. On the
impact of Turkish nationalism, see Scott Redford, '"What Have You Done for Anatolia
Today?": Islamic Archaeology in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic', *Muqarnas* 24, 2007:
243–252.

devoted primarily to Islamic art—in contrast to Cairo and Istanbul—that rendered art objects and paintings less accessible and observable to the Urdu-reading public than the living mosques and protected monuments that featured in so many books.[142]

Yet colonial policies were far from the only factors. In his essay on the impact of popular prints in colonial India, Partha Mitter has argued that such mass-produced images 'offered a new sense of cultural unity that contributed to the construction of national identity.'[143] Mitter rightly added a cautionary caveat, noting that 'there were of course limitations to such a "ubiquitous" visual culture. The "imagined community" created by print culture, which expressed the centralising tendency of elite nationalism, was considerably fragmented and fissured, as alternative popular forms of visual culture proved resistant to its hegemonic forms.'[144] Representing such fragments and fissures—whether the small Muslim publishers of Agra or the presses of princely Hyderabad—Urdu formulations of an artistic heritage that was at once Indian *and* Islamic were indeed a response to the 'hegemonic' cultural nationalism of Asian Anglophone elites like Okakura, Coomaraswamy, and Tagore. But they were more than just that. Because through the collaborations and amalgams that contributed to what we have called architectural *rekhta,* the development of 'Islamic' art history in Urdu became a search for an Indo-Muslim self that involved the participation of the European other.

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[142] Reid, *Contesting Antiquity in Egypt*, 176-187 and Wendy Shaw, 'Islamic Arts in the Ottoman Imperial Museum, 1889–1923', *Ars Orientalis*, 30, 2000, 55–68.
[143] Mitter, 'Mechanical Reproduction', 30.
[144] Mitter, 'Mechanical Reproduction', 30.