



**A QUEER READING OF  
NAWABI ARCHITECTURE  
AND THE COLONIAL  
ARCHIVE**

**LUCKNOW QUEERSCAPES**

Sonal Mithal and Arul Paul





# A Queer Reading of Nawabi Architecture and the Colonial Archive

*A Queer Reading of Nawabi Architecture and the Colonial Archive* explores the architectural production of nawabs Asaf-ud-Daula and Wajid Ali Shah and reveals the colonial bias against queer expression. It offers methods of using queer strategies to read archival evidence against the grain and rewrite erased, overlooked, and suppressed histories.

The book provides its readers a unique queer postcolonial architectural history of Lucknow from 1775–1857. It highlights the nawabs' non-normative expressions, which not only offered a fierce resistance to the colonial enterprise but also were instrumental in furthering Lucknow as a cultural center. It simultaneously extracts parameters from queer studies and redefines them to illustrate ways in which queer architecture can be characterized. It reconstructs the footprint of nawabi architecture erased by the colonial enterprise and places it back on map—an exercise not undertaken meticulously until now.

*A Queer Reading of Nawabi Architecture and the Colonial Archive* is intended for scholars and students of queer studies, postcolonial studies, architectural history, and the global south, as well as the citizens of Lucknow.

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Lucknow Queerscapes

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# Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>vii</i>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PART I</b>	
<b>Dragging Up the Past</b>	<b>7</b>
1 Gender, Sex, and State in Nawabi Lucknow	9
2 Locating Forms of Resistance and Transgression	20
3 Queering the Colonial Archive	25
4 Locating Inaccuracies, Fallacies, and Biases in the Colonial Archive	34
5 Counter-Archives	41
6 Contesting Colonial Claims	48
<b>PART II</b>	
<b>Lucknow Queerscapes</b>	<b>53</b>
7 Architecture of Asaf-ud-Daula	57
<i>The Machhi Bhavan Precinct</i>	57
<i>The Daulatkhana Precinct</i>	71
<i>The Bada Imambada Complex</i>	78
8 Architecture of Wajid Ali Shah	87
9 Of Vaudeville Variety	114
<i>Multivalence, Ambiguity, and Plurality</i>	114

<i>Accommodating Leisure, Female Gaze, and Dissent</i>	115
<i>Combining the Aesthetic of the Austere, the Extravagant, and the Industrial</i>	117
<i>Institutionalized Ishq That Cultivates, Cajoles, and Controls</i>	120
<i>Overlapping Realms of Affinities and Hierarchies</i>	125
<i>Intersectionalities That Subvert</i>	127
<i>Theatricity</i>	129
<i>Queer Collections and Excess</i>	129
<i>Dressing Up and Dressing Down</i>	133
<i>Theater of Water</i>	134
<i>Performance of Politics and Pleasure</i>	136
<i>Paristan: An Everyday Theater of the Fantastical</i>	138
<b>10 Of Perverse Compositions</b>	<b>146</b>
<i>Hybridity, Adaptation, and Stylistic Disorganization</i>	146
<i>Orientating: Forging Familiarities</i>	148
<i>(Im)morality of Deviance</i>	150
<i>The Strange, the Odd, the Queer</i>	153
<i>Disorientations and Non-Alignments</i>	156
<i>Withholding the Gaze</i>	156
<i>Spatial Incomprehensions</i>	157
<i>Portal to Re-formed Orientations</i>	160
<i>Disorientations Destructed</i>	162
<i>Unfamiliarity as Orienting and Familiarity as Disorienting</i>	163
<b>11 Of In-Tensions and Obscurations</b>	<b>166</b>
<i>Spectacles and Contestations</i>	166
<i>Holding the Gaze</i>	169
<i>Gardens of Social and Gendered Tensions</i>	171
<i>Sites of Erasure</i>	176
<b>Conclusion: Site of Memory</b>	<b>191</b>
<i>Bibliography</i>	194
<i>Index</i>	213



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# Introduction

At a conference, we exhibited a queer map of Lucknow, India, which also featured *rekhti*<sup>1</sup> poetry. A noted architect-educator, author, and poet dismissed our connecting *rekhti* to queer expressions, saying that we might be reading too much into it. Without specific references, he spoke tangentially, that male poets write about their devotion to god and that scholars usually misconstrue the use of a male pronoun in such poetry to imply that the poets were writing about a male lover. When things make us uncomfortable, we ignore them and do not talk about them. We don't acknowledge things even if they might be available in plain sight. Our discomfort makes things in plain sight get hidden, buried, and eventually obscure. The stark absence of scholarship on poetry penned by Asaf-ud-Daula, the nawab of Awadh, even when the poems are available to read online, is an example of ignoring things in plain sight. In his poetry, Asaf uses several terms of endearment or respect<sup>2</sup> to address his lovers and celebrate the body of his lover. Some of these words are gender-specific and indicate that Asaf is addressing a male person. With the exception of two words, none of the terms have the possibility to refer to a god. Without reading too much into the poetry but looking at it at face value, it becomes evident that there is a general resistance to locating queer expressions in the historiographical scholarship of the subcontinent. Dismissing an observation by labeling it as reading too much into things is a familiar occurrence with which queer scholarship has grappled. In fact, queer studies scholar Alexander Doty has remarked that queer reading is an acknowledgment and an articulation of the complex range of queerness that has always already existed culturally and that it is not limited to “alternative readings,” “wishful or willful misreadings,” or “reading too much into things” (1993: 16). Queer reading or analysis—or queering—enables making explicit the subtext and emergent meanings. It is often called “queering” as it frequently involves rendering a text queerer by reading it in a certain way (Barker 2016: 290). The general resistance to scholarly initiatives of finding queer voices and queer expressions in the history of the subcontinent is restricted neither to poetic expression nor to contemporary scholarship. In fact, the limited presence of Lucknow and its architecture in contemporary architectural historiography points to a colonial bias against

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## 2 Introduction

nawabi architecture that is inextricably linked to an outright rejection of what the book reads as the “queerness” of it.

The colonial archive actively obliterated the Lucknow nawabs’ artistic and architectural vision on the pretext of their queerness. In the colonial archive—texts written during the colonial period or texts aligning with the colonial enterprise—Hodges, Keene, Fuhrer, Nevill, Fergusson, Newell, Sharar, Hilton, Hay, Forrest,<sup>3</sup> and several others have called the architecture of Lucknow “degraded,” a “corruption,” an “unmitigated misfortune,” an “abomination,” a “hybrid,” a “bastard style,” “the most debased examples of architecture to be found in India,” style lacking “architectural chasteness,” *etc.* In those descriptions is embedded a bias for normative architecture—stylistically classified, and clearly identifiable in its elements, and discernible by function—such as that of the colonists and Mughals. Such terms of derogation helped in consolidating the colonial bias that registered nawabi architecture as invalid and unworthy of inclusion in the architectural historiography.<sup>4</sup>

Architectural historians<sup>5</sup> and later the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)<sup>6</sup> and the Lucknow State Archeology Department<sup>7</sup> emphasize the Mughal architecture of India and the colonial architecture of Lucknow, respectively, as compared to nawabi architecture. This speaks to the colonial institutionalization<sup>8</sup> of the architectural history of the subcontinent. Mughal architecture provided great connoisseur appeal to the colonizers, forging its way to become the most identifiable form of Indian architecture in the history discourse; this was not the case with the nawabs. ASI has been instrumental in controlling the architectural historiography of the subcontinent, much of which relied on how the colonial writers wrote. In Lucknow, nawabi architecture was and continues to be looked down upon in the same way as the nawabs and their culture were held in contempt and disdain. The absence of nawabi architecture from the mainstream architectural history discourse is evidence that the intentional colonial obliteration has sustained in contemporary architectural studies.

The nawabs of Awadh were governors under the Mughals. By the late 18th century, when the English East India Company (EIC) was expanding its political reach in India—the nawabs had established Lucknow as a significant cultural and political center. In the early 19th century, the Company helped the nawabs to become independent of the Mughals. Once the nawabs were independent, the Company began to sabotage their political growth, turning Awadh into a vassal state. Lucknow became the capital of Awadh and became an urban center when Asaf moved the capital from Faizabad in 1775. The last nawab was Wajid Ali Shah who was deposed following the British annexation of Awadh in 1856. This was followed by the 1857 Uprising, in the aftermath of which Lucknow came under the rule of the British Raj—the rule of the British Crown.

The book focuses on the history and architecture of the two nawabs from 1775 to 1857, undertaking a queer reading of related colonial texts and imagery. The nawabs actively pursued and propagated a parallel queer culture,

often in conflict with the then dominant colonial enterprise. It was believed that Asaf did not consummate his marriage; some emphasized his impotence, while others his fluctuating interest in “women to boys and back again.”<sup>9</sup> His own poetry, however, reveals his attraction and longing for men, and for that he suffered strong words of derision at the hands of the British. Wajid deviated from normative expectations of a ruler in his cultural productions, political strategies, and non-binary expressions of gender. The nawabs normalized and popularized their non-normative culture within their kingdom, through staging of rituals, plays, and dances; through the written word; and through architecture. It was possible for the nawabs, by virtue of their position, to bring these expressions center-stage. Historian Maya Jasanoff makes a similar argument that what the British otherwise considered inappropriate was so banal, commonplace, and frequent in nawabi Lucknow that it was the norm. Briefly touching upon Asaf’s homosexuality, she puts him in the same frame as Antoine Polier, Claude Martin, John Mordaunt, Johann Zoffany, and others who escaped the social margins of their own backgrounds to find shelter in Lucknow and propel a cultural vibrancy which thrived in Lucknow (Jasanoff 2005: 12). Reading into her text, we argue that the cultural vibrancy of Lucknow was due to its debauched nature. Nawabi architecture materialized—in pleasure palaces, harems, and other spatial types—as a gradual adaptation of existing formal archetypes to accommodate theatricized ways of dwelling; deviant practices of power politics; gender-bending forms of dance, theater, poetry; and performed non-normative sexuality.

The EIC targeted the nawabs’ race, gender, sexuality, physical appearance, cultural pursuits, and architectural expression—to refute the nawabs’ efficacy as political rulers—gendering the superiority and credibility of a political leader. The colonial archive is replete with words of derision for Asaf, some comments were on his persona, some on his body, and some on his sexuality. Asaf appears in the colonial archive as “extremely disagreeable, . . . his . . . mind depraved beyond description,”<sup>10</sup> who would “laugh unreasonably, fling derisive abuse at others and desire derisive abuse in return, . . . delight in meaningless amusements, [and be] immensely pleased with . . . filthy language [and] obscene . . . conversation.”<sup>11</sup> Asaf was “debauched and demoralized,”<sup>12</sup> an “excessively dissolute individual”<sup>13</sup> who had embarked on a “life of debauchery,”<sup>14</sup> was of a “portly mien,”<sup>15</sup> and “deranged state.”<sup>16</sup> The colonial writers used homosexuality as a big excuse to ridicule Asaf, calling it a “natural fault,”<sup>17</sup> “unnatural passions [in which Asaf indulged to] excess, . . . most detestable crime, . . . shameful purpose, . . . baseness of his nature, and . . . degeneracy.”<sup>18</sup> They accused Asaf of being “[a]ddicted to frivolities, . . . whose . . . natural inclinations and attachments were for low, ill-born, and base-minded associates,”<sup>19</sup> and who was unable to “abandon his vicious courses.”<sup>20</sup> The bias of colonial writers for filiation, and that any deviance from that was a shock to them, is visible in a commentary on the nawabs’ stables where—“[b]reeding [was not] the favorite pursuit.”<sup>21</sup> These observations formed part of the colonial enterprise which spared no instance

#### 4 Introduction

to dismiss the nawab. The rules of stables as archived in colonial writings in fact indicates that Asaf continuously deviated from filiation and created a counterculture stemming from that.

Like Asaf, Wajid too was the object of colonial ridicule. The then British resident William Sleeman called Wajid a “crazy imbecile, . . . led about [by eunuchs] like a child, . . . who appointed . . . fiddlers and eunuchs . . . at high civil administrative positions and because of that had . . . wilfully forfeited all right to [reign].”<sup>22</sup> Sleeman considered them unworthy, showing the British bias on the basis of masculine ideals. Edward Henry Hilton, too, made similar remarks but used caste along with normative masculine ideals to discredit the officials in Wajid’s court, saying, “*Domes*, the lowest caste in India . . . with the eunuchs, . . . influenced the King’s decisions.”<sup>23</sup> Hilton projected Wajid as “low and dissolute,” asserting that his reign was characterized by misrule, attributing it to Wajid’s reliance on his “profligate” court.<sup>24</sup> Relying on previous texts, subsequent writers who consider previous colonial writings unquestionable continued to build up the bias. Citing Henry Lawrence, whom she considered “a moralist,” Sidney Hay characterized the nawabs “[w]eak, vicious, and dissolute.”<sup>25</sup> Her reliance on prior colonial writers is an example of cumulative colonial bias. Asaf shifted his capital to Lucknow and Wajid was the last nawab of Awadh; together they bookend the nawabi phase of architecture in the city of Lucknow. Recent researches have contested the colonial archives on Lucknow architecture and have brought out the biased language, but there is a dearth of work on actively determining the nature of nawabi architectural productions. We reclaim from colonial archives the term “queer” to refer to this nature that has not yet been explored, because it is “strange” and “vulgar,” but also because that characteristic was precisely what made the colonial power uncomfortable.

Queer studies have reclaimed words such as “deviant,” “strange,” *etc.* to imply an empowered meaning which expresses a distancing from the mainstream and is cogent precisely because of that. Using queering strategies, the book develops a method to decolonize the colonial archive. At the same time, it writes a queer history of Lucknow architecture that emerged between 1775 and 1857. During and after the 1857 Uprising, large parts of the nawabi precincts suffered heavy destruction and eventually got obliterated not just physically but also from public memory. The book, while reading the colonial archive against the grain, builds an outline of the footprint of that erased architecture and places it back on the map, an exercise not undertaken as meticulously until now.

The book establishes queer architecture—an extension of a personality, performativity, and a site for embodied knowledge production and experience—as a category of historical architectural inquiry, ignored until now. The queer architecture of Lucknow was a cultural and a personal expression of the nawabs and had widespread political consequences. In that expression, architecture developed a language that actively subverted a normative purist architectural vocabulary. The book advocates for its validity and

inclusion into the architectural historiography of the subcontinent. It does so by resisting to fit in, and at times inverting, the canonical understanding of architecture, which has prioritized symmetry, balance, and proportion. Nawabi architecture was queer and deviant, and therein lies its merit. Queering is used as a strategy to acknowledge the reasons and processes of archival exclusion and hence goes beyond looking for what is not included in the archive. In other words, the work uses the archive of the British Raj against its own agenda—subverting it and hence queering it. It is an exercise in countering the colonial archive, and at the same time looking for evidence of nawabi counter-archives.

The book offers a method to critique the bias—against queer expressions and its resultant cultural environment—in the colonial archive. This method provides a possibility to both read and queer other forms of colonial archives (whether in the same or in a different context) to reveal colonial practices of suppression, marginalization, and erasure, of queer performative architectural practices. Queer appears in the Lucknow nawabi court culture and becomes an inherent part of day-to-day citizenship. It simultaneously remains private but can be seen in certain instances, highlighted in this book, leaving that containment, to become public. Queerness, as it manifested in nawabi culture, was different than that of other, more widely recognized cultures, such as that of the Mughals, which, too, were characterized by harems, polygamy, homosexuality, and queer presence. The Lucknow nawabs embraced a no-war culture; prioritized art forms over political strategizing; favored feminization of education, administration, and defense; and practiced overlapping structures of intimacy and power, as forms of resistance and transgression of colonial imposition.

## Notes

- 1 *Rekhti*, a genre of Urdu poetry, was a product of the sociocultural and literary ambience in 19th-century Lucknow. It was adopted by male poets, who employed women's idioms, mannerisms, and accents to describe particular women-women and women-men affairs, and also women's sensual desires and sexual urges. *Rekhti* was later suppressed and turned into frivolous verse that reiterated patriarchy's gendered status quo, and Urdu's literati was taught to be ashamed of those elements that the British looked down upon.
- 2 These terms are described in detail in Chapter 1.
- 3 William Hodges (1794), Henry George Keene (1875), Alois Anton Fuhrer (1891), Henry Rivers Nevill (1904), James Fergusson (1910), Herbert Andrews Newell (1915), Abdul Halim Sharar (in a series of essays written between 1913 and 1920), Edward Henry Hilton (1934), Sidney Hay (1939), Charles Ramus Forrest (1824).
- 4 One of the first scholars to point out the European bias against Lucknow is historian Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, who wrote a chapter titled "European Criticism" in her book *Fatal Friendship* (1985: 226–242). The chapter highlights what Llewellyn-Jones calls "some deep vein of prejudice and sarcasm in its visitors unmatched elsewhere in India" and calls for a scholarly analysis of the colonial travelogs for its "muddled thinking" (1985: 226). She divides the European criticism into



## 6 Introduction

three categories—comments on the filth in the city implying that cleanliness is aesthetic and hygienic, comments highlighting the nawabs' extravagant lifestyle and contrasting it with the citizens' poor conditions to make a moral case for annexation, and lastly, comments that critiqued *nawabi* architecture for not following purist principles. She uses several examples from the archives, such as Forrest, Calcutta Review, Polehampton, Russell, India Political Consultations, Asiatic Annual Register, William Tennant, Thomas Twining, Fanny Parks, Henry George Keene, Fergusson, and Alois Anton Fuhrer, among others, to bring out the bias.

- 5 James Fergusson, for example, provides one reference to Bada Imambada, while describing 13 structures in Delhi, of which seven are those of Mughal architecture. Similarly, architectural historian Percy Brown has featured four structures from Lucknow the Bada Imambada, Rumi Darwaza, Martiniere School, and Qaiserbagh Entrance, while he has featured 52 plates of Mughal architecture.
- 6 The Archaeological Survey of India was created in 1871. It was an extension of the Asiatic Society established in 1784 in Calcutta and subsequent Bengal Regulation 1810 which sought to safeguard buildings from damage. It has enlisted 69 structures in Agra of which 55 are Mughal.
- 7 It has enlisted 60 structures of which just 24 are nawabi structures, while the rest are related to the colonial history of Lucknow.
- 8 The creation of ASI and its activities are representative of how the colonial eye saw and took on the agency to describe the architecture of the subcontinent. In 1861 archaeologist and engineer Alexander Cunningham proposed to carry out an extensive survey with the intention of “an accurate description, illustrated by plans, measurements, drawings or photographs,” of (per the ASI website). It enacted the Ancient Monuments Preservation (AMP) Act in 1904, which empowered the ASI to decide whether any historical artifact was worthy of protection. This highlights the power vested in the colonial archaeologists, historians, and preservationists in appropriating properties under the ASI umbrella. ASI became attached to the Ministry of Culture after Independence in 1947. However, the legal frameworks that continue to date are based on the ones ratified during the colonial times. In 1951, the AMP Act 1904 was redeclared as the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act.
- 9 Jasanoff 2005: 65
- 10 Hastings 1786: f. 111
- 11 Hoey 1889: 16
- 12 Nevill 1904: 150
- 13 Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 35
- 14 Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 45
- 15 Hay 1939: 15
- 16 Stewart 1972 (1814): 4
- 17 Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 48
- 18 Hastings 1786: f. 111
- 19 Hoey 1889: 16
- 20 Hoey 1889: 18
- 21 Tennant 1803: 413
- 22 Sleeman 1858: 369
- 23 Hilton 1894: 3
- 24 Hilton 1894: 2
- 25 Hay 1939: 52

## Part I

# Dragging Up the Past

Drag defies a straightforward definition. Acknowledging the play on the word *drag*, which means to pull with difficulty, and also a type of theatrical performance where people dress up and perform, often in highly stylized ways; this section uses dragging both ways. In the literal act of dragging, or pulling up, the past, the chapter facilitates the contextualization of the architectural and cultural expressions of the nawabs within the broader cultural context. In using the second meaning, that of the theatrical dimensions of drag, the section brings to fore the non-normative gender and sexual performativities of the nawabs in Lucknow. Just as in a drag performance, the performers' identities are significant to subvert the normative; similarly, "Dragging up the Past" reveals the highly theatrical cultural and personal expressions of nawabs that challenged the colonial eye and made it uncomfortable.



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# 1 Gender, Sex, and State in Nawabi Lucknow

Until the year 1719, the Awadh subah functioned as a province within the Mughal Empire, overseen by a governor (Nawab Wazir) appointed by the Mughal emperor. This subah was one of the 12 administrative divisions established by Akbar during his reforms from 1572 to 1580. Jahangir, who ruled from 1605 to 1627, conferred an estate in Awadh upon Sheikh Abdul Rahim, a favored nobleman. Later, this estate became a seat of power for Rahim's descendants, the *sheikhzadas*, who exercised their control over the region.

Saadat Ali Khan I became the first nawab wazir of Awadh in 1722 and established his court in Faizabad, strategically positioned near Lucknow. Capitalizing on the waning authority of the Mughal Empire in Delhi, Saadat laid the foundation of the Awadh dynasty. He subdued the autonomous *sheikhzadas* of Lucknow consolidating Awadh as a state. Faizabad, under his reign, evolved into a flourishing town. His successor, Safdar Jang, further developed Faizabad, designating it as his military headquarters. However, it was Shuja-ud-daula, the third nawab wazir, who elevated Faizabad to the status of a full-fledged capital city. This era, marked by architectural splendor, eventually culminated when Asaf transferred the capital from Faizabad to Lucknow in 1775. Asaf not only shifted the capital but also made Lucknow the new center of culture, exemplified in several architectural projects, attracting poets, musicians, and scholars from not just the nearby kingdoms but from across the world. During Asaf's times, Lucknow became a cosmopolitan city.

Awadh held immense strategic importance, situated ideally for controlling the Doab, the fertile plain between the Ganges and Yamuna rivers. Since Awadh was located in a prosperous region, the EIC soon took notice of the affluence in which the nawabs of Awadh lived. The British, who were primarily interested in retaining their hold on Bengal and their lucrative trade there, started to strategize toward direct expansion in Awadh. British dominance was established at the 1764 Battle of Buxar, when the EIC defeated the alliance between Shuja-ud-Daula and the deposed nawab of Bengal Mir Kasim. The battle was a turning point for Awadh. Shuja was forced to pay heavy penalties and cede parts of his territory. To further shape the policy of Awadh and direct its internal affairs, the governor-general of Bengal, Warren Hastings, appointed a resident, Nathaniel

Middleton, in Lucknow in 1773, and by the early 19th century, the EIC gained control of more territory and authority in the state. British residents were British representatives appointed at the court of the nawab, who not only kept a close watch over the political affairs but also interfered actively in making political decisions. The residents also kept a close watch on and, hence, controlled the state expenditure incurred by the nawabs. Eventually they became influential in deciding how the provincial revenue would be spent.

Asaf-ud-Daula [Figure 1.1], son of Shuja-ud-Daula, shifted the capital from Faizabad to Lucknow in 1775, initiating the foundation of Lucknow as an urban center. However, by 1798, the fifth nawab, Wazir Ali Khan, faced internal and external challenges, leading to his abdication. The British intervention placed Saadat Ali Khan II on the throne. Saadat became a puppet ruler who, in the treaty of 1801, ceded half of Awadh to the EIC. This treaty transformed part of the state into a vassal to the British, even though its nominal association with the Mughal Empire persisted until 1819. In 1819, following the advice of Warren Hastings, Ghazi-ud-Din Haidar Shah took the title of *badshah* (king), signaling formal independence from the Mughal empire.

By now, the EIC had begun to exert their political power and control over state matters through the nawabs. Throughout the early 1800s until annexation, several areas were gradually ceded to the British. With an ambition that kept growing, the EIC eventually took direct control and annexed Awadh on February 7, 1856, by order of Governor-General Dalhousie. The annexation was carried out under the terms of the Doctrine of Lapse on the grounds of alleged misrule under the then nawab, Wajid Ali Shah [Figure 1.2]. Wajid was subsequently exiled to Calcutta, and imprisoned for a time.

Begum Hazrat Mahal and Bijris Qadr, Wajid's queen and his son, participated in the 1857 Uprising (also known as the First War of Indian Independence and the Indian Rebellion), which lasted eight months, from July 5, 1857, to March 3, 1858. Although they were defeated, several nawabi palaces such as Qaiserbagh and Machhi Bhavan became important centers of the rebelling forces. Henry Havelock, Colin Campbell, and James Outram were significant leaders of the British forces in that war, causing immense damage to the city. Following the British victory in 1858, Lucknow became part of the British Raj, marking the end of Company rule in India. The lineage and titles held by the nawabs of Awadh are shown in Figure 1.3. The figure shows the overlap of British residents in Lucknow and British governors-general, with the nawabi period. To exercise its agenda, the British Raj took the support of the *taluqdars*, who were wealthy landowners of Awadh and who had supported the British during the 1857 Uprising. They also held considerable influence on the social, economic, judicial, and military aspects of the region. The British government conferred important titles to the *taluqdars*, and transferred nawabi property to them to ensure their continued loyalty to the British Empire.

This book follows the life and projects of nawabs Asaf and Wajid. As said earlier and detailed out further in this chapter; the two nawabs exercised



*Figure 1.1* Nawab Wazir Asaf-ud-Daula, 1775–97. Oil painting on canvas by Johann Zoffany. 1784.

*Source:* Image courtesy of British Library Visual Arts Collection.

non-normative expressions of gender and sexuality because of which they faced open ridicule at the hands of the British and suffered politically. Despite this the two nawabs continued to hold their political position through acts of transgression, resistance, and even sometimes by playing ignorant. Both the nawabs furthered an urban cultural environment that rejected macho military standards of politics and embraced arts as central to shaping the city. South





*Figure 1.2* Wajid Ali Shah, Nawab of Awadh. 1847–56. Photo of a framed portrait by an anonymous painter hanging at Wajid’s tomb. 2009.

*Source:* Image courtesy of Eric Parker.

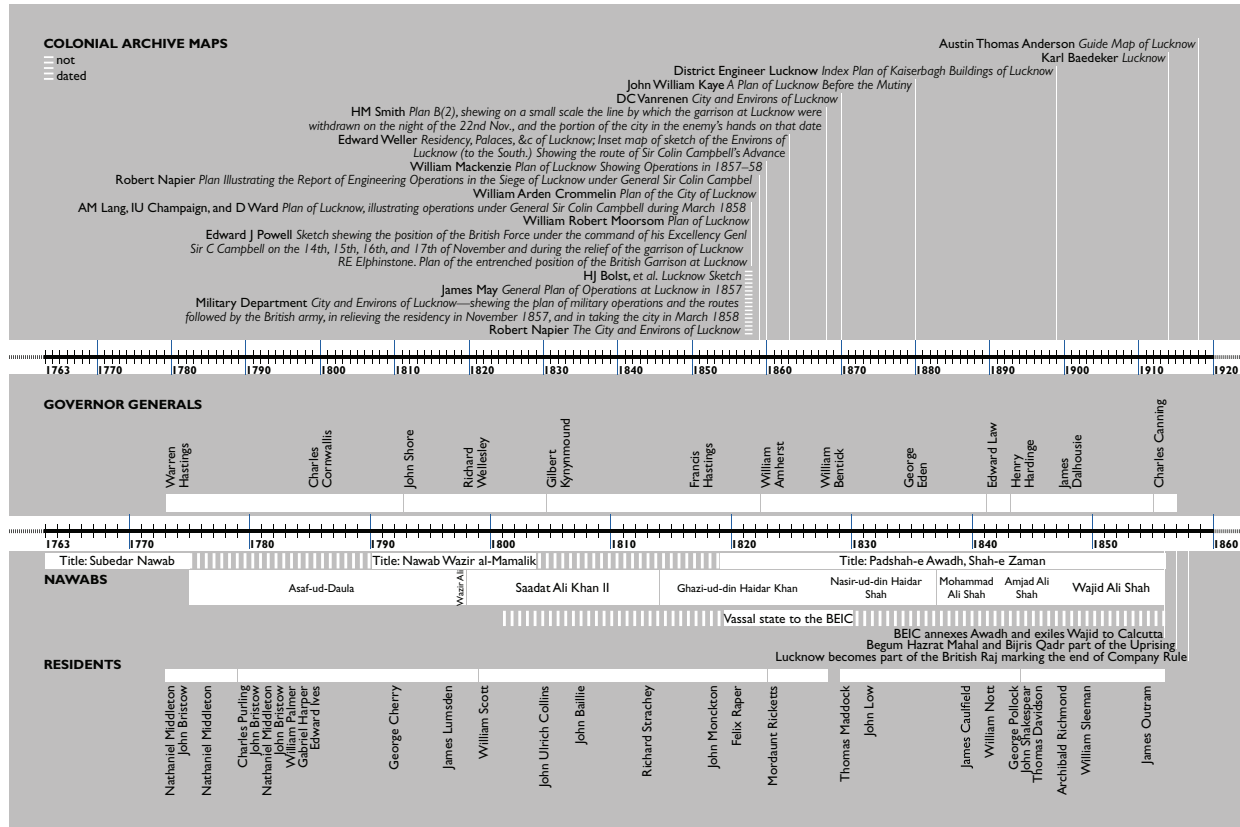


Figure 1.3 Timeline of colonial maps referred to in the book; overlapped with the timeline of British officers and nawabs in Lucknow.



Asia historian Simonetta Casci argues that the nawabs used architecture not just as a means to exhibit opulence and luxury to the EIC but also to showcase the development of a highly cultured and refined society, distant from the moralistic ideals of the Victorian era (Casci 2002: 3713). Asaf commissioned several buildings such as the Bada Imambada, Asafi Masjid, Rumi Darwaza, Asafi Kothi, Bibiapur Kothi, Alam Bagh, Aish Bagh, several *bazaars* (marketplaces) such as the Chowk, bridges, and rest-houses. He also built the Residency for the British officials. Under his patronage, Lucknow flourished as a vibrant center of artistic expression, attracting intellectuals, artists, and cultural luminaries from Delhi and beyond. Wajid commissioned Qaiserbagh and several other residential palaces in the vicinity.<sup>1</sup> These structures are difficult to locate today. Of these, the “Lucknow Queerscapes” section of the book focuses on just the Qaiserbagh. Wajid was a patron of the arts, particularly music, dance, and poetry. He was a skilled dancer and musician himself and played a crucial role in the development of *kathak*, a classical dance form that originated in the courts of Awadh. The nawab was also a poet and writer, composing numerous *ghazals* (odes), poems, and literary works.

William Hoey is one of the few writers who writes about Asaf’s sexuality in *Memoirs Of Delhi And Faizabad* (1889), albeit using indirect references and language that mocks Asaf. The book is a translation of the Persian *Tarikh Farahbakhs*, by Muhammad Faiz Bakhsh. Qureshi (2004) argues that the work had been “got written by the [British] with a view to propagate . . . the facts they wanted to make current and the useful facts and details contained in it are, in fact, a by-product of the same process” (Qureshi 2004: 32). The British commissioned the work to make a case that it was not Warren Hastings who instigated the spoliation of the Begums at Faizabad but a minister of Asaf (Qureshi 2004: 32). This observation is important because Asaf’s sexuality, written explicitly in an indirect manner, is meant to demean him and his political capabilities. Hoey relates an incident from Asaf’s childhood when his tutor asked him to bring fruits from the gardener’s basket, and Asaf picked a raw sweet potato, “which he held in his hand and played with for a while” (Hoey 1889: 17). Hoey (translating Faiz Bakhsh) goes on to emphasize that despite the tutor insisting that it does suit a nobleman to “care for these worthless things, which are both shapeless and tasteless” and that he must throw it away, Asaf clutched onto it. The tutor then instructed the gardeners not to bring sweet potatoes, plantains, or radishes in their baskets anymore. In reading this account, we argue the writer intentionally uses vegetables that appear phallic in shape to emphasize Asaf’s inclination toward that shape, as a means to describe Asaf’s homosexual desires. The emphasis on the tutor’s insistence on throwing away the vegetable, and “urgently” so, tells us about the tutor’s belief that sexual orientation could be corrected; if such objects were not in Asaf’s reach.

In Bakhsh’s description of Asaf’s “boyhood,” his addiction to frivolities, and his “natural inclinations and attachments” for “low, ill-born, and base-minded associates,” we read a classist bias against Asaf’s choice of companions. Bakhsh’s bias is also against those who Asaf may have wanted

to associate with romantically and sexually. He deems them unfit for someone of noble birth. In Bakhsh's observation of Asaf's delight in "meaningless amusements" and pleasure in "filthy language" and obscene conversation, we read the strict morals and the conventions of the time, which carry a bias against the non-normative. That bias would have judged any expression of homosexual attraction or desire in word or deed as "filthy" (Hoey 1889: 16).

In writing that Asaf's father, Shuja, "knew that the boy's natural tastes and bent were for things unbecoming the son of a noble," Bakhsh projects his biases and opinions of propriety and appropriateness onto Asaf's father (Hoey 1889: 17). Bakhsh writes that on reaching puberty, when "his beard and mustache began to appear," Asaf's father selected "well-mannered companions" for him (Hoey 1889: 17). They were to restrain his use of "bad language" and converse with him "night and day" about the principles and characteristics of the great, which included military organization, swordsmanship, and modesty, none of which he was able to master (Hoey 1889: 17). From this text, we read the author's assertion that Shuja did all in his power to try to shape Asaf into a mold of what would have been considered socially acceptable and appropriate, and that the young Asaf was either unable to or disinterested in having his behavior modified or character shaped by such constraints (Hoey 1889: 17). Bakhsh accuses Asaf of being fickle in his male friendships, of rude behavior, and of insensibility. In our reading, however, we find there is no clear indication of whether these friendships were platonic or not. Therefore, we infer that it may not have been unreasonable for Asaf to expect more loyalty and fidelity from a sexual or romantic partner. Betrayals may have caused outbursts from Asaf, something that is not the norm in platonic male friendships and this may have shocked Bakhsh (Hoey 1889: 18). Bakhsh writes that Asaf's marriage was "never consummated" and that he "never exhibited desire for [his wife's] society and never even slept with her" despite his parents attempts to "excite his passion" (Hoey 1889: 18). As we have argued before, these texts, commissioned by the British or written in their favor, use and project Asaf's homosexuality to be a reason for the absence of a legitimate heir to Awadh. The British use his sexuality to their advantage, in a bid to authorize themselves to choose the successor to the throne. According to Faiz Bakhsh, when Shuja learned the "truth" of Asaf's unconsummated marriage from the "creatures and eunuchs" whom Shuja had placed around Asaf, he "imprisoned for life some of his associates who were men of bad character, and threw some low blockheads into the river at night" (Hoey 1889: 18). The author here employs the purported violence against Asaf's companions, their imprisonment, and perhaps even their murder as a means to dramatize and stress on the degree, heinousness, and repulsiveness of Asaf's transgressions (Hoey 1889: 18).

Homosexuality was not an unusual occurrence in the Mughal court. However, Babur—who held a position of power—had a much younger male lover. Similarly, in ancient Greece, it was a norm for an emperor to take a much younger male lover. Dover, a scholar of Greek sexual morality, concludes that the Greeks conceived of same-sex relations primarily as

intergenerational and identifies the terms for the roles of the two male lovers, *erastes*, “the lover,” that is, the older active partner, and *eromenos*, “the beloved,” indicating the adolescent male beloved (Dover 1989).

It is difficult to say whether Faiz Baksh was familiar with homosexuality in Mughal court and whether Hoey was aware of the same and of European examples of homosexuality. In both cases, the younger male would assume a passive role, while the older one held the dominant position. Further, in both cases, the dominant older one would also be expected to hold a more powerful social or political status. While it might have been more conceivable for a man in a position of power to engage in a relationship with a younger male, which typically entailed the latter assuming a passive sexual role, a queer reading of Hoey’s work suggests that Asaf’s deviation from this norm, and his possible satisfaction in assuming a passive or submissive sexual role, might have contributed to the author’s unease in conveying these ideas. Consequently, the author resorts to an indirect and suggestive style of writing.

The absence of a direct way of writing about Asaf’s sexual orientation may, in part, be attributed to the author’s limited understanding or vocabulary to articulate homosexual attraction explicitly. Additionally, it is plausible that the “inclinations” alluded to were so socially condemned that Faiz Baksh felt unable to address them directly in a work intended for consumption by polite society. This aspect takes on another dimension, when we consider that Faiz Baksh, commissioned by the British, was fabricating evidence to discredit the nawabs and to portray the British leaders such as Warren Hastings in good light. Faiz Baksh, hence, would have used British values to write about Asaf’s sexuality. The text also refers to Asaf’s “sexual deficiency” (Qureshi 2004: 32), which was not medically healed, foregrounding that as a legitimate reason to discredit Asaf politically. This also indicates that the British considered Asaf’s sexuality a medical condition.

Warren Hastings wrote an observation about Asaf anglicizing his name, Mirza Amani—the name conferred on the soon to be Nawab Wazir Asaf-ud-Daula—to Mirza Manie (Hastings 1786: f. 110–117). We can deduce that the date of this writing is 1773 because Hastings mentions that Asaf’s age at the time was 25 years. Hastings, who is writing to other company officials and possibly confident that his observations will not be made public, is direct and unguarded in his correspondences. In representing Asaf as a character who dishonors human nature, his chief complaint appears to be Asaf’s homosexuality. He finds it “notorious” that Asaf’s choice of sexual partners are “men and boys” and regards Asaf’s sexual preferences as “unnatural passions,” serving “shameful purposes” (Hastings 1786: f. 111).

In writing that Asaf “indulged himself to such excess, that [he is] now no longer capable of performing an active part in the most detestable crime, his highest qualification consists in becoming the passive in it,” Hastings clearly exhibits his prejudice against passive sexual roles (Hastings 1786: f. 111). He conflates what may have been Asaf’s preference with an inability to

perform an active role in a homosexual act. He attributes this incapacity to overindulgence. This can be read in two ways: first, that frequent engagement in same-sex acts had led him to develop a preference for passive or submissive roles, and second, that the frequency made him impotent, unable to become physically aroused. These observations imply both a psychological and a medical condition—a possible reference to a sexually transmitted disease. Asaf's impotence has been the subject of much speculation in colonial texts. It was also the subject of a joke in Zoffany's 1784b painting *Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match*, for instance, described in detail in Chapter 4.

*Rekhta*, an online repository of Urdu poetry, has 27 *ghazals* penned by Asaf. Many of these *ghazals* help us unpack his amorous life. We access these *ghazals* to identify various words which Asaf uses to address his lovers. Because Urdu attaches a gender to each noun, either in the way the word ends or in the way the following verb is formed, the poems make it explicit that Asaf's lovers are male. To address his beloved, Asaf uses words such as *pyare* (male beloved), *gul-badan* (one who has a delicate body),<sup>2</sup> *miyan* (gentleman or husband),<sup>3</sup> *shokh dilkash* (playful, naughty, sprightly, and attractive),<sup>4</sup> *yar* (friend or lover),<sup>5</sup> *sahab* (master—a title of courtesy),<sup>6</sup> *banda-parvar* (superior),<sup>7</sup> *rashk-e-mah* (one having a face as bright as a moon),<sup>8</sup> *sanam* (idol),<sup>9</sup> and *jan-e-man* (life).<sup>10</sup> *Pyare*, *gul-badan*, *rashk-e-mah*, and *shokh dilkash* imply his lover is younger and someone whom Asaf considers more feminine. These words suggest a mutual playful seduction. The implication in the use of the word *yar* is that of an equal. *Miyan*, *sahab*, and *banda-parvar* are used in addressing a superior, older, richer, or powerful man, and also imply that his lover appeared more masculine to him, someone whom Asaf considered to have some power over him. In that, the words suggest Asaf's surrender to his lover. Similarly, the word *sanam* means idol, sculpture, or image. This implies a person of absolute perfection—god-like—to whom Asaf avows complete devotion.

Asaf's poetry also helps us see how Asaf felt ostracized for his amorous life, felt betrayed often by people who did not acknowledge the mutual love socially, and acknowledged servitude to his lovers.

For example, in *ham ne qissa bahut kaha dil ka* (Asaf-ud-Daula n.d.-c), the couplet

*ishq men aisi khinchi rusvai*  
*ho gaya shor ja baja dil ka*

translates to

love has brought me such dishonor  
that its furor is everywhere at all times.

Wajid's *Parikhana*<sup>11</sup> and *Ishqnamah*<sup>12</sup> capture the essence of the overlapping realms of politics and amour which he realizes fully at Qaiserbagh. In these

texts Wajid places the spaces within the Qaiserbagh complex at the center of his narrative. The palace complex becomes a site of performance of the *ishq*—a contractual relationship that combines political ambition and intimacy.

*Parikhana* is replete with examples of Wajid's flattering descriptions of his own looks. He was quite proud of his ability to charm and control people with his looks. He described himself as life giving, but also could wound people with his looks. Comparing his physical appearance to weapons, such as bows and arrows, nooses, spears, and swords, he wrote how he had the ability to wound, and hence control people. He says his *qad-o-qamat*, or physique, was so *dilkash*, or attractive, that he could control his lovers through *hazaar fareb* (a thousand deceptions; Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 71–72). Significant here is the use of deception and beguiling in order to bring people into agreement with him—something that was also his political strategy. It was important for him that people were in his control. He let people believe they were in love with him so that they would willingly comply with him instead of using force. Or he believed that people could be made to fall in love with him which would let them comply and that his looks could do that. This was the strategy of *ishq*, and it worked with his subjects. He married as many as 374 women and was not averse to amorous gazes of men either.<sup>13</sup> He was most satisfied when women and men would watch him with longingness.

Colonial writers spared no chance to portray Wajid as effeminate, an argument that they used in political propaganda against him eventually leading to him being deposed (Sleeman 1858; Sharar 1975 (1913–1920); Hay 1939). To colonial writers, Wajid was nowhere close to the ideal monarch—a “kingly redresser of wrongs” (Hay 1939: 55). Despite their claim that Wajid imagined himself as more a literary character than a ruler (Hay 1939: 55), it was the colonial audience that was distracted by his performance and dismissive of his role and contributions, partly because they were unable to look beyond what they considered to be theatrics and histrionics. Wajid is depicted in a statue at the Shahji Krishna Temple in Vrindavan, cross-dressed as a *gopi* (female cowherd). Hay (1939:140) emphasizes on Wajid's fondness for singing and dancing, dressing up in female garments, and dancing before the ladies of the harem. Wajid, on several occasions, dressed up as a woman in the plays he commissioned or as a *faqeer* (mendicant) while giving audience to his subjects. He would also give his courtiers an opportunity to dress up in their finery (Hay 1939: 140; Hoskote 2019; Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 65). These moments of performance and drag, a renouncement of privilege, allowed Wajid to put himself in a position of vulnerability, and thereby to be more open to his surroundings, and empathetic of those represented in his performances. Sharar (1975 (1913–1920): 64) writes about the nawab's extravagance in preparing for this act. Wajid would smear his body with ash from expensive pearls burnt especially for this occasion. Wajid's body, thus, would become a site for the blending of extravagance and abstinence. He embodies both the opposites, renouncing and embracing both simultaneously.

In the burning of the pearls, he displays a theatrical letting-go of the material wealth that the pearls signify. At the same time, he is very much aware of his position as the ruler and ensures to maintain that he does not smear his body with anything less than pearl ash, in order to display his royalty. The necessity to display that status arises from the constant scrutiny by the British and the citizenry that Wajid was also cognizant of.

Sharar does not approve of Wajid's cultural pursuits and repeatedly describes them as obscene and vulgar, of "shame-fully low taste," claiming that Wajid intentionally staged himself as a "sinner" letting the world know of his "unchaste predilections, thoughts and deeds" (Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 63).

Wajid makes himself vulnerable by proclaiming his "sins" to the otherwise conventional, moral world. Wajid acknowledged his private life in public, and that demonstrates Wajid's deviance from the norm by dismissing the clear boundaries of personal relationships and public pretenses and embracing the expression of an individual personality. This is further evident in the fact that Wajid widely circulated handwritten and lithographic prints of his literary work, *Ishqnamah*, during his exile in Calcutta and made it available to other neighboring courts as well (Di Pietrantonio 2020: 24). This was possibly Wajid's way to make himself visible and remain relevant despite having been deposed, and he certainly considered his amorous and sexual relationships to be a creditable form of performing power.

## Notes

- 1 Munshi Lalji gives a list of several buildings that he attributes to Wajid. Lalji and his forefathers served as *waqia nigars* (reporters) to the residents of Luckow. Some of the buildings he lists are Shahanshah Manzil, Badshah Manzil, Ishq Manzil, Inayat Manzil, Istrahat Manzil, Waquar Manzil, Afsar Manzil, Taj Manzil, Shikoh Manzil, Hazri Manzil, Rahas Manzil, Gulzar Manzil, Aram Manzil, Hayat Manzil, Rahat Manzil, Zard Kothi, Qasr-ul-Khaqan, Qasr-ul-Baizavi, Makan-e-Dilpsand, Akhtar Pasand, Qaiser Pasand, Dिल्za, Baradari Nagina, Makan-e-Charugoshia, Makan Khas, Baitus Sroor, Jahan Numa, Makan Chaupahal, Kunj Gulshan, Taskin-e-Mahshar, Inra Sen, Baradari Sang-e-Marmar, Shah Burj, Badshah Burj, and Kardid (Lalji 1853: ff. 110a-110b).
- 2 Ghazal titled *is ada se mujhe salam kiya* (Asaf-ud-Daula n.d.-d)
- 3 Ghazal titled *kis qadar dard ke shab karta tha mazkur tira* (Asaf-ud-Daula n.d.-g)
- 4 Ghazal titled *bismil kisi ko rakhna rasm-e-vafa nahin hai* (Asaf-ud-Daula n.d.-b)
- 5 Ghazal titled *jis ghadi tere astan se gae* (Asaf-ud-Daula n.d.-f)
- 6 Ghazal titled *ankhon se apni asif tu ehtiraz karna* (Asaf-ud-Daula n.d.-a)
- 7 Ghazal titled *mire dil ko zulfon ki zanjir kiijo* (Asaf-ud-Daula n.d.-h)
- 8 Ghazal titled *naam tira main le kar munh dekh rah gaya tha* (Asaf-ud-Daula n.d.-i)
- 9 Ghazal titled *ye ashk chashmon men hamdam rahe rahe na rahe* (Asaf-ud-Daula n.d.-j)
- 10 Ghazal titled *jab se mere dil men aa kar ishq ka thana hua* (Asaf-ud-Daula n.d.-e)
- 11 *Parikhana* was written in 1848–49 by Wajid Ali Shah and was later translated to *Ishqnamah* (Shah 1987 (1877): xiii)
- 12 The *Ishqnamah*, written by Wajid Ali Shah, is a collection of his poems, accompanied by painted scenes from his harem.
- 13 Williams 2023: 85

## 2 Locating Forms of Resistance and Transgression

Lucknow was a place of strategic importance to the nawabs. As early as 1733, Safdar Jang and his son Shuja-ud-Daula resigned their claim to ministership at the Mughal Court in Delhi, and made their way with their families to Lucknow (Srivastava 1939: 12). Safdar Jung instructed Shuja-ud-Daula to stay behind in Lucknow and reorganize the administration of the western half of the provinces while proceeding to Faizabad himself (Srivastava 1939: 18). By 1757, Lucknow became a military stronghold of the nawabs with a considerable part of the army and artillery stationed near the town (Srivastava 1939: 44, 107). The fort of Jalalabad in Lucknow, now no longer in existence, was used to imprison political prisoners such as Muhammad Quli Khan in 1759 (Srivastava 1939: 70–71). Shuja considered Lucknow as a strategic place from a military point of view and, in preparation for battle, moved his family along with his treasure to Lucknow (Srivastava 1939: 94, 138). The town became his base for military operations and was also a site for important meetings and negotiations (Srivastava 1939: 89). Shuja also built several edifices in Lucknow, some for his personal use. Lucknow also housed the library of the kings of Awadh. In 1774, Shuja added a collection of books that belonged to Hafiz Rahmat, the defeated ruler of Rohilkhand, to this library (Strachey 1892: 287). There are several instances of letters being sent out from Lucknow about Shuja-ud-Daula's political and military plans to the EIC by informants such as Father Windel, a Lucknow padre (Srivastava 1939: 138), suggesting that the EIC had informants stationed at Lucknow to keep watch on political developments. All these instances indicate the significance of Lucknow, even though the court of the nawabs was in Faizabad at the time.

There is one dominant narrative explaining Asaf's move of his capital that emphasizes the discord between him and his mother, who had a great deal of control at the Faizabad court (Keene 1875: 68; Irwin 1880: 88; Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 45). Gladwin reduced Asaf's moving of the capital from Faizabad to Lucknow to a practice "customary amongst the princes of Indostan to remove the seat of government (the residence of their predecessors) on their accession to the sovereignty" (Gladwin 1785: 388). In fact, there were multiple reasons for a ruler to shift the capital—to expand their control over their territory, to construct monuments that



signify their individuality, and to leave a mark on the minds of the citizens present and future.

The colonial archive had always sought to trivialize the decisions made by the Awadh nawabs and to present simplistic accounts of their political strategies. These accounts had a way of becoming mainstream, shaping the collective memory. We argue that the narrative of Asaf's decision to shift his capital to Lucknow is conveniently simplistic, and has been used as a means to discredit his political prowess. In our reading, we question the determinism of this narrative; and instead argue that Lucknow was also politically significant which Asaf recognized when he came to power. It was Asaf's political farsightedness that made him move to Lucknow, become proximate with the Europeans, employ them in court, and make them dependent on him. This was his way of ensuring his power. The colonial archive, however, downplayed that. Asaf specifically aimed to establish a necessarily urban center for his kingdom, and the scale of the construction generated employment, created trade opportunities, and facilitated cultural exchange across political borders. In Asaf's case, a fourth reason was the "collapse of the political compact between mother and son" (Keshani 2004: 23).

Asaf resisted British monopolization of trade, resisted British oppression of revenue collection, and instituted systems that could circumvent them. As Karen Chancey, who studied Asaf and underscored his ways of resistance to the British hegemony, concludes, Asaf never pledged allegiance to anyone and regarded himself as equal to the British. No other individual would attain his degree of independence (Chancey 2007: 56). Asaf's resistance to British trading policies during his reign was primarily driven by his commitment to the welfare of his citizens. Asaf intentionally decentralized *ganjs* (revenue collection centers) as a response to the British demand for tribute. By decentralizing the *ganjs*, Asaf intentionally allowed local farmers to retain more of the total revenue. This strategic move was aimed at combating EIC pressure for increased tribute, showcasing the Nawab's dedication to protect the economic interests of his people (Bayly 1983: 98–99). Asaf's concerns extended beyond mere revenue collection. He actively protested against the monopolistic practices of the British that were detrimental to the tradesmen and businesses in the region. This is reflected in his formal complaint to the Bengal government, urging them to refrain from policies that were ruining local commerce. As a continuation of Asaf's resistance, he signed a treaty with the EIC in 1788, which subjected the British to the laws of the land and the regulations of a uniform tariff. Subsequently, Asaf implemented measures such as imposing high export duties, with rates of 30 percent on saltpeter, 15 percent on indigo, and 10 percent on sugar (Bayly 1983: 117), enforcing more financial pressure on the British. As a counter to Asaf's resistance, the British took strong countermeasures such as establishing trading monopolies to be held by British residents or army officers.

Valentia is critical of Asaf for having gone too far with his preference for European manners and for "abandoning the forms of an Asiatic court" (Valentia 1809: 173). His argument is that Asaf insisted on discussing political affairs over



a breakfast instead of in the “*darbar*,”<sup>1</sup> which unsettled the inherent hierarchy of the Europeans and the nawab. Valentia observes that even the “lowest European gentleman” would consider himself an equal of the nawab and would not treat him respectfully. However, Asaf’s choice to associate closely with Europeans was intentional, to ensure European subordination. Even Valentia acknowledged that agency Asaf exercised in laying out “an ingenious plan to place every European at Lucknow in dependence on him” (Valentia 1809: 173).

The EIC employed various mechanisms to control Awadh. Similar to the use of trading policies during Asaf’s times, it tried to weaken the ruler by limiting control over the military. The British Resident persuaded Wajid to not recruit or restructure any armed forces under his personal command.<sup>2</sup> To circumvent that, Wajid trained 30 women *turk-sawaarnian* and employed them as guards, and trained 50 male soldiers *turk-sawaar* to form a small squad.<sup>3</sup> The painting titled *Sharif al-Mulk, as Colonel Hajji Sharif, drills British soldiers as Wajid Ali Shah watches on from the roof dressed in military uniform* in the *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850bg) shows Wajid overseeing the training of his soldiers [Figure 2.1]. The painting shows a dark-skinned *khwajasara*—a deviant from the colonial idea of masculinity—leading white soldiers. Having such a painting commissioned, Wajid explicitly conveys a performance of power—despite not having control over a full-fledged army. He positions himself higher up on a terrace, from where he oversees his army chief taking charge of soldiers. Through this painting Wajid openly performs an act of transgression by exhibiting himself as the head of an army, a power that the British resident had denied him. Contrary to the perception made widespread by the EIC, the painting illustrates that he took an interest in matters of the state, formed troops, and even personally oversaw the training of those troops. Wajid, also, resisted the military limitations imposed by the EIC by using dance commands as movement cues for his troops. Wajid gave poetic names to the cavalry regiments, such as *banka* (dandy), *tirchha* (fop), and *ghanghur* (dark), and the infantry battalions *akhtari* (lucky) and *nadiri* (rare).<sup>4</sup> He formalized the use of Persian vocabulary for military parades: for instance, *rast rau* (to the right), *pas biya* (retire), and *dast-chap ba-gard* (left turn). The choice of names highlight that Wajid employed dance postures, personal appearance, and musical words to name the troops and to describe the military movements. Some of these names carry a queer connotation. There is a clear merging of the two forms of movements—the martial and the artistic in the realization of the military troops—softening the martial, all the while valorizing dance. It suggests that Wajid did not distinguish the military parade as a purely aggressive form of movement. Later he appointed a small army of women and trained them. His inclusion of women in the military established his rejection of the military as a gendered institution. The non-normative character of these troops tricked the British into considering it as a ceremonial rather than as a functioning military force, who later even offered to provide an annual amount of three lakh rupees for its upkeep (Sharar 1975 [1913–1920]: 65 and Dalhouse *et al.* 1856: 302).



Figure 2.1 Khwajasara Haji Sharif training Wajid's soldiers seen in an opaque watercolor with metallic paints by an unknown artist. Part of Ishqnamah manuscript; c1850.

Source: Image courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

In the *Blue Book*,<sup>5</sup> single-mindedly determined to remove “objectionable persons,” such as “low and incapable advisers, eunuchs, fiddlers, and songsters,” Outram highlights a letter dated June 22, 1848, written by Wajid to the then resident Archibald Richmond (Dalhousie *et al.* 1856: 14). Outram’s argument is that despite Wajid having given a written assurance in the letter, he did not fulfill his promise of preventing “eunuchs, singers, and other improper persons, from holding office under the Oude Government, either directly or indirectly” (Dalhousie *et al.*: 14).<sup>6</sup> The absence of Wajid’s letter from the *Blue Book* is conspicuous because it makes Outram’s claim difficult to corroborate or contest. We argue that even if Wajid showed a willingness to comply with the resident’s choice of officials in his employ, Wajid did not dismiss the “improper persons” for two reasons. First, he may have found the resident’s advice biased, thought it unfair to dismiss people from his office based on conventional gender norms, and was aware that this would affect their financial conditions. Second, and more importantly, these so-called objectionable persons were an indispensable part of his idea of the court. Their appointment was part of the *ishq*, his way of structuring and allocating duties at his court in relation to himself. An alternative approach without the presence of “improper persons” would not have been compatible with his version of court culture. He knew no other way and also implicitly resisted the version suggested by the British residents.

This is further seen in the composition of the delegation Wajid sent to England to appeal to Queen Victoria. Wajid’s mother was accompanied by “seven eunuchs,” among others (Fisher 2013: 137), whom Fisher and the British residents called eunuchs<sup>7</sup> and who were known as *khwajasara*—literally meaning *lord of the palace* in Persian. They held high offices in the Wajid’s court and were an inseparable part of Wajid’s own political representation. In consciously choosing to send *khwajasara* as part of a highly significant envoy to England, Wajid undertook a transgressive act. Despite having been deposed himself, he transgressed in two ways—first, by making those whom the British looked down upon represent him and, second, by having them enter England and the British court—an act of intrusion into a space where power lay.

## Notes

1 *Durbar* means the official court of the ruler.

2 Ghani 1919: 126

3 Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 84

4 Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 62

5 The EIC annexed Awadh in 1856 and published its official justification for the annexation in *The Oude Blue Book*.

6 Oude is anglicized spelling for Awadh.

7 In the historical context, a eunuch was commonly defined as an individual, usually male, who had undergone castration, often serving in roles of trust within royal courts, religious settings, or households. The castration was believed to diminish reproductive capabilities, making them deemed more suitable for certain social positions due to perceptions of increased loyalty and reliability.

### 3 Queering the Colonial Archive

An archive is a repository or collection of material that records important events. Archives serve as proof that an event occurred, sometimes even explaining how it occurred. If the event is recorded in an archive, it is deemed important. This implies that the absence or exclusion from an archive may result in obscuring the significance, or even the occurrence, of the event. At the same time materials within an archive enjoy a privilege that shields them from thorough examination or close scrutiny. Archives as institutions and records as documents are generally considered passive resources to be used for various historical and cultural purposes. Yet archives are established by the powerful to protect or enhance their position in society. According to Michel Foucault, the archive is the system of records that functions as evidence for making claims, providing documentation that validates, authorizes, and certifies historical knowledge. It is a network of relations and institutions that control the presentation of materials, and hence a historical account (Foucault 1972: 129). Jacques Derrida discusses that the archive is etymologically linked to the Greek *arkheion*, which refers to “a house, a domicile, an address, the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded” (Derrida 1996: 2). This connection highlights the role of the archive in establishing authority, controlling knowledge, and defining what is included or excluded from historical narratives. Knowledge is constructed, and discourse is controlled. This definition is important for this book. It recognizes the institutional nature and, hence, the Foucauldian power vested in the archives.

Exclusion leads to marginalization. Retrieval of archival information relies on indexing, descriptors, and keywords. Keywords are instrumental in determining what contents become accessible and what contents do not. However, there is always a possibility of exclusion in the way the keywords are created. Certain stories therefore become privileged and others marginalized. An acknowledgment of the marginalization has resulted in contemporary efforts to decolonize contemporary archival institutions that may employ hegemonic and white supremacist practices. Counter-archiving is one such effort. Counter-archiving questions what is considered archivable and provides options to challenge traditional conceptions of history. This creates

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space for narratives that may be absent from mainstream archival materials. Making a case for the role of archives in constructing gay Dutch historical memory, Brooks Hosfeld argues that the archivist bias leads to historical erasure and that the archivists establish historical remembering when they actively make space for individuals and groups who are traditionally omitted from past narratives. Such instances restructure what is deemed valuable enough to be preserved within historical memory and can shift the power to the marginalized people, enabling them to reclaim their past and future (Hosfeld 2019).

The exclusive nature of the colonial archive is visible in the readership it was meant for. The documents of the colonial archive that we accessed were mostly meant for British travelers who might want to visit Lucknow, for the British government, or for strategizing within the EIC. A large part of that colonial archive was not meant to be read or accessed by the nawabs who were the subject of the colonial documents. These references projected the cultural and artistic focus of the nawabs to be a sign of weak administration as a reason to justify the annexation. This is important because the British were aware that the annexation might be scrutinized as unjustifiable usurpation, and hence, they ensured a systematic production of evidence to justify their actions. Hence, the colonial archive is a motivated archive. These writings did not merely serve as historical archiving of the nawabi period but have also served to proselytize the local intelligentsia, such as Sharar, who had a wider audience. The archive was instrumental in coercing the literati into feeling ashamed of those elements in their own culture that the British considered inappropriate. The subjugation and annexation of Awadh was possible, in part, due to the distrust of nawabi culture, successfully propagated by colonial writers.

To *build* an archive, it is not enough to produce and collect documents but also to ensure that the documents *seem* to be authentic. A few pieces written by colonial writers are cases in which an evidently constructed history is made to appear authentic through a long-drawn preface. Hoey's translations of Persian texts commissioned by the EIC are examples of such cases.

Colonial archival material that dates back to the times of the nawabs can broadly be found in travelogs<sup>1</sup> (some illustrated);<sup>2</sup> descriptions in tourist books;<sup>3</sup> representations by visiting artists later curated;<sup>4</sup> historical accounts;<sup>5</sup> British institutional documents such as British Gazetteers,<sup>6</sup> *Asiatic Annual Register*, and *Asiatic Journal* providing commentary on history and architecture; political commentaries by EIC representatives<sup>7</sup> to contextualize the political environment; and British architects' commentary<sup>8</sup> on the architecture of Lucknow. The colonial archive also includes translations of Persian works of historians contemporary to Asaf (Hoey 1885, 1889). The Persian works as well as the translations, however, were commissioned by the British and further the views of the colonial enterprise. India and Bengal Political Despatches were a formal means of communication between England and its officials in the Indian subcontinent and carried considerable



institutional authority, conveyed by personal letters. These despatches have been useful evidence to read the language and the strategies employed by British residents to discredit the nawabs. Firsthand accounts of the Uprising brought home by military men employed in the British army form a significant part of the colonial archive for this book. The accounts were written with the intention of providing a picture of the skill, prowess, and control the British army had displayed, to the political overlords in Britain.<sup>9</sup> These accounts have been useful in the speculative reconstruction of the demolished architecture of nawabi Lucknow. Figure 3.1 provides a timeline of these publications providing our readers an opportunity to see their temporal overlaps. Figure 3.2 shows the timeline of European visitors to Lucknow. Maps [Figure 1.3], images, illustrations, paintings [Figure 3.3], and newspapers published by Europeans are also considered a part of the colonial archive. Colonial maps prepared for military operations or for clearing up the city post the 1857 Uprising have been instrumental in showing the erasures and also in certain cases to reconstruct the layouts of nawabi precincts. For Machhi Bhavan, Bada Imambada, and Daulatkhana, we have referred to military maps that show the location of cannons, lines of defense, embrasures to hold cannons, and embankments with batteries installed on either side<sup>10</sup> and that show the movement of artillery, location of cannon fire, and new roads across the city for both military and civil purposes.<sup>11</sup> For Qaiserbagh we have referred to maps which show the embankments erected by the uprisers, movement of the British troops through the precinct, location and direction of attacks, and buildings targeted during the 1857 Uprising.<sup>12</sup>

The colonial archive, in its criticism of nawabi culture, registers nawabi architecture as queer because it was “strange,” “corrupted,” “bastard,” “most debased,” and so on. Colonial practice of dismissive descriptions reveals its insufficiency that relies on normative parameters to read architecture. Normative parameters are restricted to offering a style-based description of architecture that limits itself to reading organizational principles of symmetry, balance, and axis. They confine architectural readings to identifying spatial hierarchies. This makes the architectural reading rigid, limiting it to a commentary on built form, aesthetics, and scale, dictated by the function of the structure. We reclaim the derogatory terms appearing in the colonial archive and situate them in queer studies. In doing so, we articulate the queerness in the words used in colonial archives and indicate the effect nawabi expressions had on the colonial writers—anger, dismissal, and disgust. Further, we use the queerness in those terms to understand and present the nawabi tactics of reorienting culture that resisted and alienated, as well as embraced parts of the colonial enterprise.

