



THE MADRASA OF 'ALAUDDIN KHALJI

by

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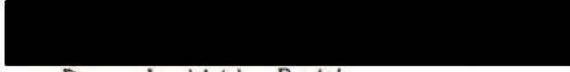
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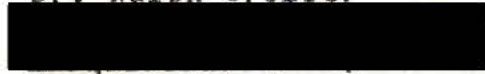
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ABSTRACT

The Quwwat al-Islam Mosque at Delhi is usually included in discussions on Indo-Islamic architecture, however, the small building situated at its southwest corner has remained virtually ignored. This is the Madrasa of 'Alauddin Khalji, one of the earliest extant Islamic colleges in India. Not only does the structure offer architectural information, but it also clarifies the position of Muslim education in Medieval India.

Constructed about 1315 A.D., the 'Alai Madrasa measures approximately 90 x 42 metres, and was entered through a monumental portal on the north side, which opened onto a large courtyard. The west wall of the court is lined with small cells; the wall opposite is no longer extant, but is believed to have been a simple screen wall. On the south stands a line of three tombs, the central one presumably that of 'Alauddin. The lack of inscriptions and incomplete documentation have hindered identification of the building's patron. A look at the patronage and personality of Sultan 'Alauddin will help to secure this attribution.


Although the 'Alai Madrasa is now in a ruinous state, it is still vital to a study of Indo-Islamic architecture as it is one of the few remaining monuments from the Khalji Period (1296-1320 A.D.). Until now, scholars have viewed

the ruined structure as being unnoteworthy, yet a first-hand examination of the site has revealed a gross misjudgement on the part of these historians and archaeologists.


The madrasa follows many of the building techniques and forms employed in the adjacent mosque, but also exhibits a number of new developments combining indigenous and Islamic elements. Here one sees an assimilation of trabeate and arcuate methods, as well as the first extensive use of the voussoired arch and the "true" dome in India. Also, the decorative muqarnas and the four eyvan (iwan) plan are introduced into the vocabulary of Islamic architecture of the subcontinent.

The 'Alai Madrasa is a clear link between the early Indo-Islamic style based on Hindu craftsmanship, and the more distinctly Islamic architecture in the later years of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND DATING

In order to avoid confusion and difficulty, Arabic and Persian words have been presented in a simplified form without diacritical marks. For example, 'Alā' u'd-Dīn or 'Alā' al-Dīn are rendered as 'Alauddin. Apostrophes indicate glottal stops.

All dates are shown according to the Gregorian calendar, rather than the Islamic one. For the approximate date according to the Muslim reckoning, subtract 622.

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Taking a look back, it is quite surprising to discover just how many people were involved in the production of this thesis. Unfortunately I am sure to have overlooked a few people; for those, please accept my sincere apologies.

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To my parents.

INTRODUCTION

Not long after its foundation in the early seventh century, Islam spread throughout North Africa and the Near East. As Islamic forces moved into Spain, other Muslim armies were making incursions into India. However, it was not until the twelfth century that Islam established a firm position on the subcontinent. During the intervening centuries, centres of trade appeared along the west coast and Muslim merchants settled there, bringing with them the trappings of Islam. Through intermarriage and missionary work, many converts were made, and the tolerant Hindu kings allowed the Muslim communities to grow. Islamic education grew with them.

With the Ghurid conquest and the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526), Islam's became the governing force in India. The first ninety years of the Delhi Sultanate passed through phases of stability and turmoil, of strong leadership under capable sultans, who resisted the power plays of the nobility. The Khalji dynasty, established in 1290 and lasting only thirty years, holds a major place in the history of India, due to the reign of 'Alauddin (1296-1316), the first Muslim ruler to unite India. The numerous campaigns of 'Alauddin brought about a time of prosperity, and in this climate the arts flourished. Architectural projects of massive proportions

were undertaken, setting new standards for the Islamic artistic vocabulary. The faith of Islam spread and great patrons fostered education.

Two elements fundamental to Islam are architecture and education, the former to assert the presence of the faith, the latter to propagate it. Due to these factors, the masjid (mosque) was of prime importance to Islam, serving not only as a place of prayer and community centre, but also as a school. To further Islamic education there developed the Muslim college, the madrasa (pl. madaris). These schools were originally founded in order to propagate Sunni (orthodox) Islam, and so maintained a theological basis, but the curriculum was often extensive.

Although thousands of madaris were founded in India, few remain. The oldest of these extant in Delhi is the 'Alai Madrasa, founded by 'Alauddin Khalji. The ruins of the madrasa are situated approximately fifteen kilometres south from the heart of New Delhi in the Mehrauli district, adjacent to the remains of Islam's first jami' masjid (congregational mosque) in India, the Quwwat al-Islam (1191-1316). While the mosque has been studied in great detail, especially its famed minar, the 'Alai Madrasa has received only the most cursory of examinations. Some scholars have stated that due to its ruinous condition, it can offer little to further the knowledge of Indo-Islamic architecture. This is a most unfortunate oversight on the

part of these critics, as only a handful of structures dating to the Khalji period survive in the Delhi area. A first-hand examination of the site shows that the 'Alai Madrasa, even in its state of disrepair, reveals evidence of a new artistic phase taking hold in the stylistic development of Indo-Islamic architecture.

The madrasa was constructed about 1310-1315 A.D. The main entrance on the north side opened onto a court, its west wall lined with small cells, the east wall a simple screen containing several niches. On the south stands a row of three sepulchres; the central one is believed to be the tomb of Sultan 'Alauddin.

Here one finds the assimilation of native craftsmanship and technique with tendencies more purely Islamic. Indian trabeate construction methods are fused with arcuate techniques, and the vousoired arch and true dome become widely used. Even the plan which may have its origins in the Indian **vihara** reflects the four **eyvan** plan of Persia.

One of the difficulties with the 'Alai Madrasa is the matter of patronage, for not a single inscription nor historical reference has been found which definitely attributes the structure to 'Alauddin Khalji. With such scant documentation, can we assume 'Alauddin was the patron of this tomb/madrasa, as commonly believed, or should it be ascribed to another ruler of generations earlier?

The complex personality of one of India's strongest

rulers engages one's interest in this period. 'Alauddin has been seen by some as a despot, a megalomaniac; but others consider him enlightened and one of the determined faithful. Here we shall delve into the life of this celebrated sultan, whose reign saw a turning point in the development of Islamic architecture in India, as revealed in the 'Alai Madrasa.

CHAPTER ONE
THE POLITICAL FOUNDATION OF ISLAM IN INDIA

It was Friday, the 20th of July, 1296. The monsoon had arrived, swelling the waters of the Ganges. Not far from the town of Manikpur, the governor of Kara, Ali Gurshasp, stood by the riverbank awaiting the arrival of his uncle, the sultan Jalaluddin Khalji. Eventually the sultan appeared at the opposite bank where he was persuaded to cross the river with only a few officers, all unarmed. Jalaluddin had barely set foot on dry land when a signal was given and an assassin's blade took off the sultan's head. The canopy was raised over Ali Gurshasp, proclaiming him the new ruler of the Delhi Sultanate, 'Alauddunya wad Din Muhammad Shah-us Sultan.¹

Islam's beginnings in India date to the mid-seventh century with an incursion during the reign of the caliph 'Ali (665-661), and a second one under Mu'awiya (661-680).² The first action of any consequence was Muhammad ibn Qasim's conquest and settlement of Sind in the early eighth century. This victory gave the Muslims little more than a foothold on the subcontinent, and these first Indo-Muslims were geographically divorced from the rest of the Islamic world.

In the eleventh century Mahmud of Ghazni directed raids into India, seizing great booty and razing "idolatrous" temples. Although he held the Punjab, there was no attempt at a full scale conquest and occupation of the country. This task was undertaken by the Ghurid sultan, Ghiyasuddin³ (1163-1203). In 1191/92 his army, under the command of his brother and successor Mu'izzuddin⁴ (1173-1206), and led by able generals, began the process of bringing the land of the Rajputs under Muslim rule. When Mu'izzuddin was assassinated in 1206, one of his generals, Qutbuddin Aibek, managed to secure the territory from Peshawar to Bengal, becoming the first of the Delhi sultans. Like many Turkish officers, Aibek was a former slave, as were some of his successors; hence this period is often referred to as the "Slave" or "Mamluk" Dynasty.⁵

Aibek died in 1209 and was succeeded by another former slave, Shamsuddin Iltutmish⁶ (r.1210-1236). He is said to have been endowed with good looks, but he was also gifted with a keen mind and proved himself more than able as a military commander. It was he who gave true form to the Delhi Sultanate. Through conquest and capable administration he controlled his territory, bringing about such "innovations" as a centralized government and instituting a common language. His greatest triumph came when he received robes of investiture from the Caliph of Baghdad.⁷ Iltutmish died after a reign of twenty years,

leaving a secure administration to his heirs. Indian history might have followed a vastly different course had it not been for the death in 1229 of Nasiruddin Mahmud, Iltutmish's favourite son and the heir apparent. As administrator of Hansi, Lahore and Lakhnauti, he had shown great promise,⁸ and undoubtedly would have made an admirable sultan. The Turkish slave officers or amirs now took power, and in the years that followed, they placed one member of Iltutmish's family on the throne after another. Even among these amirs there was a contest of wills, and one of them, Ulugh Khan, became the power in Delhi during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Nasiruddin (r.1246-1266/67).⁹ Usurping the throne as Ghiyasuddin Balban, he ruled for the next twenty years, consolidating the state, holding back the Mongols, and putting down rebellions. He was in his eighties when he died.

A brief period of unrest began when Balban's grandson Kaiqubad (r.1287-1290) assumed power. His life of debauchery was brought to an end by the aging general, Jalaluddin Firuz Khalji (r.1290-1296).

Jalaluddin's reign was marked by a period of passive rule; he could not stand the thought of shedding blood, especially Muslim blood. In meting out punishments he was lenient. Thieves were merely exiled to the provinces. When conspirators were caught in a plot to seize the throne, their punishment amounted to little more than a

wrist slap. However, Jalaluddin retained enough of his military spirit to repel a Mongol invasion in 1291/92.¹⁰

During this time, the province of Kara¹¹ was governed by Jalaluddin's thirty-year-old nephew Ali Gurshasp, whom the sultan loved more than his own sons. At this stage, the man who would take the name of 'Alauddin already exhibited signs of his ambitious nature. With his uncle's permission he led a raid into Bhilsa, bringing back great booty for himself and the sultan. Those loyal to the sultan warned him of the designs of his power-hungry nephew, but Jalaluddin would not listen, and this blind trust was to be his downfall.

While on the expedition to Bhilsa, 'Alauddin learned of the riches at Deogir,¹² in the northern Deccan. On the pretext of raiding Chanderi, 'Alauddin headed south, all the while having false reports sent to Jalaluddin. 'Alauddin quickly took the fortress at Deogir and returned to Kara. By then the sultan had received word of 'Alauddin's actions, but forgave him for his insubordinate deeds. Officers once more tried to warn Jalaluddin, but he refused to heed them.

'Alauddin then enlisted the aid of his brother Almas Beg, who convinced the sultan to go to 'Alauddin to forgive him in person. At Kara, the sultan was persuaded to cross the Ganges to 'Alauddin's camp with only a handful of unarmed officers, and his fate was sealed.

Following the assassination, 'Alauddin moved to take Delhi as quickly as the monsoon would allow. Along the route he shot gold coins from a catapult, so that by the time he reached Delhi he had raised a force of over 100,000.¹³ Malika Jahan, the wife of Jalaluddin, fled with her young son Rukhnuddin, whom she had set on the throne.

As soon as his power was secure, 'Alauddin executed all the nobles he had won over with bribes, as they were not to be trusted. Many posts were filled by capable friends.

Throughout his twenty year reign he had much to contend with. Several rebellions had broken out, due in part to Jalaluddin's passive nature, but all were put down. Between the years 1296 and 1307, 'Alauddin was required to face at least a half dozen incursions by the Mongols. In addition, his desire for conquest and booty led him to launch several campaigns in order to bring the whole of Hind under his control.

'Alauddin had designated his son Khizr Khan as heir apparent, but when the young prince chose to devote his interests to the pleasures of the **haram**, the sultan recanted without naming an heir.

In January 1316, 'Alauddin died, possibly due to dropsy, though some suspect poisoning.¹⁴ Immediately, his trusted vizier Malik Naib Kafur took control. He set 'Alauddin's six-year-old son Shihabuddin 'Umar on the throne and put all other potential claimants in prison.

Many were blinded, including Khizr Khan. Within a short time Malik Kafur had alienated those around him, and his rule of thirty days ended when three soldiers took the initiative to do away with the usurper.

Released from his imprisonment, Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah (r.1316-1320), another of 'Alauddin's sons, was then brought to power. At the beginning of his reign, Mubarak Shah exhibited great kindness. He revoked many of 'Alauddin's severe measures and renewed grants and charters that had been removed by his father. He even freed many thousands who had been wasting away in the Delhi prisons.

However, this attitude was soon to change. Mubarak Shah became harsh and demanding; many lost their heads. Though members of royalty were known to indulge in various vices, Mubarak Shah was noted as a pervert.¹⁵ Openly bisexual, he gave himself over to the pleasures of his slaves and the haram. He was so infatuated with a Hindu convert named Hasan that, within a relatively short time, the young man was elevated to the post of vizier. Officers tried to warn Mubarak Shah of Hasan's scheming, but as with his great-uncle Jalaluddin, affection blinded his vision.

