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Chand Singh, *Aspects of Medieval Indian Architecture*. Delhi: Agam Kal Prakashan, 2015, ₹2,950, 147 pp., ISBN: 9788173201554.


DOI: 10.1177/037698362096894

The book under review is a study of Medieval Indian Architecture, which was divided in two Subas—Delhi and Lahore. This study is extensively based on archaeological, architectural sources and field survey. The author has tried his best to search through different monuments, buildings and remains of architecture in modern Punjab. The author has explained aspects of architecture in this area and tried to document the architectural monuments to reconstruct the History of Medieval Punjab. The book also has high-resolution photographs and plates of the monuments with detailed description of each plate. Also, the publisher has put his best efforts in bringing out this highly academic work. After the publication of this book, the obscured monuments covered under the study came to light. The individual researchers, Archaeological Survey of India and the state government have initiated further research and protection of these monuments, respectively. Therefore, the book has created a landmark in this area of study.

The text of the book, spread over 145 pages, is divided into seven chapters which clearly explain the different aspects of research.

Chapter 1, 'History and Archaeology', delineated the relationship between 'History' and 'Archaeology' and how archaeology is an important source of study to preserve the leftovers from different ages. During the development of civilisation, human beings have left behind multiple villages, towns, tanks, stepwells, coins, seals, household objects, stones, means of transport, etc. All these artifacts are the representatives of their age, and the modern industrial world is feeling the need to find out about their past using archaeology as their most important tool of study. The experiences of the past can be beneficial in present times to protect resources, culture and environment.

Chapter 2, 'Growth of Architecture in Medieval India', explains the systematic growth of architecture in medieval India from the beginning of the eighth century to seventeenth century. Most of the medieval Indian architecture is composed of masonry formed of dressed stone which was majorly used in India. All of these Islamic architectural monuments used the same method of construction and were maintained


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in different parts of Punjab during the medieval period. Most of these monuments are not situated on modern-day routes; therefore, it is not a simple task to locate these sites.

Chapter 3, 'Urban Punjab—Historical Context', extensively deals with the growth of urbanisation during the medieval period. In the Subas of Delhi and Lahore, seventy-five new urban centres emerged. Different monuments in Punjab such as Sarais, Tombs, Tanks, Mosques, Kos-minars and Baradaris are the witness of how Punjab went through the urbanization process. Simultaneously, different economic activities and the relations between traders and rulers have been explained in this chapter. The author has also given a list of medieval towns/cities of the region with the surviving monuments.

Chapter 4, 'Routes, Monuments and Historical Remains', describes forty-eight monuments—Kos-minars, caravansarais and bridges—along the Agra–Lahore Mughal Highway (which lies between the boundaries of present Punjab). Out of these, only twenty-three are protected by central or state institutions and fifteen known structures are in an unprotected condition. The author has also discovered the old medieval trade route of Punjab and considered it as a factor of importance for this study. This route can be revived, because it is still the shortest route and is not being used for modern-day transport.

Chapter 5, 'Structure and Religion', covers mosques, tombs and dargahs during the period of study in the region. The author has beautifully described the twelve mosques, fifteen tombs and dargahs of the region. Dr Chand Singh has further mentioned that only one mosque out of twelve and ten tombs out of the fifteen are under protection. It has been very honestly stated that only one mosque, 'Mosque of Machhiwara', of these twenty-seven monuments belongs to the Sultanate period and the rest of these belong to the Mughal period. These sites were the centre of religion, faith and unity during medieval times.

Chapter 6, 'Water Architecture', deals with medieval hydrological monuments and further explains the status of wells, stepwells, tanks and hammams. Six wells have been studied by the author, all of which are unrecorded and unprotected. Two monuments are specially mentioned in this chapter because of their unique constructions; these included 'Hammam of Sarai Doraha' and 'Raja Taal of Amritsar'. These hydrological monuments set an example of how the civilisation used to save water during the period under research.

Chapter 7, 'Recreation, Authority and Constructed Space', analyses such monuments, which were associated with power, administration and general public. The sites mentioned in this chapter were the centre of attraction among the public. The Fort of Bhatinda and the coronation site of Akbar at Kalanaur are two of the major centres of study.

Photographs of the sites included in the research have been explained with captions. The book also contains a list of abbreviations, a list of illustrations (which includes separate sections for 7 maps, 6 figures and 254 plates) and a list of Kos-minars, Sarais and bridges in Punjab (eighteen belonging to the Suba of Delhi and thirty belonging to the Suba of Lahore). The study is also appended by a detailed glossary, a rich bibliography and index.

The paintings of Sarai Doraha, Sarai Dakhni and Noor Mahal are highlighted in the sense of cultural importance by the author. Even the inscriptions found in and around

the sites have been very well documented in the study in their original form and the translated version of these inscriptions has also been included.

The crux of the matter is that the book is a very useful source to study architecture of Medieval India, particularly the architecture of the monuments of Lahore and Delhi Subas of medieval period. Thanks to its author, Dr Chand Singh, that the readers have an authentic and authoritative book. Right from the beginning to the end of the text, every page of the book is insightful and erudite.

Mahender Singh

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