A literary or a painterly object in the colonial archive has been produced with an agenda of presenting Lucknow culture from the British colonial perspective. That agenda does not make explicit what the nawabs were thinking and why they acted the way they did. The colonial archive just presents a singular perspective which diminishes the nawabs to mere specialist

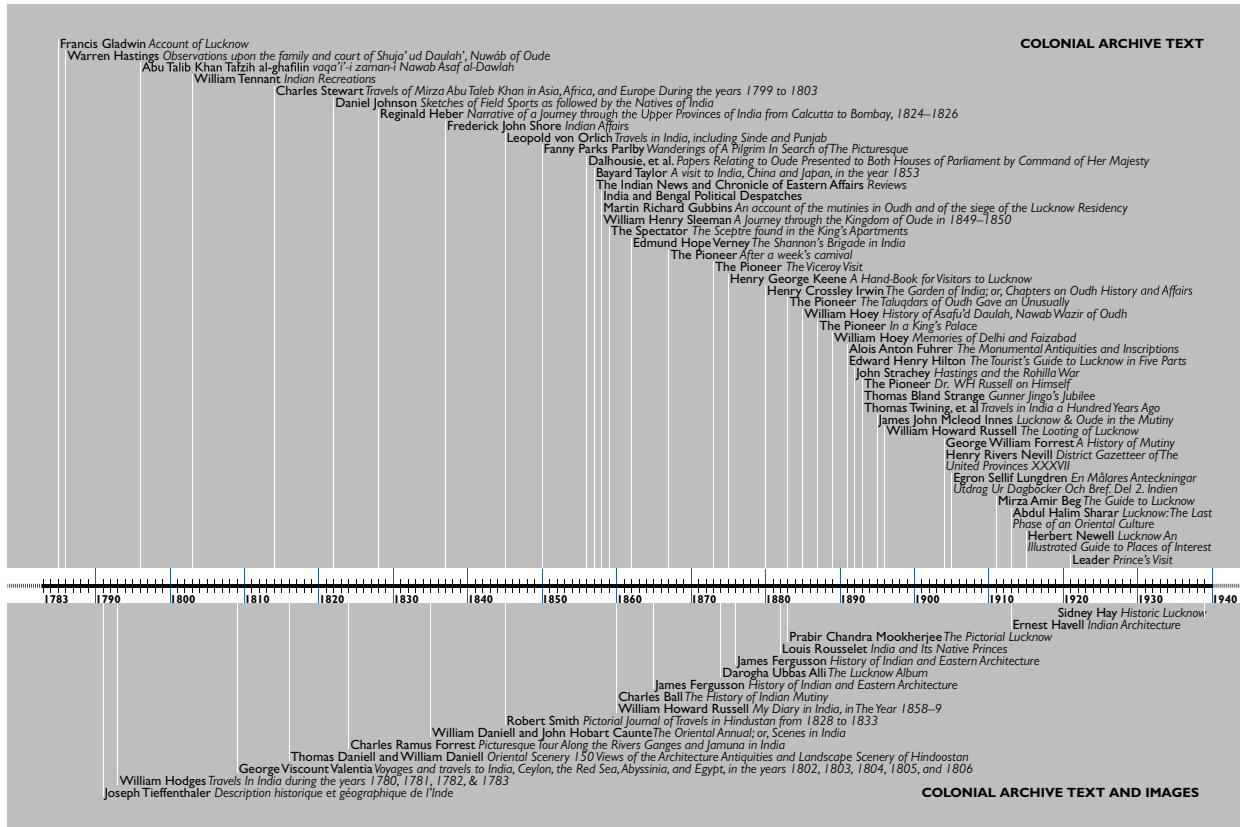


Figure 3.1 Timeline of colonial publications related to Lucknow referenced in the book.

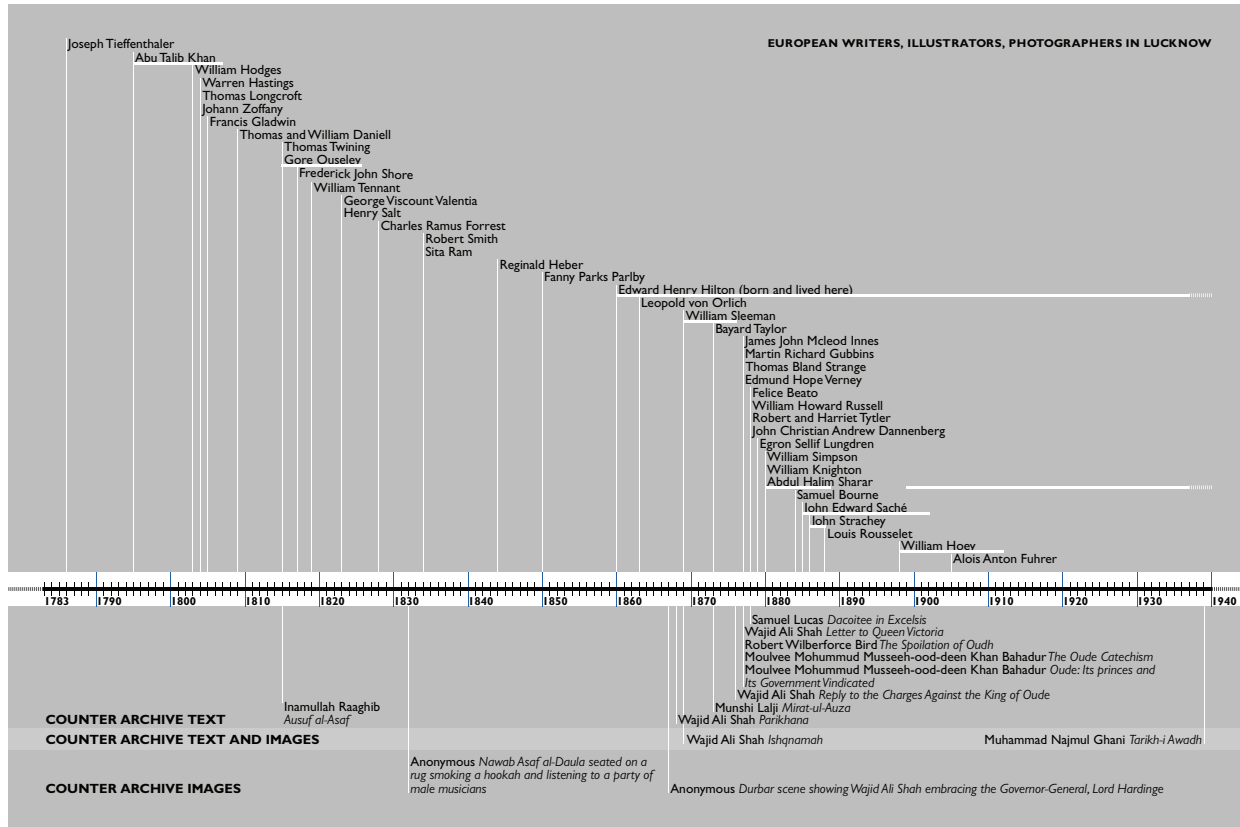


Figure 3.2 Timeline of European visitors in Lucknow referred to in the book, overlapped with the counter archive of the nawabs.



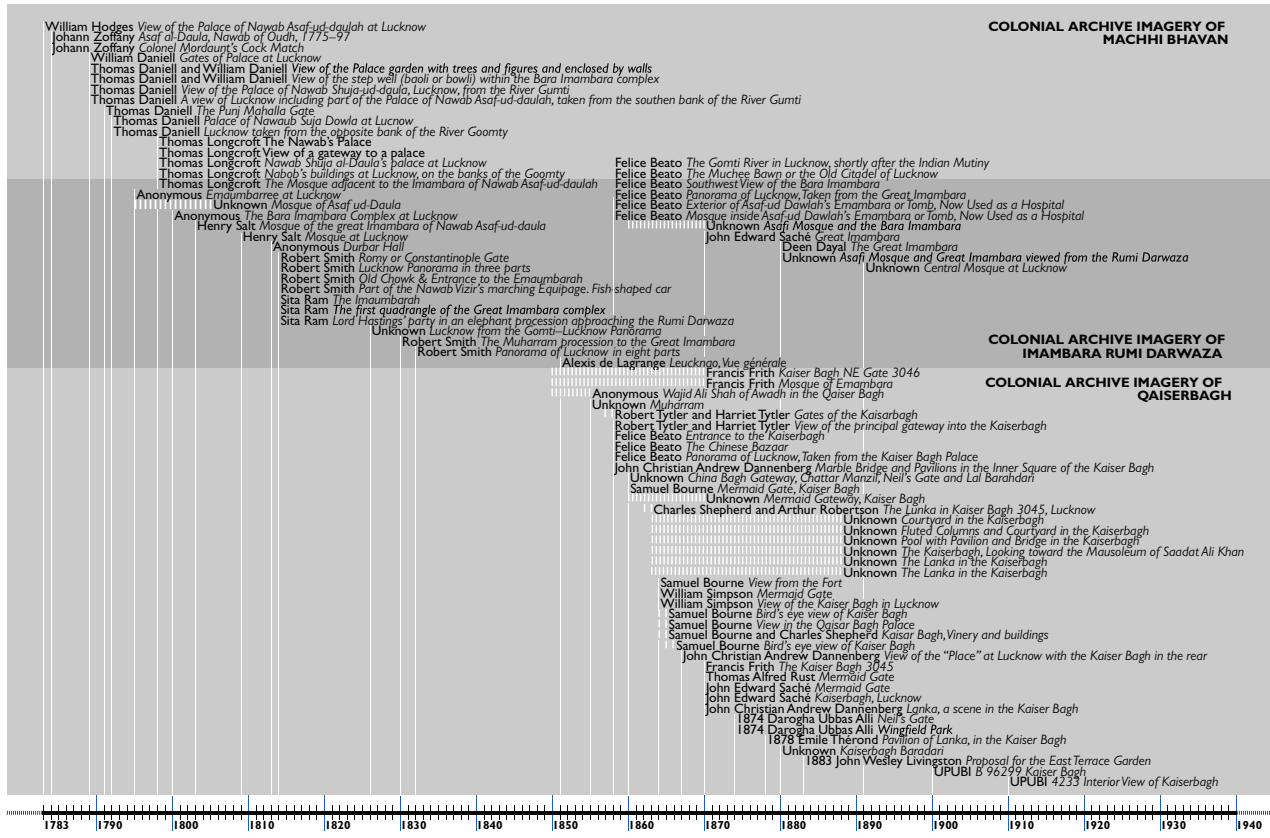


Figure 3.3 Timeline of colonial imagery related to Lucknow referenced in the book.

content. A queer reading involves rendering a particular text or painting queerer by reading it in a certain way (Barker 2016), perhaps against the grain as we do. Our queer reading reads the colonial texts, maps, paintings, and photographs to make explicit the vantage points of the colonial eye; the embedded voice of the nawabs revealing what they thought, how they acted, how they offered resistance to the colonial ingress, and in what ways they discomforted colonial power. In short, we are committed to reading the agency that the nawabs exerted, through the colonial archive, even when the colonial archive is silent on that. Further, we make explicit that the nawabs exerted their political and cultural agency by subverting norms of gender and sexuality. A paucity of contemporary sources other than the ones produced by the colonial enterprise has made the colonial texts the dominant discourse. Hence, queering it becomes one of the most practical ways of extracting other voices and identifying the agency of the marginalized—the nawabs in this case—from the dominant sources of the colonial archive.

As we undertake a queering or queer reading of the colonial archive; we redescribe the events, commentaries, architectural objects, and performativities—politics, sex, and gender; we posit those as queer providing explicit reasons and thereby also provide a description of the queer. This also helps us in contributing and widening the ways in which queer and queerness are recognized.

During the 1857 Uprising, the precincts of Machhi Bhavan, Bada Imambada, Daulatkhana, and Qaiserbagh offered resistance to the British army and subsequently became sites of violent attacks from the British side. We read the colonial military maps against the grain, which were prepared—in order to strategize attack on Lucknow—to contend how these precincts became sites of violence because they offered resistance to the British army, and in that, they became sites of erasures. The British army prepared military maps in order to meticulously strategize where to place their batteries, build barricades, identify buildings to target their cannon attacks, determine directions of fire, and design the movement of the army through the city. Queer reading the colonial maps against their intended purpose has helped us determine the number and extent of demolitions and places targeted and see how the nawabi precincts became sites of British erasures.

Given the extent to which the Machhi Bhavan precinct has been erased, it is difficult to comprehend its historic form today. To speculate its form, we assembled information from several illustrations, drawings, photographs, and written records to offer a piecing together of what the precinct might have been during the last decade of the 18th century. Joseph Tieffenthaler's drawings and a brief description of the precinct *In Description historique et géographique de l'Inde* (1791) is the earliest archival record available to us. We referred three drawings from that document: *Facies externa Palatii quintuplicis quod exstat Lacnoi ad partem occiduam* (1791a: Plate XV-1), *Frontispicium Portae Palatii* (1791b: Plate XV-2), and *Palatium* (1791c: Plate XVI-2). We laid out Tieffenthaler's drawings and kept them beside

several archival images,<sup>13</sup> photographs,<sup>14</sup> and maps.<sup>15</sup> The images were taken and drawings drawn from various vantage points. It was a challenge to read the illustrations because the drawings follow differing rules of illustration. For example, *Facies externa* is planimetric, and scales were exaggerated or diminished based on the importance he would have attached to the object he was representing. The depth in Beato's panoramas is lesser than actual, making faraway structures appear closer. The proportions of Hussein Bagh, for example, seem to be more linear than wide; hence, we had to rely on other features, such as bastions and boundaries appearing in other texts or images. Only Longcroft's and Daniell's drawings follow perspectival rules. To put these varied images together, we have not only juxtaposed but also turned around, reoriented, stretched, scaled, fragmented, and re-pieced these

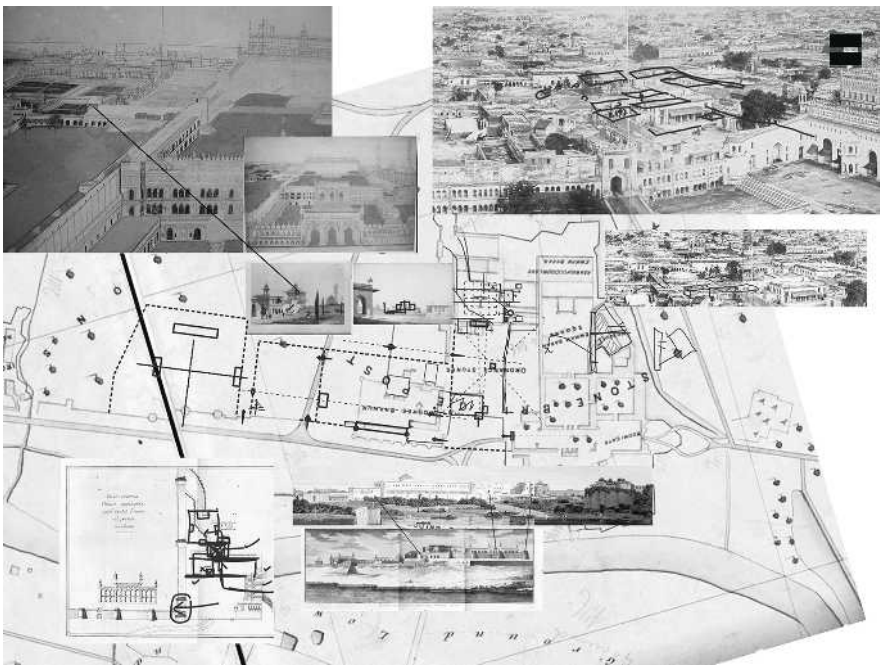


Figure 3.4 Screenshot of authors' method of queer reading colonial imagery that incorporates authors' annotations on a collation of archival imagery. Zooming in on a section of the Machhi Bhavan area in plan of the city of Lucknow (Crommelin 1859), the following images have been placed clockwise starting from the top left: part of the Bada Imambada Complex (anonymous, c1800), the Bada Imambada Complex (anonymous, c1800), view in the garden of the Palace at Lucknow (Daniell 1835), view of the palace garden with trees and figures and enclosed by walls (Daniell 1789b), part of *Panorama of Lucknow* (Beato 1858), part of *Panorama of Lucknow* (Beato 1858), Palace of Nawab Shuja-ud-Daula at Lucknow (Daniell 1802b), "Palatium" (Tieffenthaler 1791), and "Facies externa" (Tieffenthaler 1791).

images and created a collage-like composite [Figure 3.4]. The image is a peek into our method—piecing together, incomplete, tentative, speculative, yet definitive in some ways.

## Notes

- 1 Gladwin, Tennant, Johnson, Heber, Archer, von Orlich, Taylor, Twining, *et al.*
- 2 Tieffenthaler, Hodges, Valentia, *et al.*
- 3 Alli, Rousselet, Hilton, Beg, Keene, Prabir Chandra Mookherjee, Murray, Newell, *et al.*
- 4 Daniells, Forrest, Smith, *et al.*
- 5 Irwin, Sharar, Hay, Niblett, Spencer, *et al.*
- 6 Hamilton, Fuhrer, Nevill, *et al.*
- 7 Hastings, Low, Shore, Sleeman, Strachey, *et al.*
- 8 Fergusson, Havell, *et al.*
- 9 Gubbins, Innes, Forrest, Verney, *et al.*
- 10 Military Department n.d.
- 11 Lang *et al.* 1858; Napier 1859a
- 12 Lang *et al.* 1858; Napier 1859a; Bolst *et al.* n.d.; Mackenzie 1860; Military Department n.d.; Smith 1868
- 13 Hodges 1793; Longcroft 1789b; Daniell 1789b, 1802b; Daniell and Daniell 1789b; Smith 1814d; Sita Ram 1814c; Anonymous c1800; and Unknown 1826b
- 14 Beato's *Panorama* 1858a, and Beato's *Muchee Bawn* 1858g
- 15 Crommelin 1859; Vanrenen 1870

## 4 Locating Inaccuracies, Fallacies, and Biases in the Colonial Archive

As part of our reading of the colonial archive, we access Johann Zoffany's 1784b painting *Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match* [Figure 4.1]. As the painting is commissioned by colonial officials, it is a description of how they see the nawab's body or how they want the body to be seen and presented. Our reading acknowledges the queer desiring gaze of Asaf in *Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match*. This is distinct from other art historians (Pollock 2003) who have focused on the white versus the non-white bodies without foregrounding the queer sexualized body of the nawab. Asaf's sexuality has been substantially overlooked or even ignored in previous scholarly works of art criticism. However, our reading looks at the ways in which the body, sexuality, and desire have been presented in the painting. We pay attention to the position of the nawab in the painting—whether he is a part of the foreground, center, or part of a dynamic composition. We take note of the spatial relationships between the other occupants of the canvas and the nawab, which enables a certain directionality of gaze. Although Zoffany was faithful to the proportions and logic of the perspective; he employed techniques that carry risqué allusions and double meanings. We locate such depictions intentionally made to shock the audience. We thus read into Zoffany's intention and techniques of giving agency to the European subjects in his painting such that they can cast a colonial gaze upon Asaf.

In *Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match*, Asaf is at the center of the dramatized tension between the nawab and the representatives of imperial power, unfolding at his court. This painting was commissioned by Warren Hastings—the then governor-general of Bengal—as a possible joke on the nawab. The joke here is on Asaf's sexuality and his attraction to a European man who is represented in a state of informality without the outer coat suggesting a state of undress. Asaf, whom several colonial writers describe as impotent (Jasanoff 2005: 65), is shown in a state of arousal on seeing Mordaunt and participating in what is considered a masculine activity. The irony and the satire are explicit. Hastings ridicules Asaf for not just being homosexual, implied in his words “who dishonours human nature” and “most unnatural passions,” but also for not “[being] capable of performing an active part in [it . . . and] becoming the passive in it” (Hastings 1786: f. 111). There is

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*Figure 4.1 Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match.* Oil painting on canvas by Johann Zoffany. 1784.

*Source:* Image courtesy of Tate.

a twofold commentary on nawab's sexuality, one on his sexual orientation and the other on his preference of being the passive participant. In this commentary, Hastings projects his heterosexual masculinist preference on Asaf. In the context of Hastings's commentary, and the fact that Hastings commissioned the painting, Asaf's representation is uncharacteristic of the nawab but, rather, is devised intentionally to elicit a response of mockery from the viewer.

A matter of ridicule for the Europeans, the representation, however, brings to attention the intersect of the sexual and the political at the nawab's court. There are several motifs of masculine display and performance of homosexuality at the event hosted at the nawab's court. Just behind the nawab is a bearded man "fondling a Moslem boy catamite" (Major 2016), and then there is a "fashionable man in his mustard yellow trousers who fondles the cock he holds between his legs" (Pollock 2003: 158). A courtier can be seen pointing to the scene in outrage, while Antoine Polier looks on in judgment. These representations are highly unusual for their time and point to a European fixation for highlighting both the debauchery of the nawab's court and the relaxed morals of the Europeans who were in his employ. As the nawab is immersed in the match, the Europeans occupy a place of vantage in the painting, from where they stand judging everything they disapprove of and everything they think proves the nawab's inefficacy. They disapprove



of the transect of sex and state, his attire, his body, his inability to have children, and his “lowering to sports of the common people.”

Similarly, the note by art historian Greg Sullivan at the Tate Gallery, where the painting is housed, enumerates several indicators of homosexuality in the painting. The nawab is shown in a state of arousal represented by the spirals in his muslin robe. Polier looks down at the scene in contempt. According to the note, the nawab’s leaning toward his chief minister and bodyguard, Hassan Reza Khan, “add[s] an erotic dimension to the nature of the cock fight” (Sullivan 2013). In our reading, however, Asaf and Mordaunt are both seen mirroring each other with their arms outstretched, both in white. Asaf appears to be gazing longingly at Mordaunt. Llewellyn-Jones has also noted the intimacy, calling Mordaunt Asaf’s “favorite English companion” (1999: 16). Mordaunt is shown wearing a white shirt, tight white pants, and local footwear similar to that of Asaf, implying an informal state of dressing. The way Mordaunt is represented, the choice of color, the sheerness of the material of his outfit, and the fit of the garments are all intended to highlight the shape of his body. The other Europeans are shown wearing Company uniforms. The way Mordaunt is shown dressed conveys the Europeans’ bias against him. It conveys that the Europeans consider him to be of relaxed morals. The only other person shown similarly dressed is a European in the foreground holding a cock who is also shown in a contemptuous way.

In a letter to Ozias Humphrey, dated March 11, 1789, Claude Martin remarks on Asaf’s “dark and sinister intentions” toward Mordaunt, implying the homosexual desire Asaf may have had. Martin does not remark on the reciprocal nature of the relationship between Asaf and Mordaunt, presenting Mordaunt to be someone who made every effort to satisfy the nawab, hoping to receive substantial rewards in return, and that Asaf would never make that payment (Llewellyn-Jones 2003a: 172). Daniel Johnson portrays Asaf as manipulative who would not make the payments due to Mordaunt, as that would ensure Mordaunt stays with him (Johnson 1822: 185). Johnson also highlights and implicitly ridicules Asaf for having “wept like a child” at Mordaunt’s funeral (Johnson 1822: 186).

Pollock reads the painting to highlight the colonial bias, which contrasted whiteness and the nawabi other. She brings out the bias of the painter by specifically underscoring the way the white men are shown in an aggressive manner, while the people of nawabi Lucknow are shown as passive spectators. Acknowledging Pollock’s reading, we argue that the painting is not just about the colonizer versus the colonized. It also portrays the colonizer’s belief that the nawab’s effectiveness as a political leader was questionable due to his homosexuality.

William Hoey wrote two books that, despite his claim, are examples of narratives constructed to invalidate Asaf’s political prowess. Written in 1885 and 1889, both were based on works by Abu Taleb and Muhammad Fiaz Bakhsh, respectively, whom Hoey claims to be contemporary historians who have closely observed the Awadh court. Hoey, through both the texts, wished

to present supposedly unbiased accounts of Awadh. Abu Taleb,<sup>1</sup> who wrote the Persian version of the first book, was in Asaf's court for a short duration but was expelled from the court, and that made him bitter. This became a perfect opportunity for the EIC to reach out to him to write a historical account of Asaf's court. Similarly, Muhammad Faiz Bakhsh was commissioned by the British to write the Persian *Tarikh Farahbaksh* "with a view to propagate . . . the facts they wanted to make current and the useful facts and details contained in it are, in fact, a by-product of the same process" (Qureshi 2004: 32). The British commissioned the work to make a case that the spoliation of the Begums at Faizabad was not the doing of Warren Hastings (Qureshi 2004: 32). The British provided a description of the nawab's administration from native perspective in order to appear unbiased, all the while ensuring that the text favored the colonial administration. Having identified Abu Taleb as a defector, Hoey's description of the nawab's administration has to be seen in the light of a colonial bias. Oldenburg too has identified that the British understood the value of "enticing court defectors to produce 'native' histories of the nawabs, which were then translated by their own officers into English" (Oldenburg 2007: 6).

In the first book, Hoey presented a casual description of the Bada Imambada built by Asaf. Hoey's writing lacked specificity and read like an offhand description of the Bada Imambada when he said that there were "two or three jilokhanas" (Hoey, 93) near the inner gateway. We use the casualness of Imambada's description in Hoey's writing to contest the authenticity of the work, which claimed to provide a reliable history during Asaf's time from a local perspective.

As the credibility of this text has already been challenged, the casualness of Imambada's description indicates three possibilities. First, that the person writing it did not fully comprehend the spatial organization. This could be because the writer was not familiar with the nawabi spatial typologies and could have been a colonial writer. Second, the writer had written it from memory much after visiting it. Third, the writer had visited the place at a later time period and used that to present a picture of what it would have been during Asaf's time. In this case, the claim that this text is contemporary becomes contested. Also, Abu Taleb is writing from memory, when he had moved to Calcutta as claimed in the text. This means that his writing is more an impression rather than an account.

The author's preface (Hoey 1885: i) justifies the production of the book by saying that other accounts are "inaccurately and partially retailed by unreliable strangers," and then goes on to offer an apology for providing "fragmentary notes" having "lost [the] diaries" and for being "compelled to write from memory." This disclaimer is unconvincing as it appears convenient. In other words, the introduction itself has admitted to the factual inaccuracy of the book. If Abu Taleb had lost his notes and was residing in Calcutta at the time, some other contemporary writer who lived in Lucknow could have been identified for writing a descriptive account of Lucknow. David



Thomas Richardson had approached Taleb to write the book in 1796 and later accompanied Taleb on his travels from 1799–1803 to Europe and back. It appears that after the work was commissioned that the “fragmentary notes were collected,” not in person in Lucknow but from memory in Calcutta.

The colonial bias of the text can be seen in the following examples: Asaf’s move to Lucknow—an “uneven” terrain having narrow streets which costed much to build upon; Asaf’s move from Faizabad “[where] the climate . . . is better” (Hoey 1885: 10); Asaf and his court officials’ “foolish expenditure . . . without fear of being called to account” (Hoey 1885: 38); the “loose and idle characters” who Asaf surrounded himself with (Hoey 1885: 38); Asaf’s “fond” care for all things “save men, especially his relatives and old dependents” (Hoey 1885: 38); Asaf’s “tyranny”; Asaf’s “building mania,” which demolished houses without compensation to residents to make way for his buildings (Hoey 1885: 91); Asaf’s impatience at not taking the time to burn bricks and lime thoroughly, leading to premature decays in buildings (Hoey 1885: 92); and so on.

In contrast to Hoey, Sharar wrote of the integrity of the plaster and brickwork in Asaf’s buildings, which, even after 125 years, showed no signs of disrepair maintaining the same splendor as when they were constructed (Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 48). Sharar’s account helps us in locating the bias and inaccuracy of Hoey’s argument.

Valentia’s description of the announcement of his arrival to the then nawab, which amused the writer, is an example of the colonial misunderstanding of nawabi protocol. He was announced as “Lord Saheb ka bhanja, Company ki nawasa” (Valentia 1809: 137). *Bhanja* means nephew, *nawasa* means grandson. The announcement also made Governor-general Wellesley (referred to as “Lord Saheb”) appear as the son of the matriarch, the Company. Valentia was amused because he thought that the titles originated from the native belief that the Company was an old woman and that the governors-generals her children (1809: 137–138). This is an example of the British taking something literally without trying to understand the cultural context and making assumptions that the “native” is literal in their beliefs. Urdu and Hindi assign a gender to all nouns. In these languages, the word “company” has a female connotation. The words *nawasa* and *bhanja* connote a person in a family that is extremely dear—a grandson is dear to the grandmother, for example. By using these two terms of familiar relations, nawabi culture openly acknowledged the privilege, indispensability, and insider-ness of Valentia, owing to his proximity to power—to Wellesley and, hence, to the Company. The nawab, thereby, acknowledged the importance of Valentia in the Company. It also defines why the nawab is so generous with what and where he provides Valentia access. Valentia, on the other hand, does not recognize the use of the familial logic as a nawabi commentary on company hierarchies, and instead reads it too literally.

Valentia identifies a cultural bias in European society against “Asiatics,” with Asian customs being “inseparably connected” to the idea of “effeminacy”

(Valentia 1809: 141). In the colonial archive, we read how nawabi culture and its rulers have been described as effeminate on several occasions (von Orlich 1845: 108; Irwin 1880: 153; Rousselet 1975 (1882): 553; Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 57), as a means to diminish their significance and value. In his argument for the benefits of the hot bath, Valentia identifies this bias as being prejudicial and strange. Valentia, however, does not articulate the possible reasons for this bias. In our reading of the colonial archive, we argue that these biases stem from the heteronormative rigidity of the social and cultural norms of British society, with its strict definitions of masculinity and masculine behaviors. Any deviation from these norms, which were bound to arise in their encounters with different cultures and societies, especially regarding the behavior of men, was under scrutiny and deemed to be effeminate, especially when such an argument could be used to discredit social, moral, and political actions and assert the superiority of British morality.

Valentia also scrutinized the behavior of European women at nawabi events. To Valentia, it was “highly disgusting” that a woman, even though she was accompanied by her husband, should sit next to a “Mahomedan” and attempt to engage in conversation. Valentia validates his own disgust of a white woman interacting freely with a brown person by calling it “contrary to the principles” of the nawabi culture, in which, according to him, this behavior would be considered contemptuous, considered on a level with “nautch girls” (1809: 143–144). Here Valentia exhibits his own prejudice, both sexist and classist, against the European women and the “nautch” girls. His use of the word “nautch” is a means to demean female performers associated with the court and nawabi culture. He does not recognize the rich tradition of female performers of the nawabi culture. Female performers, or *tawaifs*, were strong independent women in whose stewardship several traditions of not just dance and music but also nawabi etiquette were entrusted. *Tawaifs* were shapers and definers of culture in Lucknow (Vanita and Kidwai 2000: 192). The bias evident in Valentia’s remarks took on a sinister form after the annexation of Awadh. The British confiscated the wealth and large landholdings of these powerful women, eventually reducing the profession of dance to prostitution, which they closely regulated to suit their own purposes (Oldenburg 1991).

The British, through Sleeman, make a case that Wajid was effeminate, childlike, and emasculated by spending his time with women and eunuchs (Sleeman 1858: 369). This the British considered inappropriate, believing that he was easily controlled by them. Wajid, however, employed people of all identities without qualms. *Khwajasaras*, for example, were given positions of power equal to those of the aristocracy. The way Wajid attributed value to people was based not on their origin but rather on their accomplishments, especially in terms of the arts. These individuals are described in colonial texts—such as that of Sidney Hay—as “low caste,” “lewd entertainers,” and “low friends,” and the act of keeping their company as “disgusting debauchery” (Hay 1939: 55). That did not align with the British idea of

political behavior (astuteness) and they were quick to attribute Wajid as incapable to rule because of these reasons. The text also clearly highlights the disdain in the writer's voice for not just the important positions but also the "enormous fortunes" (Sleeman 1858: 369) the *khwajasaras* and other people of lower rank and privilege under the employ of the nawab were making. Vanita's work gives us a more nuanced understanding of gender roles in Awadh. She cites Khalil Ahmed Siddiqi's use of the term *auratparasti*, which translates to "women-adoring," to describe the nawabs of Lucknow and the urban style that emerged due to this adoration. She argues that "the political and cultural prominence of women in Awadh's court culture, which has been seen as symptomatic of its effeminacy," can be read as indicative of the "culture's strength rather than weakness" (Vanita 2012: 14). The nawabs advanced a feminized culture that did not remain contained within the private realm of the palace. It spilled out into the public realm on certain occasions, where men would imitate the nawabs. Such feminized cultural proliferation was a shock to the colonial writers who used the word "effeminate" as a derogatory term to describe the inhabitants of Lucknow.<sup>2</sup> Wajid valued art and artists and gave highly accomplished artists the reward of his proximity. The "poets, fiddlers, eunuchs, and profligate women"—whom Sleeman (1858: 422) criticizes for holding "some court or other, fiscal, criminal, or civil, through which to fleece the people"—are all Wajid's close associates whom he trusts and from whom he expects utmost loyalty. In conferring his proximity, Wajid allocates responsibilities to these individuals that have to be undertaken like a lover would. That way, Wajid would control his lovers and not be controlled as, Sleeman writes (1858: 369), a part of his political strategy. Di Pietrantonio calls it the erotics of sovereignty—visible in the tone and content *Ishqnamah*—which intends to mask issues of consent and forced labor, and instead emphasizes love and desire as the motivating factors behind Wajid's relationships (Di Pietrantonio 2020: 24). The relationship between Wajid and his lovers was a form of slavery, which was reciprocal by contract and not a forced servitude. Wajid played out his politics in a non-normative manner, bringing in the possibility of his amorous and sexual partners to aspiring to rising the ranks of the harem and court.

## Notes

- 1 Taleb was born in Lucknow 1166 AH (1752) and went to Allahabad with his father. He returned to Lucknow in 1775 and was in Lucknow on and off until 1787. From 1792 to 1795 he was in Lucknow again, after which he moved to Calcutta.
- 2 Rousselet 1975 (1882): 553

## 5 Counter-Archives

To challenge the contents of the colonial archives, it became increasingly important to expand the archives to take into account other contemporaneous works. We have referred to (translations of) a few Persian and Urdu texts, chiefly to locate any inaccuracies constructed in the colonial archives or to find any evidence of ways in which the nawabs themselves countered colonial power. Muhammad Najmul Ghani's *Tarikh-i Awadh* (1919) and Inamullah Raaghib's *Ausaf al-Asaf* (1795) provide descriptions of Machhi Bhavan during Asaf's times, while Munshi Lalji's *Mirat-ul-Auza* (1853) provides the names of several nondescript structures built by Wajid. Asaf's own poetry available online at the *Rekhta* website has been instrumental in understanding his sexuality and how he lived it. Wajid's own writings *Bani* (1987 (1877)), *Parikhana* (2017 (1848–1849)), and *Ishqnamah* (1849–1850) provide a firsthand account of his own court culture. These references form part of the counter-archive for this book [Figure 3.2].

*Parikhana* and *Ishqnamah*, both written by Wajid, the latter also meticulously illustrated, form a rich resource for this section of the book. *Parikhana* was written in 1848–49 (Shah 1987 (1877): viii), and it was later translated to *Ishqnamah* (Shah 1987 (1877): xiii). Wajid's *Ishqnamah* (1849–1850) carries 103 paintings which have immensely contributed to our project of reconstructing the Qaiserbagh. The *Ishqnamah* was looted from Qaiserbagh,<sup>1</sup> and hence it was written and illustrated during the times that were contemporary to Qaiserbagh's use as a royal precinct. Therefore, even if there is very little direct reference to specific buildings of Qaiserbagh, the paintings provide an architectural aesthetic that Wajid endorsed and hence we use it to extrapolate the aesthetic in Qaiserbagh. It is difficult to ascertain the various structures that the painter might have been referring to create these paintings. It is possible that the painter referenced the buildings in the Huzur Bagh and Qaiserbagh, which were either already built or in the process of construction. Wajid took over as king in 1847, and soon after he began the construction of Qaiserbagh. He had already engaged in improving and expanding the Huzur Bagh and the residential precinct prior to his ascension. They paint a vivid picture of the day-to-day life at the palace, providing illustrations of Wajid, his court, the women in his *zenana*, and the architectural

settings of the paintings. These paintings also provide us with visual evidence of the possible qualities of the landscape and built form of the Qaiserbagh. In the *Ishqnamah* paintings, Wajid almost always appears looking away from the viewer, either longingly at his lovers; or in conversation with them, his friends, or subjects. These paintings have been commissioned by Wajid and hence are instruments to access his intentionality. He evades the gaze of the viewer, and yet is aware of it.

Wajid was invested in ensuring adequate representation at his court, paying special attention to employing people from less privileged backgrounds—based on gender, race, ethnicity, and social status. He writes about that intent and agency he exercised once he ascended the throne in his book *Parikhana* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 137). In his pursuit to include many voices in his kingdom, Wajid also created a system to collect feedback from citizens. A silver chest was given to *sawaars* (horse riders who accompanied Wajid during his processional ride through the city), and any person could put their opinions and petitions in it. Wajid would then personally go through them as soon as possible (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 147). Wajid was cognizant of the voice of people and created an opportunity for them to express it. In his mind, this was his strategy to earn popularity among his citizens.

The opaque watercolor and gold painting *Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh in the Qaiser Bagh, Lucknow* (anonymous, mid-19th century) [Figure 5.1], possibly commissioned by Wajid, forms another source to write a decolonial description of Qaiserbagh. The techniques and artistic license employed by a local artist



*Figure 5.1* Qaiserbagh seen in an opaque watercolor and gold on paper by an anonymous artist. Mid-19th century.

*Source:* Image courtesy of Kenneth X and Joyce Robbins Collection.



in this painting deviate from the European realism seen in Zoffany's paintings. The artist employs non-normative techniques to represent architecture, such as simultaneously showing both the interior and the exterior of the structure on the facade, or showing structures as flat two-dimensional elevations that twist and fold to represent depth and directionality. These deviations allow the artist to communicate how they read the scene. Our queer reading pays attention to the artists' personal bias in the way they juxtapose and emphasize certain objects in the painting, such as architectural elements and the emergent compositions.

Many of Wajid's paintings show his shoes and those shoes are ornate and royal and are part of how Wajid wishes to present himself. Following a requirement of the EIC that Wajid should wear formal black English shoes for all public occasions, Wajid instructed his painters to not show his feet in paintings. It was his way to exercise his power in controlling his representation to his people and the rest of the world where his powerlessness is not objectified. This was his way of disobeying, his way of circumventing the requirement by ensuring he was not painted that way, even though he might not have been able to avoid wearing the shoes. Such paintings then become a representation of his political desire.

Following his move to Calcutta, Wajid became proactive and undertook an agenda of making explicit and commonplace the knowledge of the EIC's wrongdoings toward him and his kingdom. For this, instead of resorting to military methods, he resorted to literary ones. He appointed a few writers who would be responsible to publish evidence-based brochures, pamphlets, and books and even publish in popular newspapers in England. His agenda was to clear his name and reach out to as many people as possible. We argue that the publications stemming from this project of Wajid's paved a way to the construction of a counter-archive that would contest the colonial archive.

The EIC annexed Awadh in 1856 and published its official justification for the annexation in *The Oude Blue Book*, which was presented to both Houses of the British Parliament.<sup>2</sup> On receiving the *Blue Book* in Calcutta and getting it translated into Persian, Wajid wrote a response in the form of a book. He sent his copy to Queen Victoria along with an illuminated letter appealing to her for support.<sup>3</sup> In this letter dated January 7, 1857, addressed to the queen, Wajid contests the annexation and his ousting, calling it illegal. He seeks a reversal of that decision and accuses the EIC of oppression, violence, and violation of the 1801 treaty.

There are seven chapters in Wajid's *Reply* (Shah 1856) contesting the colonial claims. The structure of the book conveys the methodical and reasoning prowess of its writer. It begins by making a case for the nawabs' cooperation, honesty, and loyalty toward British counterparts in the first chapter, and goes on to enumerate the instances when the EIC flouted the various treaties in the second chapter. The third chapter outlines the fact that the defamation of the Awadh has solely been made on the grounds of statements made by British residents Sleeman and Outram. The fourth

chapter shows the discrepancies in the *Blue Book* (Dalhousie *et al.* 1856) and hence contests the credibility of all the allegations made toward Wajid and his kingdom. The fifth chapter provides evidence of good governance in Awadh during nawabi rule. Wajid argues, in the sixth chapter, that the long-standing treaties between Awadh and the British cannot be nullified in order to impose Company rule. The final chapter provides evidence of crimes and murders being committed in the EIC's Territories.

The letter (Shah 1857) accompanying this book is more strongly worded. The letter is extremely polite and cordial and acknowledges the honor of the throne of the queen, yet it is pointed and sharp in its agenda. Foregrounding the *Blue Book*, the letter provides a context of Wajid's *Reply* (Shah 1856). It provides a short summary of the *Reply* and calls upon the honor of the British to deliver justice. Wajid challenges the British decision to censure the Awadh government arguing that the EIC has not been censured despite the "the number of murders, wounds, dacoities, and cruel and oppressive acts" in its territories. He challenges the decision using a crisp short but strong statement: "No censure at all can be attached to the Oude Government" (Shah 1857).

The letter also conveys the twofold purpose of the book: first, to point out that despite admitting to the binding nature of the 1801 Treaty, the EIC is "desirous of annulling the same, without considering the disgrace that would attach to the British name by breaking a contract" and, second, to show that the "statements regarding the oppression and misgovernment of the people of Oude are quite groundless" (Shah 1857). Using the words "disgrace . . . to the British name" and "groundless," Wajid invokes the morality and justice that the British government would have liked to be known for.

Wajid calls it the responsibility of the queen to ensure justice, despite there being ministers and members of the Houses of Parliament appointed to support her administration (Shah 1857). Wajid employs the same argument that Sleeman used in a letter to Wajid, dated August 17, 1855, documented in *The Blue Book* (Dalhousie *et al.* 1856: 17–18). The following are Sleeman's words:

I believe that Your Majesty is anxious to see your affairs well managed, and your country prosperous, and that you would not willingly give pain to any one; but the fact is that, while the Sovereign of the country never looks into his own affairs, or sees that his servants do their duty, and protect his people—on the contrary, devotes himself to his pleasures, and abandons his affairs and his people entirely to his servants—his country can never be well governed.

Using the same argument, Wajid employs British sensibilities and moralities and reverses it on them. However, he maintains a poise and respect in his tone and language praying "for your Majesty's happiness and continued welfare and prosperity" (Shah 1857), in contrast to the rude and derogatory tone of Sleeman.

After the annexation and subsequent dethronement by Dalhousie, Wajid decided to personally travel to London and petition Queen Victoria, the Parliament, and the East India Company court of directors. He hoped that if he presented the true facts his plea would be heard and the decision of annexation would be reversed. However, the British blocked him from traveling. Diplomatically reporting illness, he instead sent a delegation to London to make the plea. The delegation was headed by his mother, Janab-i-Aulia Taj Ara Begum; his son and proclaimed heir, Mirza Muhammad Hamid Ali Mirza Bahadur; and his younger brother, General Mirza Sikandar Hushmat Bahadur. According to postcolonialist historian Michael Fisher, the delegation assisting the Janab-i-Aulia Taj Ara Begum had a diplomat, Moulvee Muhammad Musseeh-ood-Deen Khan Bahadur, whom Wajid appointed to carry out the actual negotiations with the British on his behalf (Fisher 2013: 137). Musseeh was quite fluent in English, and that has been officially noted in one of the newspapers *The Indian News and Chronicle of Eastern Affairs*: “few foreigners (of whatever country) had acquired a greater command over our difficult language.” Musseeh published two works, a book titled *Oude: Its Princes and Its Government Vindicated* and an eight-page brochure titled *Oude Catechism*, in the year 1857, both at a London press. His intention was to make the British Queen and British citizens aware of his, and hence the nawabi perspective of the events of Awadh as they unfolded since 1765 when the EIC made its first political connections there. *The London News* not only published a review of the book and the brochure but also published the entire brochure providing the reason that it was a good analysis of the book and that it was a matter of much importance (*The Indian News and Chronicle of Eastern Affairs* April 28 1857: 204).

*Oude Catechism* is an important counter-archive for us. There are four reasons for this. First, Wajid followed the footsteps of the British who engaged Persian historians (such as Abu Taleb and Muhammad Faiz Baksh) to give a colonial version of history in local language. Use of local language ensured a widespread readership within the kingdom, and also a construction of narrative that would be considered credible. This way, the colonial version of Awadh history began to become more mainstream and accepted. Similarly, Wajid appointed Musseeh to write his version of Lucknow history in English—the language of England. He made sure to publish it in England to make his voice heard beyond the EIC officials, the Parliament, and British royalty, to also reach a wider audience of ordinary British citizens. The fact that *The London News* carried its review speaks of the importance of these publications. Second, there is a similarity in the choice of people who wrote these publications. Abu Taleb had been ousted by Asaf, and his bitterness worked in favor of the colonial enterprise in the construction of a historical account of Asaf’s court. Similarly, Musseeh had been in the employ of the British for 12 years. Musseeh had earned the title of *khan bahadur* and had risen to the rank of *mir munshi* (chief secretary) in the Persian Department of the EIC at Calcutta. In 1844 he was accused of having disclosed confidential



papers and his employment terminated. He felt mistreated, and his resentment toward the British encouraged him to join Wajid's mission (Fisher 2013: 137). Third, despite the review of the book *Oude: Its Princes and Its Government Vindicated* and widespread circulation of the brochure *Oude Catechism*, the British government seized all copies of the book and banned its circulation (Varady 1978: 166; Fisher 2013: 143). Circulating or even possessing a copy of this book was considered treason in India (Fisher 2013: 143). It was later edited and republished as *British Aggression in Avadh*, by Safi Ahmad (1969). Fourth, the use of the word *Catechism* was a smart move as it invokes a religious connotation, implying the credibility of the answers.

*The Oude Catechism* was, as the name suggests, a series of questions related to Awadh answered. These answers are sometimes sarcastic, sometimes funny, and sometimes reveal the malpractices of the EIC. For example, to a question asking how did the EIC acquire their power in Awadh, the answer "By gradual encroachment and interference effected by means of Residents" (The Indian News and Chronicle of Eastern Affairs April 28, 1857: 204) makes fun of the EIC. Its satirical tone is evident in the following sentences, which defines the term "Resident" to be

an officer appointed by the Company at the Court of a native Prince, ostensibly to advise him, but really, to promote mismanagement and confusion in his dominions, and thus afford plausible excuses and opportunities for the English taking possession of them.

(The Indian News and Chronicle of Eastern  
Affairs April 28, 1857: 204)

The *Catechism* makes a case in favor of Wajid and his ancestors and discredits the EIC. It claims the sovereignty of the nawabs, and that the EIC, through 16 treaties, extorted 40 million sterling from Awadh. It claims that following the annexation; revenue dropped, and as many as one million individuals dependent upon the nawabs were deprived of their offices and employment. It invokes the friendship the British extended to the nawabs calling it "fatal" for the latter. It calls out the rampant British appropriation of personal property and states that theft, burglary, and robberies increased and that drunkenness and adultery were vices introduced by Englishmen in Awadh. The *Catechism* also claimed that the crimes were tenfold in EIC territories as compared to Awadh under the nawabs. It further clarifies that Wajid did not want war and bloodshed and hence ordered his own troops not to resist the Company's forces and die in defense of their lawful sovereign, Wajid. Finally, the *Catechism* reminds the British of the utmost loyalty with which Wajid and his ancestors had observed all the treaties, emphasizing the financial and military aid the nawabs had happily afforded to the government of India for their successful campaigns against other states.

Similar to Musseeh, Wajid identified another individual, British in this case, who had taken a contrary stance toward the EIC—Robert Wilberforce

Bird, who was an assistant resident to Awadh under Sleeman. During this time, Bird came in conflict with Sleeman over the latter's methods of discrediting the nawabs. The EIC accused him of supporting the Awadh dynasty against the policies of his superiors. Subsequently, he joined Wajid's office, which appointed him as his agent in London. Wajid asked Bird to circulate the news of the distinguished delegation he sent to meet Queen Victoria even before the delegation reached England (Fisher 2013: 137). Bird is the author of a 24-page pamphlet *The Spoilation of Oudh* (1857). There is another larger book, *Dacoitee in Excelsis; or The Spoilation of Oude*, which some historians believe was penned by Samuel Lucas—a British abolitionist journalist. However, Fisher maintains that Bird himself expanded *The Spoilation of Oudh* into the book *Dacoitee in Excelsis*, under the pseudonym Samuel Lucas (Fisher 2013: 142). These works are an analysis of the *Blue Book* (Dalhousie *et al.* 1856) as well as Wajid's *Reply* (Shah 1856) and make a compelling argument in favor of Wajid. These works too are part of a counter-archive that Wajid created to contest the colonial archive.

## Notes

- 1 On the Royal Collection Trust website, a note accompanies *The Ishqnamah*, marking the date of its production as 1849–50. This is soon after Wajid's ascension, and hence, it is possible that Qaiserbagh was not fully constructed by that time.
- 2 This is housed in the British Library India Office Records of Political and Secret Department under the title *Papers Relating to Oude Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty* (Dalhousie *et al.* 1856).
- 3 This response was published in Calcutta in 1856 and in London 1900 with the title *Reply to the Charges Against the King of Oude*. The London publication of the *Reply* is held at the Royal Collection Trust, while the letter is currently part of the Private Papers (or European Manuscripts) Collection of the British Library (Shah 1857). According to the Royal Collection Trust website, “this letter appears not to have been passed on to its intended recipient.”

## 6 Contesting Colonial Claims

Sara Ahmed has used queer in two forms—first, that which is “oblique” or “offline” and, second, that which is “non-straight sexual practice” (Ahmed 2006a: 565) or all that is deviant. Her scholarship supports us in seeking merit in architectural terms, such as “disorganization,” “disorientation,” and “non-alignment,” which challenge the ubiquity of order in architectural discourse. Invoking furniture as “technologies of convention, producing arrangements,” Ahmed brings our attention to the presumed expectation for organizing in “certain ways” (Ahmed 2006b: 143). She problematizes the function specific arrangements of rooms in a home where furniture acts as an orienting device and the repetition of those rules contribute to constructing the norm. Order prioritizes where architectural objects are located, which way they are oriented, and how orderly compositions contribute to the expected hierarchies of a place. Hence, we reclaim terms such as “deceptive,” “strange,” “odd,” and “unusual,” and discuss how the nawabi architectural compositions do not necessarily follow a classical order and defy any contribution to the construction of the norm. Ahmed valorizes strange because it challenges “familiarity” (Ahmed 2006b: 137) and hence is unsettling. If nawabi architecture is “strange” to the colonial eye, it carries within it an ability to discomfort and hence subvert the colonial viewer. Acknowledging the fact that queering is an ability to enact actions that subvert and destabilize power structures to reveal the “capacity or agency of performance and acting out with the aim to pervert and undermine power constructs to unleash suppressed and marginalized desires” (Gorny and van den Heuvel 2017: 2), we present the nawabs capacity and invisible intents of subverting colonial power. Nawabi architecture becomes a vehicle of that subversion that facilitates the nawabs in performing their “suppressed desires.” We also reclaim terms such as “bastard,” “impure,” “debased,” “debauched,” “mixed,” and “corrupt” to acknowledge the hybridity of architectural forms and techniques, which subvert the hegemony of purist stylistic qualifiers of architecture. We reclaim the term “vulgar,” “rude,” and “obscene” to acknowledge its inherent flamboyance and theatricality. We reclaim the term “pervert” to present emergent forms when architecture defies compositional rules. Here, we also argue that compositional rules

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are inherently open-ended. Any composition is one, unless compared to an established norm—purist classical European forms being the norm in the case of the colonial archive. In being self-referential, nawabi architecture does not seek to defy any purist rule but actually makes its own. Therefore, we see it from the perspective of it being perverse. We reclaim the term ambiguous to present nawabi architecture as multivalent, capable of taking on several personas, and not restricted to function-based typologies. This reading aligns with Cottrill (2006: 359) and makes such queer spaces visible that counter the divisions of sexuality, gender, class, and race. Reclaiming terms such as “eccentric,” “peculiar,” “bizarre,” “fantastical,” “phantasmagoric,” “outrageous,” “atrocious,” “outlandish,” and “deceptive” helps us present the nawabs and nawabi architecture that offered spectacular contestations and resistance and to the colonial eye by always remaining outside of its comprehension. We present nawabi architecture as that which necessarily discomforts the colonial writer, and that is precisely the salient feature that we qualify as queer. Our queer reading relies primarily on reclaiming queer terms that the colonial archives use to discredit nawabi culture and architecture. In doing so, we look for opportunities the nawabs have created in claiming space against dominant heteronormativity (Cottrill 2006: 363); spaces that are inclusive of the diversity of queer identities (Campos 2014: i); spaces that subvert reality to accommodate queer lives (Betsky 1997: 193); spaces that challenge the binary, such as male-female, inside-outside, and center-periphery (Gorny and Van den Heuvel 2017: 2); and spaces that defy normative typology-based definitions (Bonnievier 2007: 373).

Queer scholarship has focused on defining queer architecture as a place where queer individuals and groups appropriate space, subvert the norm, and thereby queer space. For Aaron Betsky, queer space is a counter-architecture a “kind of third scene, a third place for the third sex,” which appropriates, subverts, reflects, and shapes the everyday orders calibrating them in new and freeing ways (Betsky 1997: 26). Betsky argues that a queer space is an outcome of a queering—an act that appropriates aspects of the material world and recomposes them into an unreal or artificial space. The act is that of counter-construction, and the emergent unreal space is that which the material world ceases (Betsky 1997: 18). Marissa Campos echoes this definition (Campos 2014: i) and goes on to define queering of a space in two ways: one that relies on the appropriation of a place where queers are not welcome (Campos 2014: 78) and the other that relies on appropriation of spaces as “hidden locations for queer populations” (Campos 2014: 83). J. Matthew Cottrill’s definition uses the word claiming instead of appropriation to define queering of space (Cottrill 2006: 363). Joel Sanders considers architecture to play a large role in reinforcing gender norms, calling architecture “one of the subjectivating norms that constitute the performance of gender” (Sanders 1996: 13). Having identified this power of architecture, Sanders calls for a revisiting of architectural practice that can subvert the norm. Katarina Bonnievier, building upon Judith Butler’s work on *gender performativity* and

Eve Sedgwick's *queer performativity* has written that "subject positions such as homosexual or female are constructed socially and historically through performative acts" (2007: 369). She expands this argument to architecture and acknowledges Sanders' investigation of architecture saying that "since architecture is produced culturally, performativity is built into all architecture" (2007: 369). As bodies engage with building elements, configurations, and environments; architecture, she says, by repeating certain principles, serves to naturalize them, thereby prescribing behavior (2007: 369). While Eve Sedgwick (1993) demonstrates that individuals actively engage in the construction and expression of their identities, Campos maintains that there is a deep connection between the occupation of space and the self-expression of the occupier (Campos 2014: 22). These definitions help us in reading queer architecture as that which is inhabited by a queer individual. These definitions also underscore the capacity of queer individuals, groups, and communities to claim and exercise their agency to affect change, to craft and create spaces that reflect their self-identities. In these definitions there is no such queer space that is always already there; rather, it is dependent on an act of subverting of the normative. The assumption here is that most spaces are heteronormative or that they fall into a gendered binary by default. The production of queer space and queer architecture occurs when spaces are occupied by queer individuals who express their self-identities. While acknowledging the fact that queer architecture is an outcome of the subversion of the normative, we contend that queer architecture has its own innate characteristics. These characteristics stem from the personality of its creator—a queer individual. By reading architecture as an extension of personality, we posit that through architecture, its creator is able to express their own gender and sexuality.

Queer refers to the non-normative—as a deviation from normative practices of gender and sexuality. Queer often refers to those who occupy the margins, not dominant, and with limited political control. Queer agency is that of subversion. In Lucknow, however, the nawabs were rulers of the Awadh state. With this political status, they had the agency to express openly their gender and sexuality and to craft, construct, and commission architectural projects that would reflect their identities. These architectural projects deviated from the norm. The nawabs' status also ensured that their non-normative performativities became the cultural norm of Lucknow. Drawing upon queer theory and postcolonial studies scholar Sara Ahmed's work, we equate queer strategies with decolonial strategies employed by the nawabs to foster their own cultural identity and to safeguard their political position against the invasive colonial blueprint.

The nawabs chose to express themselves in different ways. Through paintings and portraits, we study how they saw themselves, and how they wished to be seen. Through literature, which includes prose and poetry, we study their inner struggles, their aspirations, and their way of comprehending and interacting with the world around them. Similarly, through these, we

also read their cultural expressions and their subversion of colonial ideals. We extend this reading to their architecture—domestic, civic, and monumental—as an extension of their personalities and an expression of the self.

Asaf grew up being ridiculed by his father, tutor, playmates, and later Warren Hastings for his sexuality. He was often fat-shamed. In his poetry, Asaf wrote about his loneliness, his feeling of social isolation, his longing for companionship, and a reciprocation of his affections. In following Asaf's life, it becomes increasingly apparent that Asaf consciously resisted—rather, countered—the detestation he received. Like his poetry, his architectural productions, Aina Khana, for example, reveal this aspect of his personality. To counter the fat-shaming, Asaf surrounded himself with mirrors at his Aina Khana, meaning “mirror house,” where he not only celebrated his body by encountering his reflection all the time but also made his guests encounter it multiple times. He kept collectibles from all over the world there and invited his European guests to view the collection. This way he ensured that the ones who detested his body had to endure its myriad reflections, at that building. Similarly, in conceiving the Qaiserbagh, Wajid created spaces that were self-referential and overtly theatrical and that allowed for the performance of the *ishq*—his unique way of combining politics and love. To perform *ishq*, he had to be perpetually in a theatrical state. He had to be seen and had to be able to see all. The gardens, the garden pavilion, and the residential units surrounding the central court at Qaiserbagh thus became devices through which he would satiate his theatrical desire.

Like the Aina Khana and Qaiserbagh, we lay out more such architectural expressions alongside the nawabs' personal expressions in *Lucknow Queerscapes*, to reveal how the queer architecture of Lucknow was an extension of nawabs' personalities. Descriptions of the sites and structures commissioned by the two nawabs are followed by a discussion of the nawabs' queer strategies in shaping these spaces. These descriptions in themselves employ queer methods of engaging with the archive and the sites. The descriptions of the Machhi Bhavan precinct and the Qaiserbagh are reconstructions of their state during Asaf's and Wajid' reigns, respectively. These reconstructions rely heavily on evidence from the archive since physical remnants of the sites are scarce. In contrast, within the Imambada Complex—which includes the Bada Imambada, the Asafi Masjid, the Rumi Darwaza, various courts, and entrance gateways—the majority of structures remain intact, allowing us to discern the overall composition. To provide a depiction of the complex soon after its completion, we access the colonial archive, studying textual and visual evidence, while identifying layers of colonial additions and erasures. Figure 3.4 is a glimpse of our method of a queer reading of colonial imagery. It incorporates reorientations of drawings, stretching and scaling, superimposing and layering, cutting out pieces of images, stacking, changing opacities of the superimposed image to view the image underneath. We have drawn over the collage to infer the shape and location of several buildings in the Machhi Bhavan precinct which do not

exist anymore. Additionally, conjecturing spatial inferences from the texts of Gladwin (1785), Valentia (1809), and Ghani (1919), we determine their location. Such a detailed reading and a reconstruction of the precincts, to this extent, has not been undertaken in the architectural history scholarship of Lucknow. Such speculative reconstructions are presented in the “Lucknow Queerscapes” section of the book, in the form of a sequence as we take the readers along on a walk through the precincts. The descriptions orient the readers toward not just the architectural objects but also the capacity they have exhibited in expressing the nawabs’ resistance toward colonial oppression, allowing the readers to experience the history from their own specificities of identity.

The walk follows an embodied account of our—the authors’—experience navigating and engaging with the site. Our experience of the place through our bodies acknowledges our orientations, our intuitive navigations, and our privilege of having access to the places unhindered. Here the reading is phenomenological, which acknowledges the site as a material archive of its own history. In this convergence of the material, phenomenological, and experiential dimensions with the archival, the interpretation diverges from the conventional, linear, and category-specific logic typically applied to the exploration of architectural and urban histories. This departure from the normative framework enables the emergence of queer perspectives.



## Part II

# Lucknow Queerscapes

In reading the colonial archive, an oriental image of Lucknow emerges, often accompanied by a criticism of an architectural decadence wrought with stylistic impurity, material incongruencies, and ruination. These writings convey contradictory images of a town having magnificent buildings on one hand and squalid streets on the other. These writings sometimes implicitly and oftentimes explicitly use these as evidence for the nawabs' disinterest in civic projects of health and hygiene and overindulgence in self-gratifying architecture.

Tieffenthaler finds “buildings of beautiful architecture, even magnificent,” commenting that these are “a small number” spread out “here and there” across the city, the streets of which are “narrow and stinky” (1791: 256–257). He comments on the quantity, that only a small number of buildings are “beautiful” and on the concentration, and that these structures are scattered across the city. His drawing *Laknao* (1791d: Plate XXXV-1) shows the extent and the dramatic topography of the city along the river, at the time, dotted with domed structures, and precincts having arched courtyards. Tennant (1803: 406), at first, likens the “brillian[ce] in external appearance” of the Lucknow cityscape to that of London, going on to even note that it surpasses the latter. He is quick to correct that comparison by then calling out its superficiality—“loaded with ornaments” and gilt roofs—meant to have a “considerable effect on the beholder at first sight,” “intended for “external glare,” yet having “nothing for comfort or even convenience” within.

Forrest (1824: 42) writes about the city as he observes it on horseback. To him, the entire town is a “filthy hole” with “miserable” huts, the streets “narrow” and filled with a “nauseous odour” from “piles of dirt and rubbish.” His primary concern is his passage through the city, which frequently gets obstructed due to piles of “rubbish” and elephants—taking up unnecessary space in the narrow streets—alarming his horse.

