ON MULTAN'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT: INDIAN AND ANGLO-INDIAN ARCHITECTURE IN MULTAN (1857-1947). 1

FRANÇOISE DASQUES

ASSOCIATE RESEARCHER TO THE CEMCA CENTRE FOR MEXICAN AND CENTRAL AMERICAN STUDIES (UMIFRE 16 CNRS/MAEE)

General remark
As a major town in South Punjab and a commercial centre in former Anglo-India, Multan has a substantial 19th century built heritage which can mainly be divided in two corpora: Anglo-Indian architecture and Indian architecture, this last one being identified during the British Raj as "Modern Indian Architecture".

Anglo-Indian architecture
Multan has a number of Anglo-Indian monuments and buildings, ordered and built by the Public Works Department, or by related British institutions when the city became a decisive place for the British administration in Punjab. The stylistic codes of this colonial architecture depend on Greco-Roman standards, hinged on the notion of Architectural Order (Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian), which precisely means a system of proportions. Technically speaking, this architecture is partly an iron architecture integrating, sometimes at a high grade, metallic beams and girders. Both Anglo-Indian and Indian construction make use of iron, according to Europeans standards - either cast iron, iron or steel (the three of its specific states) -, although relatively later in the case of Indian architecture. In the princely states (like the former state of Khaipur, I could visit), steel in construction appears sporadically in the 1880's and becomes of a systematic use at the beginning of the XXth c.
One of the first memorials of Multan is undoubtedly the Monument for Lt Patrick Alexander Vans Agnew, consisting of a plain obelisk on a high pedestal that bears a plaque commemorating the last siege of Multan. Three tombs erected in the immediate vicinity of the monument have been obviously influenced by the Islamic art of tombs (built by local artisans ?). The occasion to mention the highly valuable heritage of Islamic cemeteries and tombs in the Indus valley, among which stands out the funeral complex of Chaukhandi (Sindh).

Figs 3, 4. The former Ripon Hall and Northbrook Tower (1882-84), nowadays Ghana Guar. A symmetrical building affecting a Moghul style of ornaments (chhatris…)
Emblematic of Anglo-Indian architecture in Multan, the Ripon building known as "Clock Tower or Ghanta Ghar" (1884-88), has been conceived in the so-called Indo-Saracenic style, which retakes, in a new version, elements from the former Indo-Mughal synthesis. The Ripon Building presents a protruding avant-corps treated as a tower (which houses the clock), that appears as a *per se* structure, independent from the main body, as it were. Northbrook Tower's vertical scansion is contributing to the relevant urban position of the building. It sort of attracts the downward perspective coming from the tomb of Shah Rukn-e-Alam. The restoration and re-opening of the building –as a centre for the arts?.. a cultural centre? - would help estimate as it should be the Anglo-Indian heritage of Multan and promote its coherent corpus, while guaranteeing the preservation of the buildings.

A catholic church is worth to be mentioned. St Mary's church is in Art history terms a *unicum*, a unique specimen regarding formal and spatial solutions. It was provided with an unusual double porch (a Clock porch –neo-medieval- , followed by an Italianate-terraced porch) (Figs 5, 6, 7), while the extensive use of buttresses, more aesthetic than structural, conveys a charming, nearly amazing effect. I could not enter the sanctuary. We find a similar aesthetic use of buttresses in St Antony's, Lahore (Fig. 8). The Cathedral of the Holy Redeemer, an imposing church corresponding to the 1940's visions of this architectural program, stands as the other pole of local Christianity.
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Fig. 5. St Mary's, Multan. Fig. 6. St Mary's. The decorative buttresses surmounted by pinnacles, outside the apse and nave.

Fig. 7. St Mary's, the two porches.

Fig. 8. St Antony's, Lahore. A similar ornamental use of buttresses.

The PWD code of 1892

Both Protestant and Catholic Churches were built to meet the religious concerns of the colonial staff. Anglo-Indian instructions regarding the planning of Christian sanctuaries for the "Divine Service", are precisely listed in the PWD code of 1892. I could consult the different volumes of this code in the archives of the Gender studies Department. I have annexed some of the relative instructions at the end of this note.