On the evening of July 9, 1320, Hasan's followers made their way to the private chambers of the sultan's palace, beheaded Mubarak Shah, and dumped his body into the courtyard below. The vizier then took the throne as Khusrau Khan.

While many officers supported the usurper, ~~there were~~ others who would not. One of these was Malik Tughluq, the governor of Multan, who had long served under 'Alauddin. When the Tughluq forces arrived at the capital, Khusrau Khan fled, though he was later captured. His rule had lasted only two months.

Though the aging Tughluq had no ambitions for the throne,¹⁶ it was his by default. Ghiyasuddin Tughluq and his relatives would rule Delhi for the next ninety-two years.

CHAPTER ONE NOTES

- 1 K.A. Nizami and M. Habib, eds., **A Comprehensive History of India**, vol. 5 (Delhi:1970) p. 326. [Hereafter CHI]
- 2 B.N. Luniya, **Life and Culture in Medieval India** (Indore:1978) p. 11.
- 3 Ghiyasuddin's given name was Bahauddin.
- 4 Mu'izzuddin's given name was Shihabuddin. He is also known as Muhammad of Ghur (Ghor).
- 5 This is also referred to as the "Pathan" or "Mu'izzi" period.
- 6 Also spelled Iletmish, Altamsh, Altamish, and Ilaltimish.
- 7 CHI, p. 219.
- 8 Ibid., p. 220.
- 9 This is the grandson, not the son of Iltutmish.
- 10 Ziauddin Barani, **Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi**, eng. tr. H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, eds., **The History of India as told by its own Historians**, vol. 14, 2nd ed. (Calcutta:1953) pp. 60-61. [Hereafter, E&D, vol. 14]
- 11 Kara is within the present day state of Uttar Pradesh.
- 12 Also Devagiri. This is modern day Daulatabad.
- 13 CHI, p. 238. This figure may be an exaggeration.
- 14 E&D, vol. 14, p. 129.
- 15 Muhammad Qasim Ferishta, **Gulshan-i Ibrahimi or Tarikh-i Ferishta**, eng. tr. Major John Briggs, **History of the Rise of Mahomedan Power in India** (Calcutta:1966) vol. 1, p. 223. [Hereafter, Briggs]
- 16 Supposedly, Ghiyasuddin wished to place a Khalji on the throne, but all claimants had been killed. The nobles were prepared to grant authority to Ghiyasuddin's son Muhammad Shah, if he refused the honour.

CHAPTER TWO

MUSLIM EDUCATION IN INDIA

The greatest difficulty in dealing with Muslim education in India is the availability of information. It is limited and generalized, often outdated, and often inaccurate. Evaluation of materials is complicated in that many of the studies conflict with one another.¹ Although certain aspects of education apply almost equally throughout the Islamic world, scholars warn that it is not wise to assume that what holds for one country holds for another, or for that matter, from province to province. Yet there is still sufficient information regarding madrasa education in India to warrant discussion.

Islamic learning came to India with the first Muslims who settled there, though it was at the most elementary level. Since Islam is a proselytising religion, there was a need to instruct the converts in the basic tenets of the faith, and teach them the portions of the **Qur'an** required to perform the **salat** (prayer).

The Ghaznavids were noted patrons and developed a great centre of learning in India when they shifted their capital from Ghazna to Lahore. At Ghazna, Mahmud had founded an impressive college, its library stocked with volumes taken from Rayy and Isfahan.² A learned man himself, Mahmud invited scholars to his capital, including the great

Persian poet Firdausi.

The Ghurids also supported education, and Mu'izzuddin's college at Ajmer was well known. The childless sultan saw that his slaves (eg. Qutbuddin Aibek) were fully educated.

The Khalji sultans at Delhi were not the first of their clan to support education. Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji, a contemporary and equal of Qutbuddin Aibek, was one of the leading generals in the Ghurid conquest of India.³ He led his army in the northeast, taking and controlling the provinces of Bihar and Bengal. He is often remembered for the destruction of a Buddhist monastic community,⁴ but the highly educated Bakhtiyar Khalji should also be noted for the many mosques, madaris and **khanqahs** (monasteries) that he raised.⁵ His successors emulated him, and Muslim education continued to flourish in Bengal.

The sultans at Delhi raised many colleges in the succeeding years, notably those of Iltutmish and his heirs. His grandson Nasiruddin Mahmud (r.1246-1266/67), a very pious sultan, devoted much of his twenty year reign to scholarship.

During the following twenty year period, educational support continued under Balban. His sons, Muhammad and Bughra Khan, initiated literary and drama societies.⁶ This set an example for the nobility, which increased the patronage of the liberal arts.

Jalaluddin Khalji maintained the high standards of the

Ilbari Turks and even patronized Sanskrit studies.⁷ Although accounts are obscure and at times conflicting, 'Alauddin too supported education. According to the Risail-ul-Ijaz of Amir Khusrau, 'Alauddin believed that:

The foundations of madaris should be decorated with gems of knowledge and not with mere stone walls, and such students should be admitted in those free institutions as are heartily and passionately fond of learning, quite unlike those on whose minds lectures and lessons fall flat. Such preachers should be allowed opportunities to deliver sermons as are capable of reciting and repeating things of the eternal preserved tablate [Lawh-i-Mahfuz] and not those who know nothing about it. Such trustees should be put in charge of the endowed property as are thoroughly acquainted with, and abide by, the conditions of justice and integrity.⁸

Under 'Alauddin, Delhi had a host of noted scholars. Among them was the Chisti saint Nizamuddin Auliya. 'Alauddin greatly respected the saint and tried on occasion to meet with him. Tradition held that such meetings did not take place, and the saint refused audience with the sultan.⁹ Shamsu'l Mulk, the vizier of 'Alauddin, was a highly respected scholar and was teacher to Nizamuddin Auliya,¹⁰ who in turn instructed Amir Khusrau. Many of these scholars enjoyed the patronage of both royalty and nobility, but not all learned men were so fortunate. A noted Egyptian Traditionist visiting Delhi was unable to secure a patron.¹¹

One of the issues often under debate is 'Alauddin's

literacy. Most believe him to have been illiterate, basing their opinions on the comments of the contemporary historian Barani, which are taken up by Ferishta writing in the seventeenth century. However, those who hold the view that 'Alauddin was literate, cite a passage in Ferishta:

The King himself being wholly illiterate, it became a maxim, with the learned men at the court, to talk upon no subjects beyond the King's knowledge. He was, however, so sensible of the disadvantages under which he laboured, that he applied himself privately to study, not withstanding the difficulty of acquiring the knowledge of Persian, after he once bent his mind to it, he soon read all the addresses, and made himself acquainted with the best authors in the language...¹²

Yet historian Henry Beveridge observes this comment with a note of caution. This quotation is unusual in light of the repeated statements regarding 'Alauddin's illiteracy. Beveridge sees this as a difficult passage in the original Persian, complicated by artistic license on the part of the translator, Major Briggs.¹³ In all likelihood, as Beveridge suggests, 'Alauddin had reports read to him, a common court practice. An old adage states that only the uneducated can rule. While this may not be wholly true, it applies to some of India's greatest rulers; the Mughal Akbar was one such man, 'Alauddin Khalji another. But as one writer puts it, "He had learnt in the one school that matters- the school of experience".¹⁴

Yet as much as 'Alauddin supported education, he dealt

a severe blow to the madrasa. In order to stabilize the political situation he imposed a number of harsh restrictive measures¹⁵ by which many colleges saw their endowments revoked. Without the endowments, the schools had to rely on direct funding from the state or private parties, or face the prospect of closing down.¹⁶

Under the Tughluqs, education prospered, and it is said that during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1326-1351) there were over 1,000 schools in Delhi alone!¹⁷ Ferishta calculated that Firuz Shah built thirty madaris,¹⁸ most notably the Hauz Khas. Although in ruins today, this college is still used as a quiet place to study in private.¹⁹

Education continued to be supported by great patrons such as Sikandar Shah Lodi (r.1489-1517), who instituted mandatory education for military personnel.²⁰ The Mughals, too, patronized learning. Babur and Humayan were noted for their scholarly interests; Akbar, although illiterate, favoured education and the arts and saw that his sons and grandsons received proper instruction. However, some feel that the madrasa system in India has been deteriorating for over the last 300 years, having been unable to respond to the changing political, economic, and social climate.²¹ Even the emperor Aurangzeb complained about the inadequacy of his own education.^{22,23}

Education served many purposes in Islam. In addition to the dissemination of knowledge, it served to propagate the faith. The educational system produced religious men, wise in the tenets of Islam, and prepared others for positions in the government hierarchy.

At the age of four years, four months, and four days, boys went through the Bismillah ceremony and began their education.²⁴ Most attended the maktab (pl.makatib), the elementary school, although those of wealthy families received private tutoring. A prerequisite to the madrasa, the maktab could be found in most villages, often attached to mosques; sometimes private houses and mausolea were used. The mulla or maulvi taught the elements of a basic education. Students wrote on a smooth wood slate, copying the alphabet and practicing calligraphy; multiplication tables were learned by heart.²⁵ Of paramount importance was the study of the Qur'an, which began with rote memorization of the suras. Explanations were provided when deemed necessary, and only later did the student learn the meanings of the chapters. The makatib were supported by donations, which were sometimes supplemented by the provincial treasury.²⁶

Although girls and boys studied side by side in the maktab, very few women went on to receive a madrasa education, though it is recorded that in some instances women actually taught in the college.²⁷ Some received

additional instruction in the arts, which took place in the home. Ghiyasuddin Khalji, the son of Bakhtiyar, set up a technical college for women at Sarangpur, offering instruction in weaving velvet, sewing, needle-work, music and dancing, as well as gold and iron smithing, carpentry, and the martial arts.²⁸ This was perhaps the first of the **karkhanas** or factories which would later flourish under Firuz Shah Tughluq.

The madrasa, being founded as a stronghold of orthodox (Sunni) principles, was basically a theological school with auxilliary studies in the arts and sciences. The madrasa was not supported by the government and was therefore not answerable to it, although at times it was subsidized by it.²⁹ For the most part, the madrasa relied on endowments (**awakf**) and private donations, but anyone with enough resources could found a college and state the conditions of its charter.³⁰ Even with this support to instructors and students, most lived at the poverty level. Information regarding salaries and tuition is conflicting. It appears that in at least several instances, tuition was free, along with room and board, but students usually brought gifts and food for the instructor. It was long debated whether or not an instructor should receive a wage, as he is in the service of God,³¹ and the pious ones refused payment.

Students met with the instructor in small groups, the classes usually taking the form of a lecture. Classes

would be held in the gardens or in meeting halls. With the utilization of the four **eyvan** plan (a vaulted chamber centred on each wall of a rectangular court), the Abbasid caliph al-Mustansir (r.1226-1242) united the four schools of thought (Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanbali), reserving one hall for each school.³² However, the four schools were not always brought together in the madrasa. No documentation has been presented, but it appears that many of the madrasas in India adhered to the Hanafi school.³³ **Mu'ids** (teaching assistants) would repeat the lecture and work with the slower students. Persian was the language of instruction, although Arabic studies were compulsory. Even at the secondary level rote memorization was still the main method of learning, though combined with debate and disputation. One of the main functions of the madrasa was to build a mind and form a character, but of a specific type. The method of rote memorization inhibited free thinking, producing a student who would conform to the society's beliefs and mores.³⁴ It was this format that inevitably led to the stagnation of madrasa education in India.

Students and teachers were cordial and informal with each other, and the teacher was highly respected, being like a father to the student. Corporal punishment was allowed, often taking the form of a rod across the knuckles. Sometimes students would have to write out lessons several

times, and it was common for sarcastic remarks to be made by the instructor, as well as the student's peers.³⁵

There were no time limits set for the completion of studies; exams were few and not given on a regular basis. There was no equivalent of a term paper. Examinations and awards were left to the discretion of the teacher. When the student had satisfied the instructor, he received an ijaza, a document which gave him permission to teach a particular subject. Awards were given for single subjects, not the completion of a required curriculum. Apparently, an ijaza was not required for teaching in a mosque.³⁶ Students were not forced to take a prescribed set of courses, and not all schools maintained the same curriculum, since it was dependent on the specialization of its faculty. There were many specialists who taught only one subject or book, so that it was common for students to travel great distances in order to study with various learned men.

It has been stated that Muslim education in India was not equal to that in other parts of the Islamic world, due to its remoteness and lack of extensive libraries,³⁷ and therefore emphasized literature, especially histories and poetry. In part, this may be true, but the recorded curriculum of the time refutes this.

As with Medieval Europe, during the Sultanate Period the main subjects were religious in nature, the three main

courses being **Hadith** (Traditions), **fiqh** (jurisprudence), and **tafsir** (exegesis). This last subject was necessary, for it was found that many did not understand the suras of the **Qur'an**.³⁸ Among the other courses taught in the madrasa were grammar, calligraphy, literature, biography, geography, history, philosophy, **kalam** (scholasticism), and **mantiq** (logic).³⁹ Emphasis was placed on mathematics, as well as algebra and geometry; music was included in this field.⁴⁰ Also studied were mysticism, medicine, astronomy, and alchemy.⁴¹ Some schools even offered courses in agriculture, accounting, and engineering. Arts and crafts were not taught in the madrasa and perhaps were not considered necessary for a general education. Marshall Hodgson points out that Muslim education had a strong normative bent, even among the sciences.⁴² Studies were directed towards one's behavior in order to produce a conforming individual.