For von Orlich, the city has “luxuriant corn-fields,” “fine gardens,” and summer houses with gilded tops on one side of the river and is “Oriental” picturesque on the other side with “innumerable minarets,” “gilded and white cupolas,” “elegant little towers of the royal palace,” and brilliantly colored sepulchers and mosques. He also writes about the river, “exhibit[ing]

a scene of uncommon activity, traffic boats, small barks, and fishing boats . . . rowing backwards and forwards, the King's gondola, adorned at the forepart with two horses leaping from the jaws of a fish, was steering to the Dilkusha Park, in case it might be his Majesty's pleasure to come back by water" (1845: 113). His first impression, however, was that of an irregular and dirty city closely built and "bearing evidence of lavish profusion of vain and foolish princes," who adorned their buildings in the "most childish, ridiculous, and grotesque taste" (1845: 92). Bayard (1857: 60) echoed a similar contrast of the cityscape on either side of the river; which Nevill has also cited (1904: 202).

Keene is appreciative of the "modern city" or the city developed by the British post 1857 because of "broad and airy streets." However, he finds the city "both curious and splendid" with a "strange dash of European architecture among its Oriental buildings," making it "unlike any other great towns of India." Like Tennant, Keene, too, compares Lucknow's residential streets to London's Regent Street with "iron railings and balustrades." He encountered cages with wild beasts and strange bright birds—"gardens, fountains, and cypress-trees; elephants, camels, and horses, gilt litters and English barouches," presenting "a dazzling picture" (1875: 77).

Nevill echoes Tennant and Newell (1904: 202) in finding the "beautiful and picturesque" city evidence of "wealthy and prodigal kings" and "lavish courtiers" but disappointed at the "glorification of stucco," which by then betrayed "extremely tawdriness." He liked that Lucknow had "finer and broader streets" than "most oriental towns," which he was quick to appreciatively attribute to the post-1857 British efforts for clearing up the city and for driving "three military roads" "right through the heart of the city."

Newell is straightforward in revealing the bias of a European visitor who expects a "fantastic splendour" to appease his "preconceived notions" of an Eastern capital city. However, like Tennant, Newell highlights that what appears "beautiful and strikingly Oriental" at "first sight" and in accordance with the orientalist gaze is "disillusioning." He writes of "fairy-like buildings," "wonderfully bright and effective," and "glittering pinnacles, swelling cupolas, spreading chhattars, flying buttresses and terracotta balustrades." However, he is disappointed that the seemingly "marble and gold" structures actually "dwindle into stucco and brick, across which the gilder has here and there passed his brush" (Newell 1915: 9).

Beg (1911: 6–7) betrays an orientalist language relying on an "intelligent American writer, who visited [Lucknow] in 1856" and using his words. This *American writer* was also seemingly misled by the "dazzling whiteness" of buildings and "burnished gold" of domes. Perhaps the *American writer* is referencing John Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) of which the lamp of truth "burnt dimly" because what appeared like "purest marble" was "simply white wash," "taste shocked by the discovery that the gilded domes . . . , are mere shells of wood, in many places rotten" (Beg 1911: 6–7).

“Eye-deception” (Rousselet 1975 (1882): 549), “disillusion” (Newell 1915: 9), and “illusion” (Beg 1911: 7) are some of the terms used for Lucknow city scape because they found the gilded domes a betrayal hiding “mere framework” (Rousselet 1975 (1882): 549) to which a few years of neglect had caused much ruination. In early-20th-century descriptions of the city, the colonial writers highlight the “greatly beautified” city having “finer [and] better roads” (Beg 1911: 7) and “verdant lawns and flowery parks” (Newell 1915: 11). They credit these “sweeping changes” to the destruction and demolition of houses and bazaars after the “mutiny” (Newell 1915: 11).

Architectural commentary has consistently been biased and compared to that of the Mughals, which the colonial writers set as a benchmark. James Fergusson (1910 (1865/1876): 322) believes that Lucknow housed a “literal copy of the Taj,” in which “bad taste and tawdriness reign supreme.” Unable to comprehend how something similar in “form” can be so “unlike in spirit,” he uses the said “replica” as a “measure” to gauge the “rapid downward career” of Mughal art. Percy Brown (1956: 122) attributes the use of brick and stucco work as a form of “repetition” of that perfection which has already been accomplished and can no longer be improved. For him the buildings would not be able to withstand close inspection as all of them represent “the style at that stage when the sources of inspiration have ceased and stagnation has begun.” Similarly, Rousselet (1975 (1882): 549) remarks that despite the number of buildings in Lucknow, they “are far from possessing the same artistic value” as “those of Delhi,” calling Lucknow’s splendor “fictitious,” a result of the nawabs’ “reckless outlays.” Rousselet’s bias is further revealed in his assertion that architecture worthy of any note in Lucknow can be attributed solely to the influence of Claude Martin—a European (Rousselet 1975 (1882): 550).

Contesting that, we build on Sara Ahmed’s contention that orientations and directions “only make sense as a relationship between body and space” and that the “lines that divide space” (2006b: xxii), such as roads and axes, are relevant only in the way they orient or disorient an experiencing body. Therefore, we present the precincts as a sequence such that various spaces become part of the reader’s experience. The intention is to simulate embodied movements through words. The precincts are presented always at an eye level and never detached like in a bird’s eye view—except for the accompanying plans.

A plan is usually a detached view, representing a place as seen from far above. However, we draw the plan to provide the readers an overall picture of what to expect as they navigate the precinct. It is an outcome of our reading of the archive, which pieces together obscure descriptions and fragmented images to make heretofore unfamiliar histories known. The plan invites the readers into a territory—now made familiar. It helps orient the readers as they move through each precinct, at times facing the buildings, at times going through them, and at times moving around them.

The same way the colonizers made maps to “settle” colonies, our plan-like drawings intend to give our readers an agency “of settling; that is, of inhabiting spaces that, in the first instance, are unfamiliar” (Ahmed 2006b: xix). Sara Ahmed writes about the significance of making things familiar in order to survive racial, sexual, and societal hegemonies (2006b: 102). We extend that to also valorize the act of making the familiar strange. The heretofore popular and hence familiar histories of Lucknow become strange to the readers, who are invited to reorient themselves and develop new familiarities, with new ones. This way we subvert the ways orientalism has worked in distancing the colonized (Ahmed 2006b: 92).

In her doctoral dissertation, Mithal (2015: 156) argues for embodied knowledge that challenges the archives in presenting histories. She argues that while “archivability fulfills the necessity for evidence . . . embodied knowledge acknowledges the witnessing . . . but in the moment of its witnessing. The witnessing is by the corporeal body and is dependent on the orientation, location and distance of the body” with respect to the precincts. Thus, knowing history becomes an enactment in the present. As Ahmed underscores, “To re-encounter objects . . . is hence not to lose sight of their history but to refuse to make them history by losing sight” (2006b: 140); our descriptions of the precincts intend to bring the reader into the sites through their bodies. But to do that, we first simulate an experience of the place through our own bodies. In doing so, we acknowledge our privilege and our social, sexual, gender, and racial identities. These make us aware of what is available and proximate to our experiencing bodies, whether in the archives or on site. This enables a reading of the precincts as an extension of reading the archives. In cases where physical remnants remain, such as that of the Imambada and Qaiserbagh, we read the site itself as a material archive. Here the body encounters the materiality of the site as testimony and evidence to corroborate, counter, question, and sustain interpretations of the textual archive.

## 7 Architecture of Asaf-ud-Daula

### The Machhi Bhavan Precinct

The Machhi Bhavan precinct occupied an area on the southern bank of the river Gomti. In this book, the Machhi Bhavan precinct [Figure 7.1] refers to a larger area within which lies the Machhi Bhavan fortification<sup>1</sup> and other structures of the palace complex. Instead of providing a description of the precinct, the colonial archive emphasizes that the British occupied the site during the 1857 Uprising for its strategic location, strengthened its fortification, and later razed the precinct and adjoining areas. This destruction and the subsequent construction and redesignation of the site as the King George Medical College (KGMC) has contributed to it being popularly known as KGMC rather than as Machhi Bhavan. It has caused an amnesia in the present-day populace about what the precinct consisted of, its history becoming more or less inaccessible. The King George Medical University occupies the entire precinct today, and the footprints of the erstwhile structures within are no longer discernible. Piecing together fragmented information from various sources, we reconstruct the precinct and draw up a map of the area as it would have been during Asaf's time, in itself an act of queering. Queering here is an act of identifying emphasis, biases, imaginations, and agendas, achieved through superposing and juxtaposing various sources. To construct a map is to commit to a plausible spatial arrangement of structures within the precinct.

Gladwin has provided what appears to be a sequential description of the precinct, as he might have traversed it on his visit. We start with him and follow its experiential quality in describing the precinct, but deviate from the sequence, to present the interconnectedness of spaces. To Gladwin, who would have approached the precinct from the west, the “palace of the Nawab Vizier” appears as a composition of six courts—sequentially connected. The first court, which he called the Putch Mhullah area, was entered through two lofty gateways. The first gateway had a room above called the “Nobit Konnah” (Naubat Khana)<sup>2</sup> where an “orchestra for martial music” played morning and evening (Gladwin 1785: 388). Asaf's equipages and attendants occupied this area. Tieffenthaler describes the Naubat Khana<sup>3</sup> as a tall building

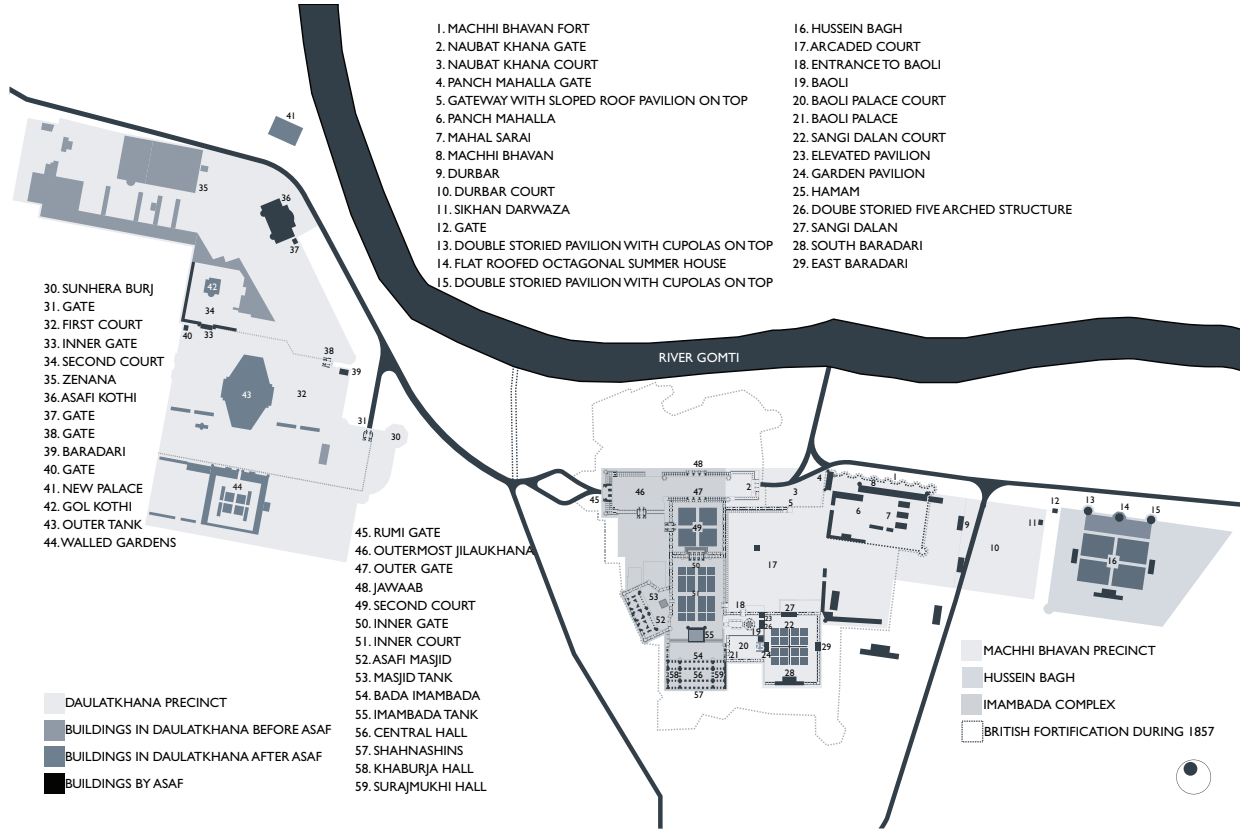


Figure 7.1 Reconstruction of Machhi Bhavan and Daulatkhana precincts.

supported by arcades, arranged for drumming (1791: 257). The orientation and location, the facade details with its three arched openings, the adjacent structures, and steps leading from the gateway to the adjacent structures point to a striking similarity between the elevation in the Tieffenthaler's *Facies externa* (1791a: Plate XV-1) and the structure seen in Beato's *Panorama* (1858a). Drums were beaten in this structure six times each day until the court of Awadh "ceased to exist" (Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 42). The Naubat Khana does not exist today. The *jawaab*, the structure that stands opposite the outer gateway of the Imambada Complex, has been referred to as the Naubat Khana by contemporary architectural historians, such as Hussein Keshani (2006: 219), and Neeta Das *et al.* (2008: 37). The memory of the erstwhile Naubat Khana Gate has ceased to exist as well.

To the west of the Naubat Khana Court was what we have termed as the Machhi Bhavan fortification. The fortification with definitive entryways and bastions is seen wrapping around the Panch Mahalla in Tieffenthaler's Plate XV-1 [Figure 7.2]. This fortification was punctured by the Panch Mahalla Gate at its northeast corner. Gladwin's second gateway, in all probability, was the Panch Mahalla Gate. The fact that several visitors have painted and photographed it<sup>4</sup> suggests that this was a prominent structure. The Tieffenthaler drawing (1791b: Plate XV-2) [Figure 7.3] refers to it as "Frontispicium Portae Palatii" (principal face of the palace gate) and shows it as a single story structure flanked by bastions on either side. By 1789, when Daniell visited, the structure appears to have been extended<sup>5</sup> [Figure 7.4]. The central archway is flanked by an arcaded bay on either side, three stories high. The two lower

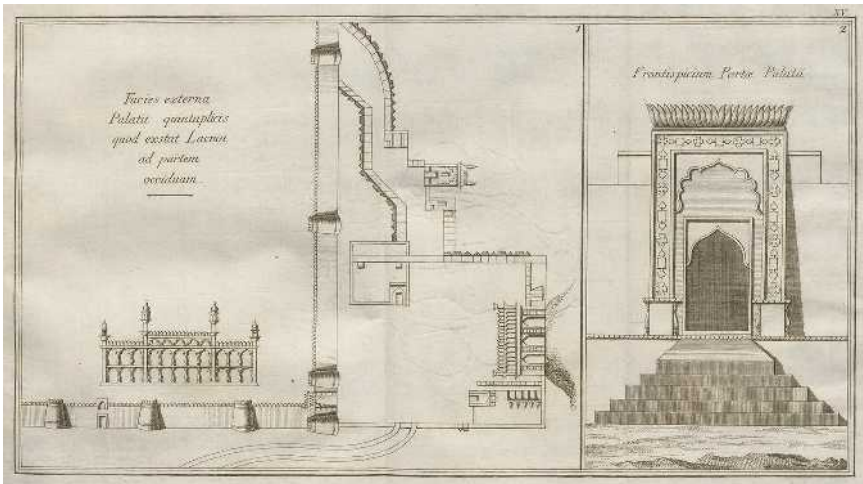


Figure 7.2 "Facies externa" and "Frontispicium Potae Palatii." Drawing by Joseph Tieffenthaler. 1791.

Source: Image courtesy of ETH-Bibliothek Zürich.



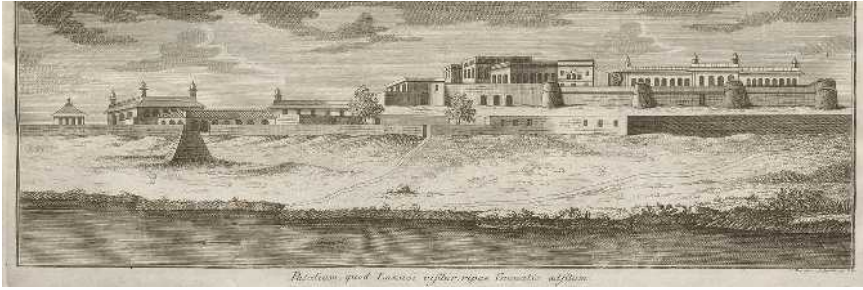


Figure 7.3 “Palatium.” Drawing by Joseph Tieffenthaler. 1791.

Source: Image courtesy of ETH-Bibliothek Zürich.



Figure 7.4 Panch Mahalla Gate seen in a colored aquatint by Thomas Daniell. 1802.

Source: Image courtesy of the British Library.

stories protrude outward toward the Naubat Khana Court. The lowermost story appears to contain offices, having small openings, the second story has three arched openings, and the uppermost story has one arched opening. The two bastions (existing in Tieffenthaler’s drawing) have had two stories added on top. The two sides are joined by a terrace that traverses over the central entranceway. Given the timing of the Hodges’s and Daniell’s drawings, it is certain that Asaf enlarged and strengthened this gateway.

Despite its repeated occurrence in the colonial archive, Gladwin does not describe the gate at all. Either he never went through it but deviated and turned right to enter what he calls the second court, or he did not have access to it since the Panch Mahalla Gate led into the *zenana*, or the private residential area. The Panch Mahalla Gate also does not occupy a central location of the eastern edge of the Naubat Khana Court<sup>6</sup> and hence the omission perhaps. To us though, this hints to a “queering” of architecture as a derivation of disorientations and nonalignments, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10.

Locating the two gateways precisely<sup>7</sup> gives a clear indication of the eastern and western edges of the Naubat Khana Court. The arcaded structures are lower in height, adjacent to the Naubat Khana; and the Machhi Bhavan fortification wall appears adjacent to the Panch Mahalla Gate. On the southern edge is a line of hutments or a low wall extending from the fortification wall in the east, to the structures in line with the Naubat Khana in the west.<sup>8</sup> An arched gateway with a sloped roof pavilion on top abuts the wall.<sup>9</sup> The gateway underwent a transformation. By the time of *The Lucknow Panorama* (1826b), the upper pavilion is missing, and the entire gateway is missing from colonial archival evidence around the time of the Uprising suggesting that it may have been destroyed during the Uprising.<sup>10</sup> The northern boundary of the Naubat Khana Court is similar in character to the southern extent, having a series of hutments and a low wall.<sup>11</sup>

The Panch Mahalla lay to the east of the Panch Mahalla Gate and comprised several structures.<sup>12</sup> On entering the gate, the first encounter would be with a forecourt. Machhi Bhavan lay to the east of this forecourt and in line with the gateway. The southern edge of this forecourt is a prominent double storied structure with an elaborate facade with several openings on its north face (Tieffenthaler 1791a: Plate XV-1), detached from the outer fortification wall, which may have served as the royal residence. This structure was later extended and integrated with the Machhi Bhavan (Daniell 1802b).<sup>13</sup> Following Asaf’s extension, the forecourt became increasingly public and this principal structure closed itself away from the forecourt. The punctures of the outer surface were filled in to form a plastered wall on the lower story (Daniell 1802b) and small hutments sprang up against this wall (Unknown 1826b). The space between this principal structure and the fortification was occupied by common people.

During Asaf’s time, the gendered nature of the Panch Mahalla became much more defined from within the courtyard which lay to the south of the principal structure and which was accessible from the forecourt via a smaller gate. The gate occupied the western edge of this court (Crommelin 1859; Beato 1858a) [Figure 7.5 and Figure 7.6], which defined the *Panch Mahalla* area during Asaf’s time and contained Tieffenthaler’s *Palatii quintuplicis*.<sup>14</sup> This courtyard comprised five structures: the principal one—discussed already—occupied the northern edge of this courtyard, to which Gladwin refers as the fifth court when he writes about the *zenana*—women’s apartments. Other structures in this court were Sheesh-Mehul (mirror palace), Khord-Mehul

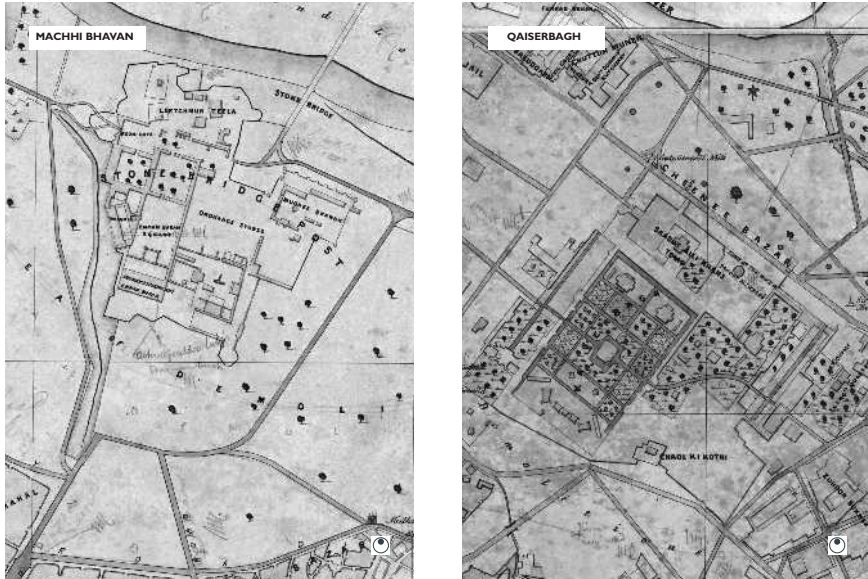


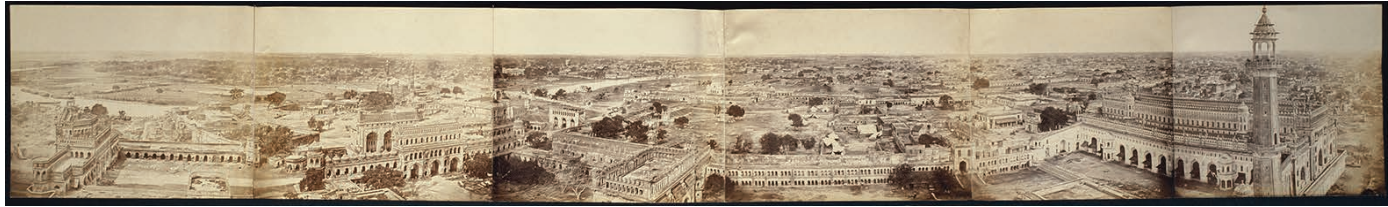
Figure 7.5 Plan of the City of Lucknow. Surveyed July 1859 by William Arden Crommelin. Source: Image courtesy of National Archives of India.

(apartments for the concubines of the nawab wazir), and Rung-Mehul (palace for festivities), together called Mehul-Seray (*mahal-sarai*, or harem or female apartments) (Gladwin 1785).

Valentia visited the *zenana* of the palace of Asaf-ud-daula, within the Panch Mahalla, to pay his respects to Asaf's wife and also visited the mother of the reigning monarch Sadaat Ali Khan II, in the *zenana* at the Daulatkhana precinct. The former enclosed a small garden with a summer house and a waterbody, and visitors would usually not be permitted into this heavily gendered complex, with a room on the outer periphery being the usual place of audience.

Later, when Queen Mumtaz Mahal, demanded compensation against the demolition of Sheesh Mahal, her palace ("Extract, Fort William Foreign Consultation Dated 5th November 1858"), she locates it in Machhi Bhavan, which was by that time used to reference the Panch Mahalla area. In a letter dated September 24, 1858, George Campbell, Esquire, judicial commissioner of Awadh, agreed to give her a house with a garden as compensation for the destruction of her house, in lieu of 8,000 rupees that Henry Lawrence had promised her as compensation (Collections to India Political Despatches Aug 1858–Nov 1859: 8).

The Machhi Bhavan structure was defined by bastions on either side of its northern face (Hodges 1783; Daniell 1802; Unknown 1826b). It had 26 openings, each with a pair of fish embellishments—fifty-two (*baavan* in



*Figure 7.6* Machhi Bhavan precinct seen in a panorama by Felice Beato. 1858.

*Source:* Image courtesy of the Getty Museum Collection.

Hindi) fish (*machhi* in Hindi) in all (Ghani 1919: 44)—giving it its name.<sup>15</sup> The colonial archive after 1857 registers a rebuilding of the “old stronghold” undertaken by Safdar Jang (1708–54) and establishes that as the time from when the place started to be known as the Machhi Bhavan (Nevill 1904: 204; Newell 1915: 16; Hay 1939: 160), but their reading is likely to be based on an empty vacant site which had been demolished by the British. The Machhi Bhavan also began to become indistinguishable from the Panch Mahalla area. The Urdu annotation in *Lucknow Panorama* (Unknown 1826b) marks Machhi Bhavan as “Panch Mahalla Makan . . . where . . . Begum Aliya resides,” while the English transcription annotates it as “Mutchee Mahul, where the present king’s eldest Sister resides,” either out of casualness in identifying structures and areas or because, by this time, the structures had begun to be identified with interchangeable names. Machhi Bhavan also occupied the most visible location from the Gomti, with the other palaces of the Panch Mahalla hidden behind. This caused a slow removal of the use of Panch Mahalla to identify the place in both later archival descriptions as well as in local parlance.

By 1858, the ground level of the Panch Mahalla courtyard was at the same level as the upper story of the principal structure, which appears two-storied (from the riverfront) (Beato 1858a), perhaps a result of the British occupation of this area during the Uprising when the space was transformed into a military outpost.<sup>16</sup> After the demolition following the 1857 Uprising, the Panch Mahalla was completely erased physically, and slowly obliterated from popular memory as well.<sup>17</sup> After 1857, the western wall of the fortification was either destroyed during the Uprising or buried as a result of the entrenchment works (Crommelin 1859; Beato 1858a, 1858g).

In 1783, from the road adjoining the Machhi Bhavan fortification, a series of descending walled courts<sup>18</sup> are seen (Hodges 1783), occupying a space between the fortification and the Hussein Bagh. One of those walled enclosures had a *char-bagh*<sup>19</sup> flower garden and the Durbar—literally an audience hall—overlooking it, where Asaf received those seeking audience with him. The Durbar was elevated, ascended through a series of steps and comprised a “range of three arcades, parallel to each other, and supported by columns in the Moorish style: the ceiling, and the whole of this, is beautifully gilt, and painted with ornaments and flowers” (Hodges 1793: 101), and it appears like an arcaded structure—a *baradari*<sup>20</sup> typology. It was an elevated single-storied structure, with seven openings on its front facade, flanked by gilt domes on all four corners, and accessed through a gateway flanked by a red walled enclosure (Anonymous 1813; Unknown 1826b).

We refer to the entire walled courtyard extending from the Machhi Bhavan fortification to the road adjoining the Hussein Bagh, as the Durbar Court. There is an entrance to the east (*Lucknow Panorama*, Anonymous 1826b) through a gateway standing exactly opposite the Durbar.<sup>21</sup> The Durbar along with public offices formed part of a garden court (Gladwin 1785: 389), which Gladwin calls the fourth court, while the *zenana* is a distinct (fifth) court.<sup>22</sup>



The construction of the walled courts was attributed to Asaf, as extensions to Shuja-ud-Daula's palace or the Panch Mahalla, placing the erection of the Durbar to early years of Asaf's reign (Hodges 1793: 101).

During the 1857 Uprising or in its aftermath, the Durbar Court appears to have been cleaved into two courtyards (Napier 1859a) by a walled enclosure. The upper one, adjacent to the fortification, appears L-shaped and wraps around the fortification from east to the south, while the lower one is rectangular—though the Military Department's *City and Environs of Lucknow* (n.d.)<sup>23</sup> shows both courtyards as rectilinear. The lower courtyard was larger, extending to the east up until a road adjoining the Hussein Bagh. It had two openings to the exterior—one on the north toward the river and another on the east<sup>24</sup> in line with the Panch Mahalla Gate (Innes 1895: 79; Unknown 1826b). By this time, the Durbar was simply referred to as a built typology, *baradari*, and its former use was forgotten. The Durbar Court was read as a resource for an outpost by the British, who were concerned with its potential for access, vantage points, and number of rooms that could be used as storage spaces.<sup>25</sup>

To the east of the Durbar Court, along the southern bank of the Gomti, separated from the precinct by a road, lay the Hussein Bagh, a walled garden with grand pavilions at each corner “lately made by the Nabob,” Asaf, prior to Hodges' visit in 1783 (Hodges 1793: 102). One of the pavilions of the Hussein Bagh carries a cupola on top (Hodges 1793: 102). Viewed from the north, Hussein Bagh, described in the English annotation to the *Lucknow Panorama* (Unknown 1826b) as the “Garden of beauty,” had a walled enclosure, with three octagonal structures puncturing it. The wall running between the structures had crenelation-like openings and was solid beyond the structures. The two outer structures were double-storied pavilions with cupolas at the top, while the central one was a single-storied pavilion and carried a flag. According to Gladwin, of the three stone structures, the two corner ones had copper gilt oval fluted cupolas, while the central one was a flat-roofed octagonal structure used as a summer house. He described the Hussein Bagh—the sixth of the six principal courts of the “palace of the Nawab Vizier” as a flower garden in a *char-bagh* layout, with fountains, baths, and dressing rooms (Gladwin 1785: 390). However, given Lucknow traditions of using brick in construction, the pavilions were more likely to have been built of brick, plastered with *chunam*,<sup>26</sup> and painted with ornaments, radiating a “rich effect” (Hodges 1793: 102). It had “a very good garden, surrounded by a wall and terrace with pavilions” (Valentia 1809: 139),<sup>27</sup> and a garden house at one end of the enclosure, with a piece of water in front (Valentia 1809: 139).<sup>28</sup>

Returning to the Naubat Khana Court, and taking the gateway that would have occupied the south of the court, one would enter a vast open space bordered by arcades, which we refer to as the Arcaded Court. The court has a pavilion at the center (Anonymous c1800) [Figure 7.7], which sits on what appears to be a larger square plinth, is open on all sides, and appears

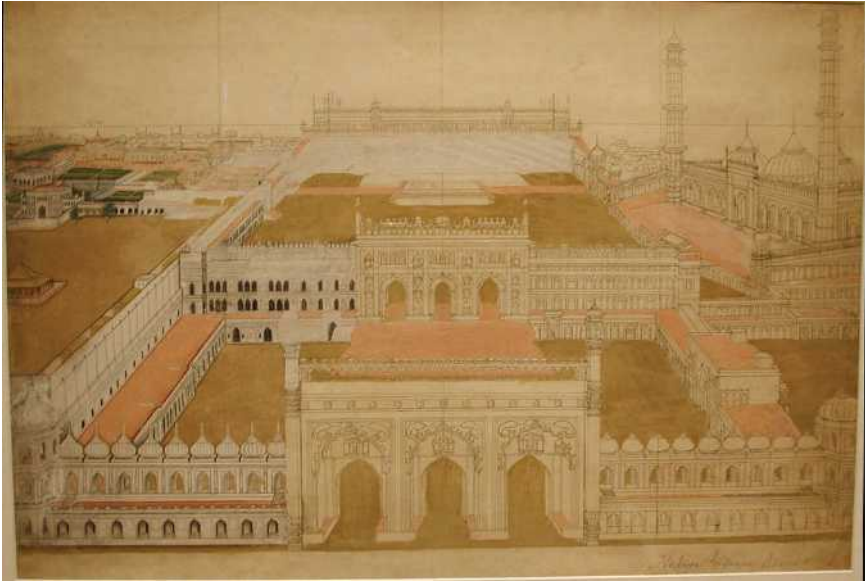


Figure 7.7 The Bada Imambada Complex seen in an ink and opaque watercolor on paper by an anonymous artist. c1800.

Source: Image courtesy of Purchase, Friends of Islamic Art Gifts, 2008 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection API.

to have a square footprint, with a columnar structure supporting a double sloped roof. Before Asaf's time, a court south of the Naubat Khana Court is seen (Tieffenthaler 1791a: Plate XV-1). It appears smaller in scale to the Naubat Khana Court. This implies that Tieffenthaler's drawing carried some variations of scale indicating its possible lesser significance before Asaf's time. The court does not appear to have been integrated within the palace complex, and appears to serve the purpose of reaching the *baoli* (stepwell).<sup>29</sup> It is square and has arcaded structures lining its southern and western edge,<sup>30</sup> and from the *baoli* onward transforms into a street lined with small rooms with sloping roofs on either side. It is difficult to estimate the nature of these small rooms—houses or shops in a market place. The Arcaded Court was adjacent to a public place accessible and usable by common citizens (Tieffenthaler 1791a: Plate XV-1). By Asaf's time, the Arcaded Court was integrated into the palace complex, and its edges clearly defined.<sup>31</sup> An entry way is defined adjacent to the *baoli*. The rectangular structure shown in east—west orientation immediately south of the Arcaded Court is the *baoli*. The shadow work in the drawing indicates depth and not height. If the scale of the Arcaded Court and peripheral structures is read separately from that of the Naubat Khana Court, the placement of the *baoli* coincides with the location of the *baoli* as it exists today. It is our estimate that Tieffenthaler



uses one scale to draw the Panch Mahalla area along with its fortification wall and the Naubat Khana Court and uses another scale to draw all spaces and structures beyond the southern wall of the Naubat Khana Court.

During the 1857 Uprising the Arcaded Court functioned as “Ordinance Stores” (Crommelin 1859). At the southern edge of the Arcaded Court, there is a large structure, the Sangi Dalan, and contiguous to the Sangi Dalan is an arcaded edge on the south (Beato 1858a; Anonymous c1800). Toward the southern end of the eastern edge of the Arcaded Court, there is a monumental double-storied structure with a series of arched openings on both floors. This structure too has a gateway into this court.

The *baoli*,<sup>32</sup> which survives intact till the present, was located to the south of the Arcaded Court. Today, it is accessed from the west, through a gateway from the inner court of the Bada Imambada that existed during Asaf’s time as well (Daniell and Daniell 1789a). The *baoli* could also be accessed from the Arcaded Court on the north through a gate (Tieffenthaler 1791a: Plate XV-1) through which Gladwin appears to have accessed it. He writes about the *baoli* as part of an external court attached to the Arcaded Court. This conglomeration of the Arcaded Court, the *baoli*, and “an arcaded chamber with a piazza, for sleeping during the summer heats” (Gladwin 1785: 388), comprises the second court for Gladwin. The *baoli* is comprised of a large well which included “a stair-case and small recesses, with openings in the well from top to bottom. These rooms are calculated for cool retirement during solstitial months; the apertures through the wall of the well, and the dripping of the waters, rendering the air quite refreshing” (Gladwin 1785: 388). Fountains fall into marble “basins” or troughs in this court from where water was manually sprinkled on the “khus” curtains (Gladwin 1785: 389; Valentia 1809: 140, 141, 170).

Adjacent to the stepwell (Crommelin 1859), and immediately south is another court, a “piazza” (Gladwin 1785: 388) with a built form on its eastern edge of this court, possibly the “arcaded chamber” lying at the “corner opposite the Bowly” (Gladwin 1785: 388). The arcaded chamber is a small structure—“fourteen feet square”—with a boarded floor. The arcaded openings were covered with “[p]erdahs (falling curtains) of kush-kush or jowassah (species of sweet-scented grass) interwoven” (Gladwin 1785: 388), keeping rooms cool.<sup>33</sup> The arcaded chamber contained the *hamam* (bath house) that Valentia used quite frequently and of which he gave a rather detailed account. The Baoli Palace in the book refers to what Gladwin has annotated as “arcaded chamber,” along with the “piazza.”<sup>34</sup> There was a royal residential component to the stepwell conglomeration and the stepwell was a key marker of that conglomerate [Figure 11]. By the time of Valentia’s visits, the *baoli* must have been integrated with the Imambada precinct<sup>35</sup> (Anonymous c1800). The west entryway to the *baoli* must have been quite prominent at the time. Asaf integrated the existing *baoli* into the Imambada precinct as well as the Machhi Bhavan palace precinct quite effectively. The *baoli* became the connection, like a spline joint, between the two precincts.

It was a private space—part of the Baoli Palace—as well as a public place accessible from the public court of the Imambada.<sup>36</sup>

East of the Baoli Palace and south of the Arcaded Court was a rectangular court, the Sangi Dalan Court.<sup>37</sup> It was the third court, according to Gladwin, who would have entered it from the Baoli Palace<sup>38</sup> [Figure 7.8] (Daniell and Daniell 1789b). The Sangi Dalan Court is seen as a courtyard with well laid gardens, surrounded by arcaded structures to the left and a mosque in the background (Daniell and Caunter 1835b: 172)<sup>39</sup> [Figure 7.9]. The mosque is slightly elevated, likely the Tila Masjid; it can be deduced that the orientation of the sketch is looking north. There is a small elevated pavilion on the northwest corner.<sup>40</sup> A “small mosque, with gilt minar, commodious offices” also appears in this court (Gladwin 1785: 389), to the southeast of the *baradari* on the south of this court (Beato 1858a). Beyond the mosque is another wall that could be the limit of this third court on the south (Crommelin 1859).

To the west, Crommelin (1859) shows a large footprint at the end of the water channel. The central part of this footprint extended out toward the Sangi Dalan Court. This was a single storied protruding arcaded structure seen in Daniell’s *Garden* (1835b: 172). It abuts the arcaded chamber of the Baoli Palace. This was what Valentia recorded as a “very beautiful garden-pavilion,” behind which was what he calls the “hummaum” or *hamam* (literally, “bathhouse”) (Valentia 1809: 140). He could see the garden-pavilion from one of the side terraces of the Sangi Dalan where he was dining and the water channels leading to it. Abutting it on its rear was the arcaded



Figure 7.8 Sangi Dalan seen in a watercolor by Thomas Daniell and William Daniell, 1789.

Source: Image courtesy of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).



Figure 7.9 Sangi Dalan Court seen in an engraving by R Brandard after William Daniell. 1835.

chamber of the Baoli Palace, where the *hamam* would have been located. The *hamam* would face the Baoli Palace Court looking over a “bason of water” in the front (Valentia 1809: 140). The *hamam* had two rooms heated by flues under the floor. The first was a column-arch construction holding a cupola, with three fountains for hot or cold water, in oblong niches on three sides, while the fourth side led into the second room. The walls were finished in white lime plaster and ornamented in black, while the floor was of white marble inlaid with a mosaic work of black and red. This room was the preparation room. The second room was sauna-like “where the heat was so great as at first to take away my breath.” It was similar in construction, with one elevated marble trough and one on the floor holding hot water and fountains with cooler water “playing into the middle of the room.” The room was built of “red porphyry to the height of a few feet from the ground; the rest, of a red stone” and was meant for massage and washing (Valentia 1809: 140). The structure was also used for habitation during the summer months.

Returning to the Sangi Dalan Court, to the north of the single storied structure on the west and receding slightly behind was a two-storied structure with five archways. It abutted the octagonal shaft of the *baoli*, and would have connected the *baoli* and to the Sangi Dalan Court (Daniell and Caunter 1835b: 172).<sup>41</sup> The Sangi Dalan Court had arcaded structures on

the east, west, and south; and a terraced structure on the north (Anonymous, c1800).<sup>42</sup> The terraced structure on the north was the Sangi Dalan. The Sangi Dalan was “a handsome edifice raised on an arched terrace. . . . It] comprises a grand hall, surrounded with a double arcade, crowned with four cupolas at the corners, and one at the principal front, covered with copper doubly gilt. At the extremities of the terrace are two wings, for morning and evening resort” (Gladwin 1785: 389). Its structure was “square in plan consisting of three apartments, the principal in the center with one on each side” (Valentia 1809: 170–71), painted a deep red with gilded domes on circular towers at the corners, producing a “rich effect” (Valentia 1809: 170–71).<sup>43</sup> A Dalan acts as a connect between an open space such as a courtyard and a much more enclosed room. Valentia reads it as a palace because Saadat invites him there to dine, to show how it was “adorned” during Asaf’s time and also because he observed the presence of the *masnad* there (Valentia 1809: 170), a cushioned seat used as a throne by the nawabs. Later, there appears to have been additions and alterations and potential damage during the 1857 Uprising to the Sangi Dalan (Beato 1858a; Crommelin 1859).

The court was accessible from all four sides through gateways on the east and west and a covered passage for women from the north (Gladwin 1785: 389).<sup>44</sup> The northern entrance<sup>45</sup> into the court through the Sangi Dalan appears to have been a private entry. The Sangi Dalan was cordoned off from the Arcaded Court (Anonymous c1800), and this entry would allow access from the Panch Mahalla area which was a *zenana*, without having to traverse and without being seen from the more public Arcaded Court. The arcaded chamber of the Baoli Palace opened into the Sangi Dalan Court as well. To the south of the Sangi Dalan Court and larger in footprint there is a structure fronted by a plinth on its north (Crommelin 1859). It has a seven-arched facade (Beato 1858a) and is flanked by linear masses on either side. The structure is open, with gilt domes at the four corners.<sup>46</sup> To Gladwin it appeared as a “stone building, surmounted also by gilt domes,” that forms an entry into the Sangi Dalan Court (1785: 389). Two structures at opposite corners of the southern edge of the court are connected to the south pavilion (Anonymous c1800). The two smaller open spaces enclosed on three sides by these structures were later enclosed by an arcade (Beato 1858a) possibly indicating a change in the function or ownership of this structure. During Valentia’s visit, the *baradari* to the south of the third court was used for dance performances and entertainment and he mentions having attended a “nautch” (anglicized spelling for Hindi *naach*, meaning dance) there (Valentia 1809: 171).

On the eastern edge of the Sangi Dalan Court, centered to the *char-bagh*, was another *baradari* (Daniell and Daniell 1789b; Anonymous c1800; Beato 1858a; Crommelin 1859). This *baradari* was flanked on either side by arcades running along the eastern edge of the court. The *baradari* was made up of a series of three arcades with five openings on its face fronting the Sangi Dalan Court (Daniell and Daniell 1789b). It had four cupolas at each corner. The

arcades appear to have been walled up at a later date (Beato 1858a). This structure may also have provided access to the court.

The flower garden in front of the Sangi Dalan was laid out in a *char-bagh* manner, with walkways, fountains, and vineries (Anonymous c1800). Running across the garden, along the north–south and east–west axis, are water channels (Anonymous c1800). The sides of the water channels or *basons*, “were covered with coloured lamps; and a complete trellis work of the same extended on each side of the walk” (Valentia 1809: 170). These walks extended along either side of the water channels and cut across the garden in a four-by-four grid or a *char-bagh*. They were lined with low hedges (Daniell and Caubert 1835b: 172), and trees with “double silver branches” placed at regular intervals, with attar placed on stands between each (Valentia 1809: 171). “The overhanging trees were perfectly lightened by the glare, which was much increased by the reflection from the water. The band was playing the whole time” (Valentia 1809: 170). The Sangi Dalan Court formed a theatrical setting that continued to be used for entertaining, well into Saadat’s reign.

The Aina Khana, described as a museum, was located contiguous to the palace—the Machhi Bhavan precinct—along with an aviary, a menagerie, and an armory (Gladwin 1785: 392). Along with the Imaumbary, the Inah Khanah was part of the royal residence (Twining *et al.* 1893: 311). A menagerie occupied “one of the courts of the palace” (Twining *et al.* 1893: 312) and had “different birds and quadrupeds” (Tennant 1803: 410), while the Aina Khana housed “a considerable number of mirrors and other toys” which also included different specimens of clock-work and some paintings (Tennant 1803: 411). The menagerie and the museum were either the same space, part of one structure, or in very close proximity to each other, within or adjacent to the Machhi Bhavan precinct.<sup>47</sup>

### The Daulatkhana Precinct

The Daulatkhana precinct<sup>48</sup> was situated to the northwest of the Machhi Bhavan precinct (Crommelin 1859). In order to reach it, Valentia would have traveled westward, along the length of the Gomti, entered the Machhi Bhavan precinct from its north gateway near the stone bridge and then moved west through the Rumi Darwaza. Between the Rumi Darwaza and the first court of the Daulatkhana, to the south of the ceremonial path, lay the Sunehra Burj, or golden tower.<sup>49</sup>

This structure formed the entrance to the residence of Bahu Begum when she visited Lucknow from her seat in Faizabad. Qureshi identifies this structure as the Tilai Burj and attributes its construction to Asaf (Qureshi 2002: 30). In Daniell (1789a), the earliest surviving visual record of this structure, it appears on the right, dominating the composition (seen in the foreground), with the Lakshman Tila mound and the Tila Masjid atop, in the background [Figure 7.10]. Several other paintings (Sita Ram 1814a and Unknown n.d.-b) also capture the structure from this perspective. One noticeable difference in





Figure 7.10 Sunehra Burj seen in a pencil and watercolor on paper by Thomas Daniell. 1789.

Source: Image courtesy of the Private Collection Photo © Christie's Images/Bridgeman Images. CH7531509.

Daniell's *View of Lucknow* (1789a) when compared to the later representations is the absence of the Rumi Darwaza, the Asafi Masjid, and the Stone Bridge.

It is possible that the Rumi Darwaza, the Asafi Masjid, and the Stone Bridge were not yet constructed when the Daniells visited Lucknow. Their own journal provided by Caunter describes their stay at Asaf's palace but does not mention any presence of the Rumi Gate or the Asafi Masjid. There is a dearth of written sources between the years 1785 to 1793. Hence, it is possible that Rumi Darwaza and Asafi Masjid were constructed in the years 1785 onward, making it possible that during Daniell's visit these structures were under construction.

The Sunehra Burj appears at a corner with enclosure walls running to the west and south of it. The remnants of this structure, which appear to have been partially destroyed, having lost its dome during the Uprising<sup>50</sup> [Figure 7.11]. A road ran north of the Sunehra Burj,<sup>51</sup> which formed the periphery of the Daulatkhana precinct<sup>52</sup>; turning westward toward Kanpur. This road was a major road leading to the Rumi Darwaza and was also used as a ceremonial path for Hastings<sup>53</sup> [Figure 7.12].

The wall running to the west of the Sunehra Burj extended to an octagonal bastion that formed one corner of the first court of the Daulatkhana (Crommelin 1859). This wall was punctuated by a gateway (Longcroft 1789a,



Figure 7.11 Ruins of Sunehra Burj seen in an albumen silver print from a waxed paper negative by Baron Alexis de Lagrange. 1851.

Source: Image courtesy of the Getty Museum Collection.

1798f; Smith 1832; de Lagrange 1851a, 1851b) [Figure 7.13]. The court had a gateway to its west (Panorama No. 5, Smith 1832), recessed inward from the eastern wall, through which Valentia entered on elephant-back to see the nawab’s “state elephants, with their houdahs and coverings, drawn out on each side, with his cavalry, camels, and led horses, richly caparisoned” (Valentia 1809: 135). The court had an inner gateway on its north which led to another court (Daniell 1801a) [Figure 7.14].<sup>54</sup> This gateway has three bays—a lofty central arched entranceway, flanked by two-storied arched terraces on either side. Even though proportions differ, this gateway is similar in composition with the Sangi Dalan of Machhi Bhavan precinct.

This gateway used to adjoin a wall and another smaller gateway stood perpendicular to it (Daniell 1801a). This smaller gateway stood opposite to the gateway on the east of the court (Panorama no. 5, Smith 1832). This inner gateway led to a second court, lined with troops who received Valentia and Colonel Scott with presented arms (Valentia 1809: 136). This





Figure 7.12 “Somuhla Burooj” or Sunehra Burj seen in a watercolor by Sita Ram. 1814. Source: Image courtesy of the British Library.

court, not discernable in the present, was located to the north of the inner gateway (Crommelin 1859; Beato 1858) [Figure 7.15]. The second court was considerably smaller compared to the first and was surrounded by arcaded structures along its periphery. The court also held “a handsome European-style building with its great curved front recalling that of Barowen” (Llewellyn-Jones 1985: 181) identified as Gol Kothi.<sup>55</sup> It is unclear when it was built or by whom, and by the mid-19th century, only remnants of it could be seen (Beato 1858; Beg 1923). Valentia had to dismount from his elephant in the second court and be carried on a palanquin through two more courts, before reaching a large court at the end of which stood Saadat’s New Palace (1809: 136).

A prominent structure located within the Daulatkhana precinct is the Asafi Kothi. The Asafi Kothi footprint seen in Tandan’s drawing number 13 (Tandan 2008: 358), is that of an independent rectangular structure with its longitudinal axis running north–south, with two semicircular projections on the west, and a bow front on the east. The footprint in Crommelin (1859) is different in size, shape, and scale from Tandan’s drawing and from Vanrenen (1870). It also differs from the present-day footprint. It is curious that Crommelin does not record the two western semicircular projections, which accord an identity to the structure today. Vanrenen (1870) shows the



*Figure 7.13* Machhi Bhavan and Daulatkhana precincts seen in pencil on paper by Robert Smith. 1832.

*Source:* Image courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum Collection.



Figure 7.14 Inner Gate of the Daulatkhana seen in an oil on canvas by William Daniell. 1801 (c1789).

Source: Image courtesy of Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata.

Asafi Kothi and its adjoining structures as one structure, albeit with a clearly marked rectilinear courtyard in the center. These two depictions of Asafi Kothi and adjoining structures conglomerated into one align with Llewellyn-Jones's (1985: 178) description in which she claims that the Asafi Kothi was a standalone structure to which a *zenana* was added later (1985: 147). She attributes both constructions to Asaf. Tandan's description acknowledges the presence of adjoining *tahkhanas*—basements to the southeast and northeast. It is unclear if these subsidiary structures are attached to Asafi Kothi or slightly away.

On a second visit to the Daulatkhana complex, Valentia visited Saadat's mother, Nawab Khurd Mahal Sahiba. He traversed the "outer courts of the palace" and, at length, entered the garden of the *zenana*, where the Saadat received him in a garden-house situated opposite the *zenana*. Between the *zenana* and the garden-house along the length of the garden, lay a water channel with fountains. As was the custom, Valentia visited with the begum through an exchange of messages delivered by the eunuchs (Valentia 1809: 142, 143). The *zenana* was located in the area later occupied by an inner tank and a structure marked as Sheesh Mahul in Crommelin (1859).<sup>56</sup>

The gendered nature of this space is further heightened by Valentia's description of the *zenana* as "a handsome building, [with] a most melancholy

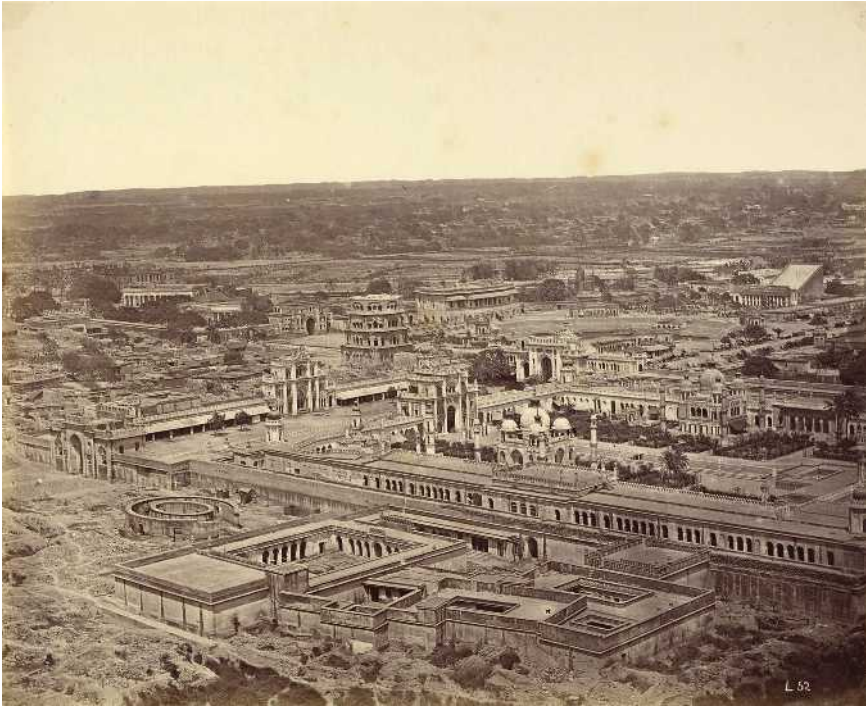


Figure 7.15 Daulatkhana precinct seen in a photograph by Felice Beato. 1858.

Source: Image courtesy of the Getty Museum Collection.

appearance from the wooden lattices-work on the outside of the windows” (Valentia 1809: 142). He walks with the nawab along the periphery of the zenana and imagines its occupants, who could not be seen from the outside, observing the nawab (Valentia 1809: 143).

On arriving in Lucknow and just prior to departing, Valentia paid formal visits to the nawab wazir, Saadat, at his New Palace. It appears that it was customary to visit the nawab at his royal residence on arrival and before leaving the city. The structure hence was quite a significant one at the time. Valentia carries an illustration of Saadat’s New Palace (1809: 173). The same palace is seen in Robert Smith’s *Panorama No. 6* (1832). The position occupied by this structure is marked as “Bawane Mahra Ke Kothi” in Crommelin (1859), where this structure is placed beyond the Daulatkhana periphery, and separated by a road from the rest of the Daulatkhana. Valentia, however, does not mention the presence of any road while approaching the palace, which he does through a series of courts.

### The Bada Imambada Complex

Asaf added the Imambada Complex to the west of the Machhi Bhavan precinct. The Bada Imambada, the Asafi Mosque, and the Rumi Darwaza were the most prominent structures constructed as part of this extension. Unlike the Machhi Bhavan and Daulatkhana precincts, the Bada Imambada Complex exists, having undergone some colonial alteration. Hence, the following paragraphs describe the Imambada Complex as it is experienced by the moving body of the writers.

Rumi Darwaza appears to have been the gate of the outermost *jilaukhana*—a forecourt (Hoey 1885: 93),<sup>57</sup> and the first of a series of gateways that define a ceremonial path leading to the erstwhile Panch Mahalla Gate and the Panch Mahalla beyond. On entering the Rumi Gate from the west, one enters the *jilaukhana*, enclosed by single-storied arcades on two sides.

The *jilaukhana* narrows into a path flanked by two structures on either side similar in size and proportion. It is at this point on the path, that the structures guide the visitor to change their bearings and align their body such that it faces the Bada Imambada. The structure south of the path, forms the outer gateway of the Bada Imambada Complex. Although both the structures look similar in terms of openings and embellishments, the structure on the north was not designed as a gateway—it is primarily a symmetrical response to the southern gate, *jawaab*<sup>58</sup>—and marks the dimension of the path. It opens primarily onto the path, and does not provide for movement through onto the rear side. Following the southern gate is the second court of the complex, square in dimensions and surrounded by arcaded structures. The body moves through the court and encounters a flight of steps up to an inner gateway. Reginald Heber who visited in 1824 (Heber 1828: 64) has alluded to the “steep ascent” from one court to the other. The inner gateway opens onto yet another courtyard at the same level. This gateway marks a threshold where the body becomes aware of the stark difference in the elevation of the two courts—the one higher, holding the Bada Imambada ahead; and the other lower, left behind. Visually, this gateway—although much deeper—is similar to the previous one. This gateway has been described by Hoey (1885: 93) as a “tirpauliya”—a gateway with three entrances. Hay describes the courts of the Bada Imambada as they might have looked during the reign of Nasir-ud-din Haider, and that they were decorated with “tessellated pavements” (Hay 1939: 116). The inner court is “bordered by a double-storied line of narrow cell-like cloisters on its eastern side” (Newell 1915: 17), a mosque on its western side, and the Bada Imambada on its southern side.

A *baoli*, stepped well, sunk four tiers down, is accessed through a gateway on its eastern periphery. This *baoli* is part of the Machhi Bhavan precinct and has been described earlier. It comprises a series of steps that lead to the well—in an open octagonal shaft. To the western side of the inner court is the Asafi Masjid.

Even though these structures stood independently around the inner court, their orientation and location contributed to an integrated composition.



The arcades running the eastern and western periphery of the inner court played a primary role in this unification. The garden of the inner court of the Imambada complex was laid out in a typical *char-bagh* composition (Salt 1803, 1809). Henry Salt's drawing *Mosque of the great Imambara of Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula* (1803) and aquatint *Mosque at Lucknow* (1809) [Figure 7.16] capture the activity in the inner court, showing people moving through the garden, moving in and out of the arcade adjacent to the mosque, engaging in conversation, and generally gazing at the structures. The arcade provided a shaded resting place, allowing one to traverse the periphery of the inner court.

On entering the inner court, the body remains oriented toward the Bada Imambada which stands on the opposite edge of the court. The imposing presence of the Bada Imambada, accentuated further by the surroundedness accorded by adjacent structures, helps the body in retaining its directionality. The horizontality of the structure is reinforced in the high plinth and a series of equal-sized openings. The seemingly low height openings in the facade make the act of entering the structure intimate rather than monumental. The body is overwhelmed by the monumentality of the structure, and yet it is effortlessly drawn into the structure when it encounters the proximity of the understated openings. The body allows itself to be easily absorbed into the building.

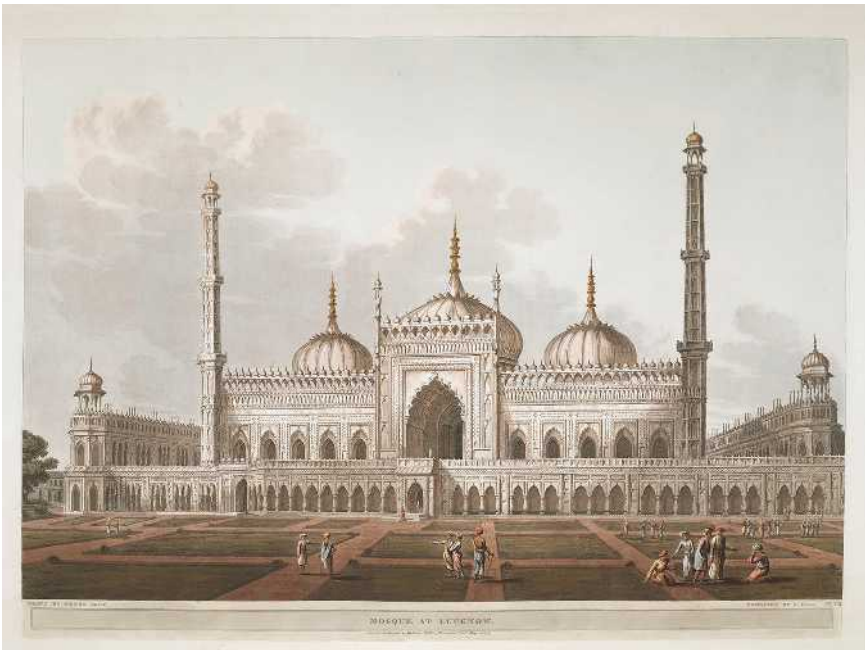


Figure 7.16 Asafi Masjid seen in a colored aquatint by Henry Salt. 1809.

Source: Image courtesy of the British Library.

The structure was sitting over two consecutive plinths, accessed by steps at their center (Anonymous 1795). The lower plinth is circumscribed by a low parapet-like stone railing all round. The image also shows a large water tank<sup>59</sup> in the center of the higher plinth, in front of the Bada Imambada. There is no evidence of that tank on the site today. Instead, a flight of steps runs the entire length of the plinth.

The body enters the structure through one of seven arched openings, on the north, into an arcaded space. This space is covered with a vault and has been described variously as verandah, corridor, and hall. From this arcaded space the body traverses the short axis, crossing a deep archway to enter the vaulted great hall. This is the center of the Bada Imambada. The body transitions from an extremely bright sunlit outer arcaded space into the darker inner hall, with diffused light streaming in from the outer room. It is as if the body follows the direction that the light provides during daytime. The central hall is covered by a higher and larger vault than the previous space. Entering the space the body turns its directionality and becomes orientated along the room's longer axis, following the length of the vault. As the body is reorienting itself, it becomes aware of the deep niches in the form of raised platforms or *Shahnashins* (Ruffle 2021: 161; Keshani 2006: 241) facing the entrance, holding elaborate *taziyas*—models representing Hussein's tomb. The experience of this room is extremely corporeal. The gold and silver of the *taziyas* against the pastel of the wall, combined with muted scent from *attars*, and several chandeliers even if unlit, indulge, seduce, and overpower the body simultaneously. In the center of the hall is the grave of Asaf-ud-Daula, laid in the cardinal north–south direction conforming with the Islamic principles. Accompanying his modestly decorated grave with flowers and barley from Mecca, were his personal belongings such as his sword, turban, and Koran (Tennant 1803: 405–406; Valentia 1809: 157).

Heber visiting Lucknow in 1824 describes the interior of the Bada Imambada as a “brilliant tabernacle of silver, cut glass, and precious stones, [under which] lie buried the remains of its founder, Asuphud Dowlah” (Heber 1828: 65). The *shahnashins* are part of the third hall, which is south of the central hall. It is accessed through a series of steps at either end of the hall. Along its length, the central hall is flanked on either side by a square room covered with a domed ceiling. The one to the west appears in popular culture as the Kharbuja Hall or the Melon Hall (The Indian Panorama 2014) owing to its ribbed dome. The one to the east has been popularly called the China Dish (Lajawaab Lucknow 2019) or China Hall, and Surajmukhi Hall (The Indian Panorama 2014) or Sunflower Hall owing to the petalled decorations at the squinch of the dome. One of the reasons why the Kharbuja Hall has a more elaborate dome construction than the Surajmukhi Hall may have to do with the fact that the former lies close to an ornate doorway. This ornate doorway is seen in archival photographs such as (Sita Ram 1814b; de Lagrange 1851a; Beato 1858a; Unknown c1860–1870a) [Figure 7.17]. This points to the fact





*Figure 7.17* Asafi Masjid and Bada Imambada seen in a photograph by an unknown photographer. c1860–70.

*Source:* Image courtesy of Matthew Dontzin, 1985, gifted to the Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection API.

that the intended entryway might have been here rather than the north, or this entryway served as entrance for specific visitors such as royalty or religious leaders, or it served to present the Bada Imambada to the city. We have not been able to find any written evidence of the use of this gateway, but our observation is completely from reading the structure as material evidence of its own history. Four chambers at each of the corners of the structure unite the composition. Together with the Central Hall, Shahnashin Hall, Kharbuja Hall, Surajmukhi Hall, and the northern veranda, these four chambers make up the rectangular form of the Bada Imambada. Returning from the Imambada and exiting into the court again, the body takes a left and encounters a series of steps in a straight steep flight. The flight goes directly to the terrace of the Imambada but if the body gets distracted it gets drawn into a series of arcaded passages—twisting, turning, rising, and descending. This is the Bhul Bhulaiyya—an intricate support system for the vaulted roof of the Central Hall. The wide walls supporting the roof have been systematically hollowed out to reduce masonry weight resulting in an intricate system of arches, steps, and passages.