Indian architecture

I had the opportunity, although briefly, to enter the old or walled town, where I could observe the Multan's 19th century Indian built heritage. This architectural corpus as been specifically identified in the 1910's. Anglo-Indians critics and officials dealing with buildings and monuments (like F. S. Growse, both a collector and a restorator, and also an author, E. B. Havell, once principal of the Calcutta school of arts, or M. J. Begg, first consulting architect to the Government of
India, appointed in the 1910's) would call it "Modern Indian Architecture", eager to size "interesting types of Modern Indian buildings in the district in which they are engaged, and to note on the craftsmen responsibility for their design and decoration". For colonial reasons, they wouldn't acknowledge and properly speak of Indian architects. In a future book on 19th century architecture in India (Sage Publication, Delhi), I insist on that important built heritage which hasn't been yet properly recognized and therefore remains mainly undescribed. This architecture of Indian source (sponsoring, conception and work), is aligned with the global constructive modernity commanded by Greco-Roman patterns. In the peripheries, Western classicism mingle with oriental forms so as to render a type, within the general framework of eclecticism (Indian eclecticism). "Modern Indian Architecture", as an architectural gender, was especially flourishing in the Royal states. The states of Junagath or Gwailor, in this respect, give account of a substantial heritage. Indian eclecticism was particularly developed in the commercial core of the cities, where wealthy merchants established their dwellings, situated in the vicinity or immediately linked to their sheds and stores.

► Fig. a. J. Fergusson, *History of the modern styles of architecture*, London, John Murray, ed. 1902.

► Fig. b. "Begam Kothi, Lucknow (from a photograph)". J. Fergusson, *History of the modern styles of architecture*, 1902. "... misapplication of the details of the
Classical Orders... Of course no native of India can well understand..." writes Fergusson, commenting that fair example of Westernized Indian architecture.

The archeologist and theorician of architecture, James Fergusson (1808-1886), who stayed and travelled in India during the 1830's and the 1840's would call it "British art in Indian hands", or "Oriental italian architecture", for its Greco-Roman classical background. Due to the prejudices of that time, particularly acute in Fergusson's text, Indian 19th century cosmopolitan style tends to be discredited by Western observers. Estimating the sumptuous Begam Kothi, a residence in Lucknow's Kaiser Bagh, Fergusson writes : "Like all the other specimen of Oriental Italian Architecture, it offends painfully, though less than most others, from the misapplication of the details of the Classical Orders." The reason for such a judgement, apart from the usual colonial conceit, is to be found in the philosophical background of eclecticism. Let's approach, in a few words, the mental process that leads to this contempt and exclusivism. According to the visions of the time, no system of architecture never came out of nowhere, as a mere creation, but was constituted by stages, by imperceptible transitions and successive transformations. The historical process conducts, but does not introduce anything radically new. All that is original, new, inventive arises on the background of pre-existing elements, for nothing can arise from nothing. This non creationist evolutionism, based on the everlasting essence of a group, explains that the precious foundations of Greco-Roman classicism should be reserved to the jealous depositary entity : the Europeans, true sons of Athens and Rome.

Getting back to Multan, a close look at architecture can help detect two main phases of economic growth. One at the end of 19th c. , probably corresponding to the British regional expansion (institutions/buildings), the other one around the 1940's or the 1950's, taking as a symptom the expansion of Art deco patterns in the ornamentation of the facades ( a style popular in Europe in the twenties, up to the fifties in extra-European countries). Of course the present conclusions remain
estimations, for having been set in the course of a very rapid outlook, and an exterior one (not being able to penetrate the dwellings and reckon their conditions of space and disposition). Those elements can certainly be refined, throughout a more detailed expertise.

**About some instances of 19th century architecture in Multan**

A facade is usually reflecting the organization of the dwelling and also speaks for its building structure. The few analysis here presented, mainly stylistic, have been set on this basic principle, and also "at first sight", without penetrating the houses or being able to work out their history and circumstances.

► Figs 9, 10, 11. A late brick and wood construction, coated with "chunam". Designed on a classical pattern, the front is the sole remaining part.

► Fig. 12. Delhi Gate, one of the monumental gates (mainly reconstructed) to enter the old city of Multan.

► Fig. 13. A triplet of metalled doors under pointed arches, for a traditional city store.
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► Fig. 14. This house is particularly interesting, due to its exemplary scheme of composition and the refined treatment of its ornamentation. The front is organized in two hierarchical registers which correspond to the piano nobile, the noble floor, and an upper storey, both being separated by a cornice. This architecture of cooked bricks, mimetical of stone architecture through a white covering, borrows from the Mughal vocabulary (umbel capitals, bulb basis of the columns …), within a framework of classical moldings. The delicate slim columns are also made of bricks, covered by a plaster coating and supported by high stylobates. On the whole: Oriental stylistic features displayed on a regular, symmetrical rhythm.