Many of the texts are known to us, for example, the twelfth century **Maqamat al-Hariri** (The Assemblies of Hariri), which was used as the main grammar text.⁴³ Composed of Arabic prose and verse, it relates the adventures and anecdotes of one Abu Zayd. The work became a classic in the author's lifetime⁴⁴ and was often illustrated. For **tafsir**, the **Madariku't-Tanzil**, a commentary on the Qur'an by 'Abdullah ibn Ahmad Hafizuddin al-Nasafi, was used;⁴⁵ the **al-Risalatuh-Shamsiyyah** of

'Ali ibn 'Umar Najmuddin al-Kitabi al-Qazwini was the chief text for the study of logic.⁴⁶ Booksellers often set up shop near the madrasa, and there copyists would transcribe the various manuscripts.

In addition to the madrasa, educational support developed out of institutions such as private libraries. The sultans built up tremendous libraries and the nobles emulated them, rivalling each other in developing extensive collections. These were used by scholars and in some instances were open to the general public with liberal borrowing privileges.⁴⁷ Literary societies and **mushairas** (poetical symposiums) furthered the development of cultural education. The growth of **khanqahs** or monastic communities such as Nizamuddin, and the ever increasing strength of **Sufism** (mysticism) in India, served to spread the teachings of the faith, especially to the common people.

Information regarding Hindu education during the Sultanate Period is limited and very much conflicting. Some scholars state that Hindus and Muslims studied side by side in the madrasa, but that the theological bias was of little value to the non-Muslim.⁴⁸ Others state that non-Muslims did not attend the madrasa, but that Islam gained many converts from the lower castes who were denied an education in their own culture.⁴⁹ With the destruction of many Hindu and Buddhist centres of learning, there was a natural decline in education. Still, non-Muslim centres

grew and flourished in the outlying areas where Muslim control was the weakest. Surprisingly, a number of Muslim nobles patronized Sanskrit writings, and many Sanskrit works were translated into Persian.⁵⁰

As widespread as the madrasa became, it never displaced the mosque as an institution of learning, and is often regarded as supplemental to it. This is because in basic principle there is no difference between mosque and madrasa. The structure is not the institution, but the teachers within it; education could take place anywhere. However, the thousands of madaris built attest to the importance placed on these teaching centres.

CHAPTER TWO NOTES

- 1 This is due to the fact that most writings have a distinctly Hindu or Muslim bias.
- 2 C.E. Bosworth, **The Ghaznavids** (Edinburgh:1963) p. 132.
- 3 The Khaljis of Afghanistan were employed by the Ghurids as mercenaries, and Bakhtiyar brought many of his clan to India.
- 4 The Hindu writers view this as outright slaughter, while the Muslim writers claim that it was an accident.
- 5 Enayetur Rahim, "Education and Learning in Muslim Bengal", **Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society**, vol. 15, 1967, p. 195.
- 6 S.M. Jaffar, **Education in Muslim India** (Delhi:1936/73) pp. 42 and 159.
- 7 K.L. Srivastava, **The Position of Hindus Under the Delhi Sultanate 1206-1526** (New Delhi:1980) p. 218.
- 8 S.H. Askari, "Political and Economic Fragments from the Risail-ul-Ijaz of Amir Khusrau", **Journal of the Bihar Research Society**, vol. 53, 1967, p. 198.
- 9 Yusuf Husain, **Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture** (New Delhi:1975) p. 40.
- 10 G.M.D. Sufi, **Al-Minhaj- Being the Evolution of Curriculum in the Muslim Educational Institutions on India** (Delhi:1941/1971) p. 29.
- 11 Aziz Ahmad, **An Intellectual History of India**, Islamic Surveys no. 7, M. Watt ed. (Edinburgh/Chicago:1969) p.4. [Hereafter, Ahmad, **Intellectual History**]
- 12 Briggs, op. cit., vol. I, p. 197.
- 13 N.N. Law, **Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule** (Bombay:1916) pp. xix-xxi. Beveridge goes on to say that "Eastern prophets and kings had small need of books. It should be born in mind that in the East in those days there were no printed books. The only reading was from manuscripts which were often in the Shikast handwriting, and wanting in vowels and diacritical marks. Reading, therefore, was almost, if not quite, as difficult an attainment as that of writing..."

- 14 CHI, op. cit., p. 326.
- 15 See Chapter Seven
- 16 Jaffar, p. 147.
- 17 Husain, p. 9.
- 18 Briggs, vol. I, p. 270.
- 19 This is a personal observation of the author.
- 20 Ahmad, **Intellectual History**, p. 53.
- 21 Mojibar Rahman, **History of Madrasa Education** (Calcutta:1977) p. 5.
- 22 Husain, p. 95. (Excerpted from Bernier)
- 23 In the nineteenth century, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan restructured the educational system, producing one that was both religious and secular. Today, the major Muslim schools in Delhi, for example the Jamia Milla University and Jawaharlal Nehru University, are very much like their Western counterparts and are quite removed from the madrasa system. Jamal Kidwai of the Jamia Milla has strongly put to me that the Jamia is in no way connected with the madrasa.
- 24 Luniya, op. cit., p. 238.
- 25 Husain, p. 92.
- 26 Luniya, p. 236.
- 27 Jaffar, p. 187ff.
- 28 Husain, p. 90. (Excerpted from Ferishta)
- 29 Luniya, pp. 3 and 91.
- 30 George Makdisi, "Madrasa and University in the Middle Ages", **Studia Islamica**, vol. 32, 1967, p. 262.
- 31 A.L. Tibawi, "Philosophy of Muslim Education", **Islamic Quarterly**, vol. 4, 1957, p. 80.
- 32 See Chapter Five.

- 33 The Seljuk sultans were strict Hanafis which may have been an influence on the Turks in India, and there is a reference to Abu Hanifa in the inscriptions of the 'Alai Darwaza.
- 34 Marshall Hodgson, **The Venture of Islam**, vol. 2 (Chicago:1974) p. 442.
- 35 Ibid., p. 443.
- 36 Makdisi, "Madrasa and University", p. 263.
- 37 Jaffar, p. 3.
- 38 Sufi, p. 4.
- 39 Sufi, p. 4ff.; Jaffar, p. 21.
- 40 Sufi, p. 37.
- 41 One may note that such words as alchemy and algebra are derived from the Arabic vocabulary.
- 42 Hodgson, pp. 439-440.
- 43 Sufi, p. 17.
- 44 loc. cit.
- 45 Ibid., p. 23.
- 46 Ibid., p. 19.
- 47 Jaffar, p. 231.
- 48 Ibid., p. 34; Luniya, p. 265.
- 49 Often regarded as a zealous Muslim ruler, it was Sikandar Shah Lodi who decreed that Hindus had a right to higher education.
- 50 Jaffar, p. 15.

CHAPTER THREE

MONUMENTS OF THE KHALJI PERIOD

An architectural study of the Khalji Period (1290-1320) poses problems due to the limited number of extant monuments. In the Delhi area there are hardly more than a half dozen Khalji structures still standing. Jalaluddin Firuz (r.1290-1296) took up residence in the palace of Kaiqubad at Kilughari;¹ within a short time a small town grew up around it. Although Jalaluddin is noted as a patron of architecture and learning, nothing survives from his days.

Siri

Today little can be distinguished of Siri, the city built by 'Alauddin. This "second city" of Delhi, situated on the southern outskirts of modern Delhi (fig. 2), was begun in 1303/04 after the Mongol invasion led by Targhi.² 'Alauddin settled there around 1309.³ Siri was plundered when Timur took Delhi,⁴ and later the city was dismantled by the Afghan Sher Shah (r.1539-1555) to use as building materials for his own city, Shergarh.⁵

In his memoirs, Timur noted that Siri was a round city with seven gates. Strong fortifications of brick and stone surrounded lofty buildings.⁶ It is said that the city walls were built in part with the heads of thousands of Mongols.⁷

Actually, the city was oval in shape, with a perimeter of 4.8 kilometres. The remnants that still stand reveal that the fortifications were built of rubble, stone and lime, with carefully placed arrow slits and "flame-shaped" battlements, seen here for the first time.⁸ The battered slope of the walls was soon to become a hallmark of Tughluq architecture (1320-1417).

No trace has been found of 'Alauddin's palace, the **Hazar Sutun**, or Hall of a Thousand Columns. Records show it to have been a two storey structure with vast terraces and courts. The lower level was used for state purposes, while the upper floor was reserved for the royal apartments.⁹

On the western perimeter of Siri was dug a seventy acre tank, the **Hauz-i 'Alai**. Apparently a madrasa was also built on the site.¹⁰ By the reign of Firuz Shah Tughluq the reservoir had silted up; he cleared the tank¹¹ and built a magnificent college. Now known as the **Hauz Khas**, it is also the final resting place of the pious sultan.

In the Delhi environs the major extant Khalji site is the **Quwwat al-Islam** complex at Mehrauli (figs. 3, 4; Plate I). Even here the study of Khalji architecture is restricted mainly to ruins and unfinished structures.

The masjid and surrounding constructions of the **Quwwat al-Islam** complex served as a testing ground in the development of Indo-Muslim architecture, creating a

blueprint for the Sultanate period. Therefore a close examination is in order.

The Quwwat al-Islam

Often referred to simply as "the Qutb", the Quwwat al-Islam ("Might of Islam") was initially the site of a Hindu temple. That structure and twenty-six other Hindu and Jain temples in the vicinity were razed and their materials reused in order to produce the Quwwat al-Islam Mosque, the first jami' masjid (congregational mosque) of Delhi.¹² Today, this type of wholesale destruction is viewed as a heinous crime, though some scholars have excused these acts citing that the ghazis (Warriors of the Faith) were caught up in the fever of the jihad, or holy war, and so destroyed the temples and idols of the nonbelievers. Yet for the most part, these were mercenary armies in service for their personal gain.¹³ Even so, the sacking of a conquered city had been a standard practice for centuries.

The original mosque was built under Sultan Mu'izzuddin by his viceroy Qutbuddin Aibek. As no craftsmen had been brought with the armies, it was necessary to rely on native workmen. Begun in 1192, the hypostyle mosque had an open court measuring 64.2 x 45 metres, bounded on three sides by a colonnade (fig. 3; Plate II). As the west side of the court was the qibla (direction of prayer),¹⁴ it was marked by a prayer chamber formed by five reused Hindu domes. The

columns were also Hindu and Jain spoils; any figural or projecting portions were cut off and plastered over, but this covering, for the most part, has long since disappeared. In the center of the court was set a 7.2 metre high iron pillar dating to the Gupta period (fourth century A.D.).¹⁵ Its metallic purity and craftsmanship have baffled scholars and scientists for centuries.

At this same time, work commenced on the Qutb Minar (Plate III). The minar, which eventually rose to a height of over seventy-two metres, was only completed to the first storey at the death of Aibek in 1209. The red sandstone minar has a base fifteen metres in diameter, and makes use of a combination of fluted and stellate flanges. The design and pronounced taper are apparently derived from the minars and tomb towers of Iran and Central Asia.¹⁶ There has been much debate regarding the purpose of the minar. Its several bands of Qur'anic and historical inscriptions suggest that it is more than simply a *mazna*, a place to perform the call to prayer, but is also a monument to the victory of Islam. Together, the actions of temple destruction, the setting of the iron pillar and the raising of the minar clearly represent the "symbolic appropriation of the land".¹⁷

In the year 1199, a large screen was constructed before the qibla wall. This non-structural facade of ashlar masonry consisted of five pointed arches with a

large central arch sixteen metres in height, bounded by two smaller arches on each side. These side arches at one time carried subsidiary arches to create a gallery. This design may have been a misunderstanding of court facades common to Seljuk architecture, in which a large **eyvan** (a vaulted chamber open at one end) is flanked by two storeys of subsidiary rooms with arched doorways.¹⁸

The arch is a common feature in Islamic architecture, and the screen reveals the attempt to assimilate this element into Indian architecture. Although aware of the arch, the native architects and masons of India had relied on trabeate construction for hundreds of years. However, their new patrons sought a more recognizably Islamic design. Not being architects or engineers, the patrons could do little more than describe the desired form. The Hindu stonemasons, who were not fully acquainted with arcuate techniques, produced an arch the only way they could imagine, through corbelling. All these arches were pointed with a slight reverse curve near the apex which has come to be referred to as an **ogee arch**.

The facade is completely covered with Qur'anic inscriptions with some **Hadith** (prophetic traditions) and Persian historical epigraphs. They are rendered in a foliated **Naskhi** script, designed by Muslims and carried out by Hindu craftsmen.¹⁹

The Extension of Iltutmish

On succeeding Aibek in 1209, Shamsuddin Iltutmish continued building on the site. He added three storeys to the Qutb Minar, the second of half round flutes, the third of stellate flanges. The fourth storey, which was repaired by Firuz Shah Tughluq in the mid-fourteenth century, is now smooth.²⁰

The original mosque had become too small to accommodate the growing Muslim population. Instead of building a new mosque, Iltutmish enlarged the existing one. During the 1220s he extended the screens of the qibla north and south, and enclosed the mosque within a larger colonnade, tripling its size (fig. 3; Plate IV). The addition made use of the same type of materials and followed the original design. The colonnade of Qutbuddin Aibek carried a roof of flat stone slabs, but here the columns support a lantern ceiling, its stone planks forming a coffered diaper pattern (Plate V). This indigenous design may be found in many Hindu and Buddhist structures.

The pointed arches of the screen addition are still corbelled, but have no ogee curve, reflecting a more distinctly Muslim outlook. The inscriptions display a more confident hand, but critics have cited them for lacking the lively ornamental quality of the earlier screen inscriptions.