## Notes

- 1 The colonial archive, however, has referred to the fortified area as the “Machhi Bhawan” (Hilton 1894; Newell 1915; Hay 1939), “Mutchee Bowan” (Gladwin 1785), “Mutchee Mahul” (Unknown 1826a), “Muchee Bhowun” (Gubbins 1858), “Mucchee Bawn” (Beato 1858g), “Machi Bhawan” (Keene 1875), “Mutchi Bhowun” (Innes 1895), and “Mucchee Bhawun” (Beg 1911).
- 2 Naubat Khana, also called *naqqar khana*, literally means “drum-house.” It is a typology that appears commonly in royal complexes constructed during the Mughal period. It usually occupied an area over the entrance, often overlooking palace complexes.
- 3 We refer to this court as the Naubat Khana Court and Gladwin’s “first gateway” as the Naubat Khana. Both can be seen in the Tieffenthaler’s *Facies externa* (1791a: Plate XV-1).
- 4 Thomas Daniell (1801b, colored aquatint), Beato (1858a).
- 5 Daniel’s aquatint (1801b). The earliest times it appears in the archive as an elaborate lofty entranceway is in Hodges (1783) and in Thomas Daniell’s illustrations (1789b, 1801b, 1802a, 1802b), which he would have drawn in 1789.
- 6 Tieffenthaler (1791a: Plate XV-1)
- 7 Beato (1858a)
- 8 Tieffenthaler (1791a: Plate XV-1), Daniell (1789b, 1802b), Unknown (1826b), and Beato (1858a).
- 9 Daniell (1789b, 1802b)
- 10 Beato (1858a), Crommelin (1859)
- 11 Tieffenthaler (1791a: Plate XV-1). The *Lucknow Panorama* (1826b) shows a cluster of houses along this northern extent corroborating Tieffenthaler.
- 12 Gladwin uses “Putch Mhullah” to reference just the Naubat Khana Court even though the area extended to the west of the Panch Mahalla Gate. “Mhullah” refers to *mahalla*, which means a district, quarter, ward, or neighborhood in Persian, Arabic, and Urdu; “putch” means five, which has led to various interpretations: fivefold, comprising five parts or five members (Tieffenthaler 1791c: Plate XVI-2), five interlocking courts (Tandan 2008: 42 and Mookherjee 2003 (1883): 230), five palaces (Llewellyn-Jones 1985: 170) similar to five-storied Panch Mahal at Fatehpur Sikri (Llewellyn-Jones 1985: 170), or a five-storied palace (Hay 1939: 160; Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 37). The Urdu annotation in *Lucknow Panorama* (Unknown 1826b) names both the Panch Mahalla Gate and adjacent area to the east as “Panch Mahalla.” According to Ghani, five palaces were built c1590 by Sheikh Abdur Rahim for his five wives (Ghani 1919: 41) and uses the word *mahallat* (plural for “palace”) to collectively refer to five palaces. It is possible that the word *mahallat* got transmuted to *mahalla*. Hence, we use the term Panch Mahalla.
- 13 The construction of the Machhi Bhawan and these additions can be attributed to Asaf since they appear in Daniell’s image and not in Tieffenthaler’s.
- 14 In Tieffenthaler (1791a: Plate XV-1). The Latin *Palatii quintuplicis* translates to Fivefold Palace, indicating a conglomeration of several structures that formed the Panch Mahalla. Tieffenthaler’s caption uses the plural “facies,” implying that the elevations in the illustration were all part of the palace complex including the Naubat Khana Court, and hence, the name Panch Mahalla might have been used to refer to it as well. “Ad partem occidentalem” indicates that this illustration is of the western part of the palace complex. Therefore, the double-storied facade shown in the illustration could not have been the only palace, further corroborating the presence of other structures that composed the Panch Mahalla. The other illustration in the same plate titled “Palatium, quod Laknoi visitur ripae Gumatis adsitum,” or “The palace, which is seen in Lucknow from the bank of

- Gumati,” shows a view of the entire palace precinct. The five structures seen in Tieffenthaler’s *Palatium* (1791c: Plate XVI-2) constituted the neighborhood—the mahalla—of five palaces. This invalidates its comparison to the Panch Mahal at Fatehpur Sikri (Llewellyn-Jones 1985: 170) and its interpretation as a five-storied palace (Hay 1939: 160; Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 37).
- 15 *Baavan* was later altered to *bhavan* (Hindi for large house). The paired fish emblem served as an insignia of the Lucknow nawabs and was specifically used to proclaim their royal image (Markel 2010: 213).
  - 16 During the 1857 Uprising, the British used the precinct for military purposes, such as the Stone Bridge Outpost, the Ordinance Stores, and the entrenchment lines Crommelin’s *Plan* (1859).
  - 17 The colonial archive describes the precinct in terms of its geography, access, and locational characteristics and shows how the term “Machhi Bhavan” began to be used to identify an area and not a structure and led to the obliteration of the term “Panch Mahalla.” Innes (1895: 71) and Gubbins (1858: 23) use of the names “Mutchi Bhowan” and “Muchee Bhowun” is recorded evidence of when the place began to be referred to differently than the Panch Mahalla.
  - 18 A series of planes descending from west to east is seen in Tieffenthaler (1791: Plate XVI-2), Daniell (1789b, 1802b), and Unknown (1826b). While Gubbins calls them plateaus, Innes observes the planes in the form of courtyards; the highest of which was occupied by the Machhi Bhavan and Panch Mahalla.
  - 19 Four-square.
  - 20 *Baradari* means a pavilion-like structure with 12 openings.
  - 21 Ghani (1919: 44) mentions the presence of a Baz Mahallat and Sikhian Darwaza near the Hussein Bagh. It is our conjecture that the Baz Mahallat refers to the Durbar Court and the Sikhian Darwaza to the gateway leading to it.
  - 22 Gladwin refers to the fourth court as the “Mutchee Bowan” (1785: 389), possibly unable to distinguish the individual components because he did not enter it. It is also unclear if he is referring to a court, a structure, or a few structures. He also erroneously attributes the “first structure of the Soubahs at Lucknow” to be part of this court, indicating that he may have combined the Panch Mahalla area and this court as one entity in his imagination.
  - 23 This map is based on Napier 1859a and Vanrenen 1870.
  - 24 The eastern gateway would be the one already discussed as the main entrance into the Durbar Court.
  - 25 The British army was concerned that the fortified precinct had no openings to the exterior (Gubbins 1858: 23), that the courtyards “lined with small buildings and store-rooms” (Innes 1895: 79) consisted of “large and airy arcaded halls along one side” of the Machhi Bhavan fortification (Innes 1895: 79), and that all rooms were flat-roofed and defined by parapet walls (Innes 1895: 80). This conveys a sense of inventorying the capacity and the vulnerabilities of the precinct for its military use.
  - 26 *Chunam* refers to a traditional lime plaster which gives an exceptionally high polished texture to the wall surface.
  - 27 It is possible that the crenelated part of the wall seen in the *Lucknow Panorama* (1826b) defined the location of the terrace that Valentia mentions and that the three pavilions were accessible from within the garden at that raised level.
  - 28 In the *Lucknow Panorama* (1826b), this structure is exactly opposite the central pavilion. It would have occupied the southern end of the garden. The extremity of the garden, or per the Urdu annotation “Hadd Hussein Bagh,” is marked at the point where the wall ends on the eastern edge of the enclosure (Anonymous 1826b).
  - 29 The combination of a well and a straight flight of steps is a unique stepwell typology usually called *baoli* in vernacular terms. This *baoli* is an octagonal well

- surrounded and topped by an octagonal arcaded structure descending five floors, interconnected via staircases. At its west, a straight flight of steps reaches down to the octagonal structure.
- 30 Gladwin mentions the presence of a square garden lined with state apartments (Gladwin 1785: 388) in close proximity to the *baoli*.
  - 31 It is represented in the same way as the formal courts of the Imambada Complex in the Metropolitan Museum sketch (Anonymous c1800).
  - 32 The *baoli* seen in Tieffenthaler (1791: Plate XV-1) appears in several other archival sources: Daniell and Daniell (1789a), Anonymous (c1800), Crommelin (1859) and in Beato (1858a).
  - 33 When water is sprinkled on these knit curtains, the fresh earthy smell of vetiver root fills the space with a pleasant aroma but also cools the hot dry summer winds. This practice is still followed in the region, albeit the water sprinkling is now mechanized.
  - 34 Adjacencies and accessibility of spaces to the *baoli* have led to such naming. Similar to the Panch Mahalla projecting its name to the neighborhood and the structures in the vicinity, the *baoli* being a remarkably distinct structure accorded its name to the adjoining arcaded chamber and court—the *Baoli Palace*. Valentia too mentions a “Bolee Palace” during his visit to the Bada Imambada. *Bolee* is another spelling for *baoli*, and hence, it certainly refers to the Baoli Palace. It is noteworthy that he does not mention the *baoli*. He writes of just the location of the “Bolee Palace,” and that too with respect to the Imambada.
  - 35 Valentia’s description of the “Bolee Palace” occupying an area on one side of the inner court of the Imambada and opposite “a very beautiful mosque”—certainly the Asafi Masjid—corroborates our locating of the Baoli Palace.
  - 36 It is quite likely that the Baoli Palace with the Sangi Dalan Court (described next) in background appears in what Keshani titled *View of the zananna of the Panj Mahal* taken from the Friday Mosque’s Minaret (2004: 7). As discussed, the Baoli palace was accessible to visitors and was not necessarily restricted to women. Sangi Dalan Court was used by the nawab, royal women, and royal guests. Neither of these areas were specifically used as zenana but had women occupying them. Gladwin, Valentia, and the Daniells write about and illustrate these spaces, further substantiating our claim that these spaces were open to visitors. The Daulatkhana already existed, and Asaf added a few structures to it, such as the Asafi Kothi. Most other zenana residences which continued into Asaf times already existed. In the light of these observations, it is difficult to agree with Keshani that the zenana existed where he points it out to exist and that the visual proximity of the Asafi Masjid with the zenana led to the shifting of zenana to Daulatkhana (Keshani 2004: 8, 9).
  - 37 Tandan (2008: 62, 63, 422) has referred to Daniell’s work and locates the garden court in the Daulatkhana, placing “a many-pillared hall on the same axis as the entranceway to the Daulatkhana.” In our reading, what Tandan calls the many-pillared hall is the *baradari* at the south of the Sangi Dalan Court, and the entranceway to the Daulatkhana is the Sangi Dalan. We attribute this to the striking similarity between the two structures.
  - 38 The grandeur of the Sangi Dalan would have caught Gladwin’s attention as soon as he entered the court. Therefore, he would have written of the Sangi Dalan to be east of his second court. Scholars such as Llewellyn-Jones have taken Gladwin’s directions quite literally and have placed the Sangi Dalan in an orientation east of the Baoli Palace. Our placement of the Sangi Dalan is further corroborated by a close reading of other sources such as Anonymous c1800 and Daniell and Daniell 1789b, Beato 1858a.
  - 39 The elevated pavilion-like structure is also seen in sketch (Anonymous c1800) as well in Daniell and Daniell (1789b) confirming the orientation. Crommelin

- (1859) shows a large footprint without demarcating distinct buildings to the east of the Sangi Dalan Court, at the end of the water channel. The central part of this footprint extends out toward the Sangi Dalan Court. This is the single storied protruding arcaded structure seen in Daniell's *Garden* (1835b: 172).
- 40 This appears in other images as well (Anonymous c1800), confirming that Daniell's drawing (Daniell and Caunter 1835b: 172) is a view of the northwest corner of the Sangi Dalan Court.
- 41 In Crommelin (1859), two separate structures have been collated to form one footprint, and the octagonal well shaft along with the abutting five arched double storied structure is missing.
- 42 The terraced structure on the north in the Metropolitan Museum sketch (Anonymous c1800) is similar to the structure drawn by the Daniell and Daniell (1789b). Reading the two drawings together has, therefore, helped in orienting the Daniells' watercolor (1789b), which looks northward. In Beato (1858a), Sangi Dalan is not clearly discernible due to later additions and alterations. However, the structures on the east, the south, and the roof of that on the west of the court are clearly seen. The character of these structures is similar to structures drawn in the Daniells' watercolor (1789b), further confirming our reading of the illustration's orientation and location.
- 43 Both Gladwin and Valentia attribute adjectives of handsome and elegant to the Sangi Dalan, respectively. Both observe the stone construction, and the structure being raised on an arched terrace supporting the origins of its name Sangi Dalan. *Sangi* means "stone," and *dalan* means "arcaded terrace."
- 44 No gateways on the east and west of the court are visible on Crommelin's *Plan* (1859), although we see a structure each on the east and west.
- 45 It is possible to conjecture the northern covered passage from the visible openings in the surrounding walls of the court seen in Crommelin's *Plan* (1859)
- 46 One dome can be seen in the Daniell and Daniell watercolor (1789b)
- 47 It is difficult to ascertain their exact location, on the basis of available archival evidence.
- 48 Colonial writings referring to the Daulatkhana have been brief, specifying a deteriorating abandoned precinct containing "a number of large houses, irregularly placed" (Hilton 1894: 135; Nevill 1904: 211; Beg 1911: 76; Newell 1915: 23). All these authors acknowledge the presence of the Asafi Kothi—the only structure they identify from Asaf's time. It is worth noting also that Daulatkhana literally means the house of a wealthy or aristocratic person, a term commonly used in Lucknow to denote nawabs' residence, which makes it difficult to identify when the term used was for a specific precinct and when it was used to refer to a royal residence. The earliest written account of the Daulatkhana in the colonial archive is that of Valentia who visited in 1803. Reading this account alongside the Daniell's painting (1801a (c1789), contemporary to the time of Asaf), Longcroft watercolors (c1789a, c1789f), Forrest (1808), Sita Ram (1814a), Robert Smith (1832), unknown artist (n.d.-b); in relation to Felice Beato (1858a), we can reconstruct Asaf's Daulatkhana.
- 49 This structure has been identified as the "Somuhla Burooj also meaning golden tower" in Sita Ram (1814a).
- 50 Beato 1858a, 1858f; de Lagrange 1851a, 1851b
- 51 Sita Ram (1814a), Unknown (n.d.-b), Forrest (1824)
- 52 Robert Smith (1832), Crommelin (1859), and Vanrenen (1870)
- 53 (Sita Ram 1814a; Forrest 1808), and polychrome engraving on paper of a View of Lucknow (1860) held by Sarmaya
- 54 Daniell (1801a) also shows several elephants, horses, and cavalry in consonance with Valentia's description of the first court. The location of this Inner Gateway is confirmed by looking at Pont's photograph (c1860) in which this gateway is

seen and Beato (1858). Beg (1923) also shows the location of this gateway. The title of the painting is erroneously recorded in the Victoria Memorial Hall as *The Imambara of Asaf-ud-Daula at Lucknow*.

- 55 The footprint of the Gol Kothi is also seen in Crommelin (1859)
- 56 The Sheesh Mahal and the inner tank also appear in military maps (Military Department n.d.), and later descriptions, post 1858. The only time the Sheesh Mahal appears in the descriptions from Asaf's reign is in the writings of Gladwin, which probably refer to a structure of the same name in the Machhi Bhavan precinct.
- 57 William Hoey translated Abu Taleb in 1885. Assuming that Abu Taleb is writing in 1796, while providing a diary entry for 1205 AH (September 10, 1790–August 30, 1791), this description might be one of the very few available ones that are nearest to construction date.
- 58 Jawaab is an Urdu word meaning a reply or an answer
- 59 Hoey translating Abu Taleb and supposedly providing the earliest description of the place also refer to a reservoir in the middle of a broad terrace (Hoey 1885: 93).

## 8 Architecture of Wajid Ali Shah

Wajid Ali Shah built the Qaiserbagh complex between 1848 and 1850. Chhote Miyan is considered to be its architect (Llewellyn-Jones 1985: 165). Qaiserbagh, translated to mean garden of the *qaiser* (king), consisted of a colossal central garden, surrounded by an enclosure that housed residential units for many of his wives. Depending on the hierarchy of the relationship with Wajid, the women would have their independent set of apartments—self-contained—complete with their own household staff. The center of the garden was marked by a stone *baradari*<sup>1</sup>—an open arcaded pavilion, called the Safed Baradari because of its use of white marble. The central garden comprised some of the most unusual buildings—typology-wise and function-wise. Examples include the Lanka and the Parikhana, apart from several pavilions, trellised vineries, topiaries, gardens, and a small private mosque. The pathways, although laid out in a geometrical fashion, often deviated to connect the vast array of structures placed all over the courtyard. The Lanka was used as a summer house, from where Wajid would occasionally hold court. It was also meant to stage theatrical performances during festivals. The Parikhana served as a residential cum training center for women (nawab called his trainee dancers *paris*) who were being trained in *kathak*. There were two elaborate gateways on the east and the west—both known as the Lakhi Gates—owing to the amount of money that was spent on their construction. On either side of the garden enclosure were a series of interconnected courtyards, entered through elaborate gates. At the southwest corner lay the Roshan-ud-daula Kothi, with a *jilaukhana* on its north, which led to the Neil's Gate at the northwest end of the complex. On the other side, toward the east, lay the Huzur Bagh (also named Hazrat Bagh), Chini Bagh, Northern Jilaukhana, and many gates, such as the Chini Darwaza and the Mermaid Gate, which served as the entrance to the complex. The Huzur Bagh (Hazrat Bagh) contained Chandiwali Baradari (silver *baradari* owing to it having been covered with a silver foil), the Khas Makan (also named Khas Mukam or Khas Maqaam), and the Badshah Manzil. The latter two formed the residence of Wajid [Figure 8.1].



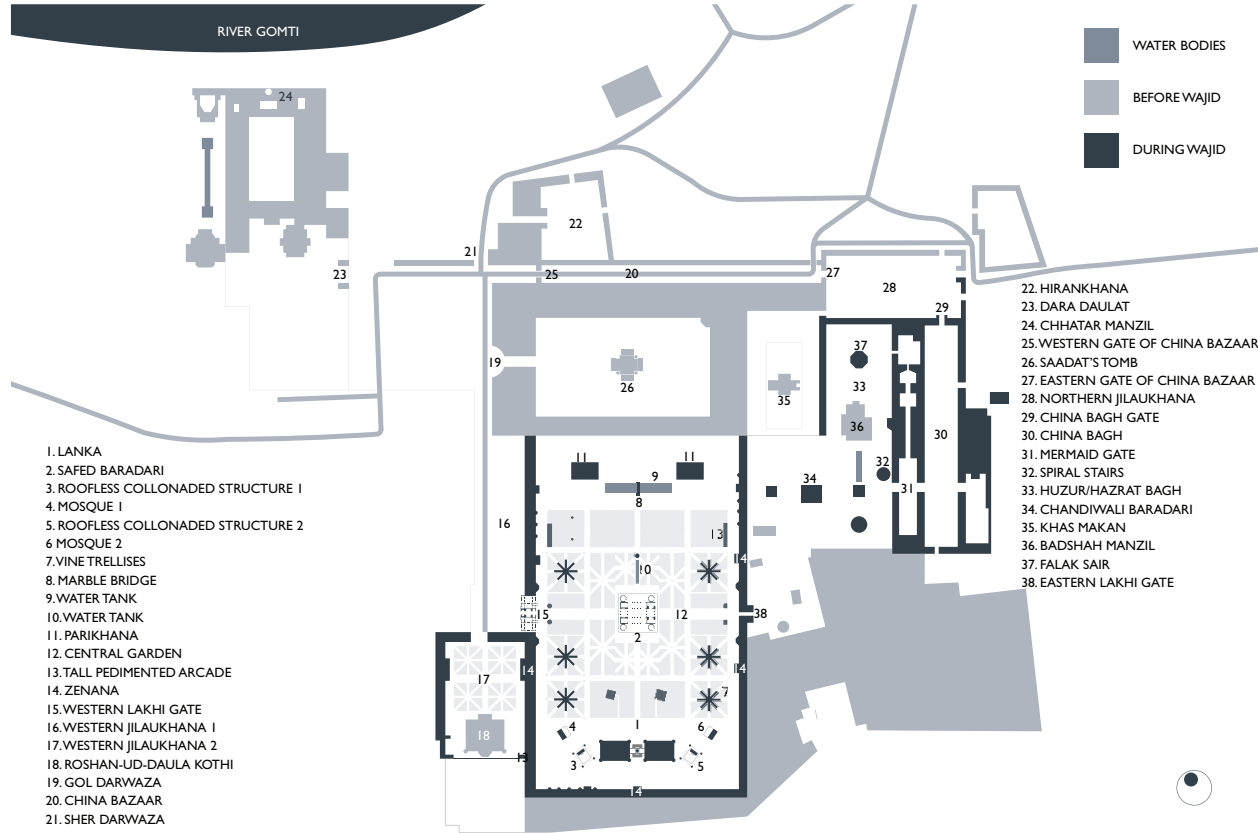


Figure 8.1 Reconstruction of Qaiserbagh.

The Lanka [Figure 8.2] was composed of two similar double storied structures joined by a stairway. Each structure had a shorter lower story continuously punctured with doors, and a taller upper story.<sup>2</sup> The upper story was highly porous and had an inner and outer arcade. The columns that defined the outer arcade were slim as compared to the ones inside that comprised trifoliate arches. The roof connecting the inner and the outer arcade sloped down inward. The roof of the central hall was lower than that of the verandahs (Mookherjee 2003 (1883): 235). Beneath the connecting stairway was a platform on which stood a domed pavilion reached by a series of steps. The connecting stairway appears to be a marble bridge, with merman decorations (Dannenberg c1858). The Lanka was symmetrical along the transverse section, as well (Shepherd and Robertson (1862–1863), Unknown c1863–1887a).

The Lanka is conspicuously absent in most of the colonial accounts, except a few such as those by Lundgren and Louis Rousselet.<sup>3</sup> Lundgren writes of “a couple of ostentatious, golden yellow, richly decorated buildings” (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 118), “joined together at first floor level by means of a stairway over the arch of a bridge” (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 119). The



*Figure 8.2* Qaiserbagh winery and buildings seen in a photograph by Samuel Bourne and Charles Shepherd. 1864–65.

*Source:* Image courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum Collection.

building appears theatrical and holds a prominent position in the garden (Lundgren 1905: 191). The *tronplatsen*, or throne-place, is on the raised platform under the bridge (Lundgren 1905: 192)—a dais or a stage from which the king could be seen by the audience and from where the king could control and observe the goings on in the garden palace.

From there, the view “out over all the wonders of the garden to the splendid mosque in the background” was the “most magnificent of its kind,” the scene “suitable decor for a ballet in the fairy queen’s enchanted castle or a tragedy of Bluebeard’s wedding” (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 119). The structures that constitute the Qaiserbagh complex seem to create an atmosphere that is fantastical and otherworldly.<sup>4</sup> Wajid at the Lanka would have a commanding view of the entire complex while performing his court duties, overlapping it with music and dance performances, constantly immersing and withdrawing himself from the various roles he played—of a king, a dancer, a musician, a connoisseur—in the exaggerated theater he has devised. He, at once, gave and received the audience.

An arcaded structure decorated with red and gold drapery was located in the center of the Qaiserbagh and in line with the Lanka.<sup>5</sup> Chandeliers would be visible through each arched opening of its arcade and the octagonal towers at the four corners were surmounted by gilded domes. The structure, raised on a plinth paved with marble in a check pattern, had two sprawling pools of water surrounded by statuary lying to the north, along the central axis. It could be accessed by staircases at the four corners, intimate in scale and degree of enclosure. On the plinth, groups of women would converge. This structure is the Safed Baradari or white *baradari*, lying to the north of the Lanka. The *baradari* is plastered white, hence the name. It was also identified as the stone baradari—perhaps because it looked like it was made of marble (Mookherjee 2003 (1884): 234); Hilton 1894: 123; Nevill 1904: 207; Beg 1911: 64; and Newell 1915: 36) and Qasr-ul-Aza or House of Mourning (Lucknow Society n.d.-a; Taqui and Saxena 1987: 25; Gordon 2006: 70; Llewellyn-Jones 2014: 58), a “striking pavilion of white marble” (Hay 1939: 202). The revenue from a few villages was allocated by Wajid to maintain this *imambada* (Gordon 2006: 264), where he would have listened to *Khudae-Sukhan*, a *marsiya* (elegiac poem) by Meer Anees commemorating the valor and martyrdom of Imam Husain and martyrs of Karbala,<sup>6</sup> and placed the *zarikh* from Kazmain.<sup>7</sup> Wajid would also hold audiences with high-ranking officials here (Tandan 2008: 270).

In popular memory, people believe that the present-day Bhatkhande Music Institute stands at the location of the Parikhana, some even believe that it is housed in the structure constructed by Wajid.<sup>8</sup> The Bhatkhande Music Institute, however, is housed in a building that served previously as Canning College built by the British.<sup>9</sup> The construction of Canning College was completed in 1878 (Beg 1911: 62). There are two structures marked on most colonial maps<sup>10</sup> near the location of the Bhatkhande Music Institute. The two structures have a similar footprint and stand on either side of the

marble bridge. The opaque watercolor and gold painting (anonymous, mid-19th century) also shows two identical structures, fenced,<sup>11</sup> having an open arcaded room on the lower floor and closed rooms on the upper level. These structures were surmounted by five domes each. One larger dome (perhaps central) and four smaller domes (perhaps at the corners). The arcaded room in each structure is laid out with a divan with gold furnishings, has several chandeliers hung and the floors outside paved with what appears to be a check pattern in marble. Each structure has two sets of staircases going up to the first floor on either side. The visual correlates with Wajid's own memoir similarly titled (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 59), in which he gives his version of how he envisaged the structure—laying it out with white marble flooring, decorated with China vases, and wooden seats and beds. This makes us believe that the two structures might be the Parikhana. Wajid allocated the Parikhana for training in musical arts, and its decoration and furnishing were undertaken in a highly formalized fashion. In his words, this building could mock paradise.<sup>12</sup> The Parikhana was guarded by *turki*<sup>13</sup> women to prevent unauthorized entry, ensuring free movement for the *paris*, singers, and tutors within.<sup>14</sup>

The opaque watercolor and gold painting (anonymous, mid-19th century) gives a detailed visual of the central garden of Qaiserbagh. The otherwise rectilinear garden appears to be a square in the painting. The painting is done in such a way that almost all the structures within the garden face the viewer, the viewer occupying an elevated viewpoint on the northwest of the garden. All buildings, structures surrounding the central garden, structures within the central garden, and the external enclosure are represented as two-dimensional elevations—like paper cut-outs—without any sense of depth. The Safed Baradari is the only structure that is shown in a somewhat three-dimensional perspectival form. Reading the painting for the location of structures in relation to one another or as a sequential arrangement provides a better understanding of the overall layout of the central garden compared to relying on it to determine the precise placement of the structures [Figure 8.1]. The court outside the Western Lakhi Gate forms the foreground, in which uniformed soldiers are encamped. The Safed Baradari forms the center of the painting lying on the intersection of the vertical and horizontal axes of the painting. The two Lakhi gates—both partially open—lie on the central vertical axis of the painting. The Lanka and two tanks form the central horizontal axis, which starts to get skewed toward the left of the painting. On the left is a walled street separating the central garden from the tombs and the royal palace complex.

The Safed Baradari—an arcaded flat roofed structure—occupies the center of the courtyard. On the left of it are two water bodies. There is a bridge over one of them leading to a space between two distinct fenced structures—which we identify as the Parikhana. On the right, there are two vine trellises beyond which is the Lanka—a linear structure—joined by a stairway. The setting for the painting appears to be a festive occasion in which Wajid is seen seated on an open palanquin, shaded by a golden umbrella. He is surrounded by noblemen. They make up a procession, which gives the painting a directionality. The

procession is led by two horses, and four elephants richly decorated with golden howdahs can be seen at the back. Wajid is positioned alongside the tank near the Safed Baradari, and a short distance from the Western Lakhi Gate. The procession continues over the marble bridge. Hundreds, perhaps up to a thousand people are seen in small clusters and larger groups all throughout the *bagh*. Both men and women can be seen selling their wares. The women of the court are seen on the plinth of the Safed Baradari and the bridge of the Lanka.

Lundgren gives a vibrant depiction of the central court of Qaiserbagh. He saw in the middle of the garden finely sculpted marble temples with alabaster pillars, ponds, ruined water features, bridges, peculiar kiosks, and tall columns, underneath which there had once been aviaries and cages for wild animals. There were small rose-red pavilions with gilded grilles in their windows and on their balconies. Emerald green swings adorned with silver buttons and fringes, flower terraces, palm trees, and peculiar bushes covered with creepers and large bluebells. He found everything in ruins—swings were empty, and bushes were covered with creepers and large bluebells. It is interesting that even in the ruinous state Lundgren provides a fairytale vision of the court. Bluebells are associated with wilderness, also referred to as fairy flowers. The way he writes, it seems that the swings were swinging among a wilderness but missing the people it was meant for. He appreciates the fairytale nature of the court and simultaneously dismisses it as a scene—not real, a caprice (“nycker”), the imagination of a despot, a result of a thoughtless whim “tanklösa infall” (Lundgren 1905: 191). Lundgren’s use of the words “vällustig despot” is a commentary on Wajid and conveys the European bias that sees Wajid as a lustful oppressor. According to Darogah Ubbas Alli, the central garden was “most tastefully laid out and adorned with innumerable fountains; the walks were lined with classic statuary” (1874: 26).

The visual of the painting is seen in colonial imagery, albeit in a fragmentary manner. We see a sole pigeon feeder (Unknown c1863–1887a); an unusual roofless rectangular structure, open on all sides, with a series of fluted columns and octagonal bastions at each corner (Unknown c1863–1887b; Dannenberg c1870; Shepherd and Robertson 1862–1863); and vine trellises radiating out from a domed pavilion (Dannenberg c1870; Unknown c1863–1887b).

Mookherjee also discusses the presence of a pair of two tanks, perpendicular to one another, on the north side of the quadrangle. Pavilions and kiosks were strategically placed throughout the complex of palaces, adding to what Mookherjee describes as the overall aesthetic appeal (2003 (1883): 235).

The marble bridge used to have elaborate merman imagery on its sides, facing the water (Unknown c1863–1887c). There was also a tall linear arcaded structure—pedimented on the shorter side. It is open on all four sides, with a parapeted roof (Unknown c1863–1887d). Llewellyn-Jones has called it “a two storey narrow avian Parthenon” (1984), identifying it as the only classical pigeon house in India and probably in the world. In her later writings, Llewellyn-Jones calls it “Palladian-inspired pigeon house” (2014: 58). Tandan refers to this and its corresponding counterpart as “a pair of

matching colonnaded and pedimented halls of an uncertain purpose on north-east and north-west” (Tandan 2008: 272). Lundgren (1905: 191) mentions “höga pelare,” or tall pillars, under which there had been aviaries and cages for wild animals. These were, however, in a state of ruin during Lundgren’s visit. Strange writes of Lieutenant Warren, who encountered “a wild beast show” during his capture of Qaiserbagh, and that those animals “had to be shot” (Strange 1893: 181). This means that the Qaiserbagh also had a menagerie.

The Qaiserbagh was surrounded by a double storied periphery. These were the residential areas where the women who became part of Wajid’s palace lived. The periphery was arcaded on the lower story and had pedimented openings on the upper story, punctured with protruding bastions regularly [Figure 8.3]. A distinct architectural feature in the form of a projecting rectangular or canted bay was incorporated into the front entrance (Tandan 2008: 271) to distinguish the units in which women of Wajid’s household lived in the *zenana*. The rooms of the *zenana* were long and not very high, “with deep verandahs giving on to the central court” (Hay 1939: 141). The buildings surrounded “a magnificent open square . . . provided quarters for the Begums” (Hilton 1894:123).

Wajid allocated a house to each *pari* to live in (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 129). Wajid called these houses “bahar ke makano,” or the houses on the outside of the palace. It is our conjecture derived from reading Wajid that these residential quarters formed the exterior of, or perhaps, even occupied what would later become the quadrangle of the Qaiserbagh. As the palace originally comprised and was centered near the Chhatar Manzil, it gradually expanded toward Sadat’s tomb. Wajid may have continued to expand the palace southward of the tomb even before the formal establishment of the Qaiserbagh. For Wajid, the Parikhana formed part of the “andar mahal” (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 109), or the inner palace. Based on this we conjecture that the Parikhana may have formed the southern edge of Wajid’s palace, suggesting that the northern edge of Qaiserbagh was already part of Wajid’s palace.

The buildings surrounding the area consisted of “two storied handsome rooms and halls with verandahs of different designs to match and heighten their inner beauty, the ceilings of which were covered with cloth, painted with different fairy scenes” (Mookherjee 2003 (1883): 235). The courtyard was surrounded by elegant, beautiful, and brightly painted buildings. The character of this periphery was marked by “multiple colonnades, balconies, annexes, stairways, terraces, and wings” (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 118), but the opulence and grandeur of the buildings gave way to ruination after the Uprising.

Doors to several rooms and chambers making up the periphery of the quadrangle could probably be accessed from the quadrangle. The exterior was golden yellow exterior and show Wajid’s royal insignia—a pair of mermaids—atop every opening, and corridors connected the internal spaces (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 119). The entire structure was punctuated by open courtyards (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 119; Beato 1858c) [Figure 8.4]. The



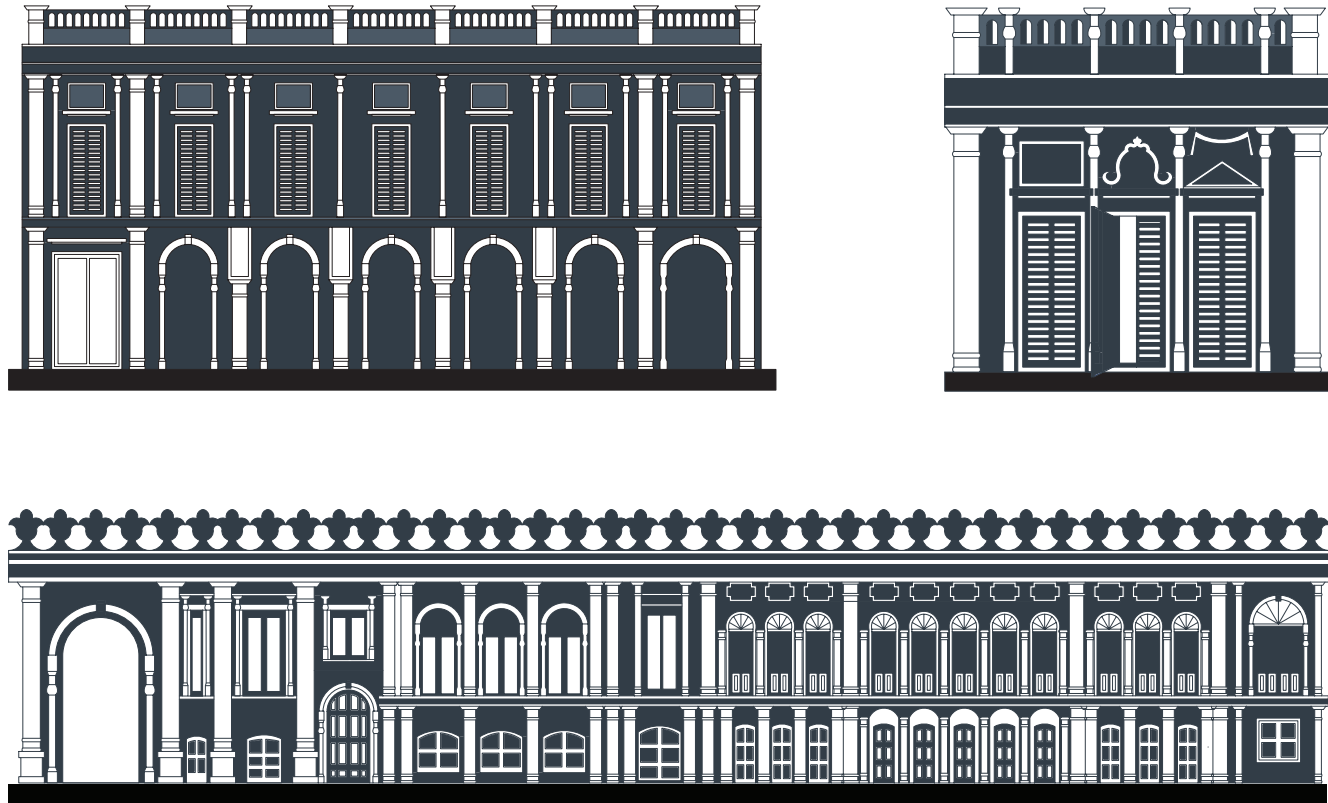


Figure 8.3 Above: Facade of an existing structure on the southern edge of the Qaiserbagh Central Garden. Below: Wall in Western Jilaukhana with details in stucco representing doors, windows, and columns.



*Figure 8.4* Qaiserbagh seen in a panorama by Felice Beato. 1858.

*Source:* Image courtesy of the Getty Museum Collection.

courtyard had pools of water in the center, possibly bathing facilities and the upper levels were accessed via staircases, through “en labyrint af smala gångar och lönrappor” (Lundgren 1905: 192), “a labyrinthine warren of narrow passageways and secret stairways” (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 119). These were domestic spaces—“small cubby-holes and boudoirs where perhaps the harem had resided” (Nilsson and Gupta 1992:119)—not meant for public use or throughfare. While the exterior was predominantly “golden yellow” or yellow ochre, with crimson and white decorations (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 120), some of the interior spaces, in contrast, were painted darker, in black, with intricate details in silver and scarlet (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 119). There is a dramatic contrast between the interior and exterior and the juxtaposition of dark and intimate interior spaces punctured by the bright and muted light brought in by the courtyards. Lavishly adorned and sumptuously furnished with grand chandeliers, girandoles, ornate wall fixtures, furniture embellished with silver and gold, intricately embroidered drapes, and luxurious cashmere tapestries, Alli calls it “the richest seraglio in the world” (1874: 26–27).

The British army was disoriented by the labyrinthine interiors of the zenana but found its flat roof quite navigable because of its continuity (Strange 1893: 182). Colonel Harness ordered a party of men up a stairway, as the roof of the structure would allow for easier navigation (Hay 1939: 141) compared to “forcing their way from room to room,” and the British used it to take control of the precinct, even if that meant being more visible and exposed to attack through the “light open balustrade” (Strange 1893: 182). The British later distributed the peripheral structures—enclosed courtyards—into many properties to give to the *taluqdars*<sup>15</sup> [Figure 8.5].

The central garden was accessed from the east and the west by two lofty ornamental gateways called the Lakhi gates. They were so named owing to their cost of construction which amounted to approximately a lakh rupees each in Wajid’s times (Hilton 1894: 123; Newell 1915: 37; Beg 1911: 64). These were located in line with the Safed Baradari, approximately at the center of the garden.

The Western Lakhi Gate is a square footprint, with two layers of arches on the inner side and one arched opening on the outside. On the inner side, a semicircular arch is enhanced by a protruding decorative trefoil arch. On each of these layers and the tympanum of the inner arch, there are different decorations—such as merpeople and fish and floral motifs. Its columns are decorated with spiral stucco work. The arched opening is flanked by *jharokhas*<sup>16</sup> on the inside only. Atop the gateway are four stairways intersecting as they rise up in the center giving an effect of a crown [top left in Figure 8.6]—a detail seen in many other Lucknow structures such as the Constantia.

While gates are usually ornate on the outside, to mark their significance to a person visiting or approaching from outside, these are more ornate on the garden side. They appear to have served as an interface, a window

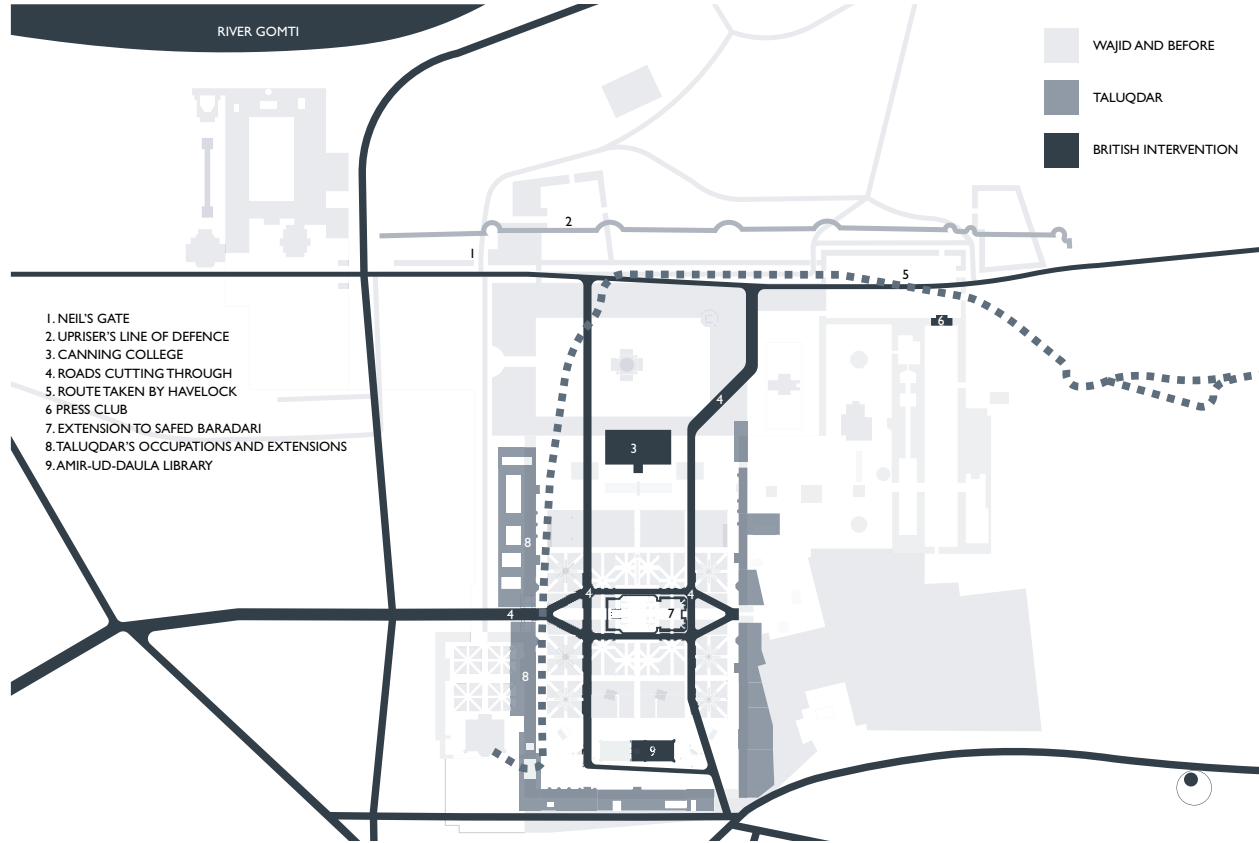


Figure 8.5 Qaiserbagh after the 1857 Uprising.

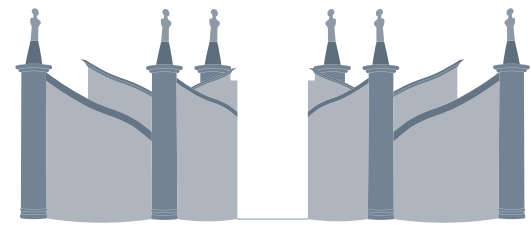


Figure 8.6 Qaiserbagh queer elements.

from the inside to the outside world and not necessarily just a means to enter Qaiserbagh.<sup>17</sup> Hence, the *jharokhas* from which people could watch the activities in the garden. The Western Gate might have also served as a connector between the Chhatar Manzil and the Qaiserbagh for royal movement, hence the presence of the guards.

The outer courtyard which lies west of the Western Lakhī Gate was walled (Beato 1858c, anonymous mid-19th century). The character of the walls of the garden matched the character of the peripheral structures of the central garden of Qaiserbagh, indicating that when Wajid appropriated the Roshan-ud-Daula Kothi for one of his queens, he defined the boundary of it and developed the garden. The garden is laid out as a *charbagh*. Leading from an arched opening in the wall directly opposite the Roshan-ud-Daula Kothi is another courtyard. This wall matches the character of the surrounding structures with details in stucco representing doors, windows, and columns appearing like false openings [Figure 8.3]. The courtyard<sup>18</sup> beyond is lined with several carts. The wall forming the rear edge of this courtyard (Beato 1858c) forms an edge of the structure surrounding Saadat's tomb—possibly part of the royal residential area which continued on the northern periphery of the central garden of Qaiserbagh. There was a direct connection with the Chhatar Manzil complex from this side (Crommelin 1859; Lang *et al.* 1858; Napier 1859a; Bolst *et al.* n.d.; Vanrenen 1870; Kaye 1880).

The character of this wall is also similar to the one of the Roshan-ud-Daula Kothi garden. Another arched gateway, in line with the previous one, led from this courtyard further north (Beato 1858c). Beyond that location one would encounter the Gol Darwaza on the right, in direct orientation of Saadat's tomb occupying a location on the tomb's northwest-southeast axis. The western side of Gol Darwaza is semicircular in plan (the gateway probably gets its name from this feature), scooped out from the structure surrounding Saadat's tomb. This gateway exists today, retaining its character, though in a dilapidated state, engulfed by the surrounding structures.

Located in the same line as the gateways of the Western Jilaukhanas, just adjacent to the outer periphery of the Saadat's tomb, is the Sher Darwaza, now known as Neil's Gate.<sup>19</sup> It was across the China Bazaar road, and possibly provided a connection between the Qaiserbagh and other structures such as the Hiran Khana located to the north of the Qaiserbagh. It is a simple unornamented structure suggesting it was more utilitarian than ceremonial, forming a connection between the structures to the left (Hiran Khana) and the Qaiserbagh (Beato 1858i<sup>20</sup>). The Hiran Khana would have been a menagerie or stables and that the area served as a service segment of the palace.

The Sher Darwaza is symmetrical, with a large central semicircular arched opening, supported on double columns (Beato 1858i). On either side of the central opening are smaller openings. The structure has pilasters with a stucco pattern to give it an appearance of dressed stone. In addition to openings on its surface, it was also decorated with false openings in stucco, as seen in



the Western Jilaukhana. Above the central arched opening was a circular opening located in the gateway's attic. The gateway itself consisted of wings on either side that were demolished post the Uprising (Unknown 1860b, Dannenberg c1867 [Figure 8.7], Alli 1874b). The effect of these demolitions was that the profile of the gateway structure became narrower, and its height reduced. Its proportions aligned with the triumphal arch typology of classical western architecture. The gateway stood as a standalone structure. The conversion of the Sher Darwaza to Neil's Gate then appears intentional, meant to symbolize the victory of the British army and a celebration of their martyr. The gateway, as it stands today, has been extended on either side.<sup>21</sup> This extended structure does bear a resemblance to the gateway as it existed before the post-Uprising demolitions, although still shorter in height. Two yellow sculptures of kneeling lions facing each other have been added to the top of the structure.

A semicircular gateway, the Dara Daulat,<sup>22</sup> appeared at the northwest end of the China Bazaar and in line with another gateway<sup>23</sup> near the Sher Darwaza (Elphinstone 1858; Moorsom 1858; Lang *et al.* 1858; Napier 1859a; Smith 1868). It would have been an elaborate gateway—which might have



*Figure 8.7* China Bazaar seen in a photograph by John Christian Andrew Dannenberg. c1867.

*Source:* Image courtesy of the British Library Visual Arts Collection.

served the purpose of ceremonial movements—from Chhatar Manzil into the Qaiserbagh. Its presence confirms the integrated connection between the Chhatar Manzil, Saadat's tomb, and the Qaiserbagh indicating a movement of the royal family through these structures. The boundaries between Chhatar Manzil and Qaiserbagh were quite porous, the two complexes connecting through a large courtyard (Lang *et al.* 1858). Apart from the structures of the Chhatar Manzil, this court connected the semicircular ceremonial gateway mentioned previously, the Lal Baradari and the Pine Bagh, positioning the Qaiserbagh as an extension of the Chhatar Manzil.

The Western Gate<sup>24</sup> of the China Bazaar (Lang *et al.* 1858; Moorsom 1858; Elphinstone 1858; Crommelin 1859; Smith 1868) was located to the south of the Hiran Khana Court. The gate was integrated with the surrounding colonnade of the *bazaar* on both sides.<sup>25</sup> The eastern facade of the gateway was painted a darker color and adorned with lighter stucco decorations (Unknown 1860b). The gateway featured a large central opening flanked by two rows of smaller niches, openings, and *jharokhas* on either side. The central arch was semicircular, with a trefoil arch positioned in front and slightly higher, resembling the archway of the Lakhi gates. The western facade is characterized by a series of double columns that extend throughout the entire height of the gateway, positioned on either side of the central archway.<sup>26</sup>

The southern periphery of the China Bazaar appears as a series of single storied arched openings (Dannenberg c1867) and the arcade opens onto the road. The arcades would have been part of a covered street, which formed the *bazaar*. Strange (1893: 179) writes of a “colonnade on either side, from which opened little rooms once used as shops, now empty” indicating the nature of this *bazaar*.

Another gateway in line with the Western Gate is the Eastern Gate of the China Bazaar (Dannenberg c1867) [Figure 8.7].<sup>27</sup> These gates would have marked the ends of the China Bazaar. The gates mirrored each other—their facades facing the market were similar, and so were their facades looking away from the market (Dannenberg c1867; Bourne 1864–1865a, 1865–1866; Unknown 1860b).

The British army entered Qaiserbagh through “the great archway at the entrance of the China Bazaar” (Strange 1893: 179) on the eastern end. Moving through the length of the colonnaded *bazaar* they reach its end which is marked by the “gorge of a bastion” (Strange 1893: 180). The British army entered Saadat's Tomb's court—“a mosque inside the Kaiser Bagh enclosure” (Strange 1893: 180).<sup>28</sup> From there the British army moved “under the wall of the Kaiser Bagh” (Strange 1893: 180), possibly on the southern periphery of Saadat's Tomb's court, which also forms the northern edge of the central garden. In this periphery, Havelock had made “a hole in the palace enclosure wall, but only large enough to admit a file of men at a time” (1893: 181).<sup>29</sup> Through this the British army enters the central garden of Qaiserbagh, and from here they enter and loot the surrounding structures [Figure 8.5].

The Northern Jilaukhana was a rectangular courtyard with six gateways, one on the south, two on the west, one on the north, and two on the east



Figure 8.8 China Bagh seen in a photograph by Samuel Bourne. 1865–66.

Source: Image courtesy of Sepia Times/Universal Images Group via Getty Images.

[Figure 8.8].<sup>30</sup> Jilaukhana was a place where royal processions used to parade and form up in preparation to start (Alli 1874: 24; Nevill 1904: 207)—a triumphal gateway (Hilton 1894: 123; Newell 1915: 36; Beg 1911: 63; Hay 1939: 140).<sup>31</sup>

The gate on the south of the *jilaukhana* began to be used as the Press Club, which still exists today. We refer to it as the China Bagh Gate as it served an entry into the China Bagh discussed next [Figure 8.9].<sup>32</sup> A large pointed arch—enhanced by a protruding decorative trefoil arch and the royal insignia above in stucco—formed the central portal of this gateway. This was surmounted by an imposing cornice, and a pediment and finials. The wings on the side were double storied and had one bay with openings and two octagonal projections on either side. The movement through the gateway was along its longer side, entering through its shorter side. The northern face of the gateway is attached to a wall occupying the southern edge of the *jilaukhana* (Bourne 1864–1865a, 1865–1866). The gateway became an isolated structure when the British repaired and retrofitted it to convert it from a gateway into a function specific building which later became the UP Press Club.

Moving south through the gate one would walk through the site of the erstwhile China Bagh or Chini Bagh<sup>33</sup> (Hilton 1894: 123; Newell 1915: 36; Beg 1911: 53; Hay 1939: 140; Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 54). Literally meaning “Chinese garden,” it was so named because it was profusely decorated with China vessels during Wajid’s time.



Figure 8.9 China Bagh Gate seen in a photograph by Francis Frith. c1850–70.

Source: Image courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum Collection.

There is another independently standing structure a little to the south and receded to the west of the China Bagh Gate (Bourne 1865–1866). This structure also has pediments on its two shorter sides, and its longer edge is parallel to the longer side of the China Bagh Gate. The longer side has one large semicircular archway that appears to be closed and several smaller openings. It is possible that the movement through this building was also through its shorter pedimented sides which lie in the north–south direction.

The composition of the aforementioned structure and that of the China Bagh Gate suggest that some buildings were long and linear. The two shorter sides would have pedimented fronts, through which one would pass through a series of arches. The Mermaid Gate also seems to belong to the same typology (Beato 1858j) [Figure 8.10], Tytler and Tytler (c1857–58), Bourne (1860), Saché (c1870), and Rust (c1870s); and Simpson's watercolor (1864a)). There were at least two<sup>34</sup> other consecutive gates behind the Mermaid Gate, seen from inside. The Mermaid Gate has mermaids carved in relief, while the rear ones have fish symbols. Taking a path through the China Bagh Gate and walking south through the China Bagh, we would encounter the second archway on one's right, and the third archway on one's left. The second archway is clearly marked in Crommelin's *Plan* (1859). Taking a right





*Figure 8.10* Mermaid Gate seen in a photograph by Felice Beato. 1858.

*Source:* Image courtesy of the Getty Museum Collection.

and moving further ahead through this archway, one would encounter the Mermaid Gate.

The Mermaid Gate, located within the China Bagh, served as an entry point leading to the Hazrat Bagh. The gate was characterized by stucco mermaids—two situated atop the pediment and two positioned on either side of the central opening. According to Hilton (1894: 123), this portal, flanked by green mermaids, showcased “the worst European taste of the last century.” The gateway exhibited a vibrant burst of polychromy, with the mermaids themselves being green, the archway yellow, and the entablature blue (Tandan 2008: 269). Nawab Ali Naki Khan, the vizier or minister of the king, resided above the Mermaid Gateway to remain in close proximity to the king and be available promptly when required (Hilton 1894: 123; Nevill 1904: 207; Beg 1911: 63).

The Mermaid Gate, with its distinctive stucco mermaids and its role as an entryway to the Hazrat Bagh, played a significant part in the overall architectural composition of the gardens. The Mermaid Gate stood as a testament to the nawabi interest in eclecticism and polychromy, incorporating elements of European aesthetics while retaining its own unique identity.

Passing through the Mermaid Gate, one would enter the Hazrat Bagh (Hilton 1894: 123; Nevill 1904: 207; Newell 1915: 36; Hay 1939: 140; Sharaf 1975 (1913–1920): 64). This garden is located south of the Jilaukhana, west of the China Bagh and Mermaid Gate, and to the northeast of the Eastern Lakhi Gate, in these maps. Vanrenen is the only one who explicitly provides a name to the garden, marking it as “Huzrut Bagh” (Vanrenen 1870). Wajid used the two names, Huzur Bagh and Hazrat Bagh, for the same garden. It is possible that he upgraded an already existing Hazrat Bagh and subsequently named it Huzur Bagh.<sup>35</sup> Wajid (2017 (1848–1849): 102–103) ordered two canals to be constructed: Chashma-e-Shirin (40 *gaz*<sup>36</sup>) and Chashma-e-Faiz (10–15 *gaz*<sup>37</sup>) each with fountains on either side. One ran in the north–south direction. He planted *karaunda* (*Carissa carandas*) trees laden with fruits and flowers; *gulab* (*Rosa indica*) flower beds; lush green *kamrakh* (*Averrhoa carambola*) trees; exotic varieties, such as *seb* (*Malus pumila*), *nashpati* (*Pyrus communis* L.), *shaftalu* (*Prunus persica*), *hazara narangi* (baby tangerines), *vilayati narangi* (*Citrus tangerina*), and *amrood* (*Psidium guajava* L.). He allocated one orchard each for each variety, never overlapping. Species were planted numbering to almost 1,000 each. All trees were maintained to the same sizes. Flowering plants that he writes of include *gul savani* (*Pyrus malus*), *gul sevati* (*Chrysanthemum indicum*), *nasrin* (white narcissus), *chameli* (*Jasminum officinale*), and *guldaudi* (*Dendranthema grandiflora*), which were all planted in separate gardens, and *mehndi* (*Lawsonia inermis*) hedges were planted to protect each flower garden.

On all sides of the bagh were wide paths wide enough to let three horse-drawn carriages go side-by-side [Figure 8.11]. These paths had *moonj* (*Tripidium bengalense*) planted on either side, the branches of which touched each other across the paths. On account of such shadedness, one such path was called Thandi Sadak, which literally translates to mean cool street. Banana trees were planted so close to each other that their leaves entangled to not let sunlight pass through and Wajid would sit under such a shade and enjoy listening to recitations he had penned himself, one of them being a masnavi titled, *Afsaana-e-Ishq* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 106).<sup>38</sup>

There appear to have been three structures within the Hazrat Bagh: the Chandiwali Baradari or the Silver Baradari so named owing to its floor of polished silver, with “columns and roof . . . originally, covered with silver” (Alli 1874: 24).<sup>39</sup> The second and third are Khas Muqam/Khas Mukam/Khas Maqam along with the Badshah Manzil which formed the royal residences, erected by Saadat Ali Khan.<sup>40</sup> Wajid improvised and integrated these structures with the new Qaiserbagh layout, especially the Khas Makan which was upgraded to remain pleasant for occupation during the scorching summer months (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 103).

On an occasion when he invited one of his lovers to his residence in Badshah Manzil (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 45–46), he had the garden of the palace prepared for the meeting. Fountains were brought alive, and seats were placed in the vicinity (f.66v of the *Ishqnamah*, Unknown, c1850r)





Figure 8.11 Hazrat Bagh seen in an opaque watercolor with metallic paints by an unknown artist. Part of Ishqnamah manuscript, c1850.

Source: Image courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

[Figure 8.12]. There is a walled enclosure at the rear suggesting that the garden occupies a more private part of the palace. The garden is quite formal, with a geometrical layout, hard paved, and having formal spaces for plantations. In the center of the garden is a wide terrace having a square fountain, from which canals flow in two directions—each with several fountains, ending at the pavilions. The terrace is prepared for the lovers to meet, having a curtained bed and a cushioned seat on either side of the central fountain. Wajid and his lover are seated on the left on the cushioned seat where they are possibly engaged in conversation, the curtained bed on the other side hints at the forthcoming intimate nature of the scene. The garden has three structures—one at the rear and two on the left and right. The structure on the rear of the garden seems to be a *baradari* raised on a terrace; it could also be a balcony, window, or terrace projecting from the structure behind the wall. The two structures on either side of the terrace are similar to each other, light kiosk-like structures, and one of them has curtains.

A fourth structure in Hazrat Bagh is the Naginawali *Baradari* (bejeweled *baradari*) (Mookherjee 2003 (1883): 234; Alli 1874: 16; Trivedi 1977: 196).<sup>41</sup> This structure was removed to the Wingfield Park—a park developed by the British post 1857 in the erstwhile Banarasi Bagh area of Lucknow, as a memorial to Charles Wingfield, chief commissioner of Awadh (1859–1866). It was a marble *baradari* which was like the Taj Mahal once “inlaid with precious stones” (Alli 1874: 16).<sup>42</sup> The “*barahdari*, a light, open building where musicians and dancers could perform, and a beautiful

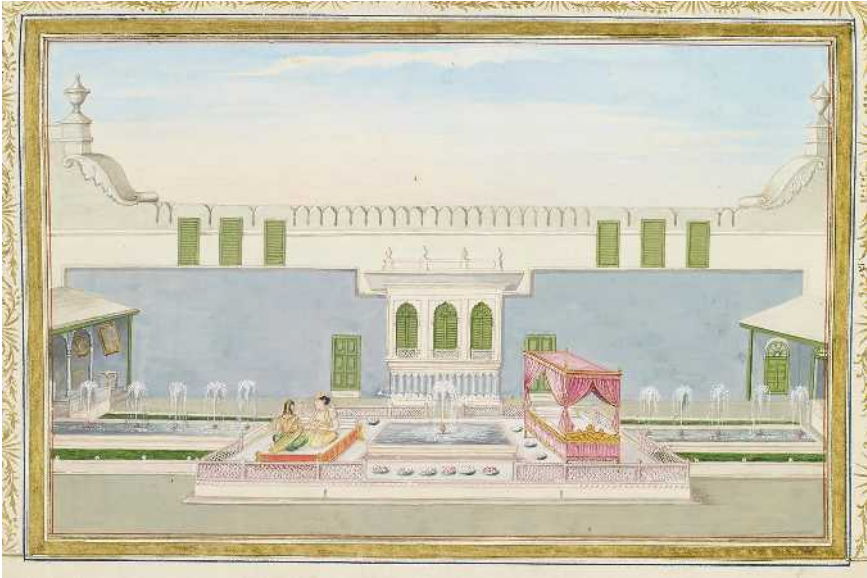


Figure 8.12 Badshah Manzil seen in an opaque watercolor with metallic paints by an unknown artist. Part of *Ishqnamah* manuscript, c1850.

Source: Image courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

Mughal inspired marble pavilion . . . subsequently dismantled by the British and re-erected in Banarasi Bagh . . .” (Llewellyn-Jones 1999: 17) refer to the Chandiwali Baradari and the Naginawali Baradari, respectively. The statuary in the gardens appeared unusual in their juxtapositions—“curiously outré groupings, Venus and Cupid and in juxtaposition an English cow” (Llewellyn-Jones 1999: 17). Both Chandiwali Baradari and Badshah Manzil seem to have survived until at least 1874.<sup>43</sup> One of them occupies the center of the garden, the other a bit to the north. The path curved to the south from the gate, and making the central structure, Chandiwali Baradari, appear to the right of the visitor (Crommelin 1859; Hilton 1894:123; Nevill 1904: 207; Newell 1915: 36; Beg 1911: 63; Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 64).<sup>44</sup>

Falak Sair was a structure dear to Wajid, which he built in the center of the Huzur Bagh for use in Monsoon season<sup>45</sup> (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 103). It was an elevated pavilion, open on all sides, with slender columns, and furnished with roll-down curtains<sup>46</sup> [Figure 8.13]. *Rahas*—a dance drama performed especially during the evening (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 117) took place here and women who observe *purdah* could be within the pavilion, watching a dance performance from behind *chilmans* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 118).<sup>47</sup> Wajid would be seated outside the pavilion watching the performances surrounded by his younger brother and *paris* seated next to him (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 117). Lamps of colorful glass lamps, decorative chairs, and couches adorn the setting.



Figure 8.13 Falak Sair seen in an opaque watercolor with metallic paints by an unknown artist. Part of *Ishqnamah* manuscript, c1850.