Also to be noted: the westernized oriental jali, organized in geometrical serial motives (when conventional jalis insist in proposing ever-changing patterns and forms). The art of cement casted jalis opened a field for innovation in the area of architectural auxiliaries.

House No 14 shows a central opening flanked by columns of a subtle and innovative design, leaving on each side a pair of regular jalis, horizontally separated by a cornice. Delicate cartouches centre the lower parts of the general frame that seizes the second register of the composition. The attic made of three coordinated jalis might have been realized somewhat later (or not). To be noted: the elegance of a composition realized by an Indian master, sensible to western classical patterns of architecture and loyal to the traditional native
devices (air circulation through jalis; wooden windows frames and balconies, etc.) Due to long duration phenomena, this type of house is difficult to date with precision. It may have been built around 1900 (+ or – 20 years). Most of the houses in the old city present a score of variations upon the same compromise.

At its left, a simpler cantilevered brick construction integrates the British upper rank of medium size openings for the suitable ventilation of a mezzanine... a "one and a half" floor. Simple openings for air circulation adopt the Gothic motif of a quatrefoil. There might be a possible continuity between these houses and the neighbouring constructions, as well as with the lower parts, occupied by stores. Detecting such a connection would help understanding the inscription of the 19th century Indian house in the chowk's urban texture. For their quality and representativeness this group of houses should be urgently preserved.
Figs 15, 16. The two following houses are organized on the same pattern and belong to the same logics as the preceding one, although arranged on a simpler scheme. House N° 15 sticks to customary wood principles of structure and ornamentation. House N° 16 adopts a sort of neo-gothic manner with windows framed in trefoil arches, while a sophisticated classical cornice, supported by consoles, divides the upper and lower registers that typify the elevation. Being the owners totally conscious or sensitized to the perishable nature of these walls and their transcendent value, they would surely endeavour to maintain them, at least as a tribute to the skills displayed by the former Multan masons.

Figs 17, 18. Two examples of cantilevered woodwork over a brick structure. The technique of corbelling (rows of corbels or consoles support a projecting wall or parapet) has been extensively used in the Indian city were streets are usually narrow. Owners, however, would lately (beginning of the 20th c.) pervert the tolerance of letting upper storeys expand. At Benares, municipal reports from the end of the 19th. c. denounce the growing amplitude gained in the old city by the upper structures, at the expense of public space.

House N° 18 is an interesting wooden house presenting large openings protected by metallic guardrails of a subtle design then "patented" (to be observed in different parts of Punjab). The windows are separated by a pattern of fluted tables that borrows from vernacular architecture (wall-incised flow channels, as in fig. 32 & 33). The wall edges of this tetrahedron are reinforced with metal rods or shields.

A south Punjabi carpenter's distinguished architecture.
► Figs 19, 20. On the same "regular pattern" as previously observed, although several years later, these two urban houses have adopted both the Art deco ornamental vocabulary and its technical system (here after 1920), consisting of cement on a brick construction. In Anglo-India, cement as a coating and a casting material replaced around the 1930's the former traditional coverings – chunam, refined mortars and plasters.

House N° 19 displays a well balanced ternary composition, horizontal and vertical (the upper attic may be posterior). The balconies of a beautiful design are apparently a combination of sand stone, mortar coating and cement castings. At the crossroad of two architectural moments, the
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house remains in the scaffold of classical register by using, in its second and third registers, "abbreviated orders".

In House N° 20, this process of simplification reaches a higher level. A simplified architectural member stands for the former columns, achieving nonetheless the same decisive partitioning of the façade, vertically and horizontally. A comparison can be made with the earlier house on the left, still featuring a classical pilaster. The wooden elements (tables and balusters) implicated in the opus were less susceptible to being altered by the stylistic modern trends. The construction has been probably erected around 1950.

► Figs 21, 22, 23. A modern door (referring to 19th c. modernity) for a mosque, with a beautiful floral treatment on a
wooden support. The Moghul favourite floral design of a lily is inflected by local artistic forms and materials. Some panels are made of Multani blue tiles.

 ► Fig. 24 This handsome wooden consol, supporting a higher structure, belongs to the carpintect's Penjabi tradition.