THE TOMB OF ILTUTMISH

Under Iltutmish the monumental tomb was introduced into India. Centuries earlier the Buddhists had raised hundreds of **stupas** as reliquaries; the Hindus did not observe burial practices and therefore did not develop forms of funerary architecture.

The first monumental Muslim tomb in India was that of Nasiruddin Mahmud, the son of Iltutmish, built about 1231 (Plates XII, XIII). Commonly referred to as the "Sultan Ghari",²¹ this mosque/tomb, which is based on Hindu principles of trabeate architecture, is noted for its fortress-like aspect.

The tomb of Iltutmish, built about 1235, is situated west of his northern extension of the Quwwat al-Islam Masjid.²² (fig. 6; Plate VI) The architect has looked to the West, yet it is not the tomb towers of Central Asia that inspired this project, but the domed central plan, such as the tenth century Samanid tomb at Bukhara. The tomb of Iltutmish, 12.5 metres square, is open on its north, east and south sides; the west wall contains three **mihirabs** (prayer niches). The exterior of dressed stone is rather plain and some suggest that it was unfinished.²³ In the center of the chamber stands a large marble cenotaph; the crypt below is entered on the north side of the tomb. The interior walls are faced with red sandstone and marble, and are fully embellished with designs and inscriptions.

While critics may fault the carvings on Iltutmish's screen, praise is lavished on those of his tomb. Like Aibek's screen, this work shows Muslim calligraphy fused with Hindu craftsmanship, embodying such indigenous designs as **chakra**, lotus and wave motifs.²⁴

The building, now roofless, is believed to have been originally crowned with a shallow Hindu style dome, employing the corbelling method. Due to the excessive span the dome has fallen,²⁵ and fragments of it can be found nearby. Although the dome was apparently a product of native construction techniques, the means of support or **zone of transition** is imported. Here for the first time the squinch is used in an Indo-Muslim structure, creating an octagonal collar on which the dome sits (fig. 6); however, the niche shaped element is built by corbelling. One can see that defined Muslim features are finding their way into this new architecture, but the native stonemasons still have their say in the handling of these elements.

The Extension of 'Alauddin Khalji

By the time of 'Alauddin, the Qutb Complex was over one hundred years old. During the fifty years since the death of Iltutmish, no further work had been done at the site as patrons turned their attention to other projects. It may therefore seem unusual that 'Alauddin should choose

to make additions here rather than raise a prominent jami' masjid in his own city of Siri. Documentation reveals that a number of mosques were raised in that city, but the Qutb site seems to have been considered the jami' masjid during this period.²⁶

The additions to the Quwwat al-Islam were 'Alauddin's most important works, more so than the construction of Siri. In building here, 'Alauddin accomplished several things: first, he fulfilled his obligation as patron of religious architecture, while at the same time he reaffirmed the position of Islam in India. The enmity among members of the Turkish nobility in the latter half of the Slave Period, compounded by the benevolent rule of Jalaluddin Khalji, had undermined the stable administration set up under Iltutmish. The Mongols had made incursions into Hindustan and the subjugated Hindu Kingdoms were openly rebelling against Muslim rule. 'Alauddin's projects served symbolically to reassert his predecessors' claims of victory, as well as his own triumphs. Thirdly, 'Alauddin staked his own claim of legitimacy as he regarded himself equal to, if not greater than, Qutbuddin Aibek and Shamsuddin Iltutmish.

Like Iltutmish, 'Alauddin chose to make additions at the Qutb complex, which, due to their grandiose scale, could never have been completed in his life time, and were left unfinished at his death. By an extension of the

screen and colonnades to the north and east, 'Alauddin hoped to more than double the size of the existing mosque, forming a court 122 x 213.5 metres (figs. 3, 4). Portions of the screen still stand, but for the most part, only the foundations can be discerned.

Of 'Alauddin's screen, little can be said. According to J.A. Page of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), it was never completed,²⁷ yet the poet Amir Khusrau wrote as though it had:

...upon the surface of the stones
he engraved verses of the Qur'an in such
a manner as could not be done in wax;
ascending so high that you would think
the Qur'an was going up to heaven, and
again descending in another line, so low
that you would think it was coming down
from heaven.²⁸

The screen has not fared well, but it is clear that this facade would have been immense, dwarfing all earlier constructions on the site. The central arch in the series of nine arches would have reached a height of over thirty metres.²⁹

Questions regarding the screen's method of construction have never been raised, though in view of other Khalji monuments, it is quite possible that these arches were to be constructed radially, a monumental task, considering the central span of approximately sixteen metres.

The colonnade follows the style of the earlier construction, though new materials are used throughout, as

the supply of spoils had long been exhausted (plate VII). The columns support the same type of coffered lantern ceiling found in the extension of Iltutmish, though here the bays are more consistent in size, and slightly larger. The windows of 'Alauddin's extension hold jalis, stone grills carved in intricate geometric patterns. The windows themselves differ from those of Iltutmish. Those of the earlier enclosure achieve a pointed arch by the corbelling system, while those of 'Alauddin incorporate a true pointed arch. It is apparently during 'Alauddin's reign that the true arch comes to the fore in India.

The appearance of the true arch in Indo-Muslim architecture is still a matter of debate. If one accepts the attribution made by Syed Ahmad Khan,³⁰ it would seem that the tomb of Balban (c.1280) displays the first known example of the radial arch (Plate XIV). However, this rubble masonry monument, now in a state of ruin, bears no inscriptions, so its association with Balban may be viewed with reservations. It is possible that the monument dates from the Khalji Period,³¹ where one finds the first dated examples of the true arch. It is interesting to note that like that of the tomb of Iltutmish, the fallen dome of this squared structure was supported by squinches.

THE 'ALAI MINAR

Rather than add to the Qutb Minar with its four storeys at 69 metres, 'Alauddin decided to build a new minar in the northern court of his extension (fig. 4; Plate VIII). Work began in 1311, but as with the rest of his mosque additions, construction was brought to a halt on the sultan's death. Had it been completed, the 'Alai Minar would have reached an estimated 150 metres, double that of the Qutb Minar, and would stand unrivaled in height by any tower in the world until the iron construction of Gustave Eiffel in 1889.³²

But at 'Alauddin's death the minar had only reached a height of about 29 meters. Ibn Battuta saw the monument during his stay at Delhi and remarked:

This [unfinished] minaret is one of the wonders of the world for size, and the width of its passage is such that three elephants could mount it abreast. The third of it built equals in height the whole of the other minaret...³³

Indeed an exaggeration, but nonetheless, the remaining stump of rubble masonry is an impressive monument. Seated on a 1.4 metre plinth, the minar has a base measuring 27.43 metres in diameter. Instead of steps, a ramp spirals around a core column. The exterior is comprised of thirty-two faces of 2.4 metres each, and is articulated by a series of "angular flutings and curved recesses" which Cunningham noted as resembling a cogwheel.³⁴ Muhammad Shah Tughluq had entertained the idea of completing the minar,

but reconsidered, deeming the project unlucky.³⁵

THE 'ALAI DARWAZA

'Alauddin had intended to have the enclosure pierced by four monumental gateways (fig. 4). Near the northwest corner of the extension, one can see four stumps of rubble masonry that mark the angle pier foundations of one of these gates (Plate IX). No sign of the two eastern gates is visible; their proposed positions are marked by breaks in the shrubbery which now delineate the boundaries of 'Alauddin's addition. The southern gateway was completed, and all concur that it is one of the "true gems"³⁶ of Indo-Islamic architecture (Plates X, XI).

Known as the 'Alai Darwaza, this gateway connected the southern enclosure wall of Iltutmish with that of 'Alauddin. It has been suggested that this, the best preserved of Khalji structures, was completed before the other gates since the city lay to the south, and therefore, this gateway would serve as the main entrance to the masjid.³⁷ Another proposal is that the ruler desired an entrance suiting his rank, thus the monumental entrance was constructed.³⁸

The gatehouse exemplifies Islam's lack of concern for specific forms serving specific functions. The cube-shaped structure, crowned with a shallow dome, is much like that of the tomb of Iltutmish. Built on a high plinth level

with the mosque, the 17.2 metre square gateway is fronted on the east, west and south by a wide steep stair and is pierced by immense archways. It is in this structure that more purely Islamic elements materialize, and many critics see the hand of a Turkish architect.³⁹ The doorways are framed by recessed nookshafts, a decorative Seljuk element. The arches are radially constructed pointed horseshoe or "keel" arches, with a carved lotus bud⁴⁰ fringe lining the intrados. This design is repeated in the large windows that frame the doorways. Their sandstone *jali* screens are some of the oldest extant in India. This particular type of arch is peculiar to the Khalji period. However, the lotus bud fringe becomes a popular motif, notable in Tughluq and Mughal structures. The intrados are decorated with six-pointed "Solomon's stars", a reference to the model of ideal kingship.⁴¹ The north doorway onto the *sahn* (court) contains a semi-circular tri-lobed arch that was originally fronted by a columned portico, no longer extant. This type of arch appears nowhere else in the architecture of the Delhi Sultanate, but manifests itself in the cusped arches of the Mughals.

The dome is faced with marble and crowned with a boss surmounted by an Indian *amalaka* finial, the whole being somewhat reminiscent of a stupa.

The exterior facing of red sandstone and marble is divided in such a way as to give the appearance of a two

storey structure. The facade is literally covered with decorative foliate and geometrical motifs intertwined with Persian inscriptions, three of which provide the date of construction, 1311. Most of these extensive inscriptions are culled from the Qur'an and Hadith, asserting the presence of Islam, but there are several historical inscriptions of a panegyric nature. The praises lavished on 'Alauddin compare him to Moses, Solomon, David, Darius and Alexander.⁴² He leaves no doubts as to his position.

The interior is 10.97 metres square, and one realizes that the durability of the structure is owed in part to the great thickness of its walls. They are decorated with geometrical carvings that carry the eye upward to the dome. It is at once apparent that the dome was not built by corbelling but is a true dome, the oldest extant in India. We have come to the stage where the patron or architect has rejected the structure of Hindu arches and domes in favour of an Islamic type built on Roman engineering principles. However, the construction is somewhat deceiving in these "true" domes, as they are composed of rubble masonry and only faced with radially set stone. The dome rests on an octagonal drum, supported by an interesting zone of transition (fig. 6; Plate XI). Here the **squinch arch** system is used; a large weight bearing pointed horseshoe arch set across each of the corners is backed by a niche composed of several ribs, producing the effect of a squinch

within a squinch. This articulation is basically non-structural, but it is quite pleasing to the eye. As is common for gateways, the walls of the 'Alai Darwaza are lined with wide stone benches which make this structure an ideal place to take a siesta while seeking refuge from the blazing sun or the driving monsoon. Even today in its ruined state, the 'Alai Darwaza creates an impressive transition from the outside world into what were once the sacred precincts of the jami' masjid.

THE JAMA'AT KHANA MASJID

Situated approximately seven kilometres northeast of the Qutb is the **Dargah** (monastic centre) of Nizamuddin, where one may find traces of architecture dating to the Khalji Period. The one structure that can be attributed, at least in part, to this time is the Jama'at Khana Masjid (Plate XV). It is noted for being the first mosque in India made wholly from new materials.⁴³ Measuring 29 x 17 metres, it is comprised of three bays faced with red sandstone and crowned with shallow domes. Like the 'Alai Darwaza, the entrances are formed of pointed archways framed with the lotus bud fringe. It is accepted that due to their character, the lateral bays are a later addition, perhaps from the Tughluq Period. This would leave the central portion as a Khalji structure. The interior is decorated with three elaborate cusped mihrabs, and

extensive Quranic and historical inscriptions (Plate XVI). The dome is supported by squinch arches like those of the 'Alai Darwaza.

Documentation of patronage is scant and contradictory. The building has been attributed to 'Alauddin's son, Khizr Khan, who was a disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya;⁴⁴ some believe that it was the saint himself who had it built.⁴⁵ A third view holds that 'Alauddin had it constructed as a tomb for the saint, who declined such a pretentious resting place.⁴⁶ The strong resemblance to the 'Alai Darwaza, as well as the tomb of Iltutmish, lends credence to this belief.

One may observe from this brief overview that through these first decades of the Sultanate Period there is a constant aspect of transition in the architectural style, moving increasingly towards an Islamic temperament. This becomes more firmly established in the years of Khalji rule and patronage, and, as will be seen, manifests itself in the madrasa of 'Alauddin.

CHAPTER THREE NOTES

- 1 E&D, vol. 14, op. cit., p. 48.
- 2 K.B. Maulvi Zafar Hasan, "Siri, a City of Delhi, Founded by 'Alau-d Din Khalji", **Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1935-36**, p. 140. [Hereafter Zafar Hasan, "Siri"]
- 3 E&D vol. 14, p. 120.
- 4 Timur, **Malfuzat-i Timuri** or **Tuzak-i Timuri**, eng. tr. Elliot and Dowson, vol. 13, 3rd. ed. (Calcutta:1963) p. 61. [Hereafter, E&D, vol. 13]
- 5 Zafar Hasan, "Siri", p. 140.
- 6 E&D, vol. 13, pp. 61-62.
- 7 Amir Khusrau, **Tarikh-i 'Alai** or **Khazainul Futah**, eng. tr. Elliot and Dowson, vol. 22, 2nd ed. (Calcutta:1954) p. 74. [Hereafter, E&D, vol. 22]
- 8 Zafar Hasan, "Siri", p. 138.
- 9 Ibid., p. 142.
- 10 **Encyclopaedia of Islam**, new ed., vol. II (Leiden:1965) p. 259.
- 11 Firuz Shah Tughluq, **Futuh-at-i Firuz Shahi**, eng. tr. Elliot and Dowson, vol. 15, 2nd ed. (Calcutta:1953) p. 129. [Hereafter, E&D, vol. 15]
- 12 J.A. Page, **An Historical Memoir on the Qutb:Delhi**, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, no. 22 (Calcutta:1926) p. 29. An inscription on the inner lintel of the east gate reveals this information.
- 13 CHI, op. cit., p. 182.
- 14 In India the qibla faces west towards Mecca.
- 15 It has been suggested that the iron pillar was incorporated into the Hindu temple and not set there by Muslims.
- 16 There is a possibility that these towers are inevitably derived from Indian prototypes.