Source: Image courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

Wajid also mentions another small structure which was part of the Huzur Bagh, which has a small water tank within it. The tank was lined with flower pots (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 103). Neither of the two structures appear in the colonial archives accessed so far.<sup>48</sup>

North of the Chandiwali Baradari was, probably, the Khas Makan (Lang *et al.* 1858; Bolst *et al.* n.d.; Kaye 1880; Military Department n.d.), which followed a similar typology as that of the central garden of Qaiserbagh, albeit at a relatively smaller scale. A central structure in a courtyard forms the royal residence, enclosed by habitable built form all around. The similarity suggests a possibility that the surrounding built mass housed a part of Wajid's zenana before the construction of the Qaiserbagh. The Khas Makan is likely to have been a part of the zenana (f.113v of *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850ac), which permitted male access to these spaces on occasion. The structure was leveled to ground by 1874 (Alli 1874: 24–25), perhaps in a cannon attack (Napier 1859a).

Wajid writes of having trees maintained with such dense foliage so that not a drop could fall through them. It is in this section, he also writes about a huge mulberry tree, under which was placed a large marble *chauki* (seat). Every Friday, *paris* and singers would congregate here [Figure 8.14]. The mulberry tree was part of the Huzur Bagh.<sup>49</sup> Alternatively, the mulberry tree could have been located beyond the Eastern Lakhi Gate (Nevill 1904: 207; Hilton 1894: 123; Beg 1911: 64; Newell 1915: 36). Huzur Bagh emerges as a site of several theatrical performances, events, and celebratory gatherings.

The Eastern Lakhi Gate projected outward from the adjacent built mass (Crommelin 1859) and appeared much deeper than the western one. As they





Figure 8.14 Mulberry tree seen in an opaque watercolor with metallic paints by an unknown artist. Part of Ishqnamah manuscript, c1850.

Source: Image courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

stand today however, in terms of scale, proportion, and detailing, the eastern gate appears to be a mirror image of the western one. The Eastern Lakhi Gate was an entry into the central garden,<sup>50</sup> well into the colonial period. Individuals participating in the festivities at the annual Jogi Mela were required to dress as *faqees* or *jogis* in order to pass through it (Newell 1915: 36–37). The opaque watercolor and gold painting, *Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh in the Qaiser Bagh, Lucknow* (anonymous, mid-19th century) shows the inner face of the Eastern Lakhi Gate in the background, with many people dressed in simple clothes nearby. The painting appears to be a scene of a fair in which Wajid opened the Qaiserbagh premises to the citizens.

Having presented the nawabi sites in a sequential manner, piecing together archival and material evidence, we invite our readers to explore their queer potential in the upcoming chapters.

## Notes

- 1 A building having 12 doors.
- 2 Dannenberg c1858 and c1870; Bourne and Shepherd 1864–1865c; Unknown c1863–1887a; Unknown c1863–1887b; and Therond c1878
- 3 Rousselet does not provide any description but instead chooses the Lanka to sketch (Rousselet 1975 (1882)) as a representation of Qaiserbagh rationalizing the

- choice by saying that is “one of [Qaiserbagh’s] least ridiculous parts” (Rousselet 1975 (1882): 517).
- 4 His use of words such as “fédrotnningens” (Lundgren 1905: 192), which means *fairy queen*, and “förtrollade” (Lundgren 1905: 192), which means *enchanted*, conjures an image of a fantastical setting.
  - 5 Anonymous, mid-19th century.
  - 6 A painting dated September 9, 1855 (Unknown 1855), shows this scene during Muharram.
  - 7 Lucknow Society refers to Kamal-ud-din Haider’s *Qaiser-ut-Tawarikh* (volume 2), which gives an account of Syed Mehdi Hasan having returned from a pilgrimage to Karbala, with a *zarib* (replica of the tomb of Imam Hussein).
  - 8 A plaque next to Bhatkhande suggests so.
  - 9 *Index Plan of Kaiserbagh Buildings of Lucknow* (District Engineer Lucknow 1899) shows Canning College at the location of present-day Bhatkhande Music Institute.
  - 10 Lang *et al.* (1858); Bolst *et al.* (n.d.); Military Department (n.d.); Crommelin (1859); Napier (1859a); and Kaye (1880).
  - 11 Unknown (c1863–1887c) provides photographic evidence of fenced areas adjacent to the water body. These are the only two structures in the painting having fences; hence, the photograph is certainly of the same structure.
  - 12 Burman (2021: 17) and Llewellyn-Jones (2014: 141) mention Wajid having written about a house named Rashk-e-Eram (which means “envy of paradise”) that served as both a living space and a school for the *paris*. The *Parikhana* text does not use the word Rashk-e-Eram.
  - 13 According to *Parikhana*, the meaning of *turk* is Muslim (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 84). Burman’s note that the Rashk-e-Eram was guarded by female African slaves just like other *zenana* buildings (Burman 2021: 17) is also in conflict with Wajid’s note on having employed female guards at the Parikhana. Wajid did not necessarily see the female guards as slaves, nor has he emphasized on the ethnic descent of the guards in his writing (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 59).
  - 14 Describing the Rashk-e-Eram, Burman and Llewellyn-Jones argue that the women were not permitted to leave its confines. *Parikhana*, however, provides several examples of women, such as Najmunissa, Amman, and Imaman, who could freely move in and out of the Parikhana (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 60).
  - 15 Colonial maps (Lang *et al.*’s 1858; Bolst *et al.* n.d.; Military Department n.d.; Crommelin 1859; Napier 1859a; Vanrenen 1870; and Kaye 1880) show the periphery. *Crommelin (1859)* is a bit more specific in providing details of the protrusions and setbacks in the periphery. District Engineer Lucknow (1899) is the most detailed.
  - 16 *Jharokha* means window with lattice or curtains, window of an oriel.
  - 17 Anonymous (mid-19th century) shows both the gates in the same fashion, even while showing the external front of the western and the internal front of the eastern one. White, yellow, and gold colors are used in its rendering. It shows a scene during a fair, in which Wajid would open up Qaiserbagh to people. The Western Lakhi Gate is guarded by soldiers, which means that this entry was not meant for public movement, even during the fair.
  - 18 This courtyard forms the foreground where uniformed soldiers are camping in Anonymous (mid-19th century).
  - 19 It was here a British military officer, James George Smith Neill, died during the Uprising near this gate, which led the British to commemorate it as Neil’s Gate, and this is how it is also known today. It doesn’t seem to be of much significance during Nawabi times, but gained significance owing to being the site of Neil’s death. That emphasis is apparent in the colonial archive (Hilton 1894: 124; Beg 1911: 65–66; Hay 1939: 208).

- 20 Smith (1868), Moorsom (1858), and Powell (1858) show the footprints of the structures seen on the left of the Beato (1858i) image.
- 21 Considering that the gateway is the property of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), it is quite possible that the extensions were part of a later intervention undertaken by the ASI. It still continues to remain a standalone structure but the proportions do not resemble a victory arch.
- 22 Supplementary notes and statistics to Nevill's Gazetteers published 12 years later mention an old gateway by the name of Dara Daulat and Chinabaz Gate (Govt. of India 1916: 48). Our conjecture is that it is this gateway that the supplementary notes are referring to. That gate does not exist today, nor has it appeared in any imagery that we have accessed until now.
- 23 This gate is the Western Gate of China Bazaar. It is also shown in Crommelin (1859) titled as Gate.
- 24 Unknown (1860b) and Dannenberg (c1867) show this gateway.
- 25 In a black-and-white photograph (Unknown 1860b), taken from a slightly elevated angle near Sadaat Ali's tomb, we can observe this *Western Gate of the China Bazaar* in the foreground, while the Sher Darwaza and Chhatar Manzil complex appear in the background. The gate is depicted as a separate structure, although historical maps and texts indicate otherwise.
- 26 Another depiction of the *Western Gate of the China Bazaar* can be found in Dannenberg's *View* (c1867). This image, taken from the Chhatar Manzil, presents the Sher Darwaza in the foreground and showcases the two tombs and the Qaiserbagh garden in the background. Once again, the gateway appears as a distinct structure, and this time we can observe its western facade.
- 27 Bourne (1864–1865a, 1865–1866) shows its eastern facade.
- 28 Napier (1859a) marks Saadat's tomb as a mosque, indicating that even Strange could have mistaken the tomb to be a mosque, and considers the tomb's court as part of the Qaiserbagh.
- 29 Bolst *et al.* (n.d.), Lang *et al.* (1858), and Napier (1859a) show the advance of British troops through the arcades of the China Bazaar to enter the court of Saadat's tomb—indicating a cut made for movement through the bazaar. This cut becomes a distinct opening in the built form in Crommelin (1859) and a road in Vanrenen (1870).
- 30 The first three are seen in Bourne (1864–1865a, 1865–1866). Archival maps such as Lang *et al.* (1858) and Kaye (1880) show six gates. These two maps also are the only maps that clearly mark the footprint of the *jilaukhana*. In Napier (1859a) only one of the two gates on the west and that on the south are seen. The *jilaukhana* is discernible in the edges marked by remnants of defense lines. Crommelin (1859) shows just one entryway on the south, and there is no indication of the footprint of the *jilaukhana*.
- 31 This interpretation could potentially stem from a misreading of Nevill's work, previous colonial descriptions, or translations of Persian texts that discuss the Qaiserbagh. In his writings, Nevill refers to an open space, accessed through a gateway known as the Jilaukhana. It is possible that the colonial descriptions mentioned earlier misinterpreted this term, mistakenly attributing it to the gateway itself instead of the space it provided access to.
- 32 Francis Frith's photograph (c1850–1870a) shows this gateway from the south, i.e. the face that fronted the China Bagh. This structure also appears in Bourne (1864–1865a, 1865–1866) seen from the east, which is the gate's longer side.
- 33 Nevill mistakenly calls it the Chini Bazaar (1904: 207). Bourne's photographs (1864–1865a, 1865–1866) show an empty space in this area.
- 34 On Lang's *Plan* (1858), we see three consecutive archways in the approximate east–west direction.



- 35 In *Parikhana* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 76–77, 83, 152) Wajid mentions Hazrat Bagh (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 103–106) and Huzur Bagh (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 103) as he provides anecdotes from his personal life. Interestingly in Wajid’s memoir, a structure—Falak Sair—is part of the Hazrat Bagh (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 88) as well as the Huzur Bagh (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 104). Additionally, Wajid explicitly provides an elaborate description of how he undertook landscaping of the Huzur Bagh, a name he himself conferred on the garden after the project was complete (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 103). Using this evidence, we can conjecture two things. In Urdu, *Huzur* and *Hazrat* are synonymous titles of respect. This could also be a reason for the two names. The colonial archive does not use the name *Huzur Bagh* at all, and only refers to the garden as *Hazrat Bagh*.
- 36 1 gaz = 9 square feet. 40 gaz = 360 square feet.
- 37 10–15 gaz = 90–135 square feet.
- 38 Llewellyn-Jones reads a similar instance in the *Ishqnamah* and locates the event in Hazrat Bagh (2014: 54), corroborating our interpretation that the Huzur Bagh and the Hazrat Bagh are the same.
- 39 According to Alli, the Chandiwali Baradari was used as the office of the Oudh Gazette and later sold off to a private individual (1874: 24).
- 40 Llewellyn-Jones identifies these structures as the “Makan-i-Khass” and the “Shahinshah Manzil,” respectively (2014: 61).
- 41 Trivedi (1977: 196) references Lalji’s *Mirat-ul Auza* to enlist “Baradari-i-Nagina” in the Qaiserbagh.
- 42 *Nagina* means precious stones, and hence, it is easy to discern that Alli is referencing the same structure. Similarly, Trivedi enlists “Baradari-i-Nagina.”
- 43 In colonial maps (Lang *et al.* 1858; Crommelin 1859; Napier 1859a; Vanrenen 1870; Bolst *et al.* n.d.; and Kaye 1880; Military Department n.d.; Baedeker 1914), there is a rather large footprint of a standalone structure in the middle of the Hazrat Bagh, in line with the Mermaid Gate. When Alli says, “On the right is the ‘Chandeeewalee Barradurree’” (1874: 24), and “Close by, ‘Badshah Munzil’ is seen” (1874: 25), he is describing what he is seeing. Considering the closeness of Vanrenen’s and Alli’s records, we conjecture that the two structures seen in Vanrenen’s *City* (1870) are Chandiwali Baradari and Badshah Manzil.
- 44 Structures—albeit of differing footprints—are located at the same locations in other maps (Lang *et al.* 1858; Crommelin 1859; Bolst *et al.* n.d.; and Kaye 1880; Military Department n.d.; Baedeker 1914).
- 45 Llewellyn-Jones, too, mentions the presence of the *Falak Sair* (2014: 61).
- 46 Corresponding to this description are f.210v and f.221v (Unknown c1850bh, c1850bk) show a conical roof pavilion in which Wajid is seated centrally. In the former, Wajid is awarding a robe of honor to *khwajasaras* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 87), and in the latter, he is having a party with his friends (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 88).
- 47 *Chilmans* are illustrated to show crisscrossing reeds behind which women are shown as vague impressions.
- 48 Crommelin (1859) shows two other smaller standalone structures on either side of the Chandiwali Baradari, a smaller structure north of the Badshah Manzil, and one other structure near the Eastern Lakhi Gate. Any of these could be the Naginawali Baradari, the Falak Sair, and the unnamed structure having a water tank of which Wajid writes. However, given the fact that Wajid built the Falak Sair in the center of the garden, we can see a stark similarity in the location of Chandiwali Baradari and Falak Sair, leading us to speculate if the two structures were the same. However, there is an absence of any reference to the use of silver by Wajid, making it difficult to conclusively conclude that these were the same structure.

- 49 An enclosed garden space is seen in the backdrop in f.289r (Unknown 1850cf) surrounded by white walls and arched pavilions. We can see such a similar composition in Crommelin (1859).
- 50 In Beato's image (1858c) both the Western and Eastern Lakhī Gates are seen. However, it is Alli's photograph (1874c) that carries the British Library note explicitly marking it as the Eastern Gate. Two images (Tytler and Tytler 1858; and Unknown c1860–1870b) appear to be that of one of the Lakhī gates. These could be of the Western Lakhī Gate, seen in most colonial maps (Lang *et al.* 1858; Crommelin 1859; Napier 1859a; Bolst *et al.* n.d.; Kaye 1880; Baedeker 1914).

## 9 Of Vaudeville Variety

Nawabi architecture lends itself to a reading as enactment through its expression of excess, variety, theatricity, and plurality. It presents itself as an expression of interchangeability, of multivalence in what today may be seen as a form of drag particular to its own context.

### Multivalence, Ambiguity, and Plurality

A variety of building elements came together in nawabi buildings, contributing to the diversification of architecture while also disorienting the established formalist standards through which they were read. Many were sites of typological and compositional variety, showing affective proximities between and among structures, not always following formal compositional rules. In the Qaiserbagh, for example, mausoleum and royal residence, harem, and *kathak* training school were interspersed with vineyards, trellises, and several terraces for musical performances. Building elements contribute almost poetically to buildings becoming an extension of the nawabs' personality and often of the culture of inclusivity they sustained. Race, gender, and class found safe environments that fostered self-expression at the nawabi courts, to which each was able to bring its own specificity. These sites, thus, became grounds for the existing intersectional inhabitance to manifest and perform its mutual interdependencies and tensions.

The reading of nawabi buildings through a formalist lens, most frequently practiced by the colonial archive, is then justifiably insufficient. The concept of typological fixity—rather the concept of typology itself—in the formalist reading of a building or space considers buildings to be univalent, i.e. serving a single function, or having one core or major function, with other uses being peripheral or subordinate. The built forms that emerged in Lucknow, however, were an extension of the nawabs' "queer" bodies, a reflection and embodiment of their complex personalities, their desires, their non-normative forms of politics, and their projection of themselves, positioning themselves alongside the Europeans—whether in comparison, contrast, resistance, or rivalry. Many of these sites were dynamic and temporal in that they were always changing in response to multiple factors such as festivals,

celebrations, and performances. They were—in a word—multivalent, a term with close ties with the history of queer studies. They were sites that served varying purposes even though seemingly incongruent and constituted overlapping realms. These sites formed a queer world—a space of multiple possibilities, in flux, without a fixed identity, and able to constantly adapt. The emergent forms and constituent architectural elements were free from restrictions imposed by functional typologies. Instead, they emerged as they are due to various factors, such as performativity, hybridity, artistic vision, local material, and craftsmanship.

The word multivalence describes a characteristic of that which has or is susceptible to many applications, interpretations, meanings, or values. Multivalence, as multivalued, offers an opportunity for elements to hold shifting values, thereby allowing elements to assume multiple characteristics or multiple identities.<sup>1</sup> Scholarly work on gender, sexuality, and space proffers multivalence as a defining characteristic of a queer space. Aaron Betsky (Betsky 1997: 18) uses the words “ambivalent, open, leaky, self-critical or ironic and ephemeral,” to describe queer space—spaces that queer people conceive of or use, in a multivalent way. A multivalent queer space is one of “unfixed or flexible identity,” a space of multiple possibilities, a flexible space that “reflects the self-expression of the users” (Campos 2014: 105). Multivalence, as it appears in this text, also correlates to Lucas Crawford’s description of dynamic temporality,<sup>2</sup> as space that is “always changing in response to multiple factors, . . . and that disposes with the notion of any normal, natural, default, or ideal state.” The very state of these spaces, Crawford says, is change (Crawford 2015: 4).

### *Accommodating Leisure, Female Gaze, and Dissent*

The Sangi Dalan Court space acted as a gendered space with its swings, personal mosque, *etc.* It was simultaneously a court with the *masnad*, a place to receive guests, and spaces for breakfast and dinner. It also had a dance hall for entertaining guests and the nobility. The courtyard performed many functions—simultaneously private and public, political and leisurely. The covered passageway made the space cordoned off for use by women of the palace, while the elaborate structures provided active invitations to the European state guests such as Valentia and the Daniells to soak up the court life of the palace.

The *zenana* of the Panch Mahalla and, by extension, its terraces were primarily meant for use by women. They were involved in breeding pigeons, and the terrace tops of the palaces were bustling with men, women, and birds (Bhasin 2018: 142). It is possible that the women kept pigeons on top of terraces of the *zenana*, and men used other terraces for pigeon keeping. However, Gladwin observes that “boys” had access to the terraces in the *zenana*.

Though he did not have access to the *zenana* or to its terraces, he describes them in some detail (1785: 391) and writes from a place of distance, from where he assumes the terraces to be univalent—used for pigeon breeding. It

is, perhaps, due to his lack of access and his visualizing pigeons soaring in skies above the terraces from outside, such as the one seen in the *View of the Palace of Nawab Asaf-ud-daulah at Lucknow* (Hodges 1783) and *Lucknow Panorama* (1826b). In Hodges's *View* (1783), latticed structures are seen in the terraces of the Panch Mahalla area over which numerous pigeons are hovering. In the *Lucknow Panorama* (1826b), the soaring of pigeons is seen above the eastern end of the Durbar Court and not above the zenana.

Although Gladwin uses the term “boys,” it is possible that these individuals were young men. The roofs of the zenana would have provided a visual connection to the inner court of the Panch Mahalla area. It would be accessed from within the court. The individuals on the terraces could, hence, observe and communicate with those in the court and habitation spaces on the lower floor. The term “boys” is an assumption that a person lesser in age is not seen as a threat in a gendered space. The “boy” is an employee, having no agency. Hence, it aligns with Gladwin's understanding of a zenana in which the women would have more agency over people who are lesser in age and in social status, despite their gender. The terraces also served several purposes such as recreation, spaces for forming friendships, and spaces for kite-flying, among others. Pavilions on the terrace would provide shaded retreat from the heat allowing women to enjoy the cool breeze. They would provide a space overlooking the river to view activities, such as the *nawab wazir* on his boat (Daniell and Caunter 1835a: 128), animal fights taking place on the opposite bank, and people on the streets below, and carnivals held on the banks of the river. Presence of pavilions, such as the ones seen in illustrations by Hodges (1783), Daniell (1789b, 1802a, 1802b), and Longcroft (c1789b), are further testimony to the multivalent use of zenana terraces. These spaces ensured women could look at the urban life of the city, providing them an elevated and protected position yet visual access to the ongoings of the city. An opportunity to look out, from an advantageous elevated position is an opportunity to look away from the domesticities, to cast a female gaze, to objectify and indulge in the city life.

Women's presence and agency is also evident, unexpectedly, through a reading of the Bada Imambada, which offered itself as a site of protest in 1812—when women of the Khurd Mahal came from Faizabad and lodged themselves here in protest of the reinstating of Tehsin Ali Khan (Pemble 1960: 38–39).<sup>3</sup> Tehsin Ali Khan, a *khwajasara*, was a manager of Nawab Shuja-ud-Daula's gynaeceum at Faizabad, and favorite of Shuja-ud-Daula's chief wife, Bahu Begum. Asaf appointed Tehsin as the *darogah* (superintendent) of the *tosha khana*<sup>4</sup> to maintain the personal effects and valuables of the ruler and the royal household. However, the nawab Sadat Ali Khan did not favor Tehsin as much as Asaf. Hence, when the royal women at Faizabad complained of him having cheated and insulted them, the nawab removed Tehsin from the office. Baillie, prompted by Bahu Begam—who also favored Tehsin—coerced the nawab into reinstating Tehsin Ali. This caused the *begums* to come all the way from Faizabad and stage a *dharna* (sit-in) at the Imambada for four months. The Imambada in this event is available as a space where royal

women—who were necessarily confined to *purdah*—are able to assemble and express their political dissent openly. Despite the protest having not reached a conclusion in favor of the dissenters, the Imambada sustains that protest for an extended period of time—four months. The Imambada becomes that space that is able to accommodate the political and dissenting voice of women. In that accommodation, it extends the multivalent nature of its public space to that of an active site of protest.

*Combining the Aesthetic of the Austere, the Extravagant, and the Industrial*

An image of a brightly lit kaleidoscopic ballroom is conjured when we read about “the absolute profusion inside the Bada Imambada of chandeliers of all shapes and sizes and the huge stands for lamps or candles, . . . made from highly decorated china, coloured glass or metals” (Llewellyn-Jones 1985: 203). It highlights Asaf’s unconventional aesthetic that is able to combine the austerity of religion with celebratory color and light. These chandeliers and decorations do not have an exclusive religious significance; rather, they indicate the urban nature of the space.<sup>5</sup> In a watercolor (Anonymous 1812) Asaf is seen holding audience with religious leaders, and at times in concert with poets and musicians at the Bada Imambada. For Asaf the realms of religious discourse coincide, even flow into realms of artistic expression. This indicates the multiplicity of use that Asaf envisages for the Imambada.

The descriptions of the Bada Imambada from the colonial archive, and the uses attributed to the structure by the writers, vary not only based on the timeline of the description, but also based on which point in the year they visited the space. A colonial writer visiting during Muharram,<sup>6</sup> for example, would perceive the space completely differently from one visiting at another time during the year, thereby valorizing one use or function over the others. Even though the colonial writer, more often than not, has attributed a univalent function to the space, yet a variety of uses comes to the fore. The following paragraphs are a chronological compilation of various instances of how the space has been read in a univalent fashion by the European writers. Those instances, when pieced together, reveal the essentially multivalent nature of the Imambada.

Tennant (1803: 405) refers to the “Imaumbary” typology as “burying places.” Valentia, however, who visits during the celebration of Muharram, observes the “double purpose” of the structure—to celebrate the festival of Muharram, and to serve as a burial place for the nawab (Valentia 1809: 157).<sup>7</sup> Heber might have implied the multivalent nature of the place, when he wrote about a “noble gallery, in the midst of which, under a brilliant tabernacle of silver, cut glass, and precious stones, lie buried the remains of its founder, Asuphud Dowlah” (Heber 1828: 65). The ambiguity in the term “noble gallery” specifically indicates multivalence. The word “noble” comes from Latin *nobilis* to mean knowable, known, well-known, famous, celebrated, high-born, of noble birth, or excellent. Heber in using the word



noble might be referring to the users of the place but also to the opulence. “Noble” also means righteous or virtuous. If this is what Heber meant, he might be referring to the religious activities taking place in the space. The third meaning of “noble” is magnificent or majestic. This meaning conveys a sense of overpowering scale that offers an experience of splendor to the visitor. Similarly, the word “gallery” holds multiple meanings. From Old French *galerie*, it means a long portico; and from Medieval Latin *galeria*, perhaps an alteration of *galilea*, it means church porch. According to *Roget’s 21st Century Thesaurus*, “gallery” means colonnade, arcade, repository, museum, tomb, vault, gathering room, and a place where valuables are kept. The central hall is perceived by the colonial visitors as a colonnade or an arcade, as they read the structure on the basis of its constituent building elements. It is a repository of tazias, houses a collection of chandeliers, a museum of models, and symbols of martyrs. It holds the tomb of Asaf. It is a vaulted hall owing to its construction but is also a vault—enclosed for safekeeping of precious objects of religious significance.

Von Orlich experienced and described it as a solemn religious place where devotees come to listen to a priest chant verses from the Koran. By this time, the British writers had begun to explicitly write about their disapproval of the nawabi culture. In this case, von Orlich believed that a solemn religious place gets “deprived of all dignity or solemnity,” by ornamentation. He considered “lamps, chandeliers, bells, pictures, and birds, with which [the Imambada] is bedizened” to be “mean and trifling” (von Orlich 1845: 102). “Bedizen” means to dress or adorn in a showy, gaudy, or tasteless manner. Hence, the choice of the word also reveals the inherent bias and righteousness in the tone that asserts what a religious place should be like. Bayard Taylor described his first fleeting impression of the Imambada—a “tomb” and a “manufactory of chandeliers.”<sup>8</sup> The expression “manufactory” communicates not only an excess of chandeliers but also assigns an industrial size and scale to the structure. Possibly the Imambada appeared to be a “manufactory”<sup>9</sup>—because of the way the chandeliers and candelabra, big and small, were placed in the building. Taylor presumably attributed an industrial character to the structure because he found the entire interior filled with “immense pyramids of silver, gold, prismatic crystals and colored glass.” Chandeliers either hung from the ceiling, or were placed on the floor “[rising] in radiant piles.” They were placed without any intelligible order and without sufficient space to walk beside them—as if they were waiting to be transported somewhere, or were in the middle of a manufacturing process. The religious aesthetic of the Imambada in this description takes on an industrial tone.

Keene (1875: 103), who wrote much after the Uprising and probably who witnessed the Muharram celebrations, provides “Patriarch’s Place” to be the exact meaning of the word *imambada*. According to him, it is a title conferred to a building dedicated to Muharram. When Keene visited, the British army had appropriated the building for military purposes. Hence, he found the building devoid of all decorations and uses which he read about previously.<sup>10</sup>

For Hoey (Hoey 1885: 93) the Imambada was a repository of tazias, a site of ritual activity of the *taziadurs* where the citizens would visit to watch. Identifying the Imambada as the most important of the “old solemn sepulchres of a better age,” Fuhrer too attributed a univalent function of a tomb to the Imambada (Fuhrer 1891: 265). Later, when Hilton wrote tourist guidebooks for a primarily British audience, drawing heavily on earlier writings, he repeated this description (Hilton 1891: 115). This is significant because Hilton’s work was instrumental in shaping the British imagination of the Imambada Complex, which they looked forward to visiting during Muharram, when the structure was illuminated, and a day set apart for European visitors. This implies that by this time, the site had become more than just a site for observation of mourning. It was also now a site for the performance of mourning, a site where Europeans could consume the spectacle of mourning.

Fergusson (1910: 328) and later Sharar (1975 (1913–1920): 47) stress on the purpose of building the Imambada to be that of providing relief to the suffering citizens during the famine of 1784.<sup>11</sup>

Newell(1915:18), on nearing the Imambada, receives “a curious impression,” curious because it was “at once solemn and bright.” What Newell finds “curious”—strange, unusual, queer—is in fact a successful visual expression of multivalence.<sup>12</sup> Acknowledging the presence of Asaf’s tomb, Newell labels the Imambada as a “well-ordered museum, or historical show-place, [which annually] awakens from . . . official lethargy, [when its] myriad crystal chandeliers burst into sudden flame, and tomb and Tazias assume still further splendours in honour of Moharram” (Newell 1915: 19). Newell’s is one of the earliest mentions of “steep flights of seemingly endless steps, and dark tortuous corridors, lead upwards to the sunlight of the roof” (Newell 1915: 19). This refers to what is now popularly known as the Bhul Bhulaiyya. The Bhul Bhulaiyya was an intricate support system for the vaulted roof of the structure. The structure might have been incomprehensible to the colonial viewer who was quick to add an exotic orientalist explanation to it—calling it a “Chinese puzzle” (Newell 1915: 19). The Bhul Bhulaiyya—“maze,” as termed by Hay,<sup>13</sup> but translated to a place where one gets lost or loses the way—a place that disorients, is a powerful expression of the multivalence of the Imambada. When Hay says that it was “designed as a maze,” she has already attributed a typology-specificity to the structure and a univalent function—that of a puzzle to be solved by moving through the spaces with the intention of finding one’s way through. Bhul Bhulaiyya is multivalent—a structure for support, a labyrinthine space which disorients, a place to light lamps and illuminate the interiors of the central hall, and a place providing various vantage points overlooking the outer courtyards and keeping watch.

In Hay’s account (Hay 1939: 115), the Imambada appears as a lavishly decorated building “dedicated to the memory of three Imams, Ali and Hassan and Hussein, his sons.” In her description, the multivalence of the place is implicit—as a building to celebrate Muharram, a mausoleum, and also as a museum. Similarly, the Imambada’s multivalence is implicitly

described in Llewellyn-Jones's text, and made more explicit in Keshani's work. For Llewellyn-Jones, "[not] only were *imambadas* repositories for the *tazias* and other treasures but some also became the burial place for their builders and other relatives" (Llewellyn-Jones 1985: 204). Keshani maintains that the Imambada is an example of a center which "could innovatively combine multiple architectural traditions—domestic, funerary, palatial, and religious—and function as a royal monument, a sacred storehouse, a religious assembly hall, a concert hall, a private ritual center, or a tomb, but never simply one of these" (Keshani 2006: 246–247). Here Keshani acknowledges the multivalent nature of the *imambada*, where Asaf "[listened] to the day's popular lamentation poetry (*marsiya*), . . . tended] to the administration of the building, . . . enthusiastically collected *taziya* to be stored there and ultimately chose to be buried there himself, reinforcing the notion that the Great Imambada was integral to his religious beliefs and practice in a way that the Friday mosque could never be" (Keshani 2006: 231).

The emphasis in Keshani's text is on the departure from *imambada* as a religious typology. We read this as a deviance—an elaboration and augmentation of what a religious practice itself can be. That practice took on the form of integrating public poetry readings, concerts, conferences with religious leaders, exhibiting and storing elaborate *tazias* and *karbalas*, celebration in the form of light and glitter, occasioning mourning as a celebration of Hussein's life, and acknowledging his own humility in the company of the Imams. Apart from that, the Imambada was also an intentional extravagant excuse to provide employment to the famine struck citizens, a public space for citizens, a site of protest where the oppressed could come and voice and stage their dissent, a space of display, a place of magnificence to rival the greatest ballrooms of the time, and a place of opulence that had an overpowering effect—almost consuming anyone who saw it. We argue that the Imambada is not merely a fulfillment of Asaf's religious convictions but, rather, an extension of his personality and an expression of his divergent non-normative disposition.

### *Institutionalized Ishq That Cultivates, Cajoles, and Controls*

While the Imambada, primarily a religious space, offers itself as space for dissent and protest, the Qaiserbagh appears ambivalent differently. The space lends itself to a reading as what Betsky would see as a queer space, an ambivalent space—a space that borrows from the conventional material world and "composes them into an unreal artificial space" (1997: 18). An ambivalent space is that space that hosts fluctuating often contradictory events. Betsky uses the example of orgasm, and qualifies the momentariness of a queer space—present only for the purpose of a queer encounter and then disappears because that encounter no longer takes place (1997: 18). Qaiserbagh was a space of multiple possibilities, a queer space without a fixed identity, a space that was always changing in response to multiple factors,

such as festivals, celebrations, and performances, where one could choose to position oneself with reference to one's desired levels of privacy or visibility.

The colonial archive, even in Hay's description (1939: 54), echoes the colonial sentiments expressed in the century previous to her critique, declaring it univalent in function, meant only as a harem. The act of entering the complex becomes, figuratively, that of passing through the harem. Given the observation of *purdah* by the women of his household, the gardens within essentially also come under the *purdah*. Yet Wajid uses these gardens—private and personal in nature—to hold court, initiating an overlap between the public realm and the private domain.

The observance of *purdah* imposed certain limitations on the way political business could be conducted in Qaiserbagh, which did not deter Wajid from meeting high officials of the state in the Safed Baradari—the center of Qaiserbagh. At times, other buildings on the periphery were used for political purposes. One of them was the Badshah Manzil, which served as a council house and was also used for holding state receptions of the British resident (Tandan 2008: 270). Writing about the inception of Qaiserbagh, Tandan acknowledges Wajid's requirement for an overlap of “social, literary, and cultural life without excluding the possibility of enabling him to conduct some functions of state,” and without compromising on the “standards of luxury and privacy” to which his family, harem, and personal retinue were accustomed (Tandan 2008: 270).

The overlap between the personal and the political at the Qaiserbagh, which the overall composition and layout lent itself to, was strategic. This overlap was essential to the functioning of Wajid's court and was characteristic of his political style that saw no fixed distinction between the public and the private realms, according to his own views in the *Parikhana* (text).

At the Parikhana (building), Wajid continued to refine his musical abilities. His taste and indulgence in music kept growing, and so did his ambition to further the musical forms developed in Lucknow. For this he wanted to train more and more women in music. He initiated an application process for admission, calling it *maruza* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 60). The application process considered how accomplished the applicant was—age, looks, and talent mattered (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 61). With this, *ishq* became institutionalized. The Parikhana embodied his pursuit for musical excellence and his exercise of power, projecting himself as an aesthete, who considered his cultural contributions to be a central part of his role as a ruler. In Wajid's use of the word *qabza*, which means both occupation and control, to describe the power of the *paris* over the space they inhabited, his vision of a women-led and women-centric learning space, meant solely for use by the *paris* is quite apparent (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 59).

Wajid uses the word *ghar*, which means home, for the Parikhana into which women were instituted.<sup>14</sup> For him, “home” was where *paris* were trained—an overlap of home and training center—and for the *paris* to be part of the Parikhana was to be part of Wajid's household. The setting of

their interviews in the paintings in *Ishqnamah* is an enclosed garden setting with conical roofed pavilions, flower beds, and canals. Wajid positions himself in the garden in various kinds of spaces—sometimes in an elevated pavilion with curtains, sometimes on a chair in the midst of the parterres, sometimes on an open elevated carpeted terrace, and sometimes in an elevated pavilion with a *shamiana* (awning). His power is explicit in all these, as he is seated while the women stand. While all these settings are likely to be part of the Huzur Bagh, where women were interviewed before Qaiserbagh was constructed, this activity might have later been taken into the central garden of the Qaiserbagh.

Parikhana literally means house of *paris* or fairies. Wajid conferred the title of *pari* to women he would admit into his training school for music and dance. Parikhana was many things—it was an institution, an idea of a residential school for music and arts, an idea of learning and living (cohabitation), a building, and a book. Wajid writes that Parikhana was not established for satisfying a passion for lust and love. Its intent was to nurture the women while sustaining his own interest in music (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 148). He set it up to satiate his constant search for musical expertise (excellence). He ensured that the *paris* were trained to become accomplished musicians and that their musical training continued without any hurdles (58). To appoint tutors, he identified four accomplished musicians and played the Sitar with them anonymously (from behind closed curtains so that he could not be identified). f.113v of *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850ac) gives a visual of this eligibility test that Wajid gives to the potential tutors before they could be selected for the purpose [Figure 9.1]. After being satisfied with their performance, Wajid appointed them tutors. Apart from this, many dancers and singers were hired. Daily performances were organized.<sup>15</sup> He would himself learn alongside the *paris* from the tutors (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 58).

To ensure education among the women, Wajid hired a *maulavi* (tutor of religion) and started a school in a part of a residential building. Every begum was given religious education based on her capacity (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 129). He was cognizant of the varying abilities of women and hence promoted an education system that was inclusive, was paced according to individual capacities, and was not the standardized form of education favored by the British.

Wajid conceived an inclusive environment, free of biases and prejudices at his palaces. On the occasion of the birth anniversary of the 12th imam, the palace was decorated and a large feast was hosted. During the feast, he ate together with all the *paris* and lovers who each had a seat at the table (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 76–77). A dining table is a symbol of gathering and shared meals. At a dining table all individuals have an equal opportunity to partake in the meal and engage in conversation which is a powerful way to break hierarchies, and this was exercised at Wajid's palace.

Qaiserbagh was a site of *ishq*, a form of love—passionate and all-consuming—which Wajid indulged in using his power. *Ishqnamah* and *Parikhana* are replete





Figure 9.1 Wajid testing potential music teachers seen in an opaque watercolor with metallic paints by an unknown artist. Part of Ishqnamah manuscript, c1850.

Source: Image courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

with examples where Wajid uses the language of *ishq*, evoking jealousy, anger, and envy among the female residents and demanding uncompromised loyalty and attachment to him from his subordinates—be it officers, wives, trainees, friends, or subordinates. He discouraged friendship among women, ensuring envy to keep people separated and dependent on him



(Shah 1987 (1877): 47). In an instance, Wajid conferred a high title of Mallika-e-Alam Nawab Nigar Mahal to Waziran (Shah 1987 (1877): 47). However, she befriended other women of the establishment, such as Khurd Mahal Umda Begum Sahiba, Nawab Nishat Mahal, and Nanhi Begum Sahiba (Shah 1987 (1877): 48). Wajid did not approve of this; he had expected Nigar Mahal to maintain her higher position and not mingle with the ones of the lower rank, and this led him to distance himself from her. In the titles of the women is also embedded a certain spatiality, apart from the hierarchy and identity. Khurd Mahal also means a lesser palace, which means that the Umda Begum was lower in the hierarchy. It is possible that the titles carried connotations of the kinds of palaces they would occupy. Wajid established himself as the most esteemed lover, or *ashiq*, for both his court and household (Di Pietrantonio 2020: 21). This way, Qaiserbagh was a site of perpetual performance of the *ishq*—a contractual relationship that combined political ambition and intimacy. If a person wished to dissociate themselves from that arrangement—even though temporarily—they would have to leave the setting. In *Parikhana*, Wajid recalls an instance of what he calls *fareb*, or deceit (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 50). *Huzurwali* was a rank conferred to a female performer. Some 18 *huzurwalis* did not return the amorous favors that Wajid extended to them, and refused to be part of his harem. Calling it deceit, he expresses, in the language of *ishq*, that he would need to detach himself from them and that he was not left with any choice but to terminate their employment at his office (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 51) and hence remove them from the premises. He explicitly uses the word *daftar*, which means office in which *huzurwalis* were employed. This description specifically demonstrates that the employee-lover boundaries overlapped and that the office-like territory worked round the clock. The office was a performance space for the *huzurwalis* as well as an amorous space; and this was part of his palace—further blurring the boundaries between Wajid’s personal and public realm.

In fact, Qaiserbagh was a place where undercurrents of rejection of *pardah* take place; women assert independence and liberation. Wajid faced significant revolt from women who did not want to observe *pardah* even after getting pregnant. Pregnancy meant that the women were conferred the title of Nawab Mahal Sahiba, and that they were now under *pardah*. Hoor Mahal (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 90), Sarfaraz Mahal, and Nawab Santanat Mahal Sahiba (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 140) openly and aggressively revolted against *pardah*. He did not use any force but instead tried several ways, using *hiilon* (tricks), *havaalon* (bribes), cajoling, and reasoning out to talk women out of their dissent (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 143) but was not successful. He eventually gives in to them. He rationalizes it and conveys to them that they are no longer attractive to him, and neither do they any longer compare with other performers. He does not exercise outright suppression of the movement but uses cajoling. When that does not work, he uses emotional manipulation. He conveys that their chances of his proximity and

of participation in significant performances get lowered. Hoor Mahal was so adamant even willing to abort her child if bearing a child meant observing *pardah*. She later lost her early child of 40 days and expressed her desire to continue her dance and music training donning mourning clothes. Wajid agrees to her wishes (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 90), the incident is illustrated in f.228r in *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850bl). Here, Wajid exercises power not by dominance but rather by persuasion and is sympathetic with the choices women make.

In another instance, he reiterates his liberality more explicitly *dast basta*—with folded hands—to all the *paris* saying that he has never forced women to come to him. They have all come to him on their own will and are free to go (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 93). This incident is illustrated in painting f.245v of *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850bt) in which he is seen kneeling with his head on Sarfaraz Mahal’s foot. His lovers are free except that he vehemently does not approve of disloyalty. Wajid fully recognized and respected the importance of a woman’s consent. If the woman didn’t want to stay, he lets her go. A woman appealed to him that she was brought by force and against her wishes. He gives it a fair hearing and lets her go (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 54). He is also generous if he knows that a person has their affection elsewhere. On learning that Ali Jaan loved a simple soldier and not him, he called the soldier to his court. He then lets Ali Jaan go with her lover (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 137).

### *Overlapping Realms of Affinities and Hierarchies*

To see a site as multivalent in this context means to acknowledge that it accommodates what Haraway (2016: 18) calls coalitions built due to affinities and not identities. Multivalent objects thus necessitate an environment to foster companionships. Women in Wajid’s harem, for example, forged friendships despite being in a system that wanted to control them by enforcing strict hierarchies and provoking jealousies and competitions.

The wives of the nawabi household of Awadh had a clear hierarchy (Buyers 2004–2010: Oudh). In that list, the principal *nikah*,<sup>16</sup> wife of the nawab, holds the highest rank. She is referred to as *Huzur Aliya Malika Nawab Begum Sahiba* and is addressed with the style of Her Majesty. The other *nikah* wives are titled *nawab begum sahiba*. The secondary *muta*<sup>17</sup> wives who have borne children by the nawab are known as *nawab mahal sahiba*, signifying a higher status. The *muta* wives who have not borne children are categorized into three ranks. The first rank is referred to as *nawab begum*, and the second rank is addressed as *khanum*.<sup>18</sup> An even lower rank for the *muta* wives is that of a *khilwati* who was often given the title *pasand*. There were many titles in his zenana, some of them have been picked out from various instances of Wajid’s *Parikhana*—*pari*, *begum*, *begum sahiba* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 129), *khanum*, *khanum sahiba* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 135), *nawab begum sahiba* (Shah 2017

(1848–1849): 129), *nawab mahal sahiba* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 135), and *nawab mahal begum sahiba* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 134). *Paris* were trainees of dance, taken as part of the household on contract (*razinama*), who also played the part of Wajid’s lovers (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 52). Each of these positions came with its own monthly allowances and salaries in cash (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 136). For example, a *nawab mahal sahiba* would receive 5,000 rupees, a *mahal sahiba* would receive 3,000 rupees, and all other *begums* and *mahals* 2,000 rupees each per month (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 136). All *paris* were given a house to live in. On a special occasion, Wajid gave every *begum* four male servants, along with expensive golden *chhatris*<sup>19</sup> (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 129).

The colonial archive is not cognizant of these hierarchies and ambiguities and brings its own gender bias to its readings. In its description of a *begum*’s journey (Newell 1915: 36), it portrays her career as “romantic,” suggesting a sense of fascination or exoticism because she began her life as a dancing girl, which implies a lower social status. The text emphasizes her “rare beauty” as the sole factor that led to her advancement in the royal harem, reducing her worth to her physical appearance. The mention of her talent for intrigue reinforces stereotypes associated with women in positions of power, implying that her rise to the status of a reigning queen was primarily due to manipulation rather than her own capabilities. The use of terms like “dizzy height” and “coveted title” serves to undermine her achievements by casting them as temporary and implying that they were unattainable for someone in her position.

The gender bias in the colonial project is also seen at work in what appears to be Strange’s description of the Parikhana, in context of the looting of Qaiserbagh during the Uprising. He writes of “a detached ornamental kiosk standing in the great square,” referring to it as a miniature marble pleasure palace,” furnished with sofas and ottomans. He describes it as “a mass of mirrors, marble pillars, silken hangings, divan sofas, statuettes of questionable French taste” (1893: 182). He also saw an ivory-handled dagger in its gold and velvet sheath and a pink Cashmere shawl in the middle of the room. Strange called the jumble of things—perfumes, combined with daggers, expensive fabrics, mirrors a “marvelous mixture of French demi-monde and degraded Oriental taste” (1893: 182), implying women of questionable morality and social status. This is his way of reading a space full of so many women, which carries an “indescribable perfume of Nautch girls, attar of roses, and something else” (1893: 182), with connotations of pursuing pleasure, associated with hedonistic lifestyles, usually in a conspicuous and flagrant manner, regarded to be on the fringes of respectable society, often considered not worthy of a ruler. Strange makes explicit his bias against the class, social standing, and morality of the women who occupied that space and against Wajid’s deviance from class behavior, and reveals his inability to see the palace as a system that housed numerous women acknowledging a multitude of skills, capabilities, expertise, and talents.

*Intersectionalities That Subvert*

Wajid also trained 30 women *turk-sawaarnian* and employed them as guards and trained 50 male soldiers *turk-sawaar* to form a small squad.<sup>20</sup> He appointed Khwajasara Haji Muhammad Sharif Ali Khan as the chief officer of both the squads, in an example of the plurality in his court. Wajid writes explicitly that following daily lessons in *qavaaid* (parade) the women soldiers far exceed the British counterparts (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 84). White soldiers, the painting in the *Ishqnamah* shows, were led by a person who deviated from the colonial idea of masculinity and who was of a darker skin color. Even its title, as recorded by the Royal Collection Trust, uses the words “British” and “Khwajasara” to refer to the soldiers and the chief. Having such a painting commissioned, Wajid explicitly conveys a performance of power—despite not having a full-fledged army and security. He positions himself higher up on a terrace, from where he oversees his army chief taking charge of an army of soldiers. In this painting we see a performance of the normative—a ruler whose power is gauged in his army yet subverting it by foregrounding the racial identities of the individuals in the painting.

Wajid’s subversion of stereotypical gendered roles is also evident in the occupations recorded for women in *Parikhana*.<sup>21</sup> Najmunissa was employed as *darogah* at Wajid’s palace and was conferred the title of *begum sahiba*.<sup>22</sup> She employed 18 women as servants, each of whom was quite accomplished (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 40). She has been depicted in several paintings that accompany the *Ishqnamah*, usually standing beside Wajid. One painting in particular—f.52v (Unknown c1850n)—depicts a scene where she receives an honor from Wajid.

Wajid also employed people of color. Wajid conferred women of Abyssinian descent (*habshin*) with the title of honor *sultan* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 135). Similarly he conferred Abyssinian *khwajasara* with the title of honor *bahadur* (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 132). An Abyssinian *khwajasara* was made officer of Ghanghor Paltan, an army troop that comprised 400 English horse riders who were known as Risala Bodyguards (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 132 and Unknown c1850bg) and another of the Bharmar Paltan (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 133).<sup>23</sup> The painting f.205v in *Ishqnamah* (Unknown, c1850bf) shows Wajid appointing and honoring two *khwajasaras*. The fact that Wajid commissioned a painting to mark this occasion shows that it was a significant milestone in his political and administrative journey.

The same way Wajid created space for people of varying backgrounds of race and gender providing them employment at his court, he provided support to people to exercise their religion.

On several occasions he generously financed his employees—whether *khwajasaras* or *paris*—who wished to visit religious sites of their choice. When Khwajasara Mussamma Bilal requested to visit Mecca and the Karbala in Iraq, he immediately agreed to cover the costs of travel. Later when Yasmin Pari, Mahrukh Pari, and Sardar Pari also expressed their desire to join Bilal

to go to Karbala (f.211r in *Ishqnamah*), he covered their travel costs too (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 85–86). Similarly, once he sent all the *paris* to visit the *dargah* of Hazrat Abbas. *Paris* were given expensive clothes to wear and were adorned with precious jewels. Best carriages were selected and especially adorned for the purpose. He writes that the caravan of those carriages was an unparalleled sight—never seen before. The painting f.145r of *Ishqnamah* depicts Najmunissa walking with the palanquins, holding her dress up, and a woman looking out from a palanquin, suggesting that the women were not in *purdah*. Wajid clarifies that the reason for him not imposing *purdah* on women was twofold [Figure 9.2]. Except three women who were *mahals*, the rest were *paris* and they didn't need to be in *purdah*. Knowing that it is not possible to create love in someone by forcing it, he acknowledged that it is only possible to receive a person's reciprocal affection if they are given freedom. Wajid let people fulfill their religious wishes to earn their gratitude and love in return (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 67).

The sites and spaces discussed in this part are multivalent because they accommodate different functions, allowing for the coexistence and juxtaposition of contrasting functions, transforming in physicality and atmosphere, and taking on multiple identities. The Qaiserbagh and the Bada Imambada embody sites of shifting values, in their capacity to lend themselves to multiple purposes and transform temporally into drastically different places accordingly. Values of multiple places within the site keep changing based on function and use. It is never one specific place that is always significant.



Figure 9.2 Najmunissa accompanying the *paris* in palanquins seen in an opaque watercolor with metallic paints by an unknown artist. Part of *Ishqnamah* manuscript, c1850.

Source: Image courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

By supporting the specificities and choices of various people at his court, be it gender, race, or religion, Wajid ensured to receive their loyalty in return as a political tactic. He fostered deep personal relationships with each of his employees through the institutionalized *ishq*. In doing so, he also made sure that he was seen and known that way which necessitated a performance of this *ishq*. Qaiserbagh specifically offered that opportunity to become a site of theatricity for Wajid's performance of *ishq*. Like for Wajid, Asaf's political vision coincided with his non-normative self-expression, and architecture was an extension of that expression.

### Theatricity

Due to their royal status, the nawabs' self-expression took on larger than life dimensions—blurring the limits at which life in private apartments ended and that in the political arena of court began. Theatricity, thus, was exercised in the private day to day encounters as well as in exaggerated court proceedings. The nawabs' exhibitionism, opulence, and self-indulgence evident in Qaiserbagh, Aina Khana and the venues for animal matches and *kathak* dances—aware of the colonial gaze—challenged the colonial expectations of a ruler. Theatricity also served to make sites, such as Qaiserbagh, accessible to citizenry giving them an opportunity to engage in annual celebrations with the nawabs—breaking the rigid distinction between royalty and the public. Unable to understand the nature of this overlapping and theatrical form of inhabitation, the writers of the colonial archive were unable to look past the performance and comprehend the embedded non-normative politics therein. They were quick to dismiss these overlaps as “whimsical” and “gaudy histrionic.”

### *Queer Collections and Excess*

Asaf was an entertainer and a showman, who liked to entertain his guests and visitors. Apart from the opulence and the exaggerated nature of performances, parades, and shows, there was an added emphasis on color, form, and costume. He created spaces such as terraces and pavilions, overlooking the river strategically, to foreground such events and performances. The use of the evening light for firework displays was also amalgamated into the spatial projects he commissioned for them.<sup>24</sup>

In propagating a theatrical culture, Asaf allowed the British to partake in these entertainments. Asaf decorated spaces of entertainment, brought a celebratory tone to the events, and organized gifts for the Europeans. These were Asaf's gestures to include the Europeans in his court culture. He generously honored his guests—the Europeans, even those who were much lower in rank. However, the Europeans saw that as extravagance. They viewed this suspiciously, commenting on the inappropriateness of Asaf—being of a noble birth—interacting with those lower in rank in such a manner



(Valentia 1809: 173). They thought he was trying to impress them, which they found unnecessary as they were lower in hierarchy to the nawab.

Chancey attributes the British dismissal of Asaf's entertainment activities to "the nawab's habit of giving them the type of entertainment he believed they preferred" (Chancey 2007: 21), which they didn't. Chancey, reading the diary of Sophie Prosser, argues that the Europeans were unable to engage with the more "intellectual"<sup>25</sup> forms of entertainment. Prosser, for example, is not able to engage with "an elaborately staged play" or the dance performances, which are supposedly more refined forms of entertainment than say the animal fights (Chancey 2007: 22). Prosser writes more about the costumes, fat-shames, and makes ageist comments on the performers' appearance and their bodies—"ugly & some very fat & old" (Chancey 2007: 22). Chancey observes that this lack of engagement was because of their lack of familiarity with the languages, history, and literature (Chancey 2007: 22). Prosser, however, loved the vaudeville forms of entertainment at Lucknow—for example, an elephant fight that featured mimes. She especially liked the "one [that] did a hilarious impression of a monkey" (Chancey 2007: 22). This indicates that Europeans were, in fact, quite entertained by what they themselves considered not so sophisticated entertainment forms. Despite their being entertained, they trivialized the court. Tennant for example uses the term "raree shew" to describe these kinds of performances (Tennant 1803: 414).

Asaf, on the other hand, kept the "sophisticated" forms of entertainment, such as poetry, and music, for his own courtiers (Chancey 2007: 23), bringing the vaudeville forms to the British. He was aware and sensitive to the fact that the Europeans would be able to better engage with the latter given their lack of access to the language and culture of the court. The Europeans did not write much about what Asaf considered intellectual entertainment as they could not comprehend it. They give detailed accounts of animal fights and other vaudeville acts—often prejudiced accounts—which contribute to the colonial archives' description of Asaf's court. The animal fights feature prominently, described in great detail, in the accounts written by European visitors—Valentia<sup>26</sup> (1809) and Daniell (Daniell and Caunter 1835: 133–136), for example.

The Aina Khana provides access to another queer version of Asaf's world. Seen as home to a collection of artifacts, it allows him to evoke his aspiration of being Europeanized, of escaping the expectations of being a non-white, non-Mughal, non-monarch *nawab wazir* of Awadh.

In the context of late-19th- and early-20th-century Europe and America, Aaron Betsky (1997) writes of queer collectors who create fantasy interior landscapes in which they immerse themselves, rarely emerging from them.<sup>27</sup> This is often their home—a collection of artifacts that define the individual. It serves as a representation of their passions, "evoking other worlds than the one in which [they are] imprisoned, and mirroring [themselves] in objects" (Betsky 1997: 19). This world of collectibles becomes a "queer version of the self-enclosed world" (Betsky 1997: 19). In its own time, Asaf's collection can

be read similarly. The objects within are a reflection of one's self-expression, aspirations, vanity, and self-projection (how one wished to be seen), form a queer space.

The reflection in the mirror is also a self-portrait projected onto the outside world.

(Colomina and Bloomer 1992: 82)

The placement of mirrors, when placed parallel to each other on opposite walls of the space creates an almost infinite mirroring—an exaggerated, fantastical, and unbounded queer world. The colonial archive presented Asaf as “portly” (Hay 1939: 15), “indolent,” and “obese” (Archer 1979: 148), having “fat ears, neck, and double chin [as] one fleshy mass” (Hoey 1889: 16). In that presentation, there was a bias against corpulence. The accepted standard was that of an imposing, masculine body—athletic and fit for military acts.

Asaf's likeness has been captured by several local and European artists during his lifetime. Zoffany's portrait of Asaf (1784a) is an example of this [Figure 1.1]. Depending on the reason why a portrait is commissioned, and by whom, portraits can be manipulated. They can be painted to show the body of the patron or subject, in a flattering light—portraying the body in alignment with accepted norms. A mirror, however, is different. It mirrors, reflects, and returns the shape and size of the body back to the viewer. In the Aina Khana, Asaf furnishes the space with mirrors, thereby acknowledging the stark reflection of his physical appearance. Asaf, in creating this mirror space, consciously faces his physicality. He consciously confronts his queer body, and celebrates it. The act of one's performance of gender and sexuality is reinforced by the body's reflection in the mirror. This is not a one-time confrontation either. With many mirrors occupying the Aina Khana, Asaf confronts his body several times, and frequently. Citing the example of Louis XIV's Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, Marxist philosopher Jean Baudrillard deems mirrors essential elements that complete a bourgeois interior as a system of objects. There, mirrors play the “ideological role [of] redundancy, superfluity, reflection: the mirror is an opulent object which affords the self-indulgent bourgeois individual the opportunity to exercise his privilege—to reproduce his own image and revel in his possessions” (Baudrillard 2020: 22). Mirrors allow Asaf to reflect, to see himself, to engage in narcissism, to exaggerate his self-worth not just to himself but also to others—the guests, Europeans, who are invited to partake in this exhibition of collectables—and to view himself as owner of these exotic collectables. The reflection of light off of these mirrors, the shine, and the shimmer, add to the quality of space—an ostentatious, exaggerated, theatrical, or camp<sup>28</sup> space.

The Aina Khana as an artistic device to represent both an imagined world of his own creation as well as reflection of being imprisoned or trapped in a privileged setting where the actor does not have the agency to act or perform, to fully control the situations arising from the complex dynamics of courtly life.

Added to the collection and the mirrors, menageries also contributed greatly to the theatricality of the nawabs. Menageries were maintained by both Asaf and Wajid. Asaf places his menagerie adjoining the palace, in close proximity to the public audience halls and private quarters. This space was accessible to the European visitor; most colonial writers who visited during the reign of Asaf give a detailed description of his collection of animals. During Asaf's time, it was "filled with wild beasts, animals of every sort, and birds in profusion" (Parlby 1850: 182). They are mentioned for their rarity, uniqueness, enormity, and wondrousness [Tennant 1803: 153, 393] [Tennant 1803: 153, 393]. For example, Parlby is particularly taken aback by a "Doomba sheep," having four horns and an enormous tail (Parlby 1850: 182).

Tennant notes that the menagerie is a collection of "oddities of nature" (Tennant 1803: 410). A 12-year-old rhinoceros catches the attention of Tennant with its "prodigious" strength and ferocity, and sharp horn that could "rip up the belly of the largest elephant" (Tennant 1803: 410). He goes on to describe the rhinoceros for its invincible build—"thick horny substance, studded over like a shield"—which neither a sword nor a musket ball could invade (Tennant 1803: 410). Tennant is disgusted by the "nastiness of the appearance" of the tiger collection (Tennant 1803: 411), and writes about "sheep . . . painted in different colours," reducing the embellishment of the sheep—a continuation of the Nawab's theatricality—to a whim, "to gratify the fantastic taste of the natives" (Tennant 1803: 412).

The theatrical use of animals is about wealth, possessions, acquisitions of the rarest, most powerful, and unique types without prioritizing the well-being of the animals or their conservation. Of course, there are a large number of attendants who care for the animals (Valentia 1809: 153), and there seems to be a robust understanding between the animals and caretakers (Tennant 1803: 412),<sup>29</sup> the menagerie is not committed to creating sympathetic habitat for animals or to breeding (Tennant 1803: 413). Tennant does not see the collection for its theatricity. Instead, he critiques the menagerie for its lack of insight into acquiring animals on the basis of their usefulness. He laments that the menagerie could be better off with machines and a superior breed of cattle that would serve husbandry and agriculture (Tennant 1803: 410).

Tennant describes a "raree shew" at the menagerie in which a variety of tropical animals, specifically apes and monkeys were taught to greet visitors with a "genteel salam" (Tennant 1803: 414). He also observed "natives" training parrots to speak (a few words of) Persian (Tennant 1803: 414). Tennant's tone in describing the pursuit of training animals is patronizing, implicitly remarking on the vainness of time spent and people engaged in training animals to perform what he appears to consider frivolities. A raree show is a street show—a vaudeville form of entertainment—meant for the masses and performed on the street. In specifically locating the "raree shew exhibited at the court," Tennant conveys a prejudice against the court that

would include forms of entertainment meant for the masses. In including the vaudeville in the court, Asaf brings the commonplace to the court. Entertainment becomes a social leveler in his court.

Europeans were habituated to a clear distinction between entertainment meant for the nobility and that meant for the masses—the former seen as refined and sophisticated, the latter crude and vulgar. When they visit the nawab’s court, the overlapping and fluid boundaries of mass entertainment becoming part of the court confuse them. Confronted with this lack of clarity, the colonial writers deride it, even going to the extent of making the court seem street-like.

Colonial writers have also criticized the expense of maintaining the menagerie. Both Valentia (1809: 153) and Tennant (1803: 414) mention the large number of people employed and Tennant speculates on the cost of the enterprise that “must swallow up large sums,” exaggerating the number of pigeons to “many crores . . . kept at the public expense, and elephants and camels to a large amount” (Tennant 1803: 414). Tennant’s dismissal of the menagerie as an excessive waste of resources hinges itself on a human-centric world view and a predisposition toward the responsibilities of a good ruler. He observes the food bestowed to the menagerie would “remove want from the city,” critiquing the nawab for prioritizing animals in his possessions over his human citizens (Tennant 1803: 415). He uses the example of the menagerie as an opportunity to critique the nawab’s ability to govern, it being “less understood and perverted” (Tennant 1803: 415).

To the nawab, the Aina Khana and the menagerie together formed a theatrical display of his possessions—animate an inanimate—the animals, birds, objects, arms, *etc.* In its proximity to the Aina Khana the menagerie was conceived as its extension. To the colonial writer, it appeared a jumble, that they needed to categorize—breaking it down into specific spaces, a museum, an aviary, a menagerie, and armory (Gladwin 1785: 392).

### *Dressing Up and Dressing Down*

The sense of dynamism and excess seen in the Aina Khana and menagerie finds an architectural expression in the temporary and movable features added to the exterior of the buildings. By the use of the *saibans* and other temporary additions, such as *chiks*, *purdahs*, *tatties*, *qanats*, *sarapardas*, and *shamianas*, the architecture of Lucknow was in a constant process of being dressed up and dressed down. All these temporary attachments were continuously put up and taken down many times during the day. Tandon compares this constant performance of taking on and off at “different times of the day and during different seasons of the year” to a stage set, with “theatrical fit-ups and makeshift props . . . that] are changed with each act” (Tandan 2008: 27). Gladwin describes “seah-bauns” as “cloths stretched out from the top of the arcades, and supported by poles, in order to shade off the glare of light and heat” (Gladwin 1785: 390). The awnings on the octagonal bastions of the

Hussein Bagh can be seen in the *Lucknow Panorama* (1924), fitted up with fabric *saibans* that extend from above the arcaded openings, supported by poles extending up from the cornice at the base, and anchored to the ground using ropes. Elaborate rope systems, poles, and pegs are used to support them when they open up in the shape of an awning running the entire perimeter of the pavilion. In the painting they appear red. These *saibans* were made of rich fabrics, such as velvet and brocade, exquisitely decorated and finely embroidered. In this use of fabric, the architecture becomes an object that is dressed up—made fashionable. It embodies the tastes, artistry, skills, and crafts of contemporary Lucknow. Tandan (2008: 26) cites Nath (1986: 97, 108) to observe that these *saibans* were also adopted by the British at the Residency for their temporariness “did not destroy a tidy classical facade.”