 ► Figs 25, 26. Along this busy street of the city centre, are aligned a number of notable large merchant houses, surmounting their corresponding stores. Stylistically, these wealthy residences follow a "modern" pattern and even adopt an eclectic manner. Where the former chowk houses conformed themselves with integrating Greco-Roman modulations, these residences afford playing with historical styles. House N° 25 is a good example of the evolution undergone, having been realized by a regional master, probably a "carpintect", for a wealthy trader or merchant. The traditional flow channels seem to have been preserved under wooden tables.

The main upper window, a major ornamental motive achieved through white-painted terracotta on bricks (apparently), adopts a mock Mughal manner that individualizes the composition. A high level of contrast is managed between the slightly inflected pointed arches of the windows (set halfway between a Gothic and an Oriental design) and the great Moghul arch that ornates the central bay. Over that arch stands a balustrade.
Figs 27, 27'. In the following house, the same device of a protruding attic, is coupled with a bow-window managed in the verandah itself. At the street level, an impressive neo-Mughal porch emphasizes the central vertical axis of the composition. Partly obliterated, nowadays, by parasite features and posters, the lower register was conceived as a solid masonry base, not deprived of subtle ornamentation in keeping with the mixed Gothic, Classical and Mughal references that nourish the dwelling's eclecticism. The use of Mughal motifs is often a truism in 19th c. Punjabi architecture.

Figs 28, 29, 30. The stores of house No 27, probably built at the turn of the centuries, benefited from the same distinguished treatment as the residential part of the building. A false ceiling made of embossed metallic plaques (27) betrays the internationalization at that date of the so-called "new materials", Indian construction being then informed by cosmopolitan modes and uses. There again I unfortunately couldn't take into account the inner organization and spatial distribution of that interesting specimen, so as to check, for instance, if there was an interior.
courtyard, and understand the attraction by the outside of the series of rooms opening on the upper verandah that overlooks the street, a main artery in the city.

► Fig. 31. Cantilevered on the same thin consoles that support the ancient houses of that street, and associating Indian ornaments to a westernized frontage, the following brick house is a true specimen of Multan 19th century architecture.

At a crossroad between an Oriental lexicon and a European medieval vocabulary, the three main windows under trefoil arches are mingling with an upper register of "British" openings, dedicated to the ventilation of the rooms. Supported by the upper cornice, deprived of most of its stucco decoration, a wooden balustrade, flanked by the dilated umbel capitals of thin lateral columns, seals this sober and effective composition.
Figs 32, 33. This extensive vernacular brick house, located in Old Multan, offers a fair example of the engineering devices conceived to match local climatic conditions and sanitary requirements. They expertly command the composition.

Fig. 34. Multan Dolat Gate, Inner city

Fig. 35. A contemporary house that retakes, exaggerating its expression and with much less attainment, the classical syntax of Multani Indian architecture in colonial times.
► Figs 36, 37. Two corresponding Lahori houses in Anarkali, (H. 36 : end of 19th. c.- H. 37, from the 1950's or 1960's, approximately). For estimating regularities and discrepancies.

Annex. Public Works Department code. On cemeteries and churches

"Quote.

Appendix M : Cemeteries and Churches (p. 464)
Churches in Military Stations (p 481)

Rule III. – At all permanent Military Stations, Churches will be provided by the Government for its Protestant and Roman Catholic European British-born soldiers on the scale laid down in Rule IV.

…

Rule IV. – The amount of the Government grant for a Protestant Church will in no case exceed such a sum as will suffice to provide a plain substantial building of the simplest ecclesiastical design, together with such plain furniture as is essentially necessary for the proper performance of the service
according to the ritual of the Church of England. It will rest with private individuals to furnish the means of imparting architectural decorations to the building, should they desire to do so, and also of supplying additional furniture, including apparatus for lighting, of a more costly description.

**Rule V.** – The same principles will regulate the grant for Roman Catholic Churches.

... 

**Rule VIII** (p. 482).- As a rule, only one Protestant and one Roman Catholic Church will be provided; (details are provided at continuation on the building norms and relative grants).

**Churches in Civil Stations (p. 483)**

**Rule X.**- At the chief Civil Station of a District where at least 25 European British-born subjects, Protestant and Roman Catholics, as the case may be, in the general service of Government, and where no suitable Church provision for them exists already, the Government will contribute towards Church accommodation...

**Churches for Railway Station**
*(see norms and specificities p. 484)*  Unquote".
Notes & References

1 This is a Brief report on a one week stay in Multan from Thursday 30th December to Saturday 3rd January 2015. Due to political circumstances and the high level of security measures prevailing during my stay in Multan, my research was reduced to a limited inquest, and consequently to the basic results I here present, regarding the town's built heritage.