- 17 Oleg Grabar, **The Formation of Islamic Art** (Yale:1973) pp. 45-74.
- 18 This design has its roots in Sasanian, Parthian, and Roman architecture. See Chapter Five.
- 19 Page, pp. 9-10.
- 20 E&D, vol. 15, p. 129.
- 21 S.A.A. Naqvi "Sultan Ghari", **Ancient India**, vol. 3, 1947, p. 5.
- 22 Page, p. 13. The tomb is attributed to Iltutmish, but documentation is incomplete.
- 23 Percy Brown, **Indian Architecture (Islamic Period)**, 4th ed. (Bombay:1975) p. 14.
- 24 R. Nath, **History of Sultanate Architecture** (New Delhi:1978) p. 39. [Hereafter, Nath, **Sultanate Architecture**]
- 25 E&D, vol. 15, p. 129.
- 26 E&D, vol. 13, p. 62. Even Timur in the late fourteenth century saw the Quwwat al-Islam as Delhi's jami' masjid.
- 27 Page, p. 17.
- 28 E&D, vol. 22, p. 73.
- 29 Based on the Archaeological Survey's reconstructed elevation. Page, Plate IIIb.
- 30 R. Nath, **Monuments of Delhi** (New Delhi:1979) p. 30. [Hereafter, Nath, **Monuments**]
- 31 Anthony Welch, Seminar Lecture on Sultanate Architecture, University of Victoria, October 19, 1982.
- 32 Constructed for the Paris Exhibition, the tower stands nearly 300 metres high.
- 33 Ibn-i Battuta, **Rehla**, eng. tr. H.A.R. Gibb, **The Travels of Ibn Battuta**, vol. III (Cambridge:1971) p. 623. [Hereafter, Ibn Battuta]
- 34 K.S. Lal, **History of the Khaljis A.D. 1290-1320** (London:1967) p. 330.

- 35 Ibn Battuta, p. 623.
- 36 This term of James Fergusson appears in nearly every publication dealing with the 'Alai Darwaza.
- 37 Nath, **Monuments**, p. 37.
- 38 This may have symbolically been the royal entrance, though it is noted that 'Alauddin never attended Friday prayer. Lal, p. 271.
- 39 M. Mujeeb, **Islamic Influence on Indian Society** (Delhi:1972) p. 124.
- 40 This is often erroneously referred to as a spearhead fringe. See J. Burton-Page, "Indo-Islamic Architecture: a Commentary on Some False Assumptions", **Art and Archaeology Research Papers**, vol. 6, 1974, p. 15.
- 41 Anthony Welch, Seminar Lecture on Sultanate Architecture, University of Victoria, October 26, 1982.
- 42 Page, pp. 34-38.
- 43 **Encyclopaedia of Islam**, vol. III, p. 290.
- 44 K.B. Maulvi Zafar Hasan, **A Guide to Nizam-u Din**, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey, no. 10 (Calcutta:1922) p. 14.
- 45 loc. sit.
- 46 Nath, **Sultanate Architecture**, p. 50.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE 'ALAI MADRASA: SURVEY AND CONSERVATION

To the immediate southwest of the Quwwat al-Islam Masjid stand the ruins of the 'Alai Madrasa (figs. 5, 8). Raised on a plinth level with that of the masjid, the building was laid out on a north/south axis as a skew-planned quadrangle, entered through a monumental gateway on the north. Lining the west wall is a series of small cells; the east wall contains a number of large niches, and is broken at its centre by a cell with an ante-chamber. To the south lies a square chamber, the proposed grave of 'Alauddin, which is fronted by a small vestibule. The chamber is bordered on the east and west by narrow passages which in turn are flanked by oblong chambers. A wedge-shaped passage separates the chambers from the southern enclosure wall, which like the east wall is lined with niches. A small gateway pierces the southeast corner of the enclosure wall.

The North Block and the Courtyard

Today one may enter the precincts of the madrasa by passing through the remnants of Iltutmish's screen and crossing the drainage ditch via a small footbridge.¹ Yet originally one would enter through the monumental gateway on the north (fig. 9). Sadly, almost nothing remains of this portion of the madrasa, though Carr Stephen suggests

that it was never finished.² However, Gordon Sanderson and James Page of the Archaeological Survey were able to produce a reconstructed plan of the portal and other portions of the madrasa, basing their conclusions on the existing structure and the foundation stones, as well as related buildings. While questionable at times, their deductions are quite logical and their reconstruction is a valuable asset to a study of the madrasa. Discrepancies in their plan will be duly noted.

At present, the foundation stones are not laid bare and, like those of the masjid, are marked by shrubberies. At the north end of the madrasa stand two massive stalagmite forms of rubble masonry, all that remains of the triple gateway (Plate XVIII). In the Archaeological Survey's conjectural plan (fig. 7), two chambers 8.5 x 11 metres flanked a larger projecting vestibule 11.25 x 13.5 metres.³ Two narrow passages, hardly more than a metre in width, separated the side chambers from the central one, and probably served as light wells or ventilation shafts.

Passing through a large central archway and up a small flight of steps, one entered a relatively small vestibule which presumably was domed. The ASI performed a sounding here and no sign of a grave was discovered.⁴ At the south end of the central vestibule, stairs off to both sides led up to the roof. Remnants of these may be seen at the apex of the rubble masonry forms.⁵ Sanderson and Page suggest

that the gateway was bounded by subsidiary rooms opening onto the court, the one to the west having its entrance on the western wall. Digs undertaken by the ASI uncovered a sluice here.⁶

Because the north block is set askew by perhaps five degrees, the courtyard, measuring approximately 50 x 32 metres, is not squared. It is not known whether the entire court was paved or not. The small southern enclosure still retains some paving stones and a vague historical reference might be interpreted to mean that the court was paved.⁷ Large shady trees planted by the ASI now provide a garden-like atmosphere, and it is not impossible that trees were an aspect of the original courtyard. 'Alauddin is noted for establishing gardens throughout Delhi,⁸ and such greenery within the madrasa would serve to reinforce the idea and hope of Paradise in the afterlife. Although no physical evidence has been found, it is likely that the court contained a pool or fountain.⁹ Besides ritual ablutions, washing was necessary before handling the Qur'an. A fountain would also serve to cool the air during the hot season. Moving from the north to the south end of the court, a perceptible rise of almost two degrees can be seen. However, the roofline remains level, for it is the thresholds that are raised.

The South Block [The Tomb of 'Alauddin]

Looking directly across from the entrance, one is quick to comprehend that the triple gateway as it is proposed by the ASI, is a reflection of the line of tomb chambers (fig. 9). The south block has not weathered well, though it is in much better condition than the gateway. Using lime concrete, the Archaeological Survey has secured a number of weak spots, preventing further deterioration (Plate XIX).

Fronting the central tomb chamber is the remains of a projecting portico. Now little more than foundations, this vestibule, similar in size and dimensions to the side chambers of the gateway, most likely carried a dome.¹⁰ Its east and west walls contained large windows, perhaps like those of the 'Alai Darwaza with their intricately carved **jali** screens.

The central chamber, the supposed tomb of 'Alauddin, has massive walls up to 3.5 metres thick (Plate XX). The interior measures 9.3 metres square. Archways also open from this chamber on the south and east; the west wall contains an enormous **mihrab**. In contrast to every other arch form on the site, this niche is rounded¹¹. It may have originally been cusped or scalloped, like those in the tomb of Iltutmish, whose sepulchre follows the same form. Or, it may possibly have been a keel arch sporting a lotus bud fringe, such as those found in the Jama'at Khana Masjid at Nizamuddin (Plate XVI).

The dome has fallen here, as well as those in the adjoining chambers. A slightly bulbous dome is believed to have sat on a high drum,¹² creating an appearance similar to the Afghani stupas of the second and third centuries A.D. A "finger" of masonry, a remnant of the drum, rests on a round collar (Plate XXI).

Page reports that evidence of what seemed to be a grave was discovered about 2.1 metres below the surface,¹³ and notes that marble paving fragments were found *in situ*. Modern repairs in concrete indicate the remains of the grave.¹⁴ One may note that the tomb lacks the crypt found in the tombs of Iltutmish. No crypt exists for the tomb of Balban either, and this design is retained throughout the rest of the Sultanate Period.

Separating the central chamber from the others are passages two metres wide and just under sixteen metres in length, which served as accessways or as an element in ritual circumambulation.¹⁵ They may possibly have been covered, carrying the lantern ceiling employed throughout the adjacent masjid.¹⁶

The west chamber is oblong in plan, measuring 5.1 x 10.25 metres (Plate XXII). Like the central tomb, it is open on the north, south and east sides, with a *mihrab* niche contained in its west wall. Page believes that the dome was flanked on the north and south by a lantern ceiling.¹⁷ At the northwest corner of the roof, steps led

down to the western block, though only a few of these remain. Indications of a grave were also discovered in this chamber. Page states that it is of a later date than the one in the central chamber, but elaborates no further.¹⁸

The east chamber bears the same plan and measurements as the opposite tomb, although reversed. The niche that once existed in the east wall was mistakenly restored as an archway by the ASI. No sign of a grave has been found here. One suggestion is that it was used as a passageway onto the court.¹⁹ It may have served this purpose, but the idea that it was built for such a function seems redundant in light of the existing passages. In all probability the east chamber was also intended as a tomb, perhaps for family members, or teachers of the madrasa.

The ASI has suggested that due to the lack of debris found here, the tomb was unfinished.²⁰ Yet the visible evidence of the drum presupposes near completion of the structure. The apparent presence of the grave reinforces this belief, as only the most pious desired their graves to be exposed to the elements.

The tomb structure now stands as a mass of rubble and ashlar masonry, and one may only hazard guesses about the decoration program. Fragments of marble and red sandstone were found on the site, and Carr Stephen suggests that the facade was once faced with the sandstone, which was carted

off ages ago, leaving the stone and mortar exposed.²¹ However, it is unusual that the lateral walls of the court have retained their facing stone, while the south block bears no trace of veneer. Either a very systematic removal was undertaken, or the tomb was left unfinished.²² It is quite possible that the gateway and tomb were intended to equal the magnificence of the 'Alai Darwaza, with its epigraphic bands in marble and red sandstone. Included among such inscriptions could be found the Throne verse from the **Qur'an** (Sura II:255); the **Asma al-Husma** (99 Beautiful Names of God) was also very popular in India.²³ These luxury materials might also be the remains of additions and restorations of Firuz Shah Tughluq, who was fond of using these materials in his repairs.²⁴

The Southern Enclosure

The southern enclosure, which may have been planned as an ambulatory,²⁵ is bounded on the north by the sepulchral chambers, and a skewed wall on the south (Plate XXIII). This 41 metre long "corridor" narrows from eight metres on the east to 2.75 metres on the west, a difference of about ten degrees. It has been suggested that the reason for this shape occurs due to limitations imposed by existing structures. It is a possibility, but in this instance, an unlikely one. Although space often dictates the perimeter of a building, such restrictions did not apply to the works of 'Alauddin. From his numerous building projects it is

evident that he built as he wished, and appropriated whatever lands he desired.

Carr Stephen, who saw the madrasa in 1876, speaks of a row of flat roofed rooms situated here and considers them part of the tomb.²⁶ As the Archaeological Survey makes no mention of such rooms, perhaps they had disappeared before the ASI's involvement at the site.

A projecting gateway, which perhaps served as the city entrance, pierces the southeast corner of the enclosure wall (Plate XXIV). That this gateway is lined with stone benches supports the idea that this was a visitors' entrance. Ogee arched niches, the most widely repeated element of the madrasa, are incorporated into the side walls of the shallow portal. Passing through the gateway, one may note the remains of the red sandstone pavement, covering an area approximately 7.5 square metres.

The inner face of the southern enclosure wall is lined with a series of seven niches displaying the ogee curve, presently in various states of delapidation. These niches vary in size, ranging from 1.8 metres to 2.6 metres in width. All are about 1.2 metres deep, rising to a height of four metres. These niches would have been used as places for individual instruction or study. On the exterior of this wall, sections of the plinth are visible, marked by a string course moulding, similar to that of the mosque.

The enclosure continues along the west side of the tomb chambers covering an area 4.75 x 16.9 metres (Plate XXV). The west wall of the enclosure, now mainly ruined, contains three rather wide niches. An archway at the northern end of the east side leads onto the courtyard.

The east end of the ambulatory does not make a circuit of the vacant east chamber, but terminates at the east wall. Two relatively small niches and a stairway which leads up to the roof are located here.