*Tatties* were also put up every morning and taken down each evening. This temporality, of populating the surface of the buildings with props, activating them by using water, and foregrounding by live actors such as the waterers makes these structures theatrical. *Tatties*, or “tattys” (Gladwin 1785: 152), were framed mattings made of vetiver root grass suspended from door- and window-openings. Nawabi court employed specific persons whose job was to keep these tatties cool by manually sprinkling them with water. Gladwin observed this ceaseless manual labor in keeping the tatties moistened at the Baoli Court (Gladwin 1785: 388). Even the manual sprinkling of water onto tatties attached to the built form conjures an image in which the built form becomes part of a theatrical act. It is an act in which water is being splashed on what would appear to be the surface of a building. The smell of vetiver root grass would further add to the theatrical experience of the space.

Curtains and their various forms make visible, even highlight, that which is not available to the outside eye in nawabi buildings. The colonial eye reads the curtains, its materiality and form, and the act of drawing those, but not the interior space. Be it Wajid’s examining his potential tutors through the curtains obscuring his identity, or the tatties in the Machhi Bhavan precinct, curtains offer an opportunity to reveal the hidden “or at least [become] available.” The use of theatrical devices in the architecture of nawabi Lucknow constantly assembles and disassembles the structure. The structures discard permanence and fixity, and assume an *activated dynamic temporality*.<sup>30</sup>

### *Theater of Water*

The Sangi Dalan Court formed a theater for viewing from the Sangi Dalan. Valentia writes of a view he sees while dining at the Sangi Dalan. In this view of the court, water was a theatrical element. It flowed from the Hammam into and through the channels of the Sangi Dalan Court. It cascaded, flowed, was still in places, and also fountained up, creating different visual, tactile, auditory, and thermal experiences. The sides along the water channels were decorated with colored lamps. Likening it to the fairytale-esque *Arabian Nights*, but “completely realised,” Valentia (1809: 170) describes an

explosion of lighting that flooded each side of the walkways through the court. The light would brighten up the trees and their reflection in water would further accentuate the dramatic experience of the court. This visual experience coincided with the auditory, and the olfactory as well. At the time of Valentia's visit, European tunes that "formed a whimsical contrast with every thing else, which was truly Asiatic" were playing (Valentia 1809: 171). As he walked from the Sangi Dalan to the pavilion across the court, he walked through a "lane of double silver branches, with attar [perfumed oil] placed on stands between each," culminating in a pavilion where a "nauch" had been organized (Valentia 1809: 171). The walk through the court culminates in the promise of a complete experience—a formalized theatrical performance, and the theatricality of the court builds up to that final experience.

Many of the theatrical forms of entertainment at Asaf's court centered on the Gomti and its banks. William Daniell illustrates one such form of theatricality in his painting, a reproduction of which can be seen in *The Moar-punkee Lucnow* (Daniell and Caunter 1835a: 128) along with a short but descriptive note. The painting centers on an elaborate boat named Moar Punkhee, which translates to "peacock wings." Daniell finds the boat "a splendid sight," he uses terms such as "flying peacock" to describe its "elegant shape, extremely long and light in form" (Daniell and Caunter 1835: 128). The boat, as the name suggests, has a figurehead of a peacock with its wings outstretched on the bow. Unlike a figurehead, however, the entire boat takes the form of a peacock. Peacock wings, especially those of the male, are long and trail behind them to form a train. The feathers having unique metallic blue-green colors with a hint of bronze are signifiers of ostentatiousness. When performing for its female counterpart, the male peacock raises its long wings in the form of a fan, showing off each and every feather in its colorful flamboyance. Daniell uses the expression "gay ornament" to reference the flamboyance, brilliance of color, and whimsical nature of the boat. A large rectilinear pavilion is situated at the front of the boat which provides shade and comfortable seating for the *nawab wazir* and his entourage. A large number of rowers, approximately 24, occupy the remainder of the boat. In front of the rowers, adjoining the pavilion, is a stage, on which a male dancer performs with a chowrie in hand. In Daniell's observation, this dancer has more agency to him than being a mere entertainer. Writing of him as a "fugleman," Daniell observes that it is this dancer's movements that guides the rowers to move their oars in his tandem, amplifying or reducing the rowing speed of the boat. Here, dance and music govern a regimental movement such as that of rowing a boat, making the act quite theatrical and intentionally so. The rowers "propel her forward with amazing swiftness, timing their strokes by a measured but not unmusical chant" (Daniell and Caunter 1835: 128).

Asaf, in creating this boat, which embodies the flamboyance of a peacock's body and which moves in tandem with the beats of a dancer, creates a theatrical piece for his leisurely travel in water. The theatricality of the boat is further accentuated in the painting by the presence of an aristocratic person



along with his subordinate holding his umbrella. The two stand idly on the bank of the river watching the boat. They watch not just the boat but the boat against the backdrop of the palace, they watch the nawab sitting in the boat with his entourage, they watch the rhythmic rowing of the boat, and they watch the dancer leading the movement of the boat. It is an urban theater of ostentation, power, and leisure to which they are invited to watch and partake in.

### *Performance of Politics and Pleasure*

Qaiserbagh, too, takes on a theater-like form, conveying an intent to create an environment of the vaudeville—blurring the boundaries of private domestic functions and the performative public ones. The theater is not only personal but also political. For Wajid, *dwelling*<sup>31</sup> is never outside of the theater of performance. Qaiserbagh is a site where Wajid positions himself at the center of all activity and relationships which he controls artistically. “Kaiserbagh became the platform for an artistic efflorescence, of which the nawab was chief patron, impresario, and dramaturge” (Hoskote 2019). The day-to-day living is entangled with the dramatic, that “wove dance, music, theatre, mime, scenography and architecture into a grand multi-media presentation, an opera” (Hoskote 2019). The day-to-day activities were lived in a perpetual state of heightened experience of “loneliness, solitude, hiding place, mystery, copulation, merriment” (Hoskote 2019), which was facilitated by the exaggerated theatricality of the Qaiserbagh setting.

The visitors to and the activities of the central garden become available to gaze from the surrounding harems, amplifying the exhibitionistic nature of Wajid’s performance of the political and the personal. To make queer is to disturb the order of the things (Ahmed 2006b: 161)—and that is precisely what is accomplished in the central courtyard.

The central garden is a theatrical setting, watched by Wajid when he sits in the *Lanka* and watched by the occupants of the harem, in which everyday activities of Wajid’s personal life are enacted. It is also a site in which Wajid reads and writes the *masnavi*,<sup>32</sup> enacts the *Dariya-e-Ta’ashshuq*,<sup>33</sup> enacts the *rabas*,<sup>34</sup> and organizes the annual Jogi Mela (a fair).

Lundgren describes this setting as a “kolossala socker-bagararbeten, gigantiska karameller och förgyllda krokaner” (1905: 191)—a colossal sugar confectionery works, gigantic candies, and gilded nougats. He further writes that it felt as if he was wandering around an immense palette of colors, missing only the brush. It conveys an image of a place of vibrant colors, of unrealistic scales, of indulgences, and of pleasures that could be consumed. It conjures up an image of the fantastical.

Within the central court of the Qaiserbagh, the *Lanka* occupied a position of prominence, serving as a backdrop for performances of politics and pleasure, where Wajid performed his politics and enactments of *ishq*. The position of the *Lanka*, at one end of and along the central axis of the

Qaiserbagh central garden conforms to a setting of a stage. The symmetry and the framing offered by the structure helped accentuate the significance of the scene, in which the white pavilion under the stairway bridge served as a focal point for the action. Wajid possibly would sit and hold court in this white pavilion. He positioned himself in a way that the bridge of the Lanka framed him and the two side structures formed an ornamental backdrop. Lanka was thus a stage as well as a place of his throne. He performed on the stage of the Lanka and simultaneously visually controlled the ongoing events in the central garden from his throne. The entire quadrangle acted as the audience space from which occupants of Qaiserbagh could behold Wajid. At the same time the central quadrangle was a site of perpetual theatrical performance for Wajid to indulge in and control.

In reading Lanka in two different ways—as a stage and as the setting for the throne—we argue that the structure embodies an overlap of the political and the theatrical, where Wajid enacts his political role of a ruler in a highly theatricized manner. On stage, the performer is under the gaze of the audience and exerts an influence over the audience by their performance. The performer also has a commanding view of the audience. In the case of a throne on a dais, the experience is similar except that the influence of the sovereign is direct. Lanka, that way, provides him that position of prominence from where he exerts control and influence on the enactment of those activities.

Tandan suggests that the bridge served as a theater set for the Lanka Ceremony, which Wajid enacted annually. The bridge symbolized the Lanka bridge, which appears in the *Ramayana*—a Hindu epic, which Wajid would retell during such ceremonies (Tandan 2008: 273). We extend this observation to suggest that the name of the structure was derived from these theatrical performances, which remained in the observers' and actors' minds even when the play was not being performed. In the colonial archive, the earliest mention of the name of the structure to be Lanka is by Rousselet (1975 (1882): 517), who visited Qaiserbagh on March 31, 1868. There is a mention of a structure named Lanka in *Bani* (Shah 1987 (1877): 21), which was written in 1877 (Shrikhande 1987: ix).

Lundgren's analogy to the "ballet in the fairy queen's enchanted castle" (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 119) is particularly poignant. Although Lundgren would not have experienced the goings on in the garden during Wajid's reign, his use of the word "ballet" suggests that the place conjured an imagery of fantastical choreographies taking shape in his mind. On the other hand, Lundgren's comparison of Qaiserbagh to the tragedy of "Bluebeard's wedding" (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 119) potentially implies that Lundgren imagined a dangerous, oppressive, and dark aspect of the garden's operations. Perhaps, Lundgren did find similarities between Bluebeard who would carry out flamboyant wedding ceremonies with women, only to kill them later; and Wajid who also married several women and housed them in Qaiserbagh. It may not be a stretch to read in between Lundgren's lines to assert that Lundgren actually implied that comparison, or if he simply stated the variety

of performances that could take shape in Qaiserbagh—from fantastical to tragic. In this comparison, Lundgren might be suggesting that the enactment of multiple weddings of Wajid in the Qaiserbagh was immoral and hence tragic. The comparison feeds into the colonial narrative of Wajid as a callous and profligate ruler. However, despite that comparison, the theatricality of the Lanka takes the foreground.

Frescoes depicting warriors, dancers, and musicians were painted in various niches (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 119). Besides his pursuit of the performing arts,<sup>35</sup> in fostering *kathak*, Wajid also oversaw the training of his troops (Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 62), creating poetically named cavalry regiments and troops of female soldiers (Vanita 2012: 17). By representing both his cultural and military pursuits, Wajid projects himself as multifaceted and inclusive. There is a statue of Wajid in the ceiling of the Shahji Krishna Temple at Vrindavan, which shows Wajid cross dressing as one of Krishna's *gopis* (plural for female cowherds who were lovers of Krishna, the Hindu god). Traditionally, one of the ways of demonstrating devotion to Krishna is to visualize oneself as a *gopi*. Wajid did so in his plays by himself enacting a *gopi*. The temple was funded by Shah Kundan Lal, a treasurer in Wajid's court who fled Lucknow soon after the annexation. The temple is reminiscent of Lucknow in many ways—the gate is a homage to the Rumi Darwaza; fish and mermaid motifs abound in the temple; twisted columns and European elements, such as pediments, pilasters, semicircular arches supported on double columns, *etc.* form the architectural vocabulary; and Wajid's statue in female attire is part of the temple interior. The fact that Wajid is represented in this way speaks about the public perception of Wajid as a performer and as a devotee of Krishna, despite being a devout Muslim. It also speaks about Wajid's occurrence in public perception as one who would comfortably navigate various roles, various attires, and various personas.

#### *Paristan: An Everyday Theater of the Fantastical*

Once a year, a fair was held in the Qaiserbagh in which the citizens—regardless of religion and caste—participated in singing, dancing, and theater alongside the royalty. This was one occasion when the nawab put his lavish lifestyle on display, even though he would sometimes play the role of an ascetic (*faqeer*) donning red-ochre robes. At other times he would play the role of Krishna enacting the mythical amorous indulges of the god, while the women of his household would play the *gopis*.<sup>36</sup> Everyone wore clothes dyed in red ocher—obscuring differences of age, gender, and class. This collapse of rigid societal bounds was something that the British were not able to understand. The Western insistence to classify things, people, and places into categories, based on some salient features, was challenged when the nawab opened the gates to the citizenry, promoted arts and cultural activities among the masses, or employed queer individuals in his court. The British, on encountering this, would write back to England saying that the nawab was inefficient.

The palace is queered not merely by the presence of inhabiting bodies and their specificities but also spatially. At the time of the fair, people were allowed into the Qaiserbagh complex—making the venue a setting where the boundaries between the common and the royal were blurred. The people and the members of the nawab's household celebrated together, and in the act of celebration, they were all equal, partly because they shared the same space. The Qaiserbagh complex transformed from a royal palace to a public space where formality of the arts and mundaneness of life intersected.

The opaque watercolor and gold painting *Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh in the Qaiser Bagh, Lucknow* (anonymous, mid-19th century) appears to show one such gathering where the central garden of the Qaiserbagh is filled with hundreds of people, which would have included a part of the populace of Lucknow. We see merchants selling their wares and men and women inhabiting the same spaces in many cases. The royal women, however, in this case are seen occupying specific positions within the Safed Baradari and the Lanka, for example. Wajid also writes of a procession on an elephant which he undertakes during the *mela* (Shah 2017 (1848–49): 121–122) depicted in f.336v of *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850co), a scene in which Wajid is preparing for his procession during the Mina Bazaar Mela.<sup>37</sup>

Within the watercolor, Wajid is shown on a palanquin, in procession, accompanied by a group of three to four elephants. The procession, possibly taking place in the central garden of the Qaiserbagh near the Western Lakhi Gate, would traverse the entire garden. It would move across the marble bridge, proceed out of the Eastern Lakhi Gate, passing through the Huzur Bagh, then enter the China Garden via the Mermaid Gate, and perhaps pause at the Northern Jilaukhana. According to various colonial writers, this *jilaukhana* has been identified as a place where royal processions used to parade and form up in preparation to start (Alli 1874: 24; Nevill 1904: 207). It is likely that Wajid would then mount the elephant at this location, marking the beginning of the grand procession seen in f.336v of *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850co). The procession would then proceed eastward, moving through the city. This deliberate act of moving through the Qaiserbagh via a circuitous route allowed the people gathered in the central garden and along the way to witness and interact with the nawab, enhancing the theatricality and spectacle of the event.

He distributed money along the way, showing love and generosity to both the poor and the rich. He took a keen interest in the happenings of the *mela*, giving money to *faqeers* and beggars. Wajid Ali Shah instructed public servants to buy items from the *mela* and the vessels used to display them at ten times their price, at his personal expense, aiming to support shopkeepers and stall owners. He intended to be remembered as a benevolent and magnanimous individual.

The Mina Bazaar Mela featured *nats*, performers known as *rasan baaz* and *nairang saaz* in Iran. These performers executed remarkable acts, such as walking on ropes tied to spears, carrying heavy weights on their

heads, standing on swords, and demonstrating magical tricks involving dismemberment and rejoining of body parts. Wajid is aware that in Iran, they held high respect, but in India, they were considered part of the lower class (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 119).

Wajid recalls a moment when he became so impassioned listening to a recitation of his own *masnavi*; that he tore his clothes and started dancing like a *jogi*<sup>38</sup> (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 105). f.302r of *Isbqnamah* (Unknown c1850cg) provides a visual of this moment in the Huzur Bagh. He smeared pearl ash on his body impersonating a *jogi*. Women of his establishment such as *mashooq-i-khas* and Sikandar Mahal played *jogins* (female ascetics). His friends, servants, and lovers of music and dance who were part of the event—all followed suit, tore their clothes, and immersed themselves in a state of spiritual stupor. Musical instruments such as *sitar*, *rabab*, *sarangi*, *mridang*, and *tabla* came alive. Every inch of the palace; every direction; every corner was swarming with women. The bagh seemed like a *paristan* (fairylane). At dusk, he moved with all the paraphernalia to Rafat Manzil, which was located over a canal. Lamps were lit, and exquisite firecrackers were fired. The event almost seemed like a wedding, everyone wanted to participate in it. The event lasted until midnight. Eventually he decided to make it a yearly celebration. Every year it was different and it went on for many years (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 105–108).

Hilton (1894: 123), Nevill (1904: 207), Beg (1911: 64), and Newell (1915: 37) have recorded that during the Jogi Mela (held in August) Wajid would sit under a large mulberry tree donning yellow robes of a *jogi*. Painting f.289r in *Ishqnamah* (1850cf) shows this mulberry tree albeit not in the context of the Jogi Mela. Nevill also describes his seat under the tree was surrounded by a marble platform—painted a bright red to a height of 12 or 14 feet. Nevill uses it as a commentary to project that Wajid was not careful about the tree's health, and that this paint was the sole reason for the tree to perish eventually (Nevill 1904: 207). Traditionally, *geru*—a natural clay earth pigment—is used as a red paint. *Geru* is prepared from natural hematite mineral; it is porous and hence lets the material on which it is applied breathe.

Citing Iqtidaruddaula's<sup>39</sup> *Tareekh-e-Iqtadari*, Taqui and Saxena say that *Dariya-e-Ta'ashshuq* was a *masnavi* (poetry consisting of distichs corresponding in measure, each consisting of a pair of rhymes) that Wajid wrote (Taqui and Saxena 1987: 25). This was a special performance that Wajid and the women of his household performed. It was a romantic story of *Ghizalah* and *Mahrugh*—both characters usually played by Wajid's *begums* (Taqui and Saxena 1987: 25). The play was performed for ten days, day and night. It was of a royal nature—meant to be watched only by the women of the mahal and members of the royal family. Citing Masud Hasan's *Lucknow ka Awami Stage*, Taqui and Saxena say that some authors, such as Sitala Sahai, have confused the play with *Indrasabha*<sup>40</sup> and that the *Indrasabha* was never performed at Qaiserbagh nor had anything to do with Wajid (Taqui

and Saxena 1987: 25). Even though Taqui and Saxena contest Sahai's claim, they provide Sahai's description of the play setting verbatim (Taqui and Saxena 1987: 24). This is useful for us in visualizing the way Qaiserbagh was set up for such performances.

In Sahai's description, all of Qaiserbagh would be the stage of the play, which was performed during winters, and Safed Baradari would be the main location.<sup>41</sup> Safed Baradari would be divided into three sections, the first for the protagonist's court and the second for the protagonist's room, but the purpose of the third is not known.<sup>42</sup> A similar description is provided by Hay (1939: 140–141). However, she locates the play in the “silver baradari” (1939: 140). It is possible that as Wajid organized the performance of this play annually, various locations across Qaiserbagh might have been chosen for setting up the scene of the king's court and bed chamber.

In a rather elaborate description of the setting and the performance provided by Hay,<sup>43</sup> the section of the baradari that was transformed into the protagonist's court was profusely decorated. Silver was used to cover its pillars, and elaborate ornaments hung from the ceiling and walls. At night, the structure was filled with light from chandeliers and mirrors. In the center stood the protagonist's throne, where the woman playing the protagonist sat in splendid attire, surrounded by a multitude of *paris*. Outside, scented water fountains were in operation, while the garden seats were gilded or silvered, shining amid the flowers and illuminated by the sun during the day and countless lamps at night. The space—transformed into the protagonist's room—was set up with a golden bedstead, a luxurious counterpane, a magnificent carpet, and golden furniture. It served as the setting for *Ghizalah*. The woman playing *Ghizalah* was adorned in gauze or muslin with golden trim, and her black hair adorned with sparkling gems. On the tenth day, Wajid himself danced to entertain the masses and insisted that the queen, Khas Mahal, and other prominent women of the court present him with monetary gifts (Hay 1939:141).

Qaiserbagh was used effectively in setting up the scenes for such day—night spectacles, round the year. The use of lamps, chandeliers, mirrors, gilding and silver, and water, still and springing-up in fountains, to cast and reflect light during the night-time performances, added nuance to the way these scenes were lit and performed.

Baradaris are small structures, they are open structures, and they can be dressed up or dressed down depending on the occasion. That way the structures are performative in nature. Such structures were not separated by walls but curtains and when juxtaposed with Wajid's inclination for performativity; they become not only settings for performance but also active characters in that theater. Falak Sair is a good example, which did not just merely function like a kiosk or a gazebo in a garden but was very significant to Wajid's domestic and political role. He used it for taking important decisions, and meeting his friends or family.



Theatrical enactments were also an opportunity for Wajid to exercise power and show his favor in the selection and casting of women in various roles. Hay (1939: 140) writes of the great eagerness among the harem ladies to play *Ghizalah*, for example, due to her beauty, and that Wajid reserved that right for one of his wives, whom he would choose to play this character.

Wajid created and treated Qaiserbagh as a grandiose setting for several extravagant events and performances, organized at an enormous scale. Large ensembles of performers and an abundance of audience members contributed to the enormity of these theatricities. The extravagant use of lighting, colors, fantastical costumes made of brocade, silks, satins, and fine muslins further emphasized the dramatic effect. Wajid took special interest in fine tuning the carefully crafted narrative of these performances. Some of them even took months to reach that stage of perfection that Wajid demanded. He took special interest in training the *paris*, especially for each performance. Timing and setting—whether it is day or night, whether it is winter or otherwise—were kept in mind for organizing these events. Color, especially through lights, draping of structures, and dresses, played a crucial role in creating a vibrant and visually striking atmosphere to evoke emotions and set the mood. In providing a majestic backdrop for these theatrical events, Qaiserbagh—with its palatial architecture, sprawling gardens, and ornate interiors—provided a culmination of a fantastical life that Wajid exercised on a day-to-day basis, acting as an extension of Wajid’s lived theatricality.

Vaudeville at the nawabi court appeared in its theatricity and the variety appeared in its multivalence and capacities to hold pluralities. Vaudeville is of the commonplace, not royal. The nawabs embraced the commonplace—animal fights, “raree show,” and Mina Bazaar Mela—integrating the citizens into the courtly life. This British Empire used this aspect to ridicule and discredit the nawabs with an intention to take over the nawabi territory. For the nawabs the theatricity was ingrained in the way they carried out their personal, political, and cultural lives, which would set an example for their citizens and hence proliferate through the kingdom. However, these practices were so opaque and inaccessible to the British that they left them uncomfortable.

## Notes

- 1 Certain multivalent elements have multiple values; they hold an ability to bond with the same elements and produce drastically different substances. For example, iron is multivalent as it exists in 2+, 3+, and 4+ states. Iron can form bonds with oxygen in more than one proportion depending on its valency. That way the element has the ability to take on multiple identities.
- 2 Arguing that the “state” of gender is change, where gender is an event and not a permanence; Crawford uses the example of *Blur Building* by Diller+Scofidio that “disposes with the notion of any normal, natural, default, or ideal state.” For Crawford, the *Blur Building* has an activated, dynamic temporality, insofar as it is always changing in response to multiple factors. Crawford 2015: 4)

- 3 Pemble refers to Oudh Papers, pp 268–69, 274–75, 280, 286, 321–22, 411–13, 425, 434, 444, 476, and 596.
- 4 Wardrobe, storehouse.
- 5 Mirza Abu Taleb, a contemporary in the court of Asaf who traveled to Europe and wrote about his travels, finds a similarity with the brightly lit “chemists’ shops containing glass vases filled with different coloured liquids” in Dublin and the illumination of Bada Imambada” (Stewart 1972 (1814): 52).
- 6 Muharram is a ten-day ritual of mourning the *shahadat* (martyrdom) of Imam Hussein. Hussein was Islamic prophet Muhammad’s grandson, and son of first *imam* of Shias, Ali ibn Abi Talib. He was killed in the Battle of Karbala by Umayyad Caliphate rival claimant to Islamic leadership in the 61 AH (680 AD). Shias in Lucknow practice *azadari*, or mourning, as a remembrance of Imam Hussein ibn Ali’s sacrifice in the struggle for justice and truth in the form of fasting and lamentation. Remembrance is observed annually through a ten-day period, culminating in the day of *Ashura*, when followers of Hussein collectively lament his death through processions.
- 7 Valentia’s claim that Asaf conceived the Imambada as his burial place is contentious. In a tomb, the body is always laid parallel to the qibla or perpendicular to the direction of Mecca. The Imambada’s orientation does not align with that of a tomb. This suggests that it was only later that the Imambada became the resting place for Asaf.
- 8 An American who visited Lucknow in 1853 as a part of his larger tour of the “orient.” He wrote about the Imambada in the *Calcutta Review* (1857: 61).
- 9 A manufactory is a warehouse, a laboratory, an industry, or a workroom (Kipfer 2005)
- 10 Keene consulted Mr. Brown’s *Lucknow Guide* (Keene 1875: 59) while writing the book, and cites Brown’s description of the interior of the Imambada thus: “The hall was usually illuminated with a profusion of wax tapers and numerous hanging lights, the tomb itself being strewn with flowers, and covered with cakes of barley from Mecca; officiating priests in attendance day and night, chanting verses from the Koran” (Keene 1875: 103). Brown’s description is similar to Tennant’s (Tennant 1803: 405–406).
- 11 Other writers have also mentioned the monetary relief provided by the construction of the Imambada, even though they do not stress on it as the purpose (Hay 1939: 113; Hilton 1891: 115; Keene 1875: 103; Newell 1915: 17).
- 12 Soon after the 1857 Uprising, the British had appropriated the Bada Imambada Complex and were using it as ordnance and ammunition stores. In 1883 the complex was returned to the Muslim community in conformity with the royal wish (Newell 1915: 16–17). Newell wrote in 1915. By this time, the building had been returned to the community. With this transfer, the building is once again used for religious and cultural purposes and not for military purposes. Following a period when the building was stark, all its decorations removed, and previous activities discontinued; there is a subsequent revival of cultural practices—which is what Newell (and also Fuhrer) observed. Hence, Newell’s descriptions of the interiors vary from earlier ones such as that of Heber’s.
- 13 “From the central chamber a staircase leads to a series of rooms designed as a maze. Above these again is a flat roof” (Hay 1939: 114).
- 14 f.85v, f.87v, f.89r, and f.91v (Unknown c1850v, c1850w, c1850x, and c1850y) show Wajid meeting women in a garden setting. He sits on a throne, behind him is his confidante and chief supervisor of palace affairs, Daroga Najmunissa. Each of the painting corresponds to an instance in which Wajid is interviewing women (Shah 1987 (1877): 52), and Sultan Pari (Shah 1987 (1877): 53) who were eventually taken in as *paris*.

- 15 f.117v of *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850ad) gives a visual of Wajid listening to a performance in the company of several women.
- 16 A Muslim marriage contract
- 17 A contract by which a Shia Muslim can take a temporary wife, for a fixed term, though the period can be defined as 50 years, by mutual consent and be subject to divorce.
- 18 *Khanum* also means a female royal and is an aristocratic title.
- 19 *Parasoles*.
- 20 f.209r (Unknown c1850bg) shows Wajid dressed in a military uniform watching Colonel Haji Sharif training soldiers. He was financially restricted in sustaining a full army (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 84), so as a way out, he employed women.
- 21 In *Parikhana*, Wajid has recorded several forms of female employment, such as *suroor-e-mehfilwali*, or joy of the party (42); *buzurwali*, or performer (48); *tawaiif*, or dancer (138); *raqqaasa*, or dancer (70); *marsiya khwan*, or female poetry reader (37); *mashooq-i-khas*, or favorite lover (129); *mehri*, or housekeeper (80); *khadima*, or servant (29); *khwasa*, or personal attendant (91); *mughalani*, or servant of the palace women (167); *aato (ustani)*, or female teacher (49); *sayyedtunissa begum sahiba*, or a female leader (136); and female sentinels to guard the entrances of the building Parikhana (60).
- 22 *Begum* also refers to a respectable woman.
- 23 Wajid has recorded in *Parikhana* the various employments conferred on the *khwajasaras*. They were made *darogah* (in charge) of *topkhana nagariya* (city artillery), Doab region of Awadh—one of the most fertile and rich sections of his kingdom, *sultani magazine* (royal magazine), *khazana* (treasury), *dafter-e-sultani* (royal office), *ravaan-e-khas sultani* (royal granary), *nazaf ashraf (imambada)*, and ancestors' mausoleums (132). They were also employed as caretakers of *begums* and pensioners, and *khas mahals*, or the royal residences (133), while some were employed as *nigahbaan*, or guard, and *khidmatguzar*, or personal attendant (49). One of them was given the post of *akhbaar-navis* (which loosely translates to journalist, reporter, and editor) (83).
- 24 Asaf uses animal motifs quite often in his celebratory illumination, circus-type acts, and acrobatics, apart from owning a large menagerie of wild animals and birds.
- 25 Chancey 2007: 22
- 26 Valentia, in his description of the “Sungi Baradari,” describes the structure as being primarily used to breakfast and view these animal fights (Valentia 1809: 159). These animal fights were designed to convey a sense of power—to establish the credibility of nawabi rule and to place the culture on equal footing with Mughal and European ones.
- 27 He refers to queer collectors, such as Oscar Wilde, Marcel Proust, and Henry James, who used their homes and rooms as spaces of self-expression, escapism, and eroticism, filling them with objects, artworks, and books that reflected their tastes and desires. He argues that these interiors were not merely decorative but rather “a way of creating a world that was both a refuge and a stage” (1997: 89).
- 28 “A style or mode of personal or creative expression that is absurdly exaggerated and often fuses elements of high and popular culture. Something so outrageously artificial, affected, inappropriate, or out-of-date as to be considered amusing” (*Merriam-Webster*).
- 29 Tennant mentions that the tigers were docile to the caretakers who would sympathetically pat them.
- 30 (Crawford 2015: 4).
- 31 Dwelling as a phenomenological verb.
- 32 A form of poetry.

- 33 A *masnavi* written by Wajid.
- 34 Dance-drama.
- 35 Wajid promoted easier *raginis* (derivative melody), such as *tilak*, *pilu*, *sendura*, *khammach*, *bhairvi*, and *jhanjhauti* so as to make them accessible to all sections of society. In this way, and also by introducing and encouraging lighter forms of music, such as *ghazals* and *thumris*, he made music part of the day-to-day lives of the common citizenry (Bhatt 2006: 78–79).
- 36 In the Vaishnav mythology, *gopis* are cowherding women, who are known for their devotion to Krishna. They are also revered as intimate female friends of Krishna.
- 37 We conjecture that this is one of the fairs that Wajid organized for his *paris*. In Parikhana, on a demand put forth by the *paris* for a Mina Bazaar Mela—a fancy fair held for the women—Wajid organized such a fair. Wajid had generously provided funds to the *paris* to acquire *zarbaft* (rich fabric woven with threads of silver and gold, brocade) clothes for their participation in the melas (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 118–121).
- The elephant that he would ride is waiting on the right of the painting. Seeing the direction of the elephants ahead of him, we read that the procession would start from where Wajid is and move through the northern periphery of the Qaiserbagh to exit out of the Eastern Lakhi Gate toward the city.
- 38 Jogi is a person who has renounced worldly pleasures, an ascetic, or a hermit.
- 39 Iqtidaruddaula witnessed all performances in the Qaiserbagh and has written about those performances in *Tareekh-e-Iqtadari*.
- 40 *Indrasabha* is an Urdu play written by Agha Hasan Amanat, also known as Amanat Lakhnavi. It was first staged in 1853, although the date of it being staged in Qaiserbagh is not known.
- 41 Sahai uses the term “Indra’s court.” We have changed it to the protagonist’s court to remain consistent with Taqui and Saxena.
- 42 Taqui and Saxena further refute Sahai’s claim saying that Wajid used the Safed Baradari as an *imambada*, and hence, there is little reason for it to be understood as a site of a play performance (Taqi and Saxena 1987: 26).
- 43 In Hay’s description too, Indra seems to be the protagonist. This makes us believe that either Hay was reading Sahai or that Hay and Sahai had similar references. We have replaced Indra with the protagonist for Hay’s description too.

## 10 Of Perverse Compositions

Nawabi architecture can be read as an expression of defiant compositional and typological (dis)orders and “polychrome” aesthetics. The nawabs took an active interest in European architecture and culture, which shaped the built environment of Lucknow, long before the EIC started to build there. This interest in conjunction with locally available material and expertise led to innovations in the construction systems. Their varied interests in music, dance, poetry, and science led to the development of new typologies, while their ability to reference contemporary European architectural styles, combined with their commissioning of European architects and engineers alongside local construction skills, led to the construction of public buildings that demonstrated new form—a hybrid and an adaptation—both terms that appear in the colonial archive with a negative connotation. But their adaptation played roles that the colonial archive failed to notice. It was part of *orientating* new buildings with ones already available to initiate *familiarity*, in the case of Asaf who had recently relocated to Lucknow, as a necessary condition for political as well as cultural sustainability.

This is reflected also in compositional aspects, materials, motifs, and ornamentation in the buildings commissioned by the nawabs, that underscore the inseparability of ornament and structure in the nawabi architecture of Lucknow. An unconventional aesthetic that deviates from puritanical principles of design, accompany the rejection of a typology-based architectural language.

### Hybridity, Adaptation, and Stylistic Disorganization

A striking example of colonial response to the perverse composition at work in nawabi architecture comes from the cursory writing about the Rumi Darwaza, described as a “half of a vast dome” (Hay 1939: 196) and read as modeled on a gate in Turkey, which does not exist. By dismissing the gate as neither an original conception, nor even an authentic facsimile, they dismiss Asaf as a gullible “victim of a deception” (Hilton 1894: 134). However, in focusing on whether or not an original on which the Rumi Darwaza was modeled existed, the colonial writers miss the point. The word *rumi* is a

claim to reference Turkey but also a claim of it being from elsewhere and not Lucknow, hybrid, envisaged and commissioned by Asaf as a structure that embodies a foreign building language conducted using local building technique. It is a hybrid of alien form and local technique, and it is this hybridity that contributes to its acceptability as the Rumi Darwaza—of Turkish origin—something not from Lucknow.

A question much more interesting than that of the “original” is what made Asaf envisage such a language? In moving to Lucknow and establishing the city as his capital, Asaf created a parallel court culture rivaling that of the Mughals in Delhi, a cosmopolitan culture where artists and scholars were invited to break away from the normative conventions of the latter. Asaf had taken up the project of placing Lucknow on the cultural map of the world, imagining it to be the center where musicians, intellectuals, priests, scholars, and other cultural representatives of the world come and settle. He created an environment that was inclusive through its familiarity to many individuals of differing backgrounds, an environment which was not specifically local but borrowed from various cultures—Turkish or Ottoman, French, English, and so on. This integration of several languages gave rise to a hybrid visual language which was to soon become very unique to Lucknow, in the aspiration to create a cosmopolitan center that the visitors were drawn to, where they were able to live without necessarily assimilating with the local culture. The idea of the cosmopolitan, here, was that of an inclusive culture or cultures, where several parallel forms of being and doing were allowed to flourish simultaneously. Thus, the culture of Lucknow was not one that of one normative whole but rather that of the hybrid—the non-normative—an intermingling of several distinct and often contrasting forms. This idea of a cosmopolitan city, we argue, led to hybrid forms of architecture, such as the Rumi Darwaza.

The rich artistic environment encouraged hybridity and synthesis of styles not just in visual arts but also architecture and poetry. While comparing the decorative art in Lucknow with that of Delhi, curator Stephen Markel describes the “distinctive styles of decorative floral imagery that arose in Awadh during this period drew from a variety of sources,” such as the chinoiserie designs widely popular in Europe and England during the 18th century. He also attributes the hybridity to the “abundance of imported works of art present in Lucknow” (Markel 2010: 204) such as that in the private collection of the nawab at the Aina Khana.

Asaf was a connoisseur of European objects, his collection of objects in the Aina Khana is testimony to that. Even as he derived hybrid architectural languages from West Asian and regional contexts for the monumental, ceremonial, religious, and public buildings such as the Rumi Darwaza and the Bada Imambada, Asaf introduced a western European aesthetic in his private residences, such as the Bibiapore Kothi and the Asafi Kothi. Asaf hired European architects to design his residences; for example, Marsack (Tandan 2008: 129–131) was appointed as the architect of the Asafi Kothi,



and Antoine Polier for Bibiapore Kothi (Tandan 2008: 130). This was much before the times when European styles became commonplace in Lucknow.<sup>1</sup>

Asafi Kothi—one of the early structures in Lucknow to be designed by a European architect—has the outward external appearance of a European structure with its semicircular arches, fluted columns, and composite capitals. The European ornament and decoration done in stone is replicated and mimicked here using stucco and plaster. The longevity and monumentality of stone structures of the European aesthetic are translated to brick-and-mortar structures, with the appearance of finely dressed ashlar masonry achieved in stucco.

### *Orientating: Forging Familiarities*

Machhi Bhavan precinct was never conceptualized at one time, as something new. It had many structures built by the *sheikhzadas* and continued to be developed over time. Many buildings were rented (Nevill 1904: 204) by Shujaud-daula and Safdar Jang from the *sheikhzadas*. Asaf continued to live in these rented properties, all the while developing the precinct further by adding many structures and strengthening old ones. In this exercise he incorporated many pre-existing structures constructed during the time of the *sheikhzadas*, but changed their use, adapted them to newer purposes and to the culture he intended to create, in an exercise in deviation and in “queering.”

Asaf’s enlargement and strengthening of the Panch Mahalla gateway discussed earlier is a good example. Initially appearing as a smaller single-story structure (Tieffenthaler drawing 1791b: Plate XV-2), positioned at the northwest corner of the Naubat Khana Court, the gateway was retained in position and enlarged even though it did not align with the axis along which the Rumi Darwaza and Naubat Khana Gate were placed. Asaf deviated from the norms of royalty embracing the inessentiality of symmetry and a monumental axis as a means of grandeur. The main gate is at the side, the corner, and in the layout nothing is symmetrical. This means that the paths taken to access these structures and complexes are not axial or cardinal but rather queer, soliciting deviation and affecting a rejection of symmetry, centrality, and monumentality.

Asaf seamlessly integrated the existing *baoli* into the Imambada and Machhi Bhavan palace precincts. The plan suggests that after integration the *baoli* served as a spline joint connecting the two precincts. It was both a private space within the Baoli Palace and a public area accessible from the Imambada’s public court. The courts adjoining the Baoli Palace—the Arcaded Court, the Sangi Dalan Court, and the innermost court of the Imambada—were all situated at varying levels, visible in Beato’s *Panorama* (1858a). The innermost court of the Imambada was the lowest. The west entrance to the *baoli* was one story above this court. The Arcaded Court was one-story higher than the west entrance to the *baoli*, and the “piazza” and the Sangi Dalan Court lay almost one-story higher than the arcaded court. It seems that one could enter the *baoli* from the north passing through an

arcaded structure and entering the octagonal structure above the well. One would enter the octagonal structure at one of the lower levels and use the octagonal structure to navigate the levels, emerging at a higher plane above the *baoli*. From here, again one could access the adjacent courts at various levels through the same octagon. Thus, *baoli* became a wedge between not just the Imambada and the Machhi Bhavan palace precincts but also between various courts of the latter. In an ingenious strategy, an existing structure is used to integrate not just various space typologies but also various ground planes, and to facilitate easy navigation through.

Asaf's disregard for the rigidity of symmetry allows for unusual compositions to emerge, a condition for the queer to take shape. Asaf builds new structures in the Machhi Bhavan precinct, such as the Machhi Bhavan, Bada Imambada, Asafi Masjid and structures within the Sangi Dalan Court. He places them in such a way that they assume a proximate directionality toward the existing *baoli*, courts, gardens, and mosques. These localities create a complex arrangement of seemingly fragmented buildings (Das *et al.* 2008) yet make the buildings coherent in their proximity and use.

After having relocated to Lucknow, Asaf begins to orient new buildings with ones already available at the Machhi Bhavan precinct to initiate *familiarity*. Reading Machhi Bhavan precinct in the way Sara Ahmed would, we argue that in Asaf orientating the new buildings with what is already available makes new forms of inhabiting possible (Ahmed 2006b). This integration is not oppressive or hegemonic, which would have been easy for Asaf had he built afresh, ignoring the existing. It is in this deviation from what is expected of a ruler, in this accommodation, in this reshaping the environment gradually and improvisationally, that he queers the place.

Migration involves reinhabiting news spaces; it is as a process of disorientation and reorientation as bodies “move away” as well as “arrive” (Ahmed 2006b: xxi). Asaf moves away from Faizabad to Lucknow and specifically to the Machhi Bhavan precinct. Acknowledging the physical features of the new location—the Machhi Bhavan precinct—its air, smells, and sounds as well as its existing structures—“like points,” Asaf created “new textures on the surface” of Lucknow. Sara Ahmed prompts us to think of “goose bumps, textures on the skin surface,” which are signs of the body's capacity to get orientated to a new atmosphere (2006b: xxi). They are also pointers of those aspects of skin that are unfamiliar with the change. The same way Asaf's interventions are signs of his arrival, and his making the unfamiliar familiar. He built his palace in accordance with the existing Sheikhzada structures, integrating them. In doing so, he continually orients toward the unfamiliar existing palace complex, and makes it his own.

On the summit of almost all the roofs of the palace (particularly of the Zenanahs) are bred flocks of pigeons, to the number of about an hundred in each flock. . . . When on the wing, they keep in a cluster; and, at a whistle, fly either way, ascend, descend, or return home, according

to the signal. When turning suddenly, and darting towards the sun, the gleam of their variegated necks appears exceedingly beautiful; and when together on the ground, no carpet can surpass the elegance of their colours.

(Gladwin 1785: 391)

Gladwin's description of pigeons is a description of directions pigeons have taken to reach Lucknow, of locations they assume, of home, of going away, and of returning. Pigeons train and acquire familiarity. We read it as if it describes the *zenana* through how bodies of pigeons as well as women who migrated with Asaf inhabit it. The presence of pigeons, brought along from different parts of the world as domesticated birds, gives the space a "direction," taking which the nawab, his household, and his domesticated birds arrive, and a "location" where the nawab, his household, and the birds begin to form new inhabitations that makes them feel "at home" (Ahmed 2006b).

#### *(Im)morality of Deviance*

Gladwin compares Asaf's buildings to their European counterparts (1785: 391), particularly noting the absence of symmetry. It amuses him that despite the absence of symmetry the buildings are "well-proportioned" (1785: 391). The connoisseur tone is evident in his account as he undertakes an "inspection of the public buildings," in a quest to find Grecian elements (Gladwin 1785: 391). It is a bias for Western classical familiar stylistic scholarship that makes Gladwin use that as a parameter to justify the aesthetic of Lucknow structures. In his inspection of the buildings, Gladwin not only categorizes the buildings as a whole as "Moorish as well as Hindoo," but breaks them down into their constituent parts such as "[c]ollonades, arcades, pillars, pilasters, pedestals, fillets, cimatia, astragals, and entablatures (particularly the foliage of the Corinthian capital)" in order to identify underlying Grecian influences in nawabi architecture (Gladwin 1785: 391). Similar bias for Western classical architecture as reference is in Valentia's account as he goes about looking for Gothic, Grecian, and Morisco (Moorish) identifiers in nawabi buildings (1809: 156).

Hodges, too, did not approve of the exterior of the Machhi Bhavan: "it reminded [him] of what [he] had imagined might be the style of a Baron's castle . . . of . . . the twelfth century" than a palace in appearance (1793: 101). He reads the palace as a commentary on the nawab's political position in relation to the Mughals—equating it to the English feudal barony, who were land holders in the service of the king during the 11th and 12th centuries. He takes that political positioning as a basis to read the nawab's palace as a reference to what a baron's castle would be like, him having never seen it. Hodges' tone remains disapproving as he wrote of the Hussein Bagh, suggesting that the pavilions of the garden look good from a distance (1793: 101). This implies that upon closer inspection, the structures did not

hold up to scrutiny, in Hodges' view. However, when Gladwin looks at the structure—possibly—from a distance, he makes the mistake of assuming that the pavilions were made of stone. The pavilions made in brick and plastered with chunam were done so brilliantly to give the appearance of stonework that they were deceptive to a distant eye.

In Hodges' illustration alongside the description, the structures of the Machhi Bhavan precinct, and Hussein Bagh are placed on high mounds, elevated from the banks of the river,<sup>2</sup> using artistic liberty to further his invitation to his readers to imagine these structures as medieval and castle-like.

Hodges uses the term "Moorish style" (Hodges 1793: 101) for describing the columns of the baradari in the Durbar Court. The term "Moorish" is misleading. It is unclear if Hodges was referring to the nawab's ancestry or the architectural influence of the Moorish kingdom on Lucknow. In any case, neither holds good. Tracing the ancestry of the nawab leads us to the Timurids. Tracing the *baradari* as an architectural typology leads us to the Mughals. In this light, the term "Moorish" seems to describe the other, the unfamiliar, the non-European. It is dismissive and unspecific. Gladwin uses the terms "Moorish as well as Hindoo" as qualifiers for building styles, and it seems that the term refers to structures commissioned by Islamic rulers. This is one of the earlier examples of the Europeans' urge to read buildings based on the religion of their patrons—where any structure having identifiers such as arches would have been considered Islamic and any trabeated structure would have been considered Hindu. Such a reading is generic and superficial and conveys a European urge to classify objects, buildings, and people into broad categories that are all an other.

Beside a deviation in the typology, Asaf also deviated from the puritanical principles of design—balance, symmetry, and order. The 52 fish on the Machhi Bhavan accord the name to the structure, even though the fish is a decorative aspect of the structure. Ornamentation is inherent in nawabi architecture and sometimes used intentionally to render an identity to the building. The fish symbol on the palace building renders a royal identity to the structure—representing the nawab of Awadh. Even though the pair of fish appear as a small symbol on the structure's exterior above each opening, the frequent repetition of this symbol reinforces an image of the nawab wazir's rule and his legitimacy. This has to be seen in the context of the Mughal regime, from which the nawabs later detached and established their identity in Awadh. The fish symbol is one of the many ways through which the nawabs proclaim their authority.

The Qaiserbagh complex, which Wajid places at the center of his narrative in the *Ishqnamah*, is similarly described as grotesque, strange, and theatrical—something that does not go with the British idea of a residential complex.<sup>3</sup> Its aesthetics confuses the European visitors, who are unable to reconcile with the fact that the architectural language of the complex resists any confirmation to established typology-based formal rules.

Curator of the Lucknow Provincial Museum Alois Anton Fuhrer's description laments an immorality that emerges in Wajid's buildings, which, unlike the Mughal or even the preceding nawabi buildings, did not aspire to purity of form, "whose style was avowedly and openly copied from debased European models," and he further condemns the adaptation of cross-bred European elements in the Qaiserbagh. "All the mongrel vulgarities which were applied in Vauxhall, Rosherville, and the Surrey Gardens, took refuge in the Qaisar Bagh," and emerged as "Corinthian pilasters under Moslim domes, false Venetian blinds, imitation marbles, pea-green mermaids sprawling over a blue sky above a yellow entablature, etc." (Fuhrer 1891: 267)—a compositional decision of fusion which resisted formal puritanical principles. Fuhrer's dismissal of Wajid's architecture was not only limited to it being a copy, but he also objected to the source of replication. In London, Vauxhall<sup>4</sup> was a mixed industrial and residential area of predominantly manual workers' homes at the time. The colonial critique here conflates vulgar taste with poverty.

The Mermaid Gate combines seemingly disparate elements in its form that to Fuhrer appears vulgar. Four mermaids in stucco—two on top of the pediment and two flanking the gateway—hold a *morchhal*<sup>5</sup> in one hand and uphold the crown in the other. The spiral decorations on the columns, the pin-wheel motif in the parapet, and the insignia all contribute to the fluid appearance and mercurial nature of the gateway—a form that evades predictability and definability (Bourne 1860; Beato 1858j; Tytlers c1857–1858). The unpredictability is further amplified by the use of kinetic forms such as spirals not only through decoration but also through architectural elements such as the double-spiral<sup>6</sup> staircase attached to the gate [top right in Figure 8.6]. The spiral staircase does not lead anywhere and brings one back to the start—implying a dreamy walk experience without any destination in mind—de-privileging utilitarianism and the necessity of reaching somewhere. The staircase is sculptural and allows for interactive sculptural experience. That evokes a sense of kineticism, a dance-like movement of going up and down the staircase. The statues in human form on top of the columns seem to be in a dance-like pose, with arms outstretched and hands holding a ring-like object, broken in many instances. Soon after the 1870s (Saché and Rust), the Mermaid Gate seems to have been destroyed.

The Qaiserbagh gateways were decorated with mermaids, and the marble bridge with mermen. There is an element of the fantastical with the depiction of mermaids, ocean, and mermen, and an element of the ornamental with richly decorative motifs embellishing the various surfaces of the gates. Merpeople are not just fantastical creatures often associated with the unknown and the lure of passion but are also perceived as free spirits representing a desire for freedom. Their part-human, part-fish forms valorize unfixed unattainable forms. In Urdu, mermaid translates to *jalpari*—water-fairy—a hybrid of fish and fairy, linked to the past emblem of the nawabs and to some of the most important inhabitants of Wajid's establishment at Qaiserbagh—the music and dance trainees, *paris*. Wajid glorified the mythological and the fantastical

nature of the mermaid and made it a symbol representing his office. That symbol appears on the several gateways of the Qaiserbagh complex, larger than life, often painted in pastels, and foregrounding decorative parapets cast in the shape of waves, clouds, and skies. Wajid's inclusion of the mermaid in his emblem reveals his aspiration to project an image of a king whose court and palace culture foster an environment that embraces the unique attributes associated with mermaids—the fantastical and the hybrid.

Wajid Ali Shah proactively employed the use of several colors—polychromy—as a strategy to explore eclecticism in his buildings. The Mermaid Gate exemplifies one of the most spectacular uses of polychromy in combination with a myriad of motifs. Simpson's view of the gateway from the Huzur/Hazrat Bagh side presents it adorned in a pale-yellow hue and accentuated by columns in a darker earthen tone, embellished with silver bands forming an intricate spiral motif. Notably, the columns possess a glossy finish, adding to their overall polished appearance. Additionally, the mermaid tails are depicted in a vibrant green shade, while the Venetian blinds on the second story, flanking the central portal, are also adorned in green.

The vibrant use of colors to depict the clothing of the human subjects indicates a conscious artistic decision to portray a significant portion of the gateway in light pastel tones. The selection of these hues could be an indication of the original colors employed in the Mermaid Gate or that by the 1860s, certain painted areas of the gateway had gradually faded over time, while only the slightly glazed columns retained their original coloration.

Banmali Tandan asserts the presence of polychromy as an innovative form of architectural visualization prevalent among the contemporary British architects—a discourse which may or may not have been available to the nawab (Tandan, 268). However, Wajid's "kind of polychromy and what was seen as its profligate hybrid detail was never forgiven all through the nineteenth century by orthodox British observers" (Tandan: 269).

### *The Strange, the Odd, the Queer*

Keene, who is accepting of the "union of European ideas with Asiatic work" seen in the architecture of Saadat Ali and Murshid Zaidi Tombs built by Ghaziud-Din Haider (Keene 1875: 90), treats these tombs as a stylistic benchmark against which the rest of the structures in Qaiserbagh are measured and finds them to fall short, calling them "less happy instances."

Keene describes Qaiserbagh as

. . . an immense courtyard with fantastic buildings on all four sides; a stucco Louvre, in which Italian and Moorish styles blend in a manner that is more grotesque than graceful; and where gilding, and ochre, and whitewash tend to give a strange appearance of the theatre to the "residency" of this Oriental Gerolstein.

(Keene 1875: 89)



Keene's description tells us less about the architecture of Qaiserbagh and more about his stylistic preferences providing self-referential reasons. Keene uses the description as a "fair occasion for political moralising" (Keene 1875: 89), in the patronizing attitude of the colonizers who saw themselves as morally superior, and suggests that the architecture of the Qaiserbagh offered an opportunity for them to pass moral judgments on Wajid's political system. The mention of "the histrionic majesty produced by one viceregal manager, and withdrawn by another" perpetuates the colonial stereotype of native rulers as mere puppets or figureheads under British control. By characterizing the nawab's authority as "histrionic" (Keene 1875: 89), meaning theatrical or insincere, the text portrays him as a theatrical performer rather than a legitimate ruler. This denigration undermines Wajid's legitimacy and portrays him as incapable of ruling effectively without British intervention.

Keene was not against a fusion of styles per se. In fact, to a certain extent, he acknowledged that a fusion of styles was the stylistic preference of the newly instituted British Raj. Citing British architects who were working for the Raj—Robert Chisholm, William Emerson, and Charles Mant—Keene makes a case for an aesthetic for the national style of the Raj (Keene 1875: 89). All these architects were developing a style popularly known as the Indo-Saracenic, which combined a variety of Indian forms with European ones. Keene notes that the architecture of Qaiserbagh had contributed to this aesthetic, but he wasn't fully satisfied with it. He found fault with the material which decayed prematurely. In foregrounding British architects, we read his bias toward a necessity to employ Western expertise for advancing an aesthetic and ensuring longevity, for an architecture that would represent the Raj. In the desire for a long-lasting architecture, there is an emphasis on the British desire to impose a uniform style across the Indian subcontinent.

Rousselet similarly discredits Wajid's contribution, by assuming that Claude Martin was "entirely" responsible for stylistic mixing/assemblage at Qaiserbagh—the "odd medley" of "Italian facade," "Moorish arcades," "spires" of a Hindu temple, and "Chinese bell-turrets" (Rousselet 1975 [1882]: 516). Martin died in 1800, almost 50 years before Qaiserbagh was built. To attribute the character of Qaiserbagh to Martin indicates a colonial bias, which assumes that the influence of a foreign person would sustain that long and that every construction, good or bad, can solely be a feat of a European. We argue that the stylistic disorganizations that combined many forms and scales were Wajid's imagination. Wajid was aware of and borrowed from a vast array of sources, and Martin was one of them. Martin's "crown surmounting La Martiniere College" (Hay 1939: 141) was, for example, adapted to form the spire of the Eastern Lakhi Gate and the Western Lakhi Gate [top left in Figure 8.6]. In Rousselet's description, we also see an attempt to take the composition apart and accord a stylistic categorization to each element.<sup>7</sup> We read this attempt as a means of trying to comprehend and critique that which was complex and not easily comprehensible to the colonial eye.

Rousselet limits his description of Qaiserbagh to calling it a “a collection of grotesque mouldings, wire carcasses, plated balls, and all the most anomalous objects” (Rousselet 1975 (1882): 517), revealing his unfamiliarity with the aesthetic and his inability to comprehend the nature of the structures. He finds the vine trellises as dead ruinous structures disdainful, but this is owed to the ruinous state to which it came after the annexation of Awadh by the British, which resulted in Wajid’s exile.

Having limited themselves to emphasizing the disproportionately large expense incurred in the construction of Qaiserbagh, colonial writers insist that the result was “most debased” (Beg 1911: 63), “disastrous from architectural standards” (Newell 1915: 35), and “meretricious” (Newell 1915: 36). These writers have commented on its scale, finding it bigger than the “Tuileries and Louvre together” (Newell 1915: 35). However, unable to comprehend the logic of its composition they are quick to call it a “pile” (Newell 1915: 35) which prioritized “quantity . . . rather than quality” (Newell 1915: 35).

The discourse continues in post-independence scholarship. In Madhu Trivedi’s fairly detailed description of the Lanka, she observes that the structure bears the stamp of a builder schooled in the Vatican and 18th-century French chateaus, and she classifies this style “pseudo-Italian” (Trivedi 1977: 200). She describes the Lanka as “perhaps the strangest of all of Wajid Ali Shah’s buildings” (Trivedi 1977: 200), apparently unable to “reconcile” the building’s interior arcade of cusped and trifoliated arches with its exterior, and she is also unable to discern the purpose for which the structure might have been built (Trivedi 1977: 200). To Trivedi, the octagonal towers that define the corners of the Lanka, appear “obstrusive” (Trivedi 1977: 200) in their commanding the attention of the viewer, extending high above the roof for no apparent purpose, and being disproportionate in contrast to the mullions that supported the roof. However, Trivedi’s description of the Lanka is incomplete and possibly inaccurate. She does not mention several key architectural features of the structure, such as the stairway bridge connecting the two structures, or the domes that surmount the octagonal towers. She also refers to the structure as single-storied. It is possible that Trivedi had access to and studied visual representations of the Lanka after it had fallen into a state of disrepair.

Tandan (2008: 272–273) departs from this discourse and provides a more accurate description of the Lanka, possibly drawing from photographs, and from Lundgren’s description. Unlike Trivedi, he tries to identify specific uses for each of the levels: the basement for keeping cool, the first and second level as residential zones, accessed by the spiral staircases in the towers, and the terrace for recreation in the mornings and evenings.

Wajid did not adhere to the European fixation of the typological language of architecture, queering—making strange—architecture in the rejection of a typology-based architectural language and in its “strangeness.” An instance in the colonial archive<sup>8</sup> where a “beautiful edifice” is described despite its “peculiarity” reinforces that the strange, the odd, and the queer were always

already overlapping and concurrent with the beautiful. It was their own bias that made the colonial writers uncomfortable with the simultaneity of both—beauty and queer.

### **Disorientations and Non-Alignments**

The reliance on normative and canonical descriptors of architecture became a bias, a justification on the basis of which colonial writers dismissed nawabi buildings as “vulgar,” and “debased” in order to further their political agenda. However, reading nawabi architecture, through orientation, position, proximity, direction, alignment, and non-alignment as terms of social and political, gendered and sexual, and physical motivation, in line with Sara Ahmed’s approach, tells a different tale of the way it deviated from the norm. The harem is placed in visual proximity to the mosque; a queer temporal blend is initiated in a deviation from the strict segregation of gendered spaces; adhoc improvisational building practices acknowledge existing built forms in their locations, orientations, distances, and directionalities. These disadvantage the colonial gaze and actively disorient the British visitor, recentering the agency and power of the nawabi state through its socio-sexual overlaps.

### *Withholding the Gaze*

The monumental axis that Asaf created by integrating existing structures with new ones to enter the Imambada Complex and the Machhi Bhavan precinct, also acted as a part of the thoroughfare for the royal procession through the city. Rumi Darwaza marked the beginning of this axis in the west. It continued eastward through the Naubat Khana Gate culminating in the Naubat Khana Court. The axis breaks at this court, which allows several deviations in various directions. There were three gates in this court, and none aligned with the other, but helping define lines of movement for the royalty, aristocracy, guests, equipage, domestics, and common citizens.

From the Naubat Khana Court, each gateway led into other courts or sets of courts that could be navigated by an insider. To an outsider these series of courts could be disorienting. From here one would have to deviate off this axis, moving northeast to the Panch Mahalla Gate, which was the royal entrance into the forecourt of the Panch Mahalla and Machhi Bhavan precinct. One could also turn southward in order to enter the arcaded court through its north gateway. The arcaded court provided access to the Baoli Court and the Sangi Dalan Court.

It was the non-alignment of the Panch Mahalla Gate with the monumental axis that caused the colonial visitor to get deviated away from the gateway and reoriented toward the Arcaded Court. Placing gates away from the axis was a device to discourage public entry into the Panch Mahalla owing to the more private and controlled nature of the spaces beyond the Panch Mahalla Gate. During his visit, Gladwin entered the Naubat Khana Court through

the monumental axis. The Panch Mahalla Gate would have been in front of him, a bit off-axis though, but he did not describe it. He did not enter the gateway, despite it being in front of him. Nor did he linger long enough in the court to write about the gateway. Instead, he took a right turn and deviated southward from the court, through a not so monumental gate, accessing the arcaded court and the structures beyond. The complete disregard of the Panch Mahalla Gate in Gladwin's descriptions, which was accessible visually, is a sign of the disorienting and reorienting nature of the Naubat Khana Court.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to Gladwin, who was only able to view the Panch Mahalla from the outside, Valentia was a guest of higher social status and made much of his visit to the garden court of the *zenana* located within the Panch Mahalla. He considers himself fortunate in being permitted into this heavily gendered space, an honor reserved for the close family of the *nawab wazir*. However, he too was taken on "suwarrys" (Valentia 1809: 145), which means he too did not know the route into the *zenana*, and remained disoriented. Despite his success in making it to the garden court of the *zenana*, Valentia was denied any "hopes of a peep" into the interior spaces, his only form of communication with the royal women being the eunuchs (Valentia 1809: 145).

The Sangi Dalan provides a similar sense of controlling the gaze as it is walled off from the Arcaded Court (Anonymous c1800).<sup>10</sup> The wall also served to restrict the movement through the Sangi Dalan, which followed a gateway typology in form and could have served that purpose. The wall contributed in furthering the multivalent nature of the Sangi Dalan, which acted as a place of audience with the *masnad* in the central chamber and a place for dining in the two chambers on the side. The addition of the walled passage appears ad hoc, created to allow for the private entry of the ladies of the *zenana*. Gladwin would have been able to see the Sangi Dalan from the Arcaded Court even though partially because of the wall. He did not mention it when he wrote about the arcaded court. It is only when he entered the Sangi Dalan Court that he described the structure. These ad hoc additions and the multivalent functions of structures that formally adhere to a specific typology would undoubtedly have been disorienting to the colonial visitor trying to navigate these series of courts.

### *Spatial Incomprehensions*

The Imambada's refusal to adhere to a typological fixity, its concealed structural systems that took on indecipherable spatial forms, and its interiors laden with a profusion of chandeliers and other valuable objects disoriented the colonial visitor. The colonial visitor was also disoriented that the primary access to the structure from the north contained no defining element to mark the entry (Newell 1915: 17–18). Newell reads the buildings in accordance with the normative principles of Western architecture, which prescribes a well-defined entry, and the decorations are also oriented in the direction of the entrance.

The Imambada does not align with these principles. No wonder, Newell calls it “curious,” that there is no distinction in the central entrance to the structure, and that the elaborate and flat parapet is “relieved by a particularly happy arrangement of big domes and small minarets” (Newell 1915: 18). Newell primarily wrote for the people residing in the British Isles, providing a firsthand account of Lucknow combined with references from Fergusson, Heber, *et al.* Hence, he used elements that are familiar to his European readers to describe the Imambada. For example, he calls the openings on the facade elegant (Newell 1915: 17) comparing them to French windows (Newell 1915: 18).

The elaborate western side entrance, seen in photographs by Baron Alexis de Lagrange (1851a), Felice Beato (1858a), and an unknown photographer (Unknown c1860–1870a) faces the city, and its magnificence is to be read from the city side. It orients itself to the people of the city (de Lagrange 1851a) [Figure 10.1]. In orienting itself toward the city and away from the direction of primary access on the north, it disorients the colonial visitor. It



*Figure 10.1* Imambada facing the city seen in an albumen silver print from a waxed paper negative by Baron Alexis de Lagrange. 1851.

*Source:* Image courtesy of the Getty Museum Collection.

also posits itself as a structure that rejects established rules of axis, hierarchy, and dominance that treat entrances as undeniably important conveyed through their ornateness and magnificence. In its non-alignment with such rules, the Imambada is disorienting to the colonial mind.

To make sense of the structure, Newell almost amusingly starts to record the interiors of the Imambada in a quantitative manner—18 steps that lead to the terrace on which the Imambada stands, 130 chandeliers in the verandah, seven steps leading to the black pulpit, behind the tomb, and full radiance of 150 chandeliers in the central hall (Newell 1915: 19). In this inventory-like specificity, the experience of the place gets lost. Newell does not find any of the splendors in the interiors that Heber described. He visited much after the British had appropriated the structure for military use and later had also returned the building to the community. By then the outer verandah is characterized by blue walls, white stucco, and “one hundred and thirty glittering crystal chandeliers” (Newell 1915: 18). Asaf’s tomb now is “enclosed by a silver railing, and spread over with a handsome velvet pall. Nearby rests the Nawab’s turban of honor, a species of silver crown surmounted by an aigrette and clasp of immense diamonds and emeralds.” During his visit too, the arcaded recesses along the southern edge gave a gallery-like impression containing a sandal-wood model of the tomb of Mohammad in Medina and silver Tazias. However, unlike Keene, Newell finds the *tazias* “handsome” (Newell 1915: 19).

Within the sizable walls on the periphery of the central hall of the Imambada lie a series of twisting and turning, rising and descending passages known colloquially as the Bhul Bhulaiyya. The Bhul Bhulaiyya is an intricate support system for the vaulted roof of the central hall of the Imambada. However, due to its intricate nature, it might have been incomprehensible to the colonial eye who was quick to add an exotic orientalist explanation to it—calling it a “Chinese puzzle” (Newell 19) or giving access to the narrow wooden gallery running above Asaf’s grave from where “the Begam log could see, without being seen” (Newell 19). Although it is possible to move around in the narrow gallery, the person would always be visible. At the same time, the space is just enough for standing and not for sitting to observe a ritual. Further, why would a design intend for royal women to walk through intricate labyrinths to take part in the ritual activities? For these reasons, it seems that the colonial writers projected their orientalist imaginations onto a structural system explaining it in an exotic fashion. It was either the incomprehensibility of the structural system or inaccessibility that may explain the obscurity of Bhul Bhulaiyya in writings prior to Newell. Another reason may be that this was seen as the service part of the structure, not decorated, not celebratory that the colonial writers omitted it from their descriptions. The colonial writers describe it in a fragmentary fashion. For example, Hay calls it a series of rooms “designed as a maze,” topped by a flat roof (Hay 1939: 114).

The Bhul Bhulaiyya—a “maze” or a “puzzle” for colonial writers—was translated to that where one gets lost or loses the way. It is a place that



disorients. To Hay and Newell, it appears to be some kind of a puzzle that has to be solved by moving through the spaces with an intention of finding one's way through. That is very different from the meaning of the term *Bhul Bhulaiyya*—where the purpose is to get lost. Feminist historian Rebecca Solnit writes about making discoveries and finding the unfamiliar by getting lost (2005: 13). That's precisely what the structure invites its visitors to do. It invites its visitors to encounter the unexpected and offers an anxiety of wanting to comprehend the structure.

Entering it is an agreement between the visitor and the structure, that the visitor will find the way out but the goal is to spend time in the multiple spaces that unfold during the journey. At one time, they may encounter arcades, staircases, and sometimes a wide room, or sometimes they reach a balcony overlooking the central vaulted hall. There are many such opportunities. The latter imparts an advantage to contemporary as well as present-day visitors who acquire a sense of privacy, solitude, a closing in away from the world, or an outlet away from the outside world—a place that supports implosions. The structure was a support system for the vault. However, it has been designed for something more than that. To reduce the load of the support system, material has been carved out from the support system in such a way that a human can possibly move through it. Ferguson provides a technical description of the building but emphatically mentions the absence of any support system for the vault (Fergusson 1910 (1865/1876): 329). *Bhul Bhulaiyya*, in its materiality and form, challenges Fergusson's observation and once again demonstrates how it evaded the clear legibility that the British were seeking while reading the place. Fuhrer, like Fergusson, too, writes about an absence of the abutments (Fuhrer 1891: 266), but the *Bhul Bhulaiyya* is precisely that.<sup>11</sup>

The experience of traversing the maze was on multiple planes, sometimes one could look outside the structure and sometimes inward. The degree of light and dark also play a role in making the visitor disoriented. The visitor would follow light streaming in through an archway and believe that it would be the periphery of the structure and hence a possibility of an exit from the maze. However, they would be disappointed that there was no exit, but rather a redirection into the maze again. But it is light itself that would eventually ease their way to the exit.

### *Portal to Re-formed Orientations*

The gates of the Qaiserbagh are also points of interest as thresholds to the world within, and they seemingly serve two purposes. The first is to prepare the individual who approaches the complex to the possibilities of fantastical larger than life immersive experiences that lay within, and the second is to serve as liminal spaces, and spaces of transition [left in Figure 8.6]. The one who enters is made aware that they are entering a world where the rules that applied outside these walls no longer hold good. The ornate gates—such

as the Eastern Lakhi Gate, the Western Lakhi Gate, the Chaulakhi Gate, and the Mermaid Gate—and the non-conventional ways in which various architectural elements come together in the composition of the built form of the gates are but a prelude to the experiences that are offered within the complex [bottom right in Figure 8.6]. The world of Qaiserbagh—experienced as soon as one enters the gates—thus becomes an intentionally segregated space where the experience of the fantastical is heightened. It fits Cottrill’s third definition of heterotopic space<sup>12</sup>—a creation of a world away from the world—the idea of a place under the sea—and hence a separation from the heteronormative. Pathways through the various courtyards of the garden were intended to be indirect and zigzag to facilitate many directions of movement, connecting various locations, and enabling intimate rather than processional walkways. Dannenberg’s photograph (c1870) shows trellised vineyards and crisscrossing pathways through the central garden.

The layout of the closed, interlocked, multilayered women’s apartments overlooking the open central court, enabled a reversal of the female, as well as a reversal of the colonial gaze—which could be cast upon the visiting resident officers of the British. The harem itself was not available for British readability. The “enormous double-storied ranges of inward-looking chambers . . . were . . . four rooms deep and comprised a succession of semi-detached domestic units or suites . . . whose numbers ran into scores” (Tandan 2008: 171) were difficult to intercept visually and physically. Each woman in the nawab’s family and harem had her own independent apartment comprising reception rooms—along with low-ceiling and deep verandahs, courtyards, kitchens, and small rooms for servants. Each apartment had its own private garden (Tandan 2008: 171) and was discernible as an individual expression because of a “projecting rectangular or canted bay on its entrance front” (Tandan 2008: 171). The argument for illegibility is further seen in Llewellyn-Jones’s citation of the secretary to the chief commissioner who uses the “intricate” nature of these apartments as a legitimate reason for their demolition (Llewellyn-Jones 1985: 194). This intricacy of layout renders the palace incomprehensible and hence is threatening to the outsider—the British colonizer. Its queerness lies in its capacity to alienate the powerful colonizer. The outsider is the one who is not part of the harem but more importantly is not familiar with the deviant rules laid out and played out within the palace complex. The palace complex thus disorients the British and subverts the supremacy of the colonial gaze to such an extent that the British prioritize this complex for demolition in the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising. Qaiserbagh was never designed strategically from any military point of view (Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 192), and yet it made the British uncomfortable. The British were unable to adapt all of the Qaiserbagh to their agenda, in that the place and its architecture resisted colonial appropriation. Sara Ahmed writes about unfamiliarity and the burden of reorienting oneself to become familiar to the new land more often than not

resides in the body of the migrant (2006b: xix). But when the colonizers come to colonize, they do not carry that burden; instead they make that world “white” (Ahmed 2006b: 87). In the case of Qaiserbagh, the British, even after having captured it and having destroyed it in the 1857 war, are unable to comprehend it. The space itself, despite its desertion, offers a stiff resistance to colonial legibility and to becoming white.

Lundgren observed that the harem comprised a labyrinth of small rooms, boudoirs and closets: small cubby-holes, hordes of labyrinthine narrow passageways, and secret stairways (Lundgren 1905: 192). It was. Labyrinths, closets, cubby-holes, secret stairways—all these indicate spaces that can be navigated only if there is familiarity. They are spaces that invite intimacy, spaces that cause the body to *move away* from certain objects, take certain directions, hide and emerge elsewhere, and opportune certain relocations. The intricate nature of harems and the compositional elements were essentially markers of spatial non-alignments that would produce a queer effect to an otherwise unfamiliar outsider (Ahmed 2006b: 83).

### *Disorientations Destructed*

Structures such as those within the Sangi Dalan Court and the Machhi Bhavan precinct saw violence inflicted by the British forces during the Uprising, and this is not unrelated to their capacity to disorient the colonial eye. The British army took over the Machhi Bhavan precinct as one of its outposts during the 1857 Uprising. Given the fortified nature of the precinct, the British expected it to have an infrastructure already in place for military purposes. The British invested a lot in strengthening the fortification and planting guns because “to all appearance the place seemed impregnable” (Hilton 1894: 130). However, on taking it over, they realized that the structure—despite its fortifications and strategic location—did not align with their idea of a military typology. Later, the engineers “condemned” (Hilton 1894: 130) the fortification for its unsuitability for “permanent defense and shelter, or as capable of standing or being made fit to stand the attack of artillery” (Innes 1895:75). The British army made the mistake of not reading it as a residential precinct and instead read it as a military resource. For them the building had a “defect” (Innes 1895:79) because the structure did not accommodate the free movement of military equipment. They were frustrated with the narrow passages and doorways through which “carts and guns could not pass” (Innes 1895:79) and had to abandon it in favor of the Residency (Innes 1895:75). Another reason why the British army had to abandon the Machhi Bhavan precinct was because it was “untenable” (Hilton 1894: 31). The walls were not strong enough to resist artillery attack and the presence of large masonry drains underneath it would afford the enemy great facilities for undermining the fort (Hilton 1894: 31). We argue that the Machhi Bhavan precinct was disorienting to the British—it was a private residence of the nawab and not necessarily a defense structure. Its architectural elements that imparted privacy were read by the

British to have military qualities. In its non-alignment with the British military typology, it cost the British army time and money building up the outpost before eventually abandoning it. As they continued to read the infrastructure capacity of the Machi Bhavan for housing the military, they identified large airy rooms for habitation. However, “the remaining rooms were not suitable for use except by natives or for stores” (Innes 1895:79). The colonial bias is quite clear in their reading of the Machhi Bhavan precinct. They wish to allocate the rooms that were not large or airy to native soldiers—lower in rank—or use it for storage. There is a clear racial undertone in their equating these soldiers to inanimate property.

### *Unfamiliarity as Orienting and Familiarity as Disorienting*

Another typology that was unfamiliar to Valentia was that of the *hamam*, the hot baths. However, it was the *hamams* that helped Valentia orient himself in the palace complex and he wrote of other structures such as the Sangi Dalan and the Baoli Palace in relation to it. The unfamiliar typology was an orienting device. Valentia attributed the absence of a similar typology in Europe to the fact that Europeans “inseparably connected the ideas of Asiatics and effeminacy” (Valentia 1809: 141), and in that bias, a *hamam* signified a sexualized space. Valentia underwent a highly bodily experience, hot oil massage in an almost undressed state, and access to warm and cold water in basins from where men were bringing him water for bathing. He called for a need to remove the European “prejudice” of the time against public bath houses, so much so that he also decided to propose it as a “fashionable remedy” in Europe (Valentia 1809: 141). This typology was quite different from the Roman bathhouses present in England. For example, the Pump Room at Bath, England—a more acceptable alternative—was a space of social gathering, where the gentry would partake in the restorative waters while socializing rather fashionably clothed (Rowlandson 1798). The *hamam* of the Machhi Bhavan precinct, thus, becomes an example of a deviant and unfamiliar typology. It offered itself as an orienting device and found its way into being proposed in mainstream architecture of Europe.

Valentia wrote about his disbelief at encountering a rather English lifestyle at Saadat’s New Palace. It was “contrary to all [his] ideas of Asiatic manners, that [he] could hardly persuade [himself] that the whole was not a masquerade” (Valentia 1809: 144). Valentia’s shock is evident in his repeatedly mentioning the word, English as an adjective to describe the girandoles, furniture, mirrors, service of plate, cutlery, wine glasses, decanters, and cut-glass vases. He was disoriented with the palace built like an “English apartment,” where “a band in English regimentals” played “English tunes” (Valentia 1809: 144). He hadn’t expected an “Asiatic” court to be so well-lit among other things. It was disorienting to a European because they did not find Asiatic things in the room. Even though the description was of Saadat’s New Palace, it might very well have been the same for Asaf’s Aina Khana.

The articulation of disorientation here suggests the discomfort European visitors had with the Europeanization of the Lucknow court. The objects appear in opposition to their idea of an Asiatic court. In using the word “masquerade” to describe the scene, Valentia questioned the legitimacy and authenticity of the display. It also conveys his inability to believe that nawabi court can avail of European objects too.

The ability of nawabi architecture to disorient European visitors was not limited to just visual experiences but was also olfactory. Hodges’ description of the Durbar Court garden highlights the multi-sensory nature of the garden, especially the olfactory. The smells of flowers in the garden were so “strong” for him that they were almost “offensive” “to the nerves of a European” (Hodges 1793: 101). His disorientation is evident in his initial olfactory discomfort from which he recovered in a while.

Sara Ahmed writes about how objects coming into view orient or disorient the viewer (2006b: 28). The “English” objects in the nawabi court—even though bought as commodities with the intention of lending an air of refinement and sophistication—were possibly meant to convey a sense of acceptability of European advancements in the nawabi court. They were perhaps also meant to impress the colonial visitor. However, these very objects—which would otherwise make them comfortable by imparting a sense of familiarity in the environment—ended up disorienting the visitors.

## Notes

- 1 Asafi Kothi was constructed in 1775, Bibiapore Kothi in 1775 (Tandan 2008: 183), while Claude Martin’s Farhat Baksh was constructed in 1781, and the construction of Constantia began in 1790 (Tandan 2008: 170).
- 2 This representation contrasts with those provided by the Daniell (1789b, 1802a, 1802b), Longcroft c1789b), and Robert Smith (1814c, 1814d) or in the Lucknow Panorama (1826b).
- 3 Lundgren uses the word “tempel” (1905: 191) or temple (Nilsson and Gupta 1992: 119) to describe the domed pavilion of white marble under the stairway connecting the two parts of the Lanka. In the use of the word, there is a constant urge to assign a typology to the structures. However, the pavilion was used by Wajid as a seat to witness Qaiserbagh. It was a setting for various theatrical performances, and became a dais for the throne when Wajid would decide to hold court here.
- 4 Since the 1990s, Vauxhall has been housing several underground gay clubs. One of the bars here, dates back to at least the late 19th century, when it was a music hall and cabaret venue (Burston 2006).
- 5 *Morchhal* is a fan made of peacock feathers.
- 6 Llewellyn-Jones 1985: 190.
- 7 Bartsch and Scriver follow a similar formalist method and provide a scholarship on Qaiserbagh’s buildings. They are cautious of placing Qaiserbagh’s architecture in neat stylistic categories and prefer to call it eclectic, distinctive, and openly hybrid. Their method has been to read each building component separately and compare it to similar counterparts across the world. For example, the symmetry is compared to classical, composition of column-pedestal-pediment is compared to the 17th- and 18th-century Rococo style, scale and the orthogonality compared

- to open grounds of Safavid Iran, and craftsmanship with those of the Mughals (Bartsch and Scriver 2019: 71).
- 8 Mookherjee 2003 (1883): 235 is writing about the Lanka.
  - 9 Gladwin's description of the *zenana* as "[t]hree heavy piles of unshapely houses" (Gladwin 1785: 390) says less about the character of the *zenana* spaces and more about his inability to access the space. The high walls and small latticed windows furthered his disorientation. He had to rely on generic descriptions of other *zenanas* in the country to provide an account of the *zenana* in the Machhi Bhavan precinct (Gladwin 1785: 390).
  - 10 The form of the Sangi Dalan structure follows the template of a gateway (Daniell and Daniell watercolor (1789b) and in the Metropolitan Museum sketch (Anonymous c1800)) strikingly similar to the entrance gateway into the second court of the Daulatkhana as seen in William Daniell's painting (1801a).
  - 11 "This immense building is covered with vaults of very simple form and still simpler construction, being of a rubble or coarse concrete several feet in thickness, which is laid on a rude mould or centering of bricks and mud, and allowed to stand a year or two to dry and set. The centering is then removed, and the vault, being in one piece, stands without abutment or thrust, apparently a better and more durable form of roof than our most scientific Gothic vaulting; certainly far cheaper and far more easily made, since it is literally cast on a mud form which may be moulded into any shape the fancy of the architect may dictate" (Fuhrer 1891: 266).
  - 12 Cottrill claims Michel Foucault's heterotopia to describe queer architecture in the following five ways: (1) Heterotopias, unlike utopias, are "a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable." Either crisis or deviance of heteronormativity creates heterotopias. (2) Foucault cites women's houses for menstruation and gay enclaves as examples of the heterotopic physical space. (3) These spaces have "the power of juxtaposing in a single real place different spaces and locations that are incompatible with each other." These incompatible spaces and locations allow for fluid queer critique of both spaces and locations. (4) Foucault links this fluid nature to time by stating that heterotopias change over time; some disappear, some divide, and some evolve. Regardless of what change occurs, heterotopias are time-bound. Much like gay pride parades, they occur, but only for a limited amount of time. Being time-bound, heterotopias have the ability to alter dominant rules of the everyday. (5) However, unlike the everyday, heterotopias do not allow people to enter freely. There are rules by which one enters, by force or by cultural influence. They become separate; however, they act as critiques of all spaces and places. They are never fully outside of society but act as insular areas of change (Cottrill 2006).



# 11 Of In-Tensions and Obscurations

While nawabi architecture accommodated multiple representations and identities—they became sites of social and gendered tensions as well as sites that challenged the colonial gaze. These posed a powerful illegibility to the British, one of the reasons why they were able to shelter Indian rebels. This illegibility was the primary reason why the British caused violent destruction to these sites during the 1857 Uprising.

Spaces and architectural projects commissioned by the nawabs counter or contest the colonial gaze, colonial rules and formality, colonial oppression, and the colonial imposition of a Eurocentric worldview, challenging the colonial gaze.

## Spectacles and Contestations

Valentia, even though ecstatic with the exclusivity of invitation to the *zenana*, is unable to “peep” into the interiors of the *zenana* owing to “thick curtains” (Valentia 1809: 144). He finds it a “high compliment” (Valentia 1809: 145) to have an opportunity to be “at a very small distance from” Asaf’s *begum* (Valentia 1809: 144). Despite granting proximity, the *zenana* denied visual access to the colonial visitor. It also denied direct verbal communication, which had to be done through eunuchs who carried across the “usual messages” between the visitors and the *zenana*. Valentia’s desire to “peep” into the *zenana* conveys his curiosity and a colonial desire to cast its gaze on the nawabi palace and its residents, who were essentially women and eunuchs.

The meeting of a male guest with the women of the *zenana* was in itself a performance. With the visual connection absent, this performance would have been carried out through engaging the other senses, such as olfactory and auditory—through food (Valentia 1809: 153) and voices—and by exchanging gifts and messages. Valentia stressed on his proximity to the *begum*. As there was no visual connection, he must have been either told where she was seated, or he must have sensed it through means other than the visual and imagined her distance from him. The occupants of the *zenana* enact a performance of presenting themselves, conversing, hosting, conferring souvenirs by means other than the visual. This performance is masked, and precisely because of

this quality, it heightens a sense of desire—especially in the case of Valentia—to engage with the performance visually. Spectacle is not available for visual consumption of the European visitor but is provocative sensorially. The performance prompts Valentia to imagine the spectacle.

In another visit to Saadat's palace, Valentia, after a veiled meeting with the *nawab wazir's* mother at a verandah, walked past the *zenana* in the Daulatkhana precinct and assumed that this was arranged so that "its inmates might have an opportunity of more closely examining the Lord Saheb" (Valentia 1809: 143).<sup>1</sup> Calling the residents "inmates" and himself "Lord Saheb" conveys his sense of superiority but also his desire to be gazed upon by the residents of the *zenana* as a powerful and cultured person. He projects that desire on the "inmates" to see him, "more closely examining" him. He assumes that he was being watched through his entire meeting with the *begum* and is cognizant of a possibility of being under the female gaze throughout the entire episode of the exchange of messages and gifts. This possibility that he is an object of the female gaze elicits in him a sense of his own importance, and also vulnerability in being an object of this gaze that he is unable to return. His inability to see within the *zenana* heightens his curiosity. However, the ability of a *zenana* under *purdah* to invoke that sense of desire in the European visitor, who remains exposed to the gaze from within, emphasizes its ability to reverse the gaze. The gaze is cast from inside to outside, from brown women on to white men.

Even though Valentia was aware of the gaze from within the *zenana*, this is not evident in his description of the structure itself. Valentia wrote of the *zenana* as a beautiful but depressing building owing to the wooden lattices that covered it (Valentia 1809: 142). The wooden lattices that prioritize privacy and protection from summer heat caused much displeasure in Valentia who possibly was used to seeing clean facades, with open windows in Europe. In Valentia's description of the *zenana*, we see a bias against the means by which the structure retains its sense of privacy. Lattices were attached on the outside of the building—something unusual for a European who would have been used to seeing curtains on windows and hanging within the building.

Asaf's Aina Khana was a spectacle of his collectibles from all over the world, a spectacle of his wealth, status, and taste, to which the colonial eye was also invited. Through the Aina Khana, Asaf positioned himself among the global elite who were known for their expensive collections. The colonial eye was unable to see and appreciate it as that and instead found it a collection of "whimsical curiosities" (Valentia 1809: 153). Gladwin's use of the term "museum" (1785: 393) while referring to the Aina Khana indicates the colonial urge to allocate a familiar typology to it and then to gauge it against that parameter. However, Asaf never labeled it as such. As a precursor to the typology, Asaf's Aina Khana precedes those established by the British or any other ruler in India. Museums as a building typology and also a functional typology did not formally appear in India until 1814 with the India Museum set up at Kolkata.

Gladwin, who is writing for a European audience, invites his readers to visit the Aina Khana, not for its select repository of art and artifacts created by “celebrated artists” but for its “ridiculous assemblage of finery and trumpery jumbled together” (Gladwin 1785: 393). Gladwin lays value on the arms and armory collection, while the nawab’s collectables, objet d’arts, animals, and such, are called a “ridiculous assemblage” (Gladwin 1785: 393). He lays an emphasis on the filigree and the ornamentation and allocates a lot of written space for this collection. Even if the other collections might also have been equally well-crafted, Gladwin’s attention and admiration of the armory underscores his bias. He seems to fulfill an expectation that his audience—a white male connoisseur—who has traveled to the “Orient.” He fulfills the expectation of favoring the arms and armory over the artifacts while presenting himself as one who prefers well curated collections. In this bias, he also projects his priorities on the nawab commenting on what is appropriate for a ruler to collect and what the ruler should be interested in.

According to Tennant, the range of collectibles in the nawab’s “cabinet” is so broad that it almost appears to be eclectic, lacking thematic curation, and coherence—guided more by the nawab’s vanity and whim. Tennant stresses on the expensiveness of objects having been favored over “variety and usefulness” (Tennant 1803: 410). This lack of usefulness and clear logic of collection is precisely what subverts the European’s obsession with thematic curation, who use words such as “oddities of nature” and “curious and expensive” though “useless” (Tennant 1803: 410–411). In Tennant’s view, a collection is meant to educate people about the usefulness or the technicalities of the objects in the collection. Commenting on the cuckoo-clock collection at the Aina Khana, he complains that neither the nawab nor the “natives” engage with the cuckoo clock intelligently but rather engage with it through senses, “feeling their effect” (Tennant 1803: 411). He mocks the people who are taken by surprise—and theatrically so—by the “elegant toy” whenever the cuckoo comes out to call the hour out. The colonial bias toward mindful engagement over sensorial engagement and hence a dismissal of the collection is evident in this account. Tennant does not understand the reason for a painting next to mirrors and toys (Tennant 1803: 411) without any thematic categorizations, hierarchy, and separations.

It is precisely this lack of classifications, systematic themes, hierarchies and delineations, and order that invites a queer reading, implying that in its eclectic nature the Aina Khana deliberately moved away from the normative. In the collecting of objects, Asaf performs an act of acquiring and dissemination of knowledge and sharing it with those he personally chooses to provide access.

Tennant’s description of these spaces appears disjunct, jumping from one typology to the other, from the menagerie to a “cabinet” (Tennant 1803: 410) for machines and then to the nawab’s collectables. The collection reflects an extension of Asaf’s personality. As a ruler, he wanted to show that he had dominion over the objects—animate and inanimate. He is free from European ideals that prioritize structures of order in envisaging institutions such as

museums. He has a certain curiosity, a certain respect for curious objects—irrespective of where they originate from, be they “English Prints,” “Chinese drawings and ornaments,” or “articles of European manufacture” (Valentia 1809: 155). He uses the objects as a means to engage with and be a citizen of the world. Commenting on Asaf’s obsession with uniqueness and acclaim for an object, Valentia uses the opportunity to highlight the gullibility of the nawab. Valentia projects the nawab as a person who is easily persuaded to buy expensive objects by men such as the French Claude Martin. Martin is framed as an extortionist, who exploited the “imbecility of [Asaf’s] mind” (Valentia 1809: 155). This is one of the early pieces of evidence of the British creating arguments to discredit the nawab’s political prowess by emphasizing, or perhaps constructing, the nawab’s characteristic weaknesses.

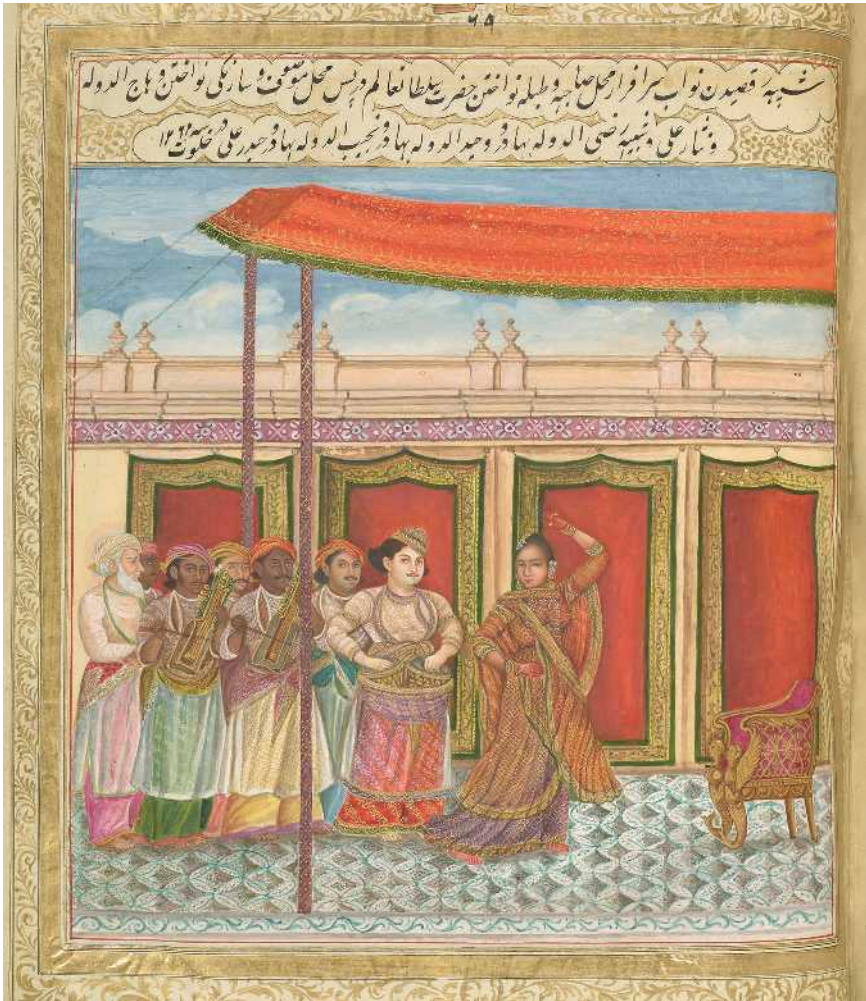
### Holding the Gaze

The viewer, in many of the recorded instances, is engaging with the building and not merely reading the building. The buildings are able to hold the gaze and project flamboyance—an ability of exaggerated self-expression, like they do in the case of the Qaiserbagh.

Keene describes the Qaiserbagh Gateway as being “not without dignity, . . . it is not so much the design as the material that is so disappointing and so pregnant with premature decay. [T]hese buildings must be admitted to be quite too good for their purpose, the seclusion of the countless concubines of a puppet, and the lair of his crapulous satiety” (Keene 1875: 89). For him, spaces for the pursuit of pleasure were not significant enough to receive so much architectural attention, especially for an over-indulgent incapable ruler. The remark regards both the morals of the ruler and the structure which was too glorious for such a person.

The Qaiserbagh, the garden, was enclosed by buildings on all sides, with the harem occupying a major part of the periphery of the quadrangle. Given the observation of *pardah* by the women of his household, the gardens within were essentially personal and private in nature. Despite that, the palace’s main courtyard and especially the central *baradari* were crucial to the functioning of his court where Wajid would entertain the British resident and other high officials (Tandan 2008: 270). The act of holding court in pavilions in this garden and opening up these spaces to the public on occasion, parallel Wajid’s unabashed portrayal of his personal affairs in his poetry that was widely circulated. This was Wajid’s way of expressing his personal and political power. The occupants of the harem and their apartments formed a physical barrier between the space within, and the world beyond. The central court of the Qaiserbagh, surrounded by the women’s apartments, became a space which was under the *pardah*—and yet available to gaze from the surrounding harems, amplifying the exhibitionistic nature of Wajid’s performance of the political and the personal, queering and disturbing the order of the things (Ahmed 2006b: 161).

Wajid's ability to disturb the order of things is captured in *Parikhana* (f.238r in *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850bo)) where he plays the tabla as Sarfaraz Pari dances [Figure 11.1]. Wajid is so enamored by Sarfaraz's performance that he forgets himself and joins her. The empty chair vacated by Wajid conveys, in the painting, what Wajid means when he says he forgets himself. He leaves the seat of sovereignty for cultural pursuits. He honors those by conferring his participation to those who excelled in the arts. He removes the distance between the king and the citizens, between the head of the household and



*Figure 11.1* Wajid Ali Shah playing the tabla seen in an opaque watercolor with metallic paints by an unknown artist. Part of *Ishqnamah* manuscript, c1850.

*Source:* Image courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.



a trainee, between the spectator and the performer. He moves from being a distant spectator to be a participant in the performance. Similarly, f.289r in *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850cf) shows him dancing and playing music with several others while others watch him. The female audience is seated on a couch. This, too, has a strong connotation of the reversal of conventional norms. It represents Wajid in line of female gaze and very much aware and enjoying it too (Shah 2017 (1848–1849): 104).

### Gardens of Social and Gendered Tensions

Social and gendered tensions are a condition for queerscapes to emerge. The nawabs were themselves part of a court culture that supported a representation of individuals from varying ethnicities as well as gender identities. Africans, Eurasians, women, and people outside the gender binary occupied various pivotal administrative roles in the court. This made the harem and courts sites where social tensions materialized. Those social tensions have been archived in the writings of Wajid. Nawabi projects were able to contain overlapping realms of homosocialities and where hypermasculinity is exhibited. The harems at Qaiserbagh held inherent tensions. It was in the interest of Wajid to induce, perpetuate, and maintain a competition and jealousy among the residents of the harem so as to ensure his own sexual supremacy, power, and control. However, the harem space also became a site of sisterhood, support, and mutual cooperation and also a site of homosexual encounters. Wajid's highly descriptive *Parikhana* provides an account of the lives of the women of the harem and how the politics of the harem and court were intertwined. The rules of the *zenana* and the architectural layout of the *zenana* played a role in determining what parts of the space a colonial visitor could occupy. A regular male visitor to the *zenana* could only access a "miserable" room on the periphery (Valentia 1809: 145). Common to all these visits, however, was the exchange of gifts and messages. This was accomplished through the movement of *khwajasaras* across the heavily gendered boundaries. They had the privilege of navigating these gendered spaces, serving as mediators between the outsider male and the insider female domains and individuals. The garden of the *zenana* was the space of a negotiation between the insider and the outsider. It is from the garden that the visitor could experience a feeling of being watched from the curtained space within. It is in the garden, and sometimes at the boundaries between the garden and the *zenana*, that the segregations were decided as to who could enter the *zenana* and who could not, depending on one's gender and social positionalities. The garden of the Daulatkhana was a space for an outsider to walk through to reach the *zenana* and away from it. The garden walls such as that in the Sangi Dalan allowed the women to maintain a degree of privacy and seclusion from the rest of society. At the same time, the garden was a space where the insider (the women of the court) and the outsider (any guests or visitors) could come together. The garden was often a place where women could gather and socialize. It was also a space where visitors, such as male relatives,



could be welcomed and entertained without breaching the norms of gender segregation. In these diverse forms of negotiations, the gardens of the *zenana* offered an opportunity to simultaneously distance as well as bring together the insider and the outsider.

During occasions like the Mina Bazaar Mela,<sup>2</sup> women could be seen sharing the same spaces as men, buying and selling wares, (Shah 1987 (1877): 118–121). The opaque watercolor and gold painting, *Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh in the Qaiser Bagh, Lucknow* (anonymous, mid-19th century) depicts men and women occupying various locations within the Qaiserbagh. Women are also seen positioning themselves in places that provide them a sense of enclosure, allow them a space of vantage to see the happenings and be seen. Women who have occupied the terrace of the Safed Baradari, and the connecting stairway of the Lanka are possibly of higher rank, and perhaps also under *purdah*. This is conveyed through the representation of *chhatris* and such. At these two locations women are separated from the crowd, can participate and watch, and can also be seen. They have more space to themselves than the other people in the painting. This is an example of how the women would, on such occasions, position themselves based on the hierarchies of social class and title.

But on the day-to-day basis, tensions played out in the residential precincts of Qaiserbagh. The social hierarchies of women—belonging to different age groups, social statuses, and roles—would often lead to hierarchical tensions and power struggles. The *zenana* would witness rivalry among women competing for the attention, affection, or favor of Wajid. However, women would also seek companionship and support among themselves. Waziran befriended other women of the establishment, such as Khurd Mahal Umda Begum Sahiba, Nawab Nishat Mahal, and Nanhi Begum Sahiba—of which Wajid did not approve (Shah 1987 (1877): 48). By encouraging an environment where jealousy and competition prevail, Wajid ensured that the women of the court were separated and dependent on him, reinforcing his position of power and control.

A painting f.415v in *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850cw) shows Wajid enjoying a leisurely ride through Hazrat Bagh with Hazrat Begum and Mehboob-i-Alam. Wajid was admittedly being more affectionate to Hazrat Begum and holding her, and this made Mehboob-i Alam so jealous that she decided to jump from the moving carriage (Shah 1987 (1877): 152). Such were common instances of rivalry, envy, and jealousy that took place against the gardens of the Qaiserbagh and which were sometimes intentionally induced by Wajid. In painting f.256r in *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850bw) Rashk Pari complains about Sarfaraz Mahal and gains Wajid's favors to such an extent that Wajid gives her the job of being an informant conveying to him if there are any rebels in the *zenana*. In a gesture of holding Wajid's hand, she promises to do that (Unknown c1850bx).<sup>3</sup> In both paintings, the women are shown as confidantes of Wajid. Hence, both face the viewer, and both share the same carpeted floor. Painting f.275r in *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850cc) is the most revelatory of the rivalry between the women of the *zenana*. It shows Mah-i-Alam and Sarfaraz Mahal in a fight on a terrace of a place with a garden in the backdrop (Shah 1987 (1877): 101). Wajid is shown intervening

and separating the two women. Similarly, painting f.242v in *Ishqnamah* (Unknown c1850bs) shows Wajid seated with Najmunissa, Khurd Mahal, and Nishat Mahal [Figure 11.2]. The three women are complaining to Wajid about Sarfaraz Mahal. Wajid would take such complaints seriously and then

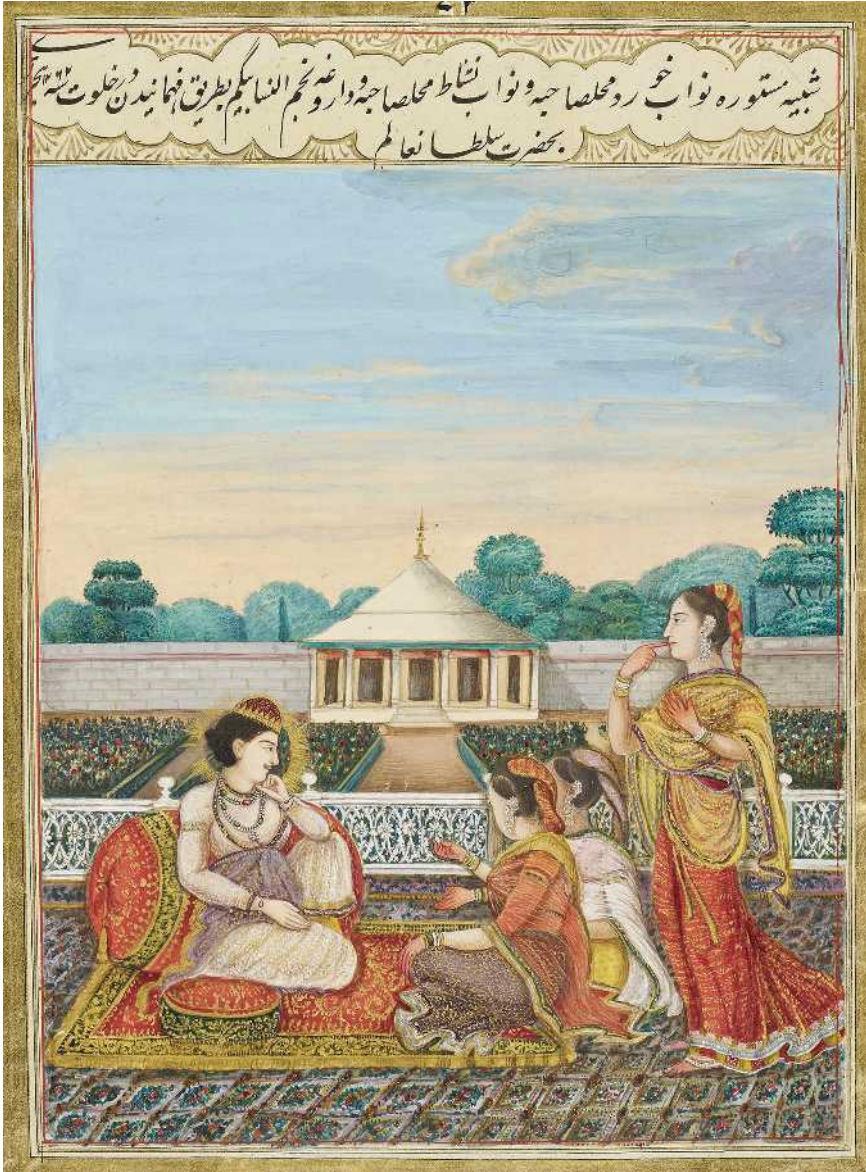


Figure 11.2 Wajid seated with Najmunissa, Khurd Mahal, and Nishat Mahal seen in an opaque watercolor with metallic paints by an unknown artist. Part of *Ishqnamah* manuscript, c1850.

Source: Image courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

would put the woman to test, where she would have to prove her loyalty to him (Shah 1987 (1877): 92). *Ishqnamah* carries several paintings which show the palace garden also as a setting where accused women were put to test and made to prove their loyalty to the king.<sup>4</sup>

Gardens form the setting for such episodes or are depicted in the background when the scenes occupy spaces such as podiums, terraces, and verandahs—implying the direct connection of gardens as settings for such tensions to be enacted. These episodes were not without a theatrical tone to them (Shah 1987 (1877): 93). Wajid seated on a carpeted terrace of his palace with Najmunissa in attendance (painting f.89r in *Ishqnamah*, Unknown c1850x). A woman is in the garden outside, and another is seen walking away toward what would be the gate, implying she is leaving the premises. Social hierarchies were clearly enacted in Wajid's palace and specifically in garden settings. When a new woman is instituted into the palace, after signing a contract with her mother (Shah 1987 (1877): 52), the woman stands in the open garden, quite vulnerable, while the mother walks away after signing the contract [Figure 11.3]. The ones who are part of the palace, Wajid and Najmunissa, occupy the elevated terraced portion of the setting.<sup>5</sup> In another garden setting Wajid with Najmunissa is in concert with Chhote Khan (a talented tabla player) and a few women (Painting f.125r in *Ishqnamah*, Unknown c1850af). Women were jealous of the closeness that Chhote Khan enjoyed with Wajid and because of which he won many awards and favors from Wajid.<sup>6</sup> The intimacy is seen through the proximity of the kneeling Chhote Khan and the seated Wajid who share the same grassy floor along with the women. Richard Williams, while discussing the musical traditions at Wajid's court, writes about the comfort Wajid displayed in positioning himself as the object of another man's desire, whether physical or emotional (Williams 2023: 85).

Wajid also used garden settings to convey his version of power to the outsiders. Having been stripped of the privilege of maintaining an army, he circumvented colonial suppression and created an army of women, led by *khwajasara* Haji. Wajid's appointment of female soldiers and guards was his acknowledgment of women's physical prowess, challenging the normative roles assigned to them in the society of that time. His appreciation for the female soldiers' abilities was his recognition of their superiority over their British counterparts in traditionally male-dominated roles (Shah 1987 (1877): 84). Wajid commissioned a painting to show a dark-skinned Haji in the role of a colonel training British soldiers. The painting<sup>7</sup> [Figure 2.1] is a garden setting, possibly in one of the courtyards of Qaiserbagh. Wajid, positioned on a terrace above, observes the unfolding scenario. The depiction of a person who deviated from the colonial idea of masculinity in a position of authority, training soldiers of different races and genders, challenged traditional hierarchies and underscored the complexities of identity and power in the historical context of the Qaiserbagh. Haji signified a complex dynamic of gender and power in Wajid's court (Shah 1987 (1877): 84) and





Figure 11.3 A *pari* being instituted into the palace as seen in an opaque watercolor with metallic paints by an unknown artist. Part of *Ishqnamah* manuscript, c1850.

Source: Image courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

his presence in the paintings of garden settings marked Wajid's participation in the exercise of power.

These gardens formed spaces where the encounters were public and could be witnessed by other women and members of the court. They could witness the signing of a contract, a raise given to a woman who displayed loyalty, or a woman put to test if she rebelled. This publicness of a garden setting was intentionally used by Wajid to exhibit his exercise of power. Wajid enacted his favors and dislikes and, in this way, controlled the people around. These gardens were important spaces to Wajid. He wanted to be seen inhabiting these gardens, attending to personal and political matters. He wanted to be linked with these gardens in the public's perception. By having these scenes depicted in gardens, such as the Huzur/Hazrat Bagh and the Central Garden of the Qaiserbagh, Wajid proliferated not just a long-lasting memory of the events, but that they occurred in garden spaces. This way he perpetuated a perception of his persona whose life was theatrical, which was constantly enacted in the grand garden settings. He linked the events inseparably to those spaces with which he wished his memory to be associated.

### Sites of Erasure

In the violence inflicted on nawabi buildings and landscapes is embedded a colonial erasure of the queer body. In the aftermath of the British destruction of the Machhi Bhavan precinct and Qaiserbagh, the embodied multivalences of these sites were also erased, in turn erasing their memory from public consciousness. The act of destruction, post 1857, is manifest in the regimentalization, geometricization, and eventual control—prioritizing visual clarity as a means of efficient administration. The razing was an erasure of not just the nawabs and their palaces but also of the queer performative practices that the nawabs sought to mainstream during their rule.

Henry Lawrence had purchased the Machhi Bhavan fortification from Nawab Yahiya Ali Khan in 1857, and ordered for the fortifications to be strengthened (Hay 1939: 161) so as to be “impregnable against an ordinary émeute and as to dominate and overawe the city” (Innes 1895: 74).

After the Uprising, the British started using the precinct as a prison where captive leaders of the Uprising were placed in confinement (Gubbins 1858: 165). It was also a site of court-martial for the trial of the captive leaders of the Uprising, many of whom were executed by hanging (Gubbins 1858: 115). The hangings also were staged at the Machhi Bhavan precinct. Gubbins gives gory details of the choice of site for the hangings and the manner in which they were staged with an intention of inducing fear and “awe” of the British among the defeated uprisers and citizens.

These executions took place near the north-west or upper gate of the Muchee Bhowun, at the crossing of four roads, one of which led directly to the stone bridge. The gallows, once erected, was kept standing: and the space around was commanded by the guns of the Muchee Bhowun.

More effectually to awe the people, an 18-pounder gun was removed to the road outside, and its wheels sunk into the ground, so that it could not easily be removed. This was kept constantly loaded with grape, and was pointed down the principal thoroughfare.

(Gubbins 1858: 115–116)

By using the Machhi Bhavan precinct strategically, as a place of imprisonment, meting out of punishment, staging executions, and aggressively displaying a loaded 18-pounder facing toward the main road, the British sent out a clear message of dominance, power, and the retribution that would be directed at their enemies.

The British found the Machhi Bhavan fortification lacking as a military base that was able to withstand enemy attacks. And on July 1, 1857,<sup>8</sup> due to lack of sufficient troops to defend both the Residency and the Machhi Bhavan precinct simultaneously, Lawrence ordered Machhi Bhavan fortification be blown up (Hay 1939: 161). A script of the order sent in the form of a semaphore from the Residency to the Machhi Bhavan read, “Spike the guns well, blow up the fort, and retire at midnight” (Hay 1939: 161; Gubbins 1858: 196).

A diary entry of a British woman living at the Residency—a substantial distance away—during the Uprising describes the “tremendous shock” of the explosion that was so powerful that it made the sleeping populace almost “spr[i]ng out of [their] beds,” its dust so thick that despite lighting a candle, one could barely see each other (Hay 1939: 162).

The colonial accounts are full of great lament for the material loss to the British army and quite silent about the loss of spaces and built form.<sup>9</sup> In this silence is seen the British disregard for the memories associated with the Machhi Bhavan precinct.

Following the demolition of the Machhi Bhavan precinct was a “sweeping demolition of the denser part of the heart of the city” (Innes 1895: 294). This was perhaps a residential area, including Bajpei Mohalla and Ismailganj Mohalla, which was demolished (Nevill 1904: 205). De Lagrange’s (1851a) photograph might be one of very few ones that have documented the residential area of Lucknow near the Machhi Bhavan precinct prior to the Uprising. Crommelin’s *Plan* (1859) shows the “Area of Demolition.” This is the area surrounding the Machhi Bhavan precinct, including the Hussein Bagh and the Durbar Court on the east and Sunehra Burj on the west [Figure 11.4]. Until 1887, this area remained a pile of debris (Nevill 1904: 205). In 1887, Victoria Park was laid out at the site of the Sunehra Burj. Nevill describes it as “a beautiful undulating garden,” contrasting it with the “dismal waste covered with debris and rubbish of all descriptions” (Nevill 1904: 205), while Innes calls it a “large clear esplanade” (Innes 1895: 294). Baedeker’s *Lucknow* (1914) demarcates Victoria Park and Hussainabad Park, which lie to the west of the Machhi Bhavan precinct. Cromlin’s Road and Circular Road are marked, which correspond to the boundary of the demolitions (Crommelin 1859) form the periphery of the Victoria Park.



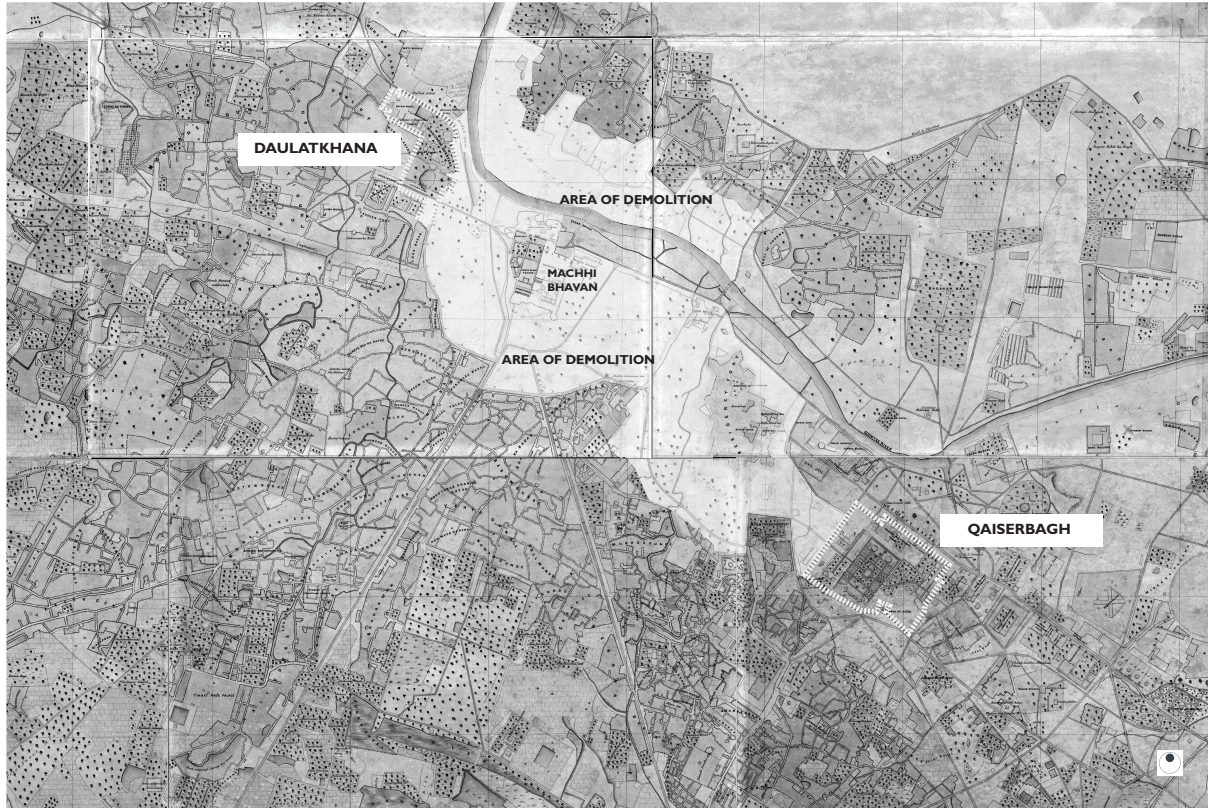


Figure 11.4 Demolition Areas adapted from Crommelin's Plan of the City of Lucknow.

In 1858, Colin Campbell “rebuilt and strongly fortified” (Newell 1915: 16) the precinct in order to secure “proper command” of the city of Lucknow (Innes 1895: 239). Now known as the Machhi Bhavan Fort (Innes 1895: 293), this fortified enclosure included the “old Mutchi Bhowm citadel,” the Imambada, the mosque, and “other large edifices” (Innes 1895: 293–94) of the erstwhile Machhi Bhavan precinct. In incorporating these structures within the new fort, the structures were divested of their cultural purpose and were now designated and used for military purposes. It was extended in order to be used “for the future, . . . taking] rank as a second class fortress” (Keene 1875: 102). Using the words “put in order” and “reconstructed on modern military principles,” Nevill (1904: 204–5) validates the British construction to conform to military standards.

Meanwhile, the British had also begun developing a cantonment near Dilkusha on the eastern edge of the city. As soon as the construction of Redoubt Number 1 at the new cantonment was complete, the British army abandoned the Machhi Bhavan precinct (Hilton 1894: 130) in c1865 (Nevill 1904: 204–5). In c1877, the British completely demolished the fortification following an imperial edict from Queen Victoria (Newell 1915: 16). In 1905, King George V laid the foundation-stone of King George’s and Queen Mary’s Medical Colleges on the Machhi Bhavan site. The medical colleges were opened in 1912 (Hay 1939: 163) and continue to function in present times.

The British erased the Bada Imambada Complex as well, in many ways. First, they removed the distinction between the Imambada and the mosque. They explicitly combined the plinths of the Imambada and the mosque through a lengthy flight of steps running the entire length of the structures. This created one huge plinth on which both the structures now seem to rest. The existing steps fronting the entire facade of the Imambada offered a model to the British for their project of coalescing both the structures into one large entity. The British extended those steps into a sweeping flight along the western edge of the inner court and turning along the periphery of one the five-sided courtyard. In this coalescing the arcade along the western edge of the inner court and the lower story of the mosque was lost. The human scale of uninhibited movement between inside and outside was lost. A part of the arcade was literally buried under the steps, effectively cutting off access to the lower story from the inner court, and the rest of the arcade was demolished. The opportunity to rest in arcades during harsh weather conditions was lost. The steps leading up to the new plinth were imposing, running the entire length of the inner court, from southeast to northwest. They encroached onto the *char-bagh* garden of the inner court, violating the character and geometry of the space. In Henry Salt’s aquatint *Mosque at Lucknow* (1809), the *char-bagh* and the arcade are visible [Figure 7.16]. With the demolition of the arcades surrounding the five-sided courtyard, the courtyard is fused with the inner court, and its distinct enclosed character lost.

The second erasure was in the form of using the Asafi Masjid and the Bada Imambada for military purposes. A place of worship and a mausoleum and

place of ritual mourning were appropriated and utilized to store ammunition. The intentional violence and display of power is apparent in Francis Frith's photograph, *Mosque of Emambara* (c1850–1870b) [Figure 11.5].<sup>10</sup> The addition of the steps and plinth can be dated to between 1870 and 1880 (Saché's (1870b) and Dayal's (1880)), shortly before the handing over of the Imambada Complex to the Muslim community in 1883 (Newell 1915: 16–17). The British found that the existing broad flight of steps leading up to the Imambada plinth had a great legibility of grandeur. The legibility offered the British an opportunity to create a statement of imposition over the citizens. In occupying the site, the British army turned Machhi Bhavan precinct into a site of violence. They actively used the Imambada as a base to inflict damage on and demolish the surrounding areas and attack the soldiers of the Uprising. After the war was over, the British placed cannons and artillery in the Imambada Complex almost like a display to show British power over the local citizens. The removal of the Imambada tank and construction of a plinth that unified Asafi Masjid and the Bada Imambada an erasure of cultural spaces such as ablution spaces. The unifying plinth buried the lower story of the mosque and removed that image of the mosque from public memory. This plinth encroached on the garden of the inner court, mutilating



*Figure 11.5* Asafi Masjid seen in a photograph by Francis Frith. c1850–70.

*Source:* Image courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum Collection.



the proportions of the *char-bagh*, thereby changing the character of the space. In barring access to the Imambada Complex and the structures within for decades, the British were responsible also for a break in the continuity of the traditions, rituals, performances, and the way in which the citizens of Lucknow occupied and used this multivalent space. The British used the Bada Imambada Complex as a site of violence during and in the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising. It was a violence inflicted on those who supported Wajid even after he was deposed by the British.

The Machhi Bhavan precinct is an expression of the problem of a colonized memory, wherein that which is part of the colonial archive continues to be remembered. The rest is forgotten. For example, the structures that are absent from colonial maps—Hussein Bagh, Aina Khana, and *zenana* structures in the Panch Mahalla—are also those that are absent from public memory.

The British army attacked Qaiserbagh from the north and the east. Lang *et al.* (1858) and Napier (1859a) show cannons firing from the north and the east Military Department (n.d.) shows cannons positioned in the Northern Jilaukhana as well, implying that the British had taken over the premises. Lang *et al.* (1858) shows cannon attacks on Sadaat Ali's tomb, the northern periphery of Qaiserbagh that was a residential wing, the Parikhana, Khas Makan, Badshah Manzil, Hazrat Bagh, and China Bagh. Napier (1859a) shows cannon fire into the central garden, Khas Makan, Hazrat Bagh, China Bagh, Sadaat Ali Tomb, and the Parikhana. Mackenzie (1860) also shows cannon fire directed at the Qaiserbagh without any other details of specific structures targeted. Military Department (n.d.) shows the courtyard of Saadat Ali Tomb and Lanka as targets.

While most maps<sup>11</sup> are quite detailed providing an idea of which structures were targeted, Mackenzie (1860) shows just the outline of Qaiserbagh without providing any further detail of the structures within. Mackenzie's map is a representation of how the British viewed Qaiserbagh when they were preparing for attack. In this map, Qaiserbagh is a rectangular precinct in the east–west orientation, which extended from the Northern Jilaukhana, Chaulakhi Kothi, Roshan-ud-Daula Kothi, and Neil's Gate as forming the extents on the four corners. It does not provide any other detail of the structures within. Smith (1868) provides somewhat different information than the other maps. In this map, the British positioned themselves at various locations—the Mess House, the Lal Bagh, the Overseer's House, the stables, and the Moti Mahal. They also set up “barracks,” “countermines,” and “sand bag parapets” all along the periphery of the Chhatar Manzil. Cannon fire from these locations were directed at the Huzur/Hazrat Bagh and the China Bazaar area near the Northern Jilaukhana.

The maps also show that the troops of the Uprising had taken up Qaiserbagh for their defense. They erected a line of defense to the north of the China Bazaar, referred to in the map as the “Enemy's Third Line of Works.” In the retaking of the Qaiserbagh, the British troops moved through

Northern Jilaukhana, China Bazaar, the structures surrounding the tombs, and through the central garden. Lang *et al.* (1858), Napier (1859a), and Bolst *et al.* (n.d.) show this direction of the movement of troops.

In the depiction of Qaiserbagh as an empty site, some colonial maps, notably those by Mackenzie (1860) and Smith (1868), present challenges in comprehending the precise structures that bore the brunt of targeting. Within these depictions, a discernible erasure becomes evident, as the focus tilts toward the explicit positioning of cannons, overshadowing the crucial sites where acts of violence were inflicted.

The British also used Qaiserbagh as a site for executions of the uprisers, as a demonstration of their power. One of the most influential leaders of the Uprising, Raja Jiyalal Singh was executed at the same spot as that of his “crime,” that of ordering the death of British captives and witnessing their killing. This was further north of the Northern Jilaukhana. The gateway that Jiyalala supposedly used to command his army was demolished too. A memorial was later constructed at this spot to commemorate the massacre of the two separate groups of Europeans (Beg 1911: 62). This series of events—execution of enemy leader, demolition of the gateway, and erection of a memorial—speak of the appropriation of the narrative of the Uprising, sending a message of power and redirecting the sympathy toward their own suffering during the war. This throws light on the demolitions at the Qaiserbagh as both retribution and a show of power.

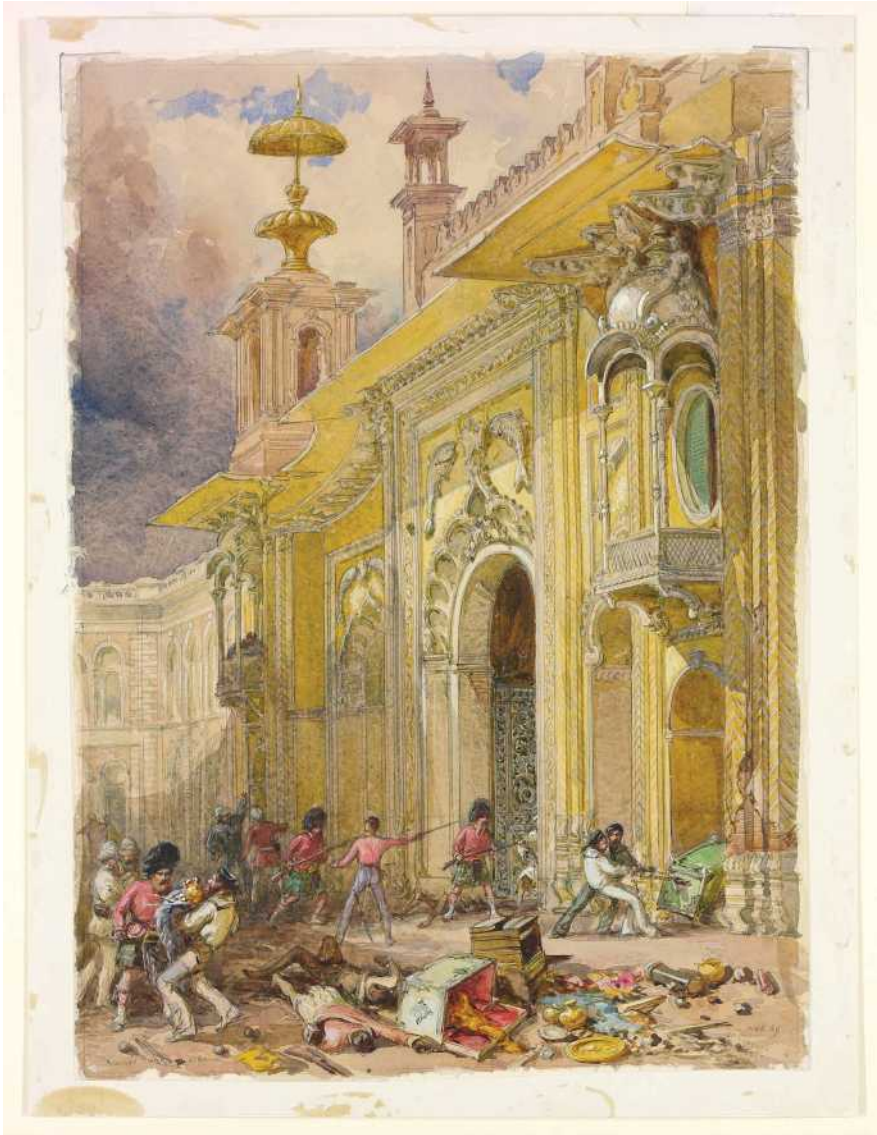
The colonial archive is full of scrupulous descriptions of the destruction of Qaiserbagh and the 1857 Uprising subsequent looting at the hands of the British army, the Sikhs, and also at the hands of the Uprisers. Sometimes the tone is boastful, sometimes lamentful, and sometimes intending to shift the blame on other than the British. Qureshi’s English translation of Kamal-ud-din Haider’s *Qaiser-ut-Tawarikh* provide a local version of the Uprising from the Uprisers’ perspectives. While Haider conscientiously includes the women and court of the ex-king in the narrative, the majority of British accounts approach the events through a materialistic lens. Although the colonial accounts briefly acknowledge the presence of the Uprising’s soldiers, these texts largely overlook the women of the *zenana*, their servants, other court members, and the broader social implications stemming from the British appropriation and looting of the site. In our reading of the colonial descriptions, the soldiers are referenced as bodies, getting killed, charging, or fleeing, and as cogs in the machine of war. Haider foregrounds Qaiserbagh as a strategic position of the Upriser leader Begum Hazrat Mahal who chose to stay back at Qaiserbagh and fight the British. Haider also gives an account of *sahibat-i-mahal* (women of the *zenana*) and servants who were residing in the Qaiserbagh during the Uprising and what impact it had on them. The servant “turned viscous and joined in the loot” (Qureshi 2008: 112), while the *sahibat-i-mahal* confronted the British army and raised protests against the plunder (Qureshi 2008: 17). Haider also further relates how the British soldiers talked the protesting women out by reasoning that the loot was for

the benefit of their King Wajid, demonizing the Uprisers saying that if not for the British the precious objects would get destroyed (Qureshi 2008: 18). In contrast, the colonial descriptions largely focus either on the military tactics employed or on descriptions of the loot, such as the gems, precious silks, and gold and silver (Forrest 1904: 354) that were left unguarded, ripe for plunder. Haider also helps us in reading British appropriations of Wajid's property in an aggressive show of power and impropriety. The triumphant British soldiers not only plant a victory flag in the Hazrat Bagh but also sit on the chairs in the Chandiwali Baradari, creating an uproar (Qureshi 2008: 111)—implying a sense of usurpation and a belittling of Wajid's seat, power, glory, and everything else he stood for.