The West Block

The best preserved section of the madrasa, the west block, originally had a facade of eleven arched doorways (Plate XXVI). The northernmost door was the entrance to the previously mentioned room bordering the gateway. The one at the opposite end is the exit from the west corridor of the ambulatory. The remaining nine doorways front a series of rooms which I have labelled A through I, from north to south. These rooms consist of two types, domed chambers or gumbad (C & G), and flat roofed cells (A,B,D,E,F,H & I). Cell A is no longer extant, and cell B lacks its front and rear walls, as well as its roof.²⁷

The Cells

A closer examination of the row of pointed arches reveals that the facade is basically a non-structural

feature, like the nearby masjid screen which it mirrors down to the ornamental bosses on the spandrels, though these are now empty sockets (Plate XXIX). The recessed doorways of the cells, averaging 1.8 metres in width, are actually of post and beam construction. While most of the madrasa is composed of rubble masonry and apparently new materials, the beams of the doorways, including the threshold, are spoils from Jain and Hindu temples. The re-use of these materials might be a matter of practicality, but it was also very fashionable for a builder to do so. At one time these beams may have been plastered over like the spoils used in the masjid.

As we shall see, the uniting of arcuate and trabeate methods is found throughout the madrasa. This particular type of doorway becomes the predominant style in the Tughluq Period, most notably in the tomb of Ghiyasuddin at Tughluqabad. Some scholars have viewed this combination of techniques as an expression of concern on the part of the Hindu stonemasons, who distrusted the arch. As the facade is non-structural, one assumes that the blending of methods is carried out for aesthetic purposes.²⁸

These cells, which served as a dormitory for both students and instructors, are laid out as rectangular rooms, averaging 4.6 x 3.6 metres; the walls are approximately one metre thick (Plate XXX). The rear wall in cells H and I contain a mihrab niche 90 centimetres

deep. Those in cells D and E are much shallower, being only about eight centimetres deep. The niches of these cells were filled in by the Archaeological Survey to shore up that portion of the wall. At present, cell F has no niche as its rear wall has been breached with a post and beam doorway of reused materials.

These cells contain a number of intriguing architectural features. Their doors are not centred on the east wall, in order that a more proportionately symmetrical facade may be achieved. None of the rooms is squared, and no two cells have the same dimensions; the cells become larger in plan as they move north to south. This is a proportional compensation to make up for the lower level of the ceiling, equalizing the cubic space of each of the cells.

Their lantern ceilings consist of stone planks forming a diaper pattern (Plate XXXI), the same as those used throughout the masjid's colonnade (Plate V) and possibly other portions of the madrasa. Two separate lanterns are supported by a most impressive transverse arch centred in each cell. Though scholars refer to these as pointed arches, technically speaking they are ogee arches. It is to these arches, with their deep soffits, that the west block owes its excellent state of preservation; their durability has kept it intact.²⁹ The arches, averaging 1.7 metres in width, are composed of a rubble masonry core

covered with courses of wide headers and narrow stretchers, a system that is used not only for aesthetic purposes, but to increase strength by embedding the stone deeply in the mortar. The design was used in Parthian stone construction, such as the second century palace at Hatra, Iraq,³⁰ and was adapted to the medium of brick in Persia.³¹ (fig. 16)

The Domed Chambers

The two **gumbad** (domed chambers) in the west block, as well as the one in the east block, were most likely used as lecture halls. In themselves the chambers are not distinctive, but like the smaller cells, they display some surprising innovations. The portal is a high ogee arch, which breaks the monotonous line of the cell doorways. At first glance these portals give the impression of an **eyvan** (a vaulted chamber open at one end), but the crowning bulbous dome quickly dismisses the notion (Plate XXXII).

Chamber G, which measures 4.4 x 5.7 metres, contains large niches in its north and south walls similar to those in the cells. The niches, 75 centimetres deep, are not centred, being closer to the rear wall. As with the adjacent cell F, the rear wall has been pierced with a doorway of post and beam construction.

As one might suspect, the dome is a "true" dome (Plate XXXIII). Like that of the 'Alai Darwaza, it is composed of

rubble masonry and faced with stones set radially. Here the courses of narrow headers and wide stretchers are also used for added strength. The exterior of the domes, now covered with a thick layer of concrete, may have been faced with marble like the 'Alai Darwaza (Plate XXXIV).

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the madrasa is the means of supporting this dome. Basically a trabeate method, the zone of transition is designed as a series of cantilevered beams which are stacked to form an inverted triangle, creating what Page has coined a "corbelled pendentive".³² (Plate XXXV) It is quite probable, as Page's reconstructed plan suggests, that the corbelled pendentive was employed as the zone of transition throughout the madrasa, although only the east block exhibits evidence of this. This method may possibly be viewed as the happy marriage of the patron's desire to follow Muslim prototypes and the skilled Hindu stonemason's insistence on corbelling. Although it did not replace the squinch, the corbelled pendentive achieved a certain popularity and may be seen in Tughluq works such as the 1320-25 tomb of Ghiyasuddin and the Hauz Khas of 1352,³³ as well as the constructions of Sher Shah.³⁴

Chamber C is slightly smaller than G, since it is several metres to the north where room dimensions were reduced (Plate XXXVI). It also has niches in the side walls, and one in the rear wall; like the niches in cells D

an E, this one has been filled in and is now only a few centimetres deep.

As in chamber G, the dome is supported by the corbelled pendentive, yet with a slight, but hardly minor difference. Here, the ends of the projecting beams have been carved out, producing shallow niche or squinch forms. Thus, India is introduced to one of Islam's most distinct decorative forms, the **muqarnas** (Plate XXXVII). In this particular instance, the niches are very shallow and lack the dripping stalactite effect found in the West. Instead they resemble the form used throughout Central Asia and Persia. This use of **muqarnas** is unique in the Delhi Sultanate, but like many elements of the period, it became part of the standard vocabulary in Mughal works, maturing in the form of "squinch nets" in their **eyvans**.

The East Block

Today almost half of the east side is no longer extant, and again one must rely on Page's work. From the southeast corner of the court, a wall nearly two metres thick ran for a length of 32 metres. This wall contained six niches rather than a row of cells, these niches being comparable to those of the southern enclosure wall. The wall is broken by a domed chamber like the ones opposite, then continues with three additional niches before abutting the tomb facade (Plate XXXVIII).

The dome of the eastern chamber has fallen, allowing

one to view clearly the construction of the corbelled pendentive (Plate XXXIX). Though opposite chamber G of the west block, this eastern chamber is discernably unaligned with it, being offset by a few feet to the south. Like the others, the design of the east chamber called for niches in the side walls, but the north wall contains a large rectangular window instead. The chamber carries high arches on both the west and east ends of the room, rather than just the side facing the court. That this lay-out varies from those in the west block reveals the flexibility of the building plan, or the function of the room; it may have been intended as a gateway. At present it is joined by a low post and lintel framework to a squat L-shaped ante-room about 4.7 x 6.5 metres. Existing wall brackets suggest that this space, which is now roofless, originally had a ceiling and did not stand open to the sky as Page believes. This idea is also supported by the presence of a slit window centred near the top of the north wall. It would be absurd to include a window whose only purpose could be light and ventilation in a room that was open to the sky. However, a curious addition reinforces the "roofless" theory. A Hindu gargoyle designed as a drain spout is incorporated into the exterior wall, some metres below the slit window (Plate XLI). The slope of the original floor points to it as having been functional.³⁵

Few *madaris* contained kitchens, so it is not surprising to find that one does not exist here. However, most colleges did include libraries. From the plan, no room seems designated for this particular purpose. One of the subsidiary rooms in the north block would serve well, or if the ante-room of the east chamber was roofed, it would also be suitable.

The 'Alai Madrasa has no visibly defined **qibla**, and does not include a mosque within its precincts. In principle there was no difference between the mosque and the madrasa, and the terms were used interchangeably.³⁶ However, they did not necessarily follow the same plan which was dependent upon the primary function of the structure. Although the west block has no large **eyvan** or **mihrab** to denote the qibla, the cells contain mihrabs, as well as two of the sepulchral chambers, which filled the need to mark the direction of prayer. This type of plan without a formal qibla is observed in the *madaris* of Anatolia (figs. 15-17). With the Quwwat al-Islam directly adjacent, it might have been used as the mosque of the madrasa. Also, near the southeast corner of the madrasa stand some indistinguishable ruins (Plate XLII); though largely ignored by scholars, some have viewed this structure as the *masjid* of the madrasa.³⁷

While the tomb and gate were apparently to be highlighted with costly materials, it appears that the rest of the building was destined for a simple facing of white

and gray sandstone and quartzite. This facing follows the pattern of alternating wide and narrow bands of stone used structurally in the transverse arches of the cells. Interior walls are treated in the same manner. The only other visible signs of a decorative scheme are empty sockets on the doorway spandrels which would have contained bosses. Dating to Roman and Sasanian times, this motif is used throughout the Islamic world.

This completes the general survey of the madrasa, but not its history. Although the madrasa was basically complete by 1320, various building operations at the site were carried out well into the twentieth century.

Renovations and Restorations of the Sultanate Period

It was not long after the death of 'Alauddin that the tomb/madrasa underwent renovation, and repair as well. The first such efforts that have been recorded were those carried out by the Tughluq Sultan, Firuz Shah (r.1351-1388). A great architectural patron in his own right, he felt it his foremost duty to repair the works of his predecessors. In his *Futuhat*³⁸ or "Victories" he states:

To the tomb of Sultan 'Alauddin. I repaired this and furnished it with sandalwood doors, I repaired the wall of the *abdar-khana*³⁹, and the west wall of the mosque, which is within the college, and I also made good the tessellated pavement (*farsh-i ta'shib*).⁴⁰

A translation of the same passage from another manuscript reads:

The tomb of Sultan 'Alauddin Gharbi-
the mosque which is inside the madrasa,
was renovated from the foundation to the
pedestal.⁴¹

Though at variance with each other, and likely with the original for that matter, these records do provide a few, if somewhat cryptic, clues as to work performed here. The fine sandalwood doors which Firuz often included in his restorations have long since disappeared. The citations from both manuscripts seem to point to a renovation of the actual tomb floor, but this matter is unclear. It may refer to the paving of the entire court.

Sikandar Shah Lodi (r.1489-1517) followed in the footsteps of Firuz Shah and carried out repairs at the Quwwat al-Islam site; however, there is no evidence that he worked on the madrasa. Still, the madrasa went through some evident changes that, on the basis of style, were probably executed during the Sultanate Period.

It was noted that chamber G of the west block now serves as a gateway, its west wall pierced with a tall doorway which utilizes post and beam construction (Plates XXVII & XXVIII). A centre post divides the entrance, and the whole is capped by a small square window. The supporting members, composed mainly of Jain spoils, are paired. This doubling feature can be found in many parts of the Islamic world, though in India it is not seen until

the Tughluq Period, with works such as the Kalan Masjid at Nizamuddin and the Hauz Khas.⁴²

Considering the exploitation of arched doorways throughout the madrasa, it is most apparent that this doorway cannot be part of the original design. It simply is not in accord with the rest of the building program. The ill-fitted central columns may be an even later addition.

Equally curious is the adjoining room, cell F. Its rear wall is now also pierced by a doorway built on the post and lintel system, using spoils. However, Page's plan shows this room with a **mihrab** in its rear wall like the others. His text does not clarify the period to which he dates his conjectural restoration. Since he includes the niche this suggests that Page produced the plan according to the madrasa's original appearance, and that he also saw the door as an addition.⁴³ Why this wall was opened can only be speculated; perhaps it was for light and ventilation. Since chamber G was opened on the exterior, it seems redundant to have built a doorway into cell F.

Moving to the block opposite, we shall consider the east chamber. The niche in its north wall was transformed into a window, rectangular in shape, with **chajja** eaves supported by corbelled brackets. Holes drilled into the lintel allowed for the hanging of window leaves.⁴⁴ As with the above-mentioned doorways, this window is out of

character. An original window would have been made to harmonize with the niche on the opposite wall by being a pointed arch like those of 'Alauddin's mosque extension. Instead, this window type follows the more indigenous design used in the later Sultanate Period, from the Tughluqs onward.

The ante-room attached to the east chamber is also at odds with the building design. An arch at either end of the east chamber gives the appearance of a gate, yet the two rooms are connected by an awkward frame of posts and beams set much lower than the apex of the arch. An examination of the exterior wall reveals a well-matched, but slight colour variation in the facing stone of the two rooms (Plate XL). The ante-chamber is clearly an addition.

The Archaeological Survey of India

Over the years the Quwwat al-Islam fell into disuse. Crops were raised in 'Alauddin's great northern court, and a road bisected the complex,⁴⁵ skirting the tomb of Iltutmish. Eventually a small colony developed to accommodate tourists and other visitors. The 'Alai Madrasa had been practically buried under generations of accumulated debris.

In 1910 the Archaeological Survey under Gordon Sanderson began the clearance and restoration of the site; most of their work was completed by 1915.⁴⁶

Actual work on the madrasa began in 1912. Vegetation was removed from the roof and walls, and the precincts were cleared of debris, exposing the original ground level. This earth was piled to the east of the madrasa, and south of Iltutmish's extension, creating a sloping terrace leading down to the 'Alai Darwaza.

As in most cases of conservation, the objective of the Archaeological Survey here was not to restore the monument, but to preserve it.⁴⁷ Some portions had their stones fully reset, most noticeably the archways of the southern block. Unsure of the original plan, the ASI team created some false archways, notably those breaching the east wall. Many other weak sections were secured with lime concrete, such as the remains of the northern gateway. This measure was planned for the southern block,⁴⁸ though it was not until the mid-1950s that the tomb chambers were attended to.⁴⁹ As is proper, faint lines executed in liquid cement delineate the restored portions.

A stepped buttress of ashlar masonry was constructed along the exterior of the western enclosure wall (Plate XXVII), two smaller ones were built along the north wall of the eastern ante-chamber (Plate XL), and a fourth buttress was set at the southern end of the east enclosure wall. It is ironic that these buttresses of relatively recent construction are presently in much worse physical condition than the walls they were intended to support.