Simpson's watercolor on paper titled, *View of the Kaiser Bagh in Lucknow* (1864b) provides an imaginary scene of the plunder of Qaiserbagh during the 1857 Uprising [Figure 11.6]. Even though painted a few years after the event; it is quite explicit.<sup>12</sup> The artist's intention to paint the British in a favorable light and depict them as authoritative figures is unmistakable. The scene is set within the inner side of one of the Lakhi gates, where British officers stand guard, efficiently controlling access to the complex. The gate is shown intricately detailed, conveying a semblance of the magnificence it once embodied. The men lying collapsed on the ground, presumably shot, serves to underscore the victory of the British forces. At the forefront of the painting, a trunk lies open, with its contents of precious jewels and finery spilled across the ground. The presence of spoilage against the gateway appears almost abusive to the structure, revealing the violence inflicted on the site. Further, the painting poses the scattered possessions of Wajid's household in a way that it appears to be available for anyone to take, available for the public to see, and of no particular value to the British officers. Posing these uncared-for possessions against the main gateway of Qaiserbagh conveys a sense of colonial victory over the nawabi site, its inhabitants, its culture, and its values. The painting conceals the colonial confiscation and appropriation of Qaiserbagh.

Lundgren's tone is that of disappointment. He had entered Qaiserbagh with the hope that he could use some of the royal property now abandoned—especially the throne rooms and Wajid's chambers—for his own personal inhabitation (Lundgren 1905: 130). Seeing the scale of destruction,<sup>13</sup> he realized that he could not use it. The palace that had now reduced to a pile of rubble was strewn with shattered vases, pot-bellied urns, and burnt fences. He wrung his hands—"vred mina händer"—a gesture expressing his loss of what he hoped to find (Lundgren 1905: 131). Lundgren's intention seen in the context of his fairytale-like description of Qaiserbagh (discussed previously) is significant because it makes it clear that what he provides is a description of his visualization of something that existed previously, in which he could have indulged for his own benefit. At times condescending, at times dismissive, and at times enthusiastic about Qaiserbagh, Lundgren might have provided his version of sour grapes. However, a queer reading





*Figure 11.6* Looting of Qaiserbagh seen in a watercolor on paper by William Simpson. 1864.

*Source:* Image courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum Collection.

of Lundgren makes explicit that the fantastical quality of Wajid's creation sustained despite its destruction—in fact, it emanated profusely from the rubble that Lundgren saw.

The annexation of Qaiserbagh by the British resulted in significant alterations to its landscape and structures [Figure 8.5]. In the remodeled

landscape and reconfigured architectural layout, notable changes included a comprehensive demolition of surrounding structures that once encompassed the tombs and bordered the central garden on the north (*The Index Plan of Kaiserbagh* 1899). In the northern section of the garden, this destruction gave way to the construction of Canning College, positioned to the north of the marble bridge. The Canning College moved into a new building built in the Qaiserbagh, completed in 1878 (Beg 1911: 62). It possibly occupied a part of the site between the two structures of the Parikhana and largely the enclosure of the quadrangle abutting the tombs. The establishment of new roads running directly through the central garden, with one road penetrating the enclosure on the southeast, marked a major transformation. With the destruction and removal of the structures that defined the extent of the central garden and the tomb complex, and with the introduction of the new roads; the degree of enclosure and the garden's layout were fundamentally reshaped. Lanka, one of the key structures of the Qaiserbagh and of Wajid's rule was allowed to fall into a state of severe disrepair.<sup>14</sup> All that survived of the structure was its plinth and towers. Later, the Lanka was completely destroyed, and in its place a library was constructed.

The surrounding periphery of the central garden was divided into individual properties having specific plot numbers,<sup>15</sup> further fragmenting Qaiserbagh. These properties were allocated to different *taluqdars* (Newell 1915: 35–36) as a sort of *caravanserai*<sup>16</sup> for their stay in Lucknow whenever they would visit (Keene 1875: 90). Newell's comparison of the Qaiserbagh with a caravanserai contains within it certain biases, implying a temporariness of use, and a shared ownership controlled by the British. Sharar, however, notes that the government handed the buildings to the *taluqdars* with instructions that they are to live in the houses and maintain them in their original state (Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 63–64). In 1865, the British issued *sanads*—a legal document that made the *taluqdars* as rightful owners of the property in Qaiserbagh. According to the *sanad*, no *taluqdar* could only transfer or sell their part of the Qaiserbagh to another *taluqdar* and that they had to perpetually keep it in a state of good repair. If either condition was not met, the British government would take over the property. This way, the British not only ensured that the Qaiserbagh was always under their control. In 1860, the *taluqdars* organized themselves into a registered society, Anjuman-e-Hind, or the British India Association (BIA). These *taluqdars* converted the buildings into townhouses, expanding them outward to add supplementary rooms and, in some cases, almost tripling the original width of the enclosure.

The British utilized the Baradari as a venue to address requests and assertions from the officers and nobles who served under Wajid and his family. Windows were installed to cover the arcaded exterior of the Baradari to convert it into an enclosed space seen in a black-and-white photograph (Unknown 1880) and a floor was added (Gordon 2006: 60). Subsequently, the British entrusted the Safed Baradari to one of the *taluqdars*, the Maharaja of Balrampur, as a gesture of recognition for their obedience and allegiance to the queen of the British Empire. Later, in 1902, the Maharaja gifted

the Baradari necessary rights, titles, and interests to Anjuman-e-Hind—a registered society organized by the *taluqdars*. Anjuman-e-Hind used it as a Town Hall (Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 64). From then on it came to be known as Lucknow’s Town Hall or Taluqdar’s Hall. It was used during events organized by the *taluqdars* to host their British guests. The Baradari continues to remain under the ownership and authority of the *taluqdars*. Today it is used as exhibition space and is also rented out for weddings and other public events. It was precisely its multivalent nature due to which the Safed Baradari—which was used as an *imambada*, a setting to read *marsiyas*, and a place to receive state guests during Wajid’s time—continued to accommodate a diverse range of functions even after the annexation when it became a site of display of colonial flamboyance, a town hall, an exhibition space, and so on.

The transfer of property allowed the British to bring the *taluqdars* within the British urban, political and administrative center of Lucknow (Krishna 2014: 169). With this relocation, the British could hold influence over the region through the *taluqdars*. It further ensured that the *taluqdars* continued their support and allegiance to the British. Consequently, Qaiserbagh became a site for the *taluqdars* to show their allegiance to the British. They *taluqdars* choose a British architect, Samuel Swinton Jacob, to create the library at the site of the Lanka on this spot. In the process, this further disassociated the site from the memory of the Lanka and that of Wajid’s rule.

Nevill noted that Lord Canning gave the buildings to the *taluqdars* on the condition that they would keep it in repair and that the “whole place is in a very ruinous state and one entire side of the main square has been removed” (Nevill 1904: 207). In his assessment of the state of the Qaiserbagh, Nevill (1904: 207) appears to direct blame toward the *taluqdars* for the ruinous condition of the once magnificent complex. According to Nevill’s account, the buildings that constituted the quadrangle of the Qaiserbagh were entrusted to the *taluqdars* by Lord Canning. However, despite this responsibility of maintaining the premises, the *taluqdars* seemingly failed to fulfill their obligation. The result is a severely deteriorated and ruined state of the Qaiserbagh. Nevill emphasizes the removal of an entire side of the main square, highlighting the extent of the damage. By focusing on the *taluqdars*’ inability to preserve the integrity of the site, Nevill seemingly attempts to shift blame away from the British administration, suggesting that the British were not directly responsible for the destruction and ruination of the Qaiserbagh.

With the handing over of Qaiserbagh to the *taluqdars* Qaiserbagh became a place of privilege. It turned into a site of glamorous parties hosted by the *taluqdars* in honor of royal visitors from the British Empire to which only a few were invited. Their visits to the capital were widely publicized with splendid illuminations and elaborate fireworks spectacles, which the general public were permitted to witness. When the Duke of Edinburgh visited the Qaiserbagh, the *taluqdars* illuminated all of Qaiserbagh quite magnificently in an attempt to impress the visitors in which they were successful. The duke

“pronounced [the whole square] to be one of the finest in world . . . It] reflected a blaze of light and beauty such as one rarely sees even in more civilised cities than Lucknow” (*The Pioneer*, December 10, 1873: 6). On another occasion when the *taluqdars* hosted Lieutenant Governor of the North-West and Lady Lyall, they organized illuminations which were “extremely picturesque; and the fireworks which were so admirable as to mark a distinct advance in native pyrotechnic art” (*The Pioneer*, November 1, 1883: 1).

This is quite revealing of the colonial bias, the same square was vulgar during Wajid’s time but becomes otherwise when decorated in the honor of the British royalty. During the visit of the Prince of Wales (Edward) and the governor, the *taluqdars* organized a fete in “quite a darbar style” (*Leader*, December 3, 1921: 5). Only those having invitation cards or passes could enter the Qaiserbagh. The site was organized into hierarchies, with separate blocks for office bearers, members of the Executive Committee and of the Legislative Council of the Anjuman-e-Hind. All guests had to arrive in dinner suits. *Taluqdars* had to wear darbar dress and black leather shoes. A tower at the southeastern end of Qaiserbagh was used to witness fireworks organized by the *taluqdars* (*Leader*, December 3, 1921: 5). The Baradari was the center of this event. This is in striking contrast to how the fairs were held at the Qaiserbagh during Wajid’s time. The fairs occupied Qaiserbagh quite organically, and people from all rungs of society wearing clothes of their choice would participate and come together to celebrate. Just the nature of public events held at Qaiserbagh reveals the contrasting ideologies in the way Wajid performed his power and how the British Raj and the *taluqdars* conducted the same. The fairs held during Wajid’s time occupied Qaiserbagh quite organically, and people from all rungs of society, wearing clothes of their choice, would participate and come together to celebrate. Anyone and everyone could be part of the Qaiserbagh during the fairs organized by Wajid, while only those with invitations cards could witness the prince. The space was quite organically occupied in the former event, while during the latter event it was divided on the basis of a strict hierarchy and the participants were expected to observe a strict dress-code.

In her collating several texts of European criticism of nawabi architecture, Llewellyn-Jones claims that the British had to necessarily establish nawabi architecture as debased and decadent to justify their definition of nawabs as inefficient, vulgar rulers (Llewellyn-Jones 1985: 241). Building on that, we further argue that the British erased many nawabi buildings to ensure that there is no evidence remaining that would contest their disdainful description of nawabi buildings—no evidence that might facilitate a view that Wajid constructed buildings that were in good taste. To a certain degree, the British have been successful in their objective. There is a dearth of evidence to investigate the character of original buildings in the Qaiserbagh in order to align or contest the British articulation.

In spite of their criticism of Wajid’s architecture and taste, the British demonstrated an intriguing contradiction by collecting various artifacts as

trophies and spoils of war, which were later presented to their queen and held in esteemed positions within the heart of the British establishment. Notably, a pavilion from Qaiserbagh caught their attention, and though initially intended for relocation at Windsor Castle, it found its place in the Frogmore grounds in 1860, as documented by Livingston (1883), where it still stands to date. The British also removed several elephant sculptures from Qaiserbagh, which were then proudly displayed at Windsor Castle, as seen in Livingston (1883). These elephants bear a striking resemblance to those depicted in Beato's *Panorama* (1858c) positioned in front of the Lanka pavilion.

Similarly, the *Ishqnamah*, an illustrated manuscript on which our reading of Qaiserbagh during Wajid's times relies, was also acquired from the spoils of Qaiserbagh during the 1857 Uprising. Currently housed at the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, John Lawrence presented the book to Queen Victoria in 1859. This is stated in the information accompanying the *Ishqnamah* on the Royal Collection Trust website.

The British exhibit a paradoxical act of denouncing and at the same time appropriating some of Wajid's creations. In this paradox it is clear that the British, despite their critical perspective, treat these pieces of art and architecture as their symbols of conquest and dominance. They remove these pieces and relocate them at prominent places forming the centers of imperial power—such as archives, libraries, museums, parks, and palaces in Lucknow and England.

If Qaiserbagh is a queer body—a simulacrum (Grosz 1992: 242) of Wajid's embodied presence in and of the spatial setting—the British had inflicted violence on the queer body of Qaiserbagh and attempted a regimentalization, control, and taming it by way of geometricization [Figure 8.5].

The British had appropriated many structures, such as the Safed Baradari, the gardens, and the kiosks and pavilions, and used it for their official events. This way the place continued to hold importance even during colonial times. Through the *taluqdars*, the British used the premises to honor British royalty, heads of government, and other dignitaries of the same stature when they would visit Lucknow. Qaiserbagh had emerged as the most threatening place for the British during the Uprising and hence the British demolished several structures of Qaiserbagh. Considering Wajid was the last nawab and the Qaiserbagh was a symbol of him, the razing was an erasure of the nawab and the palace and also the queer performative practices that the nawab sought to mainstream during his rule.

## Notes

- 1 Interestingly, there is a sustained interest in the gendered gaze in colonial archives. Von Orlich (1845: 97) in his description of the Badshah Bagh, a site not discussed here, privileges the male gaze—that of the then king, Amjad Ali Shah, constructing a narrative that commodifies the women of the *zenana*. The description positions the king at the colonnade of the palace, from where von Orlich imagines that he is able to view the activities taking place in the inner courtyard of the *zenana* attached to the *bagh*. The emphasis placed on the king's ability to observe



- the “amusements of the ladies” positions these women as objects of his gaze, reducing them to objects of entertainment and visual pleasure. One of the primary intentions behind the *bagh*, however, was to create a space for women where they were “wont to disport themselves” (Hay 1939: 84), a space that women could occupy and enjoy without any restraint or reservation.
- 2 A Mina Bazaar is usually a marketplace for women having shops handled by women. Here, there are male sellers, too, conveying a sense that Qaiserbagh challenged the rigid gender-based separations
  - 3 The incidence is noted in Wajid’s *Parikhana* (Shah 1987 (1877): 96–97)
  - 4 f.317r, f.430r, f.282r, f.128v
  - 5 Many such instances throughout the *Ishqnamah* paintings reiterate the nature of the gardens as that of social tensions. Appointment of women are shown in gardens with a clear separation of Wajid from the woman (f.52v, f.85v, f.87v, f.91v, f.93v, f.142r, f.155r, f.157r, f.158v, f.165r, f.174r, f.176r); settings in which *paris* are given raises are shown to be within a walled enclosure and not gardens (f.132v, f.139v, f.143r, f.184v, f.192r, f.200r, f.379r, f.380v, f.382r, f.407v), Abyssinian women appointed (f.193v, f.195v, f.197r).
  - 6 Wajid writes of Intiaz Pari, also shown in the painting, who was particularly jealous of the Chhote Khan’s proximity to him (Shah 1987 (1877): 62).
  - 7 f.209r of *Ishqnamah* ((Unknown c1850bg)
  - 8 Nevill and Newell give a different date of blowing up the fortification June 30 (Nevill 1904: 204) and July 2 (Newell 1915: 16; Hilton 1894: 130).
  - 9 Sheesh Mahal, one of the principal structures of the zenana of the Panch Mahalla, was destroyed during this time by order of Henry Lawrence.
  - 10 In the photograph the words “Ammunition Godown” is seen written in relief in plaster above the principal entrance archway of the Asafi Mosque. Piles of cannon balls carefully arranged in the inner court in front of the Imambada tank can be seen in Saché’s (1870b) photograph. Several colonial writers [Keene 1875: 103; Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 47; Fergusson 1910 (1865/1876): 329] describe the use of the Bada Imambada as a site of storage of ammunition, with one writer [Sharar 1975 (1913–1920): 47] going so far as to compliment the structure/floors for being able to withstand the weight of the heavy equipment. Prior to being used as an ammunition go-down, the mosque was used as a hospital in the immediate aftermath of the 1857 Uprising, as suggested by the title of Felice Beato’s (1858l) photograph *Mosque inside Asaf-ud Dawlah’s Emambara or Tomb, Now Used as a Hospital, Lucknow*.
  - 11 Lang *et al.* 1858; Napier 1859a; Bolst *et al.* n.d.; Mackenzie 1860; Military Department n.d.; and Smith 1868. Although all these maps were created at different times, they all focus on the British suppression of the 1857 Uprising.
  - 12 It is possible that Simpson read of the details of the looting from contemporary colonial accounts (Russell 1860, 1896; Ball n.d.). The painting showcases a diverse group of Europeans from various uniformed services, with Scottish officers commanding attention in their kilts and tall bearskin helmets. Their presence exudes a sense of control and order as they question and regulate the activities of others in the scene. Additional officers, dressed in white uniforms adorned with hats, add to the impression of disciplined authority.
  - 13 He found a place where sulfurous fumes billowed among the rubble and filth on broken up floors, tottering columns strained to support the soot-blackened, half-charred beams of the roof, the venetian blinds were bullet-riddled, the doors could not be closed, and on the walls—instead of the mirrors of the ladies of the bedchamber—soldiers’ graffiti; the stairway was in a state of collapse and in much worse case than a scale in a superannuated singer’s throat—slippery, false, and unreliable, the balustrades silver-plated but as treacherous as April moonlight (Lundgren 1905: 131). This is translated verbatim from Swedish.



- 14 Lanka is seen in many archival images, namely, Dannenberg (c1858), Bourne and Shepherd 1864–1865c), Shepherd and Robertson (1862–1863), two albumen prints held by Getty (Unknown c1863–1887a, c1863–1887b), Rousselet 1975 (1882), Dannenberg (c1870), Frith (c1870), Alli (1874), Therond (c1878), and postcards of early 20th century (Universal Postal Union British India [UPUBI], c1900 and c1910). These images show Lanka in various stages of repair and disrepair—ranging from being intact in earlier images to being dilapidated in later ones. The UPUBI postcards show just the lower story flanked by octagonal towers that are also just a story high. There used to be two high bamboo staffs over these octagonal towers for the royal pigeons to rest after their daily exercise of flight (Mookherjee 2003 (1883): 235). In these postcard images, Lanka has lost its upper story and the upper parts of the tower. It appears more like a stage for performance—a platform framed by octagonal pillars, and raised on a basement story having several arched openings. The parapet of the towers has been redone following the wavy stucco found on other Qaiserbagh buildings, such as the Mermaid Gate. It is difficult to ascertain the exact year of the imagery used in the postcards, but it certainly shows a British intervention on the Lanka—devoid of the connecting stairway. *The Index Plan of Kaiserbagh* (1899) shows three detached rectangles in the location of Lanka—two side pavilions with a central platform. This means that by 1899, the bridge was lost and the Lanka transformed into two disjoint open pavilions. An earlier photo by Alli (1874) shows the Lanka as a continuous structure with a connecting bridge, but the corner towers have all lost their domes. Frith's photograph (c1870) shows the Lanka with a much more complete form, with domes intact. However, the arcaded terrace, bridge, and the central pavilion are covered with heavy vegetation. This means that the structure was cleared up and repaired by the British sometime between 1870 and 1874 and later demolished by 1900.
- 15 *The Index Plan of Kaiserbagh* (1899) shows the property numbers.
- 16 *Caravanserai* means lodging used by travelers on a temporary basis. *Taluqdars* lived in the rural areas of Awadh, and the property in Qaiserbagh was given to them for use when they would be in town. Hence, Newell uses this term. But the *taluqdars* owned the property now.

# Conclusion

## Site of Memory

Our text orients the readers to an alternative architectural history of Lucknow and directs their attention to treat existing buildings and landscapes as mnemonic devices. These mnemonic devices serve as reminders of the nawabs' resistance to British hegemony as well as an expression of their own culture and personality. Acting as triggers to recall a memory, these buildings and landscapes—in their incompleteness—leave a lot to the people's own capacity to remember and conjecture their own histories about the city and its erased parts.

The book's queer reading of the archive has initiated an introduction of new parameters for architectural historiography. Such a historiography is premised on considering the potential of architecture to offer spaces of gendered and social tensions and to offer spaces that reverse the colonial male gaze. Such a historiography finds merit in the capacity of architecture to accommodate intersectional bodies—the specificity of varying pluralities they require. Such historiography traces the intentions behind and the emergent forms that follow a deliberate disobedience and deviation from conventional architectural rules of balance, symmetry, and composition. It valorizes flamboyance that is a result of hybrid forms and materials and ostentatious tastes of the nawabs as an architecture that offered a spectacular discomfort to the colonial eye asserting its own identity.

Queering is also about embodied experience of history—in the archives and on the site. By reading the archives, we write the descriptions as sequences of movements, sometimes using our embodied experience of the site and sometimes devising it. In either case, the book invites its readers to orient their body, their views, and their discourse toward the nawabi away from the colonial. By reading the colonial archive meticulously, against the grain—queering it—the book has been able to reconstruct the entire Machhi Bhavan precinct, a part of the Daulatkhana precinct, and the Qaiserbagh. Verifying and cross-examining sources the book, at times, has evened out many unresolved conjectures and at times provided exact locations of buildings that heretofore had just been named. In demonstrating this, the book demonstrates the capacity of queering as a method to contribute to architectural history.

The explicit and architectural nature of the drawings is an intentional decision to highlight that queering methods can contribute to systematic and definitive reconstructions and in turn to an attestable architectural history. These drawings were prepared following a meticulous collaging and collating of numerous images, maps, and texts. Sometimes the images and maps were skewed, sometimes rotated, sometimes overlaid, and sometimes laid beside each other. This became an exercise of orienting and reorienting the archival material until a clearer image of the past started to emerge. Developing drawings following such a method makes a case that the queering method is evidence-based. These overlapping readings when placed on a drawing revealed several inconsistencies that had to be verified against other archival evidence. Through these exercises, we reconstructed the Imambada precinct before the British intervention and the Qaiserbagh as a continuation of Chhatar Manzil and an existing palace.

*Lucknow Queerscapes* provides an architectural history of Lucknow, which gives the readers a few more instances of history that contribute to the making of a new memory of the city. If buildings and landscapes, and fragments thereof were to act as mnemonic devices, people might read the steps to the Imambada in a new light—a huge flight that hides a lower story. They would read the roads of Qaiserbagh in a new light—as reminders of the British fragmentation of the city. They would read that even though the Bhatkhande Music Institute is not Wajid's Parikhana as the present-day plaque says, it still serves as an indicator of a sustained memory. For the Machhi Bhavan precinct reconstruction we use the movement of women, movement of performers, movement of the nawab and his retinue, and movement of guests. This way we have been able to explicitly locate structures such as the Sangi Dalan, the Baoli Palace, and the connection between the *baoli* and the rest of the precinct. Similarly, the way Wajid prioritized his orientation in relation to the women, performers, guards, British guests, or his audience has been instrumental in reasoning out the layout of the Qaiserbagh, which for a large part had been deemed irrational and extravagant by the colonial writers.

Today, Machhi Bhavan, Daulatkhana, and Qaiserbagh are used much differently from they were historically. At the site of the erstwhile Machhi Bhavan stands a medical university. Bada Imambada is visited for its religious as well as its wondrousness of having a large vaulted ceiling. The Bhul Bhulaiyya offers opportunities to visitors to get lost, to way-find, to contemplate, and to indulge in the fantastical stories spun by tourist guides. The area around the Rumi Darwaza and extending until the entrance of the Imambada has been cobblestoned. The Rumi Darwaza appears as a background in advertisements of expensive cars. The silhouette of Imambada and Rumi Darwaza are indicators of Lucknow identities serving as logos for various businesses. Rumi Darwaza also features in the logo of the Lucknow Metro. A surviving footprint in Daulatkhana when it was so is the Asafi Kothi which is now divided among its several tenants. The theatricity of Qaiserbagh is no longer visible to a distracted eye. It is seen as a large precinct

containing residential neighborhoods, public offices, public gardens, gates and tombs serving as monuments, and public venues for holding cultural and social events.

Lucknow today is home to several queer individuals, communities, and organizations. Lucknow held its first pride march in 2017, organized by Awadh Queer Pride (AQP), a volunteer organization. The Pride march is one representation of an active queer community in Lucknow. Pre-Pride events, such screenings of queer films and setting up stalls to inform citizens and support queer community have been undertaken.

*Lucknow Queerscapes* remains a part of the present-day cruising<sup>1</sup> despite rampant erasure and an ensuing amnesia about this queer history. The history of nawabi architectural sites, when positioned in the present-day socio-sexual context of Lucknow, illustrates that despite having suffered erasures, they serve as sites of memory, directing the city's pride marches<sup>2</sup> and providing safe and accessible cruising locations. They embody an architecture that has sustained a deviance and resistance to the normative, architecturally, culturally, and socially.

## Notes

- 1 Posts on websites and internet forums reveal that Qaiserbagh and the green spaces cleared out as a result of demolition near the Machhi Bhavan remain popular choices for cruising among gay men. The Qaiserbagh crossroads (southeast corner of Qaiserbagh quadrangle), garden housing the Saadat Ali Tomb, green spaces next to the Safed Baradari, and the Begum Hazrat Mahal Park are favorite cruising spots in and around the Qaiserbagh. Similarly, the Nibu Park (adjoining Imambada on the west) and Buddha Park (a park carved out in front of the Panch Mahalla and the river) are popular cruising spots near the Machhi Bhavan.
- 2 The official route taken by the pride march for the first six years was from Dainik Jagran Chauraha to the General Post Office (GPO). However, in 2023, in light of an ongoing Vidhan Sabha budget session, the High Court ordered not to conduct processions near the GPO. Hence, the Pride march that took place on February 26, 2023, had to revise its route. The proposal for a new route changed three times. In two of these routes, Qaiserbagh—a site that this book terms as queer—would have appeared.

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- Unknown. c1850ad. “f.117v: The Prince Listens to a Performance with Najm al-Nisa, Sultan Mahal Yasmin, Mahrugh Begum, Hur Mahal, Najib al-Dawlah, Qutub al-Dawlah, Razi al-Dawlah, Wahid al-Dawlah, Tahsin al-Dawlah, Baha al-Dawlah, Nishat al-Dawlah, Masturah and Izzat Mukhlis Sahibah (1259/1843–44).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.ae
- Unknown. c1850af. “f.125v: Wajid Ali Shah Plays Sitar with Daroghah, Munna and Others as Anis al-Dawlah Plays Tabla (1259/1843–44). In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.ag
- Unknown. c1850ag. “f.128v: Munna Is Brought to Wajid Ali Shah, Wrists Tied, with Diyanat al-Dawlah in Attendance (1259/1843–44). In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.ah
- Unknown. c1850ah. “f.132v: Dilruba Mahal Before Wajid Ali Shah (1260/1844–45). In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.ai
- Unknown. c1850ai. “f.139v: Wajid Ali Shah Invites Sarfaraz Mahal to Sit with Him (1261/1845–46). In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.aj
- Unknown. c1850aj. “f.142r: Mahlika Mahal Enters Wajid Ali Shah’s Presence (1259/1843–44). In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.ak
- Unknown. c1850ak. “f.143r: Wajid Ali Shah Invites Ajaib Khanum to Sit with Him in a Garden (1261/1845–46). In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.al
- Unknown. c1850al. “f.145r: A procession Leaving Court: Ladies Are Carried on Palanquins Through the Bazaar Area of Lucknow.” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.am
- Unknown. c1850ao. “f.155r: Iftikhar al-Nisa (Begum Hazrat Mahal) Before Wajid Ali Shah (1261/1845–46).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.ap



- Unknown. c1850ap. “f.157r: Dildar Mahal Enters Royal Presence (1261/1845–46).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.aq
- Unknown. c1850aq. “f.158v: Huzur Mahal Before Wajid Ali Shah (1260/1844–45).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.ar
- Unknown. c1850ar. “f.165r: Malikhah Mah-i Alam Enters Royal Presence (1261/1845–46).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.as
- Unknown. c1850at. “f.174r: Khurshid Liqa Amir Mahal Enters Wajid Ali Shah’s Presence (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.au
- Unknown. c1850au. “f.176r: Khurshid Mukhlis Sahibah Before Wajid Ali Shah (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.av
- Unknown. c1850av. “f.184v: Late Sikandar Mahal Enters Royal Presence (1263/1847–48).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.aw
- Unknown. c1850ay. “f.192r: Matbu al-Sultan Begum Enters Wajid Ali Shah’s Presence (1260/1844–45).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.az
- Unknown. c1850az. “f.193v: Altaf al-Sultan Enters Wajid Ali Shah’s Presence (1260/1844–45).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.ba
- Unknown. c1850ba. “f.195v: Aram al-Sultan Inayat Before Wajid Ali Shah (1260/1844–45).” In *Ishqnama*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.bb
- Unknown. c1850bb. “f.197r: Aram al-Sultan and Zayn al-Nisa Before Wajid Ali Shah (1261/1845–46).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.bc
- Unknown. c1850bd. “f.200r: Rahat al-Sultan Before Wajid Ali Shah (1260/1843–44).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.be
- Unknown. c1850bf. “f.205v: Diyanat al-Dawlah and Gulbun al-Dawlah before Wajid Ali Shah (1261/1845–46).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.bg
- Unknown. c1850bg. “f.209r: Sharif al-Mulk, as Colonel Hajji Sharif, Drills British Soldiers as Wajid Ali Shah Watches on from the Roof Dressed in Military Uniform (1261/1845–46).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.bh
- Unknown. c1850bh. “f.210v: Wajid Ali Shah Awards Robes of Honour to Qutb al-Dawlah, Razi al-Dawlah, Najib al-Dawlah and Vahid al-Dawlah and They Pay Him Homage (1261/1845–46).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour



- with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm (page dimensions). Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.bi
- Unknown. c1850bk. “f.221v: An Imposter with a Sabre Is Dealt with by Razi al-Dawlah and Vahhaj al-Dawlah as Qurb al-Dawlah and Sabit al-Dawlah Watch (1263/1847–48).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.bl
- Unknown. c1850bl. “f.228r: Wajid Ali Shah Awards the Grieving Hur Mahal a Robe of Honour After the Death of Her Son (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.bm
- Unknown. c1850bo. “f.238r: Sarfaraz Dances as Wajid Ali Shah Plays the Tabla [sic]. Vahhaj al-Dawlah and Nisar Ali Play Sarangi as Eazi al-Dawlah, Vahid al-Dawlah, Najib al-Dawlah and Haydar Ali Watch (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.bp
- Unknown. c1850bs. “f.242v: Masturah, Nishat and Darughah Speak to Wajid Ali Shah in a Garden (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.bt
- Unknown. c1850bt. “f.245v: Wajid Ali Shah Kneels with His Head on Sarfaraz Mahal’s Foot, Watched by Hur, Yasmin, Mahrukh, and Sardar Khanum (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.bu
- Unknown. c1850bw. “f.256r: Mashuqah Khass (Mah-i Alam) Sits on a Sofa and Speaks to Wajid Ali Shah (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.bx
- Unknown. c1850bx. “f.258r: Mah-i Alam Stands Holding Wajid Ali Shah’s Hand (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.by
- Unknown. c1850cc. “f.275r: Wajid Ali Shah Intervenes to Stop a Fight Between Sarfaraz and Mah-i Alam on a Terrace Overlooking the Garden (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.cd
- Unknown. c1850cf. “f.289r: Dancers, Musicians and Spectators in a Garden (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.cg
- Unknown. c1850cg. “f.302r: A Gathering on Wajid Ali Shah’s Birthday: Wajid Ali Shah with Mah-i Alam, Sikandar Mahal, Anis al-Dawlah, Razi al-Dawlah, Vahid al-Dawlah, Najib al-Dawlah, Qurb al-Dawlah, Nishat al-Dawlah, Musahib al-Dawlah, Muti al-Dawlah, Sahib al-Dawlah, Mustaqim al-Dawlah, Tahsin al-Dawlah, Sabit al-Dawlah, Vahhaj al-Dawlah, Sana Ali and Vahij Ali, all Smeared with the Ash of Pearls and Dressed as Yogis (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.ch
- Unknown. c1850ck. “f.317r: Mah-i Alam Strikes a Watchman with a Golden Whip in Wajid Ali Shah’s Presence as a Penalty for His Making a False Accusation (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic

- Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.cl
- Unknown. c1850cn. “f.326r: Wajid Ali Shah Watches a Dance Drama with Sikandar Hashmat and Dildar Mahal, Shahanshah, Sardar, Sarfaraz, Masturah, Izzat, Yasmin, Dilruba, Hur, Mahrukh with Razi al-Dawlah, Vahid al-Dawlah and Najib al-Dawlah Present, While Other Women Watch from a Pavilion (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.co
- Unknown. c1850co. “f.336v: Wajid Ali Shah on an Elephant in Procession at a *mela* in the Mina Bazaar with Troops as Spectators Flank the Route (1262/1846–47).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.cp
- Unknown. c1850cs. “f.379r: Matlub al-Sultan Begum Before Wajid Ali Shah (1263/1847–48).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.ct
- Unknown. c1850ct. “f.380v: Huzur al-Sultan Umrao Begum Before Wajid Ali Shah (1263/1847–48).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.cu
- Unknown. c1850cu. “f.382r: Badshah Begum with Wajid Ali Shah.” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.cv
- Unknown. c1850cv. “f.407v: Mughal Sahibah with Wajid Ali Shah (1263/1847–48).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.cw
- Unknown. c1850cw. “f.415v: Mahbubah-i Alam Falls from the Carriage While Riding in Bagh-i Mubarak with Wajid Ali Shah and Other Women (1263/1847–48).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm (page dimensions). Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.cx
- Unknown. c1850cy. “f.430r: Wajid Ali Shah inspects Mughal Sahibah’s Burnt Thigh and Sympathises. (1264/1848–49).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.cz
- Unknown. c1850n. “f.52v: Imaginary Scene of Najm al-Nisa Before Wajid Ali Shah (1259/1843–44).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm (page dimensions). Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.o
- Unknown. c1850r. “f.66v: The Prince and a Lady in a Palace Garden.” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.s
- Unknown. c1850v. “f.85v: Yasmin Mahal Sahibah with Wajid Ali Shah (1259/1843–44).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.w
- Unknown. c1850w. “f.87v: Mastur Malikh Parivash Bilqis al-Nisa with Wajid Ali Shah (1259/1843–44).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.x

- Unknown. c1850x. “f.89r: Mastur Malukah Iklil al-Nisa with Wajid Ali Shah (1259/1843–44).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.y
- Unknown. c1850y. “f.91v: Sultan-i Jahan Mahal Sahibah with Wajid Ali Shah (1259/1843–44).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.z
- Unknown. c1850z. “f.93v: Late Mahrukh Begum with Wajid Ali Shah (1260/1844–45).” In *Ishqnamah*. Painting in Opaque Watercolour with Metallic Paints. 45.0 × 29.0 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023. RCIN 1005035.aa
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# Index

Note: Page numbers in *italics* indicate a figure and page numbers in **bold** indicate a table on the corresponding page.

- Abdul Halim Sharar 2, 18–19, 26, **28**, 29, 38  
adaptation 3, 146, 152  
affinities 125  
Aina Khana 51, 71, 129, 130–131, 133, 167–168; absence 181; collection 147, 163; *see also* mirror; museum  
Alexander Doty 1  
Alois Anton Fuhrer 2, **28**, 29, 119, 152, 160  
ambiguities 126  
ambiguity 114, 117  
ambiguous 49  
animal fights 116, 130, 142, 144n26  
annexation 2, 26, 39, 43, 45, 184  
Antoine Polier 3, 35, 36, 148  
appropriated 99, 118, 143n12, 159, 180, 188  
appropriation 46, 49, 161, 182, 183  
Arcaded Court 65, 66–68, 70, 148, 157  
archivability 56  
archive 25–26, 56; colonial archive 2, 3, 13, 26–27, **28**, 30; counter-archive 5, 41, 43, 45, 47; counter-archiving 25; material archive 52; queering colonial archive 31  
Asafi Kothi 58, 75, 76, 147–148, 164n1, 192  
Asafi Masjid 72, 79, 79, 81, 84n35, 84n36; erasure of 179, 180, 180; *see also* Asafi Mosque  
Asafi Mosque 78; erasure of 189n10; *see also* Asafi Masjid  
Awadh Queer Pride 193  
Awadh 2, 9–14, 13, 24n6, 26, 144n23  
Backdrop: theatrical element 136, 137, 142, 172  
Bada Imambada 14, 31, 32, 58, 80–81, 192; colonial account 37; of perverse compositions 157–159; of vaudeville variety 116–120  
Bada Imambada Complex 51, 59, 58, 66, 67, 78–80; erasure 179–180; of perverse compositions 148–149  
Badshah Manzil 87, 88, 105, 107, 107, 121; erasure 180  
*Bani* 41, 137  
Banmali Tandan: on Asafi Kothi 75, 76; on Lanka 155; on polychromy 153; on Qaiserbagh's harem 161; on Sangi Dalan Court 84n37; *tatties* 133–134; on theatrical elements 133–134, 137; on Wajid 121  
*baoli* 30, 66–68, 69, 78, 83n29, 84n29; of perverse compositions 148–149; of vaudeville variety 134; *see also* stepwell  
Baoli Palace 67, 68, 69, 84n34, 84n35, 84n36, 163  
*baradari* 64, 65, 83n20, 151  
Begum Hazrat Mahal 10, **13**, 172, 182  
EIC 9–10, 13, 20, 22; commissioning persian historians 37; malpractices 43, 44, 46; treaty with Asaf 21; *see also* English East India Company; Company  
Bhatkhande Music Institute 90, 110n8, 110n9, 192  
Bhul Bhulaiyya 81, 119, 159–160, 192  
bias 39, 43; archivist bias 26; *see also* colonial bias



- Bijris Qadr 10, 13  
*Blue Book* 24, 24n5, 43–44, 47; *see also*  
*Oude: Papers Relating to*  
 British Raj 2, 5, 10, 13, 154, 187
- Canning College 90, 110n9, 185  
 central hall 80–81, 89, 118, 119, 159;  
*see also* Bada Imambada
- Chandiwali Baradari 87, 105, 107,  
 112n43, 112n48, 183  
*char-bagh* 64, 65, 70, 71, 79, 179, 181  
 Charles Ramus Forrest 2, 28, 29, 53  
 Chhatar Manzil 93, 99, 101, 181,  
 192
- China Bagh 30, 102, 102, 103,  
 102–105, 111n32, 181; China  
 Garden 139; *see also* Chini Bagh
- China Bagh Gate 30, 102, 103, 103,  
 105; *see also* Chini Darwaza
- China Bazaar 101, 100, 111n29, 181,  
 182; Eastern Gate 101; Western Gate  
 111n23, 111n25, 111n26
- China Bazaar road 99
- Chini Bagh 87, 102; *see also* China Bagh
- Chini Darwaza 87; *see also* China Bagh  
 Gate
- Claude Martin 3, 36, 55, 154, 164n1,  
 169
- Colin Campbell 10, 13, 179  
*Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match* 17, 30,  
 34–35, 35
- colonial bias 1–5, 37, 38, 92, 168,  
 187; for classical architecture 150,  
 154; against corpulence 131; against  
 effeminacy 163; gender bias 126;  
 against nawabi architecture 54,  
 55, 118, 167, 185; against non-  
 normative 15, 36; *see also* bias
- colonial eye 6n8, 31, 48–49, 134, 167,  
 191; incomprehensible to 154, 159;  
*see also* colonial gaze
- colonial gaze 34, 129, 156, 161, 166,  
 191; *see also* colonial eye; gaze
- Company 2, 16, 36, 38, 45, 46, 47;  
 Company rule 10, 13, 44; *see also*  
 EIC; English East India Company
- connoisseur 2, 90, 147, 150, 168
- Crommelin, William Arden 13, 32, 62,  
 75, 177, 178
- cross-dressed 18
- Dacoitee in Excelsis; or The Spoliation*  
*of Oude* 29, 47
- dais: theatrical element 90, 137, 164n3
- Daniel Johnson 28, 36
- Dara Daulat 100, 111n22
- Darogah Ubbas Alli 92, 96, 105, 106,  
 112n43, 113n50
- Daulatkhana 58, 71–78, 76, 75,  
 84n36, 85n48; of in-tensions and  
 obscurations 167, 171, 178
- DC Vanrenen 13, 75, 105, 111n29,  
 112n43
- demolition 64, 100, 161, 177–182, 178,  
 185
- deviance 3, 19, 120, 126, 150–153, 193
- directionality 34, 43, 79, 80, 91, 149
- directions 31, 55, 150, 156, 161, 162
- discomfort 1, 48, 49, 164, 164, 191;  
 discomfited 31
- discredit: Asaf 21; BEIC 39, 46; nawabs  
 16, 27, 47, 49, 142, 169; Wajid 4, 154
- disorient 55, 119, 156, 158, 160, 161;  
 disorientation 48, 61, 156, 164;  
 disoriented 96, 156, 160; disorienting  
 114, 156, 157, 159, 162
- disorient 55, 156, 162, 164;  
 disorientation 48, 149, 164, 164,  
 165n9; disoriented 96, 157, 160,  
 163; disorienting 114, 157, 159, 163,  
 164; disorients 119, 158, 160, 161
- dissent 115, 117, 120, 124
- Doctrine of Lapse 10
- dominant 3, 16, 20, 31, 49, 50
- Donna Haraway 125
- drag 7, 18, 114
- darbar 22, 24n1, 187; Durbar 64–65;  
 Durbar Court 64–65, 83n21, 116,  
 151, 164, 177
- Edward Henry Hilton 2, 4, 28, 29; on  
 Bada Imambada 119; on Qaiserbagh  
 93, 104; on Rumi Darwaza 146; on  
 Uprising 162, 179
- effeminate 18, 39, 40
- Egron Sellif Lundgren 183–184;  
 on harem 162; on Lanka 89; on  
 Qaiserbagh central court 92–93, 96,  
 136, 137, 138
- embodied: account 52; experience 191;  
 knowledge 4, 56; movement 55;  
 presence 188; walk 54
- English East India Company 2; *see also*  
 EIC; Company
- erasure 5, 26, 27, 31, 51, 193; sites of  
 176–177

- eunuch 15, 76, 157, 166; Sleeman on 4, 24, 39, 40
- European visitor 29, 54, 119, 132, 151, 164
- exhibition 131, 186; exhibitionism 129; exhibitionistic 136, 169
- extravagance 18, 129; extravagant 5n4, 117, 120, 142, 192
- fair 109, 110n17, 136, 138–139, 145n37, 187
- fairy 93, 152; fairies 122; fairyland 140; fairy-like 54; fairytale 92, 134, 183; *see also pari*
- Faizabad 9, 14, 20, 37, 71, 116; Asaf move from 2, 10, 20, 38, 149
- Falak Sair 107, 108, 112n35, 112n45, 112n48, 141
- familiarity 48, 147, 150, 162, 164; familiarities 56, 148; to initiate 146, 149; *see also* unfamiliar, unfamiliarity
- Felice Beato 29–30, 63, 77, 95, 104, 189n10; panorama 30, 32, 32, 59, 148, 188
- fish 62, 64, 83n15, 96, 103, 138, 151
- flamboyance 48, 135, 169, 186, 191; flamboyant 137
- Francis Gladwin 28, 29; on Aina Khana 71, 167–168; on Asaf 20; on Machhi Bhavan 57–59, 61, 62–65, 67, 150–151, 156; on Sangi Dalan 70; on *zenana* 115–116, 165n9
- Frogmore 188
- ganj* 21
- gaze 18, 34, 42, 137, 157, 167; female gaze 115–116, 167, 171; male gaze 188n1, 191; *see also* colonial gaze
- gender-bending 3
- George Valentia 28, 29, 157, 163–164, 166–167, 169; on animal fights 130, 132, 133; on Asaf's court 21–22, 38–39; on Bada Imambada 117; on Machhi Bhavan and Daulatkhana 65, 67, 68–74, 78, 84n35, 134–135; on *zenana* 61–62
- George William Forrest 28, 183
- ghazals* 14, 17, 145n35
- Ghazi-ud-Din Haidar Shah 10, 13, 153
- Gol Darwaza 99
- Gol Kothi 74
- Griselda Pollock 34, 35, 36
- Haji Sharif 23, 127, 144n20, 174; *see also* Hajji Sharif
- Hajji Sharif 22; *see also* Haji Sharif *hamam* 67–69, 163
- Hamid Afaq Qureshi 14, 16, 37, 71, 182–183
- harem 3, 5, 62, 96; of in-tensions and obscurations 169, 171; of perverse compositions 156, 161, 162; of vaudeville variety 121, 124, 125–126, 136
- Hazrat Bagh 87, 103, 104, 105–106, 106, 172, 176; erasure of 180, 182; *see also* Huzur Bagh
- Henry Crossley Irwin 20, 28, 39
- Henry George Keene 2, 28, 54, 153, 185; on Bada Imambada 118, 143n10; on Machhi Bhavan 179; on Qaiserbagh 153–154, 169
- Henry Havelock 10, 101
- Henry Lawrence 4, 62, 176, 177, 189n9
- Henry Rivers Nevill 2, 28, 111n22, 140, 177–179, 186
- Henry Salt 29, 30, 79, 79, 179
- Herbert Andrews Newell 2, 28, 143n12, 155, 157–160, 185; on Bada Imambada 119; on *begum* 126; on Lucknow 54–55
- heteronormative 39, 50, 161
- hierarchies 48, 122, 126, 159, 172, 174; colonial 27, 38, 187
- hierarchy 22, 87, 124, 125, 130, 187
- Hiran Khana 99–101
- homosexual: desires 14, 36; encounters 171; performativity 50
- homosexuality 3, 5, 34, 36; Asaf's 14–16; *see also* sexuality
- Hussein Bagh 32, 64–65, 134, 150–151, 177, 181
- Hussein Keshani 21, 59, 84n36, 120
- Huzur Bagh 41, 87, 105, 107–108, 122, 140; *see also* Hazrat Bagh
- hybridity 48, 115, 146–147
- hybrid 2, 146–147, 152, 153, 164n7, 191
- illegibility 161, 166; *see also* legibility
- incomprehensible 119, 159, 161; not comprehensible 154; *see also* indecipherable spatial forms
- indecipherable spatial forms 157; *see also* incomprehensible

- industrial 117–118, 152; *see also*  
     manufactory  
 inhabitation 114, 150  
 insignia 83n15, 93, 102, 152; *see also*  
     mermaid  
 intersectional 114, 191;  
     intersectionalities 127  
 intimacy 5, 18, 36, 124, 162, 174  
*ishq* 18, 24, 51, 120–121, 124, 129  
*Ishqnamah* 17, 19, 23, 29, 40, 188;  
     counter-archive 41–42; of in-  
     tensions and obscurations 170–171,  
     170, 172–173, 173, 174, 175; on  
     intersectionality 127, 128, 128, 139,  
     140; on Parikhana 122, 123, 125; on  
     Wajid's architecture 106, 107, 108,  
     109, 151  
  
*jalpari* 152; *see also* mermaid  
 James Fergusson 2, 6n5, 28, 55, 119, 160  
 James Outram 10, 13, 24, 43  
*jawaab* 59, 78, 86n58  
*jharokhas* 93, 99, 101, 110n16  
*jilaukhana* 78; Qaiserbagh 87, 99, 102,  
     105, 139; erasure 180, 182  
*jogi* 109, 140, 145n38  
 Jogi Mela 109, 136, 140; *see also* fair;  
     *mela*  
*jogins* 140  
 Johann Zoffany 11, 29, 30, 34, 35, 43  
 John Christian Andrew Dannenberg 29,  
     30, 100  
 John Mordaunt 3, 17, 30, 34–36, 35  
 Joseph Tieffenthaler 28, 29; drawings  
     31–32, 32, 59–60; on Lucknow 53;  
     on Machhi Bhavan 57–60, 61, 66, 67  
  
 Kamal-ud-din Haider 110n7, 182–183  
*kathak* 14, 87, 114, 129, 138  
 keywords 25  
 Khalil Ahmed Siddiqi 40  
 Khas Makan 87, 88, 105, 108, 181  
 Khord-Mehul 61; *see also* Khurd Mahal  
 Khurd Mahal 116, 124; *see also*  
     Khord-Mehul  
*khwajasara* 24, 39, 40, 127, 144n23,  
     171; Haji Sharif 22, 23, 127, 174;  
     Tehsin Ali Khan 116  
  
 labyrinth 159, 162; labyrinthine 96,  
     119, 162  
 Laksi Gates 87, 91, 92, 96, 101,  
     113n50, 182; Eastern 108–109,  
     113n50, 139, 145n37, 154, 161;  
     Western 96–99, 97, 110n17, 139,  
     154, 161  
 Lanka 30, 87, 89, 88, 90–92; erasure  
     180, 185, 186; of in-tensions and  
     obscurations 172; of perverse  
     compositions 155; of vaudeville  
     variety 136–138, 139  
 legibility 160, 162, 180; *see also*  
     illegibility  
 leisure 115, 135–136, 172  
 Leopold von Orlich 28, 29, 53, 118, 188n1  
*The London News* 45  
 Louis Rousselet 28, 29, 55, 89, 109n3,  
     154–155  
 Lucas Crawford 115, 142n2  
*Lucknow Panorama* 61, 65, 116, 134  
  
 Machhi Bhavan 10, 30, 32, 43, 58, 61,  
     62–64; Hodges' description 150, 151  
 Machhi Bhavan fortification 57–59, 58,  
     61, 64, 83n25, 162; erasure 176–177  
 Machhi Bhavan precinct 57, 58, 63, 71,  
     76, 78; erasure 31, 176–179, 178,  
     180; of in-tensions and obscurations  
     163; of perverse compositions  
     148–149, 151, 156, 162; of  
     vaudeville variety 134  
 Madhu Trivedi 106, 155  
 manufactory 118, 143n9; *see also*  
     industrial  
 marble bridge 30, 89, 92, 139, 152  
*maruza* 121  
 masculinity 22, 39, 127, 174;  
     hypermasculinity 171  
 Maya Jasanoff 3, 34  
 maze 119, 159, 160  
 Mehul-Seray 62  
*mela* 109, 139; *see also* fair; Jogi Mela;  
     Mina Bazaar Mela  
 memory 37–38, 59, 176, 186, 191,  
     192; collective 21; colonized 181;  
     historical 26; popular 64, 90; public  
     4, 180, 181; sites of 193  
 menagerie 71, 93, 99, 132–133,  
     144n24, 168  
 mermaid 93, 103–105, 138, 152, 153;  
     merman 89, 92; merpeople 96, 152;  
     *see also jalpari*; insignia  
 Mermaid Gate 30, 87, 103–105, 104,  
     139, 152–153  
 Michael Fisher 24, 45, 46, 47  
 Michel Foucault 25, 165n12

- migration 149, 150  
 Mina Bazaar Mela 139, 142, 145n37,  
 172; *see also* fair; *mela*  
 mirror 51, 71, 130–132, 168; in  
 Qaiserbagh 126, 141; *see also* Aina  
 Khana  
 Mirza Abu Taleb 28, 36–38, 45, 86n57,  
 143n5  
 Mirza Amani 16  
 Mirza Amir Beg 28, 54–55, 155  
*The Moar-Punkee Lucnow* 135  
 morality 15, 39, 44, 126; immorality  
 150, 152  
 Moulvee Mohummud Musseeh-ood-  
 deen Khan Bahadur 29, 45  
 Mughals 2, 5, 147, 150, 165n7;  
 architecture 2, 6n5, 55, 82n2, 151,  
 152  
 Muhammad Faiz Bakhsh 14–16, 36–37  
 Muharram 30, 110n6, 117, 118, 119,  
 113n6  
 mulberry tree 108, 109, 140  
 multivalence 114–115, 117, 119, 142,  
 176  
 museum 71, 118, 119, 133, 167, 169;  
*see also* Aina Khana  
*muta* 125  
 Naginawali Baradari 106–107, 112n48  
 Najmunissa 127, 128, 128, 143n14,  
 173–174, 173  
 Nathaniel Middleton 9–10, 13  
 Naubat Khana 57, 61, 82n2, 82n3;  
 Court 59–61, 58, 65–66, 82n3, 148,  
 156–157; Gate 59, 58, 148, 156  
 nautch 39, 70, 126  
 Nawab Wazir 9, 13, 62, 130, 151, 157  
 Neeta Das 59, 149  
 Neil's Gate 30, 87, 88, 99, 100, 181; *see*  
*also* Sher Darwaza  
 non-alignments 156, 162, 163  
 odd 48, 153, 154, 155  
 opulence 14, 93, 118, 120, 129  
 orient 52, 55, 149, 158, 168, 191;  
 orientated 80, 149, 157; orientating  
 146, 148, 149, 192; orienting 48, 158  
 orienting device 163  
 oriental 53–54, 126, 153  
 orientalism 56  
 orientalist 119, 159  
 orientation 51–52, 55, 78, 99, 156, 160;  
 sexual 14, 16, 35  
*Oude: Its princes and Its Government*  
*Vindicated* 29, 45–46  
*Oude: Papers Relating to* 13, 24, 28,  
 47n2; *see also* *Blue Book*  
*Oude Catechism* 29, 45–46  
 outsider 156, 161–162, 171–172, 174  
 Panch Mahalla 59, 58, 61–65, 66, 70,  
 78; of in-tensions and obscurations  
 181, 189n9; of perverse compositions  
 156–157; of vaudeville variety  
 115–116  
 Panch Mahalla Gate 59, 58, 61, 60,  
 78, 82n12; of in-tensions and  
 obscurations 156–157; of perverse  
 compositions 148  
*pari* 93, 122, 125, 170, 175; *paris* 87,  
 121, 122, 126, 127–128, 128; *see*  
*also* *fair*  
*Parikhana* 17–18, 29, 41, 42, 170, 171  
 Parikhana 87, 90, 91, 93, 121–122,  
 122; colonial bias 126; erasure 180,  
 185, 192  
*paristan* 138, 140  
 performance 166–167, 171; dance 70,  
 90, 107, 114, 115, 122; drag 7; of  
 gender 49, 131; of homosexuality  
 35; of *ishq* 18, 51, 124, 129; of  
 mourning 119; of power 22, 127,  
 136; theatrical 19, 108, 130, 133,  
 137; *see also* raree show  
 persuade 163, 169; persuaded 22;  
 persuasion 133  
 pigeon house 92  
 pigeons 115–116, 133, 149–150,  
 190n14  
 plurality 114, 127  
 poetic names to the cavalry  
 regiments 22  
 polychromy 104, 153; polychrome 146  
 Prabir Chandra Mookherjee 28, 89, 91,  
 92, 93, 106  
 preference for European manners 21  
 Press Club 102, 103, 103; *see also*  
 China Bagh Gate  
 privacy 121, 160, 162, 167, 171  
 procession 30, 91, 92, 102, 139,  
 145n37, 156; processional 42, 161  
 protest 116–117, 120, 182; protested  
 21; protesting 182  
*purdah* 124–125, 128, 167;  
 architectural connotation 107, 117,  
 121, 133, 169, 172; rejection of 124

*gabza* 121

Qaiserbagh 10, 14, 17–18, 30, 42, 51, 62; central garden 91–92, 93; complex 87, 88, 89, 95; counter-archive 41–42; erasure 97, 178, 180–188, 184; of in-tensions and obscurations 169, 171–172, 174–176; of perverse compositions 151–155, 160–162; residential quarters 94, 93; Uprising 101; of vaudeville variety 120–122, 124, 126, 128, 129, 136–142

*ganats* 133

## Qasr-ul-Aza 90

Queen Victoria 24, 29, 43, 47, 179, 188

queer: architecture 4, 49, 50, 51, 165n12; body 34, 121, 131, 176, 188; connotation 22; expressions 1, 5; identities 49; lives 49; map 1; scholarship 1, 49; space 49–50, 115, 120, 131; voices 1; world 115, 131  
queering 1, 4, 5, 48, 57, 61, 155, 169; queered 139; queers 149  
queerness 1–2, 5, 27, 31, 161  
queer reading 31, 32, 43, 49, 51, 168; definition 1–2, 31; of Hoey 16; of Lundgren 183; outcome 191

## Rafat Manzil 140

raree show 130, 132, 142; *see also*

performance

readability 161

reclaim 4, 26, 27, 48–49

Reginald Heber 28, 29, 78, 80, 117–118

*rekhti* 1, 5n1

reorient 27, 34, 51, 56, 80; reorientation 119; reoriented 156; reorienting 157, 161, 192

*Reply* 29, 43–44, 47, 47n3

residency 14, 13, 28, 134, 162, 177

resist 46, 151; resisted 21, 22, 24, 51, 152, 161; resisting 5

resistance 1, 11, 31, 49, 162; nawabs' 11, 21, 52, 191

ridicule 3–4, 11, 34–35, 36, 51, 142

Robert Smith 28, 29, 30, 73, 75

Robert Wilberforce Bird 29, 30, 47

Roshan Taqui and Krishna Mohan Saxena 90, 140–141

Roshan-ud-Daula Kothi 87, 99, 181

Rosie Llewellyn-Jones 5n4, 36, 187; on Asafi Kothi 76; on Bada Imambada 117; on Qaiserbagh 87, 93

Rumi Darwaza 30, 71–72, 78, 146–147, 156, 192

Rung-Mehul 62

Ruth Vanita 39, 40, 138

Saadat Ali Khan I 9

Saadat Ali Khan II 10, 13, 30, 70, 71, 105

Saadat's New Palace 74, 77, 163

Saadat's Palace 167

Saadat's tomb 99, 101, 111n28,

111n29, 153; erasure 180

Safdar Jang 9, 20, 64, 148

Safed Baradari 87, 88, 90–92, 121, 139; after annexation 186, 188, 193n1; as theatrical setting 141

Safi Ahmad 46

*saibans* 133–134

Samuel Lucas 29, 47

Sangi Dalan Court 68–71, 68, 69, 115, 134, 148–149, 162

Sara Ahmed 48, 55, 136, 164, 169; familiarity 56, 149, 150; unfamiliarity 161–162

*sarapardas* 133

sexuality 31, 41, 49, 50, 115, 131; *see also* homosexuality

*shahnashins* 80

*shamianas* 133

Sheesh Mahal 61–62, 86n56, 189n9

*sheikhzadas* 9, 148

Sher Darwaza 99–100, 111n25, 111n26; *see also* Neil's Gate

Shuja-ud-Daula 9, 16, 17, 20, 28, 30

Sidney Hay 2, 28, 121; on Bada Imambada 78; on Bhul Bulaiyya 119, 159–160; on *khwajasaras* 39–40; on nawabs 4, 18, 131; on Qaiserbagh 91, 93, 141, 142; on Rumi Darwaza 146; on Uprising 96, 176, 177; on *zenana* 189n1

Simonetta Casci 14

Sitala Sahai 140–141

Sophie Gordon 90, 185

Sophie Prosser 130

spectacle 119, 139, 141, 166–167, 186

*The Spoliation of Oudh* 29, 47

Stephen Markel 83n15, 147

stepwell 66, 67, 83n29; *see also* *baoli*

Stone Bridge 71, 72, 176

strange 4, 20, 54, 56, 151, 153; reclaiming 27, 48

- subvert 7, 48, 49, 56, 161, 168;  
 subversion 48, 50–51, 127; subverted  
 4; subverting 5, 31, 48, 50, 127  
 Sunehra Burj 71–72, 72, 73, 177
- taluqdars* 10, 28, 96, 185–188, 190n16  
*tawaijs* 39, 144n21  
*tazias* 80, 118, 119, 120, 159  
 tensions 34, 114, 166, 171–172, 174,  
 189n5  
 theater 134, 136, 137, 138, 141  
 theatrical 51, 90, 131, 134, 154; culture  
 129; performance 7, 87, 108, 135,  
 137; setting 71, 136  
 theatricality 48, 132, 138, 139, 142  
 theatricity 114, 129, 132, 136, 142,  
 192; theatrics 18  
 Thomas Bland Strange 28, 29, 93, 96,  
 101, 126  
 Thomas Daniell 28, 30, 32, 60, 72; and  
 William Daniell 29, 30, 68; *see also*  
 William Daniell  
 Thomas Longcroft 29, 30, 32  
 Tila Masjid 68, 71  
 treaty 10, 21, 43, 44; treaties 43–44, 46  
*turk-sawaar* 22, 127  
*turk-sawaarnian* 22, 127; *see also*  
 women army
- unfamiliar 55–56, 57, 149, 151, 160,  
 162; unfamiliarity 161, 163; *see also*  
 familiarity
- Uprising 2, 10, 13, 27, 31, 97; during  
 57, 64–65, 67, 177, 188; destruction  
 due to 4, 72, 162, 166, 180–183
- vaudeville 114, 130, 132–133, 136, 142  
 Veena Talwar Oldenburg 37, 39  
 violence 15, 43, 162, 176, 180, 188;  
 sites of 31, 180, 181, 182, 183  
 vulgar 4, 19, 48, 133, 152, 156
- Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh in the Qaiser  
 Bagh* 30, 42, 91, 109, 139, 172  
 Warren Hastings 9, 10, 13, 14, 28, 29;  
 on Asaf 16, 34–35, 51  
 water: theatrical element 134, 135, 141  
 Wazir Ali Khan 10, 13  
 William Daniell 28, 29, 30, 68, 69, 76;  
*see also* Thomas Daniell  
 William Henry Sleeman 4, 13, 28, 29,  
 39–40, 44  
 William Hodges 2, 28, 29, 30, 62,  
 64–65; disapproval 150–151, 164  
 William Hoey 14, 26, 28, 29, 36; on  
 Asaf 14–16, 36–38, 131; on Bada  
 Imambada 78, 119  
 William Tennant 28, 29; on  
 Aina Khana 168; on Bada Imambada  
 80, 81, 117; on Lucknow 53, 54;  
 on menagerie 71, 130, 132–133,  
 144n29  
 Windsor Castle 188  
 women army 22, 127; *see also*  
*turk-sawaarnian*
- zenana*: Machhi Bhavan 62, 64,  
 84n36, 115–116, 150, 157,  
 166; Daulatkhana 76, 76, 167;  
 Qaiserbagh 93, 96, 108, 110n13,  
 125, 171–172