With a budget of 2,238 rupees allotted for the repair of the madrasa, work in 1913 was complete, with a balance of Rs.104.⁵⁰ Over 1,500 additional rupees were spent in clearing the site, digging drains and installing a pump.⁵¹ In 1915 the stair in the east wall was repaired and opened to the public.⁵² However, the installed safety railing has not been maintained and the stairway is now closed to public access, only one of the unfortunate occurrences to befall the structure in modern times. In recent years the madrasa has been marred by vandals. Some carve their names in the stone. Others use the cells for urinals and campgrounds, building fires which blacken the walls. Signs posted by the Indian government are simply not enough to protect a monument from such willful misconduct.

Throughout its long history of growth and change, the 'Alai Madrasa was altered to suit the patron or those using the site. Like the other Khalji monuments we have surveyed, the 'Alai Madrasa continues the tradition of appropriating indigenous forms and blending them with Pan-Islamic features. Many of these elements have their own histories as can be discovered by tracing the madrasa's origins.

CHAPTER FOUR NOTES

- 1 The footbridge and drainage ditch are products of the Archaeological Survey's restoration campaign.
- 2 Carr Stephen, **Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi** (Allahbad:1967) p. 88.
- 3 Measurements of portions no longer extant are approximations based on the reconstructed plan.
- 4 **Annual Progress Report of the Superintendent, Muhammadan and British Monuments- Northern Circle, for the Year Ending 31st March, 1914** (Allahbad:1913) p. 37. [Hereafter **Circle Report**]
- 5 As noted in reconstructed plan, fig. 7.
- 6 **Circle Report** 1914, p. 37.
- 7 Firuz Shah Tughluq, **Futuh-at-i Firuz Shahi** as cited in John Williams, ed., **Themes of Islamic Civilisation** (Los Angeles:1971) pp. 122-123.
- 8 Maulana Hakim Syed Abdul Hai, **India During Muslim Rule**, eng. tr. Mohiuddin Ahmad (Lucknow:1977) p. 149.
- 9 The **Futuh-at-i Firuz Shahi** refers to the repair of a fountain. Also Gordon Sanderson places a well outside the north gate of the madrasa. See **Archaeological Survey of India Annual Report 1912-13** (Calcutta:1916). [Hereafter, **Circle Report**]
- 10 Page, op. cit., p. 18.
- 11 It is possible that the mihrab was given this form by the ASI restoration team.
- 12 Reconstructed elevation, fig. 9.
- 13 Page, p. 47.
- 14 loc. sit.
- 15 Ibid., p. 18.
- 16 Reconstructed plan, fig. 9.
- 17 Ibid. This is common to Indian Temples.
- 18 **Circle Report** 1914, p. 37.

- 19 Anthony Welch, Seminar Lecture on Sultanate Architecture, University of Victoria, October 26, 1982.
- 20 **Circle Report** 1914, p. 37.
- 21 Stephen, p. 89.
- 22 The tomb of Balban is in similar condition.
- 23 George Michell, ed., **Architecture of the Islamic World** (New York:1978) p. 45.
- 24 Firuz Shah Tughluq, **Futuhāt-i Firuz Shahi**, trans. Williams, op. cit. pp 119-124; E&D vol. 15, pp. 119-134; N.B. Roy, "The Victories of Sultan Firuz Shah of the Tughluq Dynasty", **Islamic Culture**, vol. XV, 1941, pp. 449-464.
- 25 Page, p. 18.
- 26 Stephen, p. 89.
- 27 A portion of this has been apparently restored by the ASI.
- 28 This style is also found in Parthian and Seljuk architecture. See Chapter Five.
- 29 Excluding cell A which has fallen, due in part to a lack of strong buttressing on the north end.
- 30 Brown, op. cit., p. 17.
- 31 Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, eds., **A Survey of Persian Art** (New York:1964) vols. I, II & III. [Hereafter, Pope, **Persian Art**]
- 32 Page, p. 18.
- 33 In the tomb of Firuz Shah, the squinch and the corbelled pendentive are used together.
- 34 Page, p. 18, footnote 2.
- 35 Reconstructed elevation, fig. 9. Such gargoyles are found on the north wall of Hindu shrines, to take the run-off of ghee or water poured over objects of veneration.
- 36 **Encyclopaedia of Islam**, vol. III (Leiden:1936) p. 358.
- 37 Stephen, p. 89.

- 38 The **Futuhāt** was originally inscribed within a domed structure which stood in the **sahn** of the **jami' masjid** at the Kotla Firuz Shah.
- 39 An **abdar-khana** is a repository for drinking water.
- 40 E&D, vol. 15, p. 130.
- 41 Roy, p. 460.
- 42 For additional information regarding Tughluq Architecture, see Anthony Welch and Howard Crane, "The Tughluqs: Master Builders of the Delhi Sultanate", **Muqarnas**, vol. I, 1983, pp. 123-166; Jeff Cohn, "Patrons of Architecture of the Tughluq Dynasty" (University of Victoria:1982) unpublished.
- 43 However, Page's plan questionably shows chamber G open on the west.
- 44 Reconstructed plan, fig. 7.
- 45 **Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report 1912-13** (Calcutta:1916) [hereafter Annual Report] p. 123.
- 46 Page, p. 47.
- 47 For further information on ASI conservation methods see T.N. Ramachandran, "Preservation of Monuments", **Ancient India**, vol. 9, 1953, pp. 170-198.
- 48 **Circle Report** 1914, p. 38.
- 49 While I have not come across any published material regarding this, ASI "stamps" are inscribed at the bases of the tomb chambers, attesting to the work carried out in the 1950s.
- 50 **Circle Report** 1913, pp. 14, 26.
- 51 **Circle Report** 1914, pp. 11, 34.
- 52 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE 'ALAI MADRASA: ORIGINS OF FORM

...Culture is a co-operative enterprise, and the nearer unique in the sense of being self dependent, the more sterile and uninteresting is a culture likely to be. The history of any significant culture is the history of the constant interchange of ideas and techniques with other, often contrasting cultures.

-Arthur Upham Pope¹

Perhaps no other culture is better suited for these words than Islam. From its inception, there has been a continuing exchange of ideas between Islam and the cultures with which it has come into contact. This is particularly evident in the area of architecture, where centuries of borrowing have taken place. Some scholars feel that due to this appropriation of ideas and techniques, there is no true Islamic style; meanwhile others are highly offended with the term "borrowing", and prefer words like "assimilation".²

Side-stepping the problem of semantics, it is clear from the monuments surveyed that Islam in India has freely adapted the techniques and materials of the subcontinent and elsewhere, to meet the pre-conceived notions of the patron. Let us now examine the 'Alai Madrasa in order to determine its position in this process of assimilation.

During the first four centuries of Islam, education was carried out in the mosque, or in the homes of the

instructors. In the eleventh century, with the growing strength of the Shi'a faction, the Seljuk vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, saw the need for a more defined institution of higher learning and endeavoured to formalize the madrasa system.³

Some of these first madaris were called **Nizamiya** in honour of the vizier. Sadly, almost nothing remains of them. However, excavations carried out at Khargird revealed the basic plan of the madrasa constructed there about 1087.⁴ A rectangular paved court was enclosed by four walls, with a large, deep **eyvan** in the centre of each side. This is the first known example of the "four eyvan plan" in Islamic architecture. More specifically this is defined as a cruciform four eyvan plan, and in the twelfth century it was carried to Syria by Nasir al-Din and to Egypt by Salah al-Din (Saladin).⁵ Although the origin is still subject to debate, scholars commonly note that the four eyvan plan developed from the domestic architecture of Khorasan,⁶ with the consideration that these were the early places of education, and so the form was retained in the development of the madrasa. This is a reasonable theory, but the four eyvan plan is a much older design, and can be found fully developed in Parthian architecture, for example the palace at Ashur, dating to the second century A.D.⁷ (fig. 11)

The best preserved of the Persian madaris is the **Mustansirya** at Baghdad, founded in 1233/34 by the Abbasid

Caliph al-Mustansir. (fig. 12) The large two storey structure does not strictly follow the four eyvan plan, but maintains the basic form of the quadrangle lined with cells, a number of large halls for meetings, plus some subsidiary service rooms.

Another view holds that the madrasa plan is derived from Buddhist monasteries.⁸ Hundreds of these **viharas** were built in Central Asia when Buddhism made a strong push to the West. The basic plan is an enclosed oblong courtyard lined with cells and a few larger meeting halls; a **stupa** was placed in the centre of the court.

Since the Delhi Sultanate grew out of the Ghaznavid and Ghurid empires, the constructions at Ghazna may well have exerted an influence on early Indo-Islamic architecture. Yet acts of willful destruction and the play of the elements have left only scant remains, which tell little. As in Persia, sun-dried mud brick was the common building material, and structures featured domes and arches. Sultan Mahmud (998-1030) did have richly decorated madaris built, and stocked their libraries with volumes taken as booty,⁹ but nothing is known of the plan of these colleges. It is also recorded that Mahmud used Indian craftsmen in his work crews, brought north as prisoners of war.¹⁰

Historical writings mention the early madaris of India, such as the one of Mu'izzuddin at Ajmer. Others were raised, notably those from the line of Iltutmish. The

Mu'izzi college of his daughter, Sultan Raziya, was so richly endowed that invading Karamathians attacked it, believing it to be the Jami' Masjid.¹¹ Yet nothing more is known of these sites, leaving the 'Alai Madrasa as perhaps the oldest extant madrasa in India.

The tomb of Nasiruddin Mahmud (Sultan Ghari) noted in Chapter Three, is often viewed as a madrasa. (Plates XII, XIII) It has also been considered a tomb/mosque which is quite likely, and due to its defensive aspect, it has been seen as a fortress. Situated a few kilometres southwest of the Qutb, the unique gray granite structure is set on a three metre high plinth, and is comprised of a court enclosed by massive walls with circular corner bastions. The east and west walls are lined with colonnades, with a large marble mihrab centred in the west wall. An unusual octagonal crypt stands in the centre of the court and descends 4.5 metres below the plinth level. Originally the site of a Hindu temple, the tomb makes use of spoils, and is built on trabeate principles of architecture. Although the tomb may have at one time functioned as a madrasa, this does not seem to have been the original intent. The colonnades could serve as a place of teaching and study, but are not fully adequate for this purpose. Also, the building lacks facilities for ancillary services (ie.

living quarters, library, etc.). Surrounding structures could have filled these needs; however, most of the extant ruins date from the Mughal Period.

Returning to the 'Alai Madrasa, we may note that many of the considerations of plan and structure rely on the reconstructed plan of the Archaeological Survey. But, even as a conjectural restoration, the plan offers some significant information that, until now, has been overlooked by scholars. The basic layout is an open court enclosed on all four sides, with a monumental entrance on the north, domed chambers centred on the side walls, and the sepulchres to the south. Clearly, the 'Alai Madrasa follows the four eyvan plan, the first known example of its use in India. Granted, adjustments have been made, such as the use of domes rather than evyans.

It is possible that this plan was brought from Persia by those fleeing the Mongol invasions, for by the fourteenth century, the four eyvan plan had been fully developed and utilized in the construction of madrasas, mosques and caravanserais. Because of the distinct Persian origins, scholars are quick to accept this reasoning, but one should also consider that the sultan, ruling a country with a non-Muslim majority, sought more distinctly Islamic forms for his building designs, asserting Islam's presence on the subcontinent. Another factor to influence construction here could be the unknown designs at Ghazna.

Also the depletion of the supply of spoils allowed for a freedom in architectural design that had not occurred earlier.

Although the works of the Great Seljuks in Persia are scant, one may turn to the Seljuks of Rum (Anatolia) to affirm the position of the 'Alai Madrasa design. The Seljuks of Anatolia are considered an offshoot of the Great Seljuks but should not be viewed as an extension, as they adapted forms and ideas, developing their own culture.

Like the Sultans of Delhi, the Seljuks of Rum readily adapted the art and architecture of Persia. Literally hundreds of madaris were built in Anatolia, though only a small percentage of them remain. The early colleges were a small four eyvan type, though the court was covered, usually with a dome. As the madaris became larger, the court was opened up. A number of thirteenth century examples still stand, such as the Hatuniye Madrasa at Kayseri (fig. 13). Built in 1237/38 by Hand Hatun, daughter of Alauddin Keykubaad I, this structure features two eyvans, one at each end of the court; the madrasa's lateral walls are lined with cells fronted by arcades.

Also of note is the Cifte Minare Madrasa at Erzurum, begun in 1253. The unfinished structure, which adapts the four eyvan plan, is the largest of its kind in Anatolia. It is one of the few known to contain a **turbe**, or tomb, though this is apparently a later addition.¹² One of the

distinct features of the Seljuk madrasa is the incorporation of the minaret, often with two flanking the entranceway which was highly decorated.

The almost perfectly symmetrical Burciye Madrasa at Sivas, dated to 1271/72, closely resembles the 'Alai Madrasa in plan (fig. 14). Here, the four eyvan plan highlights the entrance with a domed chamber, while the other three eyvans contain barrel vaults. The entrance is flanked by two domed chambers, as is the main eyvan. The cells lining the lateral walls have post and lintel doorways framed by arcades with pointed arches. The madrasa at Korkuteli (Istanos), which is coeval with the 'Alai Madrasa, exhibits a similar plan¹³ (fig. 15).

With the dissemination of this plan from Persia to Anatolia and North Africa, it is not surprising to find that this form made its way to India, and was used by a ruler desiring distinctly Islamic forms of architecture. It is interesting to see that Khalji building more closely observes the Anatolian Seljuk design, rather than the cruciform four eyvan plan used by the Caliphate in Egypt, though one might consider that the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate came from Turkish stock.

From the survey it was noted how the 'Alai Madrasa appeared symmetrical but was adjusted, creating "imperfections" in the design; the court is not quite square, nor are the cells of the west block; the gumbads of

the east and west blocks are not aligned. This asymmetry, also common to Seljuk construction, can be found in the earliest of Islamic buildings in Syria.

In looking at the plan, one might wonder why the gumbads are not centred on the court when in fact they are centred on the east and west walls. However, they are not centred on the court. Upon measuring the lateral blocks from the south end of the sepulchres to the north end of the court, one finds the domed chambers are directly in the middle. If these chambers were meant to be centred on the walls of the court, we can assume that the court would have been larger, with perhaps an additional line of cells, instead of the three tomb chambers. If the southern enclosure wall was squared, rather than skewed, a line of cells would fit perfectly, and create a plan nearly as symmetrical as the Burciye Madrasa at Sivas. Page has given dates of 1311 for the 'Alai Madrasa, and 1315 for the tomb, although without substantiation.¹⁴ If the tombs were built later, it could very well have brought about this alteration of the original plan. These assumptions cause me to wonder if the wedge-shaped southern enclosure was not an afterthought of the planners.

The skewed arrangement of the north and south walls of the madrasa appears unusual in light of the fact that all the surrounding buildings are squared. As considered earlier, due to 'Alauddin's position, it is unlikely that

the design was imposed by limitations of space. It is clear that the northeast corner of the madrasa was aligned with Iltutmish's extension; however, it is not apparent why the facade is skewed a few degrees as it runs westward. Firuz Shah mentions the repair of a madrasa of Iltutmish,¹⁵ and some scholars have suggested that the 'Alai Madrasa should be attributed to him. It is a remote possibility that 'Alauddin's college was raised on the site of an earlier structure. If this is the case, it could have imposed a restriction on the building design.

It is clear now that, although the facade of the west block resembles the masjid screen, creating a sense of unity in the Qutb complex, this was not the aim of the planners. The plan was an adaptation of Persian designs for the madaris, masjids, and caravanserais, in which the courts were lined with small chambers fronted by eyvans. Many of these structures have a second storey with another line of eyvans. At Delhi, this design was translated, producing the non-structural masjid screen and the facade of the madrasa's west block. But in the Sultanate buildings it is only the "look" that is adopted, for the 'Alai Madrasa uses domes and archways rather than eyvans; although eyvans appear in Tughluq works, their use does not become prominent until Mughal times.

The theoretical views of symmetry within the madrasa are not evident when one considers the east block. This

wall incorporates a line of niches rather than cells. Yet in the light of existing space and design, it is quite probable that the original plan would have called for an east block of cells and perhaps a gate, to mirror the wall opposite. The area is planned so that there would be just enough space to raise a line of cells that conceivably would share its eastern enclosure wall with the qibla wall of Iltutmish's extension. However, for reasons to be discussed in Chapter Six, this plan was not carried out, causing this portion of the madrasa to be out of harmony with the rest of the structure.

It has been seen in previous chapters that many features of Khalji architecture left their mark on the artistic vocabulary of Muslim India, but it is difficult to assess what effect the 'Alai Madrasa had on the madrasa architecture of India, for although thousands of colleges were built, few remain. The best known example is the Hauz Khas of Firuz Shah, which may have been constructed on the site of an earlier school of 'Alauddin's. The extensive two storey structure which is situated along the southeast corner of the reservoir does not even closely resemble the plan of the 'Alai Madrasa, but many features are carried over, not least of which is the incorporation of the patron's tomb. Also included are the "true" dome and the corbelled pendentive.

Under 'Alauddin, rubble masonry was extensively employed, as seen from the remains and records of his building projects. With the 'Alai Madrasa, the technique of laying alternate courses of narrow headers and wide stretchers on a rubble core enters the Indo-Islamic vocabulary. This technique is not found on Indo-Muslim structures pre-dating the Khalji period; it is not even used on the 'Alai Darwaza. This style is found in Persian brick construction, such as in the eighth century Tarikh-Khana Masjid at Damghan.¹⁶ However, the native medium of this method is not brick, but stone, evidenced as early as the second century A.D. in the Parthian palaces at Hatra and Ashur.¹⁷ (fig. 16)

At the 'Alai Madrasa, as in the Parthian palaces, the alternating headers and stretchers finish a rubble core. The first use of this technique noted in the madrasa was the massive transverse arches of the west block cells. Yet the question still stands as to why such a heavy support system was used for a small single storey building. Was there to be a second storey like those in Persia and Anatolia? A reasonable suggestion, but an additional storey would be unlikely here, for purely aesthetic reasons. The madrasa is so designed as to bring the viewer's eye down the line of cells to the monumental sepulchre. An added floor would dwarf the tomb chambers, lending an aspect of humility to the patron, a quality

apparently lacking in Sultan 'Alauddin.

Yet historical records do offer a partial solution. In his *Tarikh-i 'Alai*, Amir Khusrau states:

When the whole work ['Alauddin's mosque addition] was complete from top to bottom, he built other masjids in the city, so strong that if the nine-vaulted heavens were to fall, as they will, in the universe quake, on the day of resurrection, an arch of them would not be broken.¹⁸

Granted, the 'Alai Madrasa was not built primarily as a masjid, but it is clear that the structure was built to last. In a non-derogatory sense, it is a matter of overbuilding, involving the use of "experimental" forms and techniques. One might well ask why the remainder of the madrasa did not receive the same attention in its construction. This involves the question of patronage, an issue that will be dealt with in the following chapter.

So far, little has been said of the indigenous influences on the madrasa. Although the arch form has a long history in India, its use at the Qutb site should be seen as an imported element. Still, the form extensively used in the 'Alai Madrasa is the ogee arch, a native design used for hundreds of years, notably in the *chaitya* windows of the Buddhist halls. While structurally its reverse curve does not make for the greatest stability, it is aesthetically pleasing.

The dome had been an important element in Islam almost from the beginning. In India, the first Muslim patrons

were contented with the truncated Hindu dome, built by corbelling. As with many adopted forms, here the dome becomes more purely Islamic, at least in form if not construction, developed as a rubble masonry dome "sandwiched" between layers of radially set stone. The shape of the dome is likely indigenous, strongly resembling the bulbous **stupa** forms of India and Afghanistan.¹⁹ In later periods a variety of dome shapes and decor is achieved through the use of rubble masonry and stucco. The native stonemasons of the subcontinent were perhaps the world's finest. Monumental temples embellished with sculpture were raised generation after generation, their construction requiring not only skill in cutting the stone, but in laying it as well; mortar was not used as a building material until the Muslim conquest. With the freedom and flexibility of mortared construction, the craftsmen were able to raise monuments more quickly, with the added assurance of greater stability. Some scholars have labelled the use of rubble masonry as inferior, but the numerous monuments still standing refute such claims.

The dome and arch forms are not the only elements of questionable origin. The arched doorway with a square frame is common to Indian architecture, found even in the **chaitya halls**, though here the blind arch becomes a window. Also the technique of laying alternate courses of wide headers and narrow stretchers appears sporadically

throughout the history of Indian architecture. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent Graeco-Roman tendencies and remaining influences from a period of Indo-Parthian architecture come into play. The enriching qualities of cultural interchange which Pope spoke of are most evident here. The whole scheme may be compared to a **roundabout**, a traffic circle with spokes wherein ideas and techniques move round and round, shooting off in one direction, only to return at a later point in time, the styles constantly changing to suit the needs and desires of the culture and its patrons.

In India, this assimilation of styles, beginning with the Quwwat al-Islam under Qutbuddin Aibek, becomes further homogenized under 'Alauddin Khalji. The continued blending of Pan-Islamic elements with the native craftsmanship and ingenuity are carried through the remaining two hundred years of the Delhi Sultanate, reaching full maturity during the Mughal Period.

CHAPTER FIVE NOTES

- 1 Arthur Upham Pope, "Some Interrelations Between Persian and Indian Architecture", **Indian Arts and Letters**, vol. 9 ns., 1935, p. 101.
- 2 Mulk Raj Anand, "Space, Time and Diety: The Background of Islamic Architecture", **Marg**, vol. 24i, 1970, p. 9.
- 3 **Encyclopaedia of Islam**, vol. III (Leiden:1936) p. 354.
- 4 Andre Godard, "L'origine de la madrasa, de la mosquee et du caravanerail a quatre iwans", **Ars Islamica**, vol. 15/16, 1951, p. 3.
- 5 **Encyclopaedia of Islam**, vol. III, p. 355.
- 6 Godard, pp. 2, 9.
- 7 Pope, **Persian Art**, vol. I, p. 422.
- 8 **Encyclopaedia of Islam**, vol. III, p. 379.
- 9 G.M.D. Sufi, op. cit., p. 11.
- 10 C.E. Bosworth, op. cit., p. 140.
- 11 Briggs, op. cit., vol. I, p. 217.
- 12 Ekrem Akurgal, **The Art and Architecture of Turkey** (Toronto:1980) p. 91.
- 13 Kurt Erdmann, "Vorosmanische Medresen und Imarets vom Medresentyp in Anatolien", **Studies in Honour of K.A.C. Creswell** (Cairo:1965) p. 58.
- 14 Reconstructed plan, fig. 7.
- 15 E&D, vol. 15, op. cit., p. 129.
- 16 Pope, **Persian Art**, vol. I, p. 422.
- 17 loc. sit.
- 18 E&D, vol. 22, op. cit., p. 73.
- 19 Richard Frye, "Notes on the History of Architecture in Afghanistan", **Ars Islamica**, vol. 11/12, 1946, fig. 1..

CHAPTER SIX

THE QUESTION OF PATRONAGE

Up to this point we have assumed that this is the tomb/madrassa of 'Alauddin Khalji. Yet the building lacks any inscriptions and has been this way for generations. In fact, if the madrasa was unfinished, it may never have had any inscriptions. Local popular opinion ascribes the structure to 'Alauddin, and this conclusion was also reached by the nineteenth century scholar Syed Ahmad Khan, who attributes the construction to Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah, the son of 'Alauddin.¹ Still, some have argued that the building should be assigned to Mu'izzuddin ibn Sam or Shamsuddin Iltutmish,² and so the question of patronage stands.

Art historian R. Nath contends that the structure in question "cannot by any stretch of the imagination be identified as the tomb of 'Alauddin Khalji", but must be the tomb of Mu'izzuddin.³ He does not offer much in support of this attribution, but rather argues against the premise for 'Alauddin's patronage, stating his position as follows: 1) Statements from contemporary sources offer support that the tomb of Mu'izzuddin stands at the Qutb, and that 'Alauddin was buried at Siri; 2) As 'Alauddin had constructed the city of Siri, he would have built his own jami' masjid and tomb there; 3) The building cannot be the

work of 'Alauddin because it is too crude, and had he built it, the structure would still be intact. As will be seen, some of Nath's statements are untenable.

Nath is willing to concede the possibility that the building operated as a madrasa, but holds that it is a work of the Slave Period. Sultan Mu'izzuddin is recognized as a great patron of Muslim learning, and is noted for having built a significant madrasa at Ajmer.⁴ How is it possible that he could have commissioned the "'Alai Madrasa", which would be considered the principal college of Delhi, and that it would be overlooked by historians?

Nath attempts to turn the **Futuhāt-i Firuz Shahi** to his advantage. Two translations have been referred to in Chapter Three regarding the tomb of 'Alauddin; a third version reads:

The tomb of 'Alauddin was repaired, and given doors of sandalwood. I repaired the walls of the foundation for drinking water, and repaired the qibla wall of the madrasa mosque, and the flagstone pavement.⁵

Preceding this is a statement which reads:

The western wall of the tomb of Sultan Mu'izzuddin Sam, and the planks of the door, had become old and rotten. I restored this, and, in the place of the balcony, I furnished it with doors, arches, and ornaments of sandal-wood.⁶

Simply because the notation citing 'Alauddin's tomb appears after the references to the Qutb does not mean that his tomb is not on the site, and located at Siri, as Nath would

have us believe. If this portion of the **Futuhāt** was arranged by geographic location, then the tomb of 'Alauddin and the Hauz-i 'Alai (Hauz Khas) should be noted together as they would both be at Siri. But if one examines the organization of Firuz Shah's **Futuhāt**, it is apparent that it follows no such order. The somewhat cryptic nature of the work can only supply us with scattered clues about these buildings; it does not reveal the location of the 'Alai Madrasa, nor the tomb of Mu'izzuddin.

The historian Barani is also used by Nath to support the belief that 'Alauddin was not buried at the Qutb, but laid to rest at Siri. Barani states:

...on the sixth of Shawwal, towards morning, the corpse of 'Alauddin was brought out of the Red Palace of Siri, and was buried in a tomb in front of the Jami' Masjid.⁷

Nath concludes from this that 'Alauddin had built a jami masjid at Siri, and would therefore be buried in Siri, although this is not specifically stated by Barani. (The Fuller translation specifies neither palace nor city.⁸) Yet, a possible error in the manuscript, or the translation, causes one to doubt the accuracy of this passage. The palace of 'Alauddin at Siri was the Hazar Sutun, a point of which Barani is well aware..⁹ The Red Palace of Balban was in Old Delhi; 'Alauddin took up residence there when he came to power.¹⁰ Although the location of the sultan's death is a moot point, Barani does

not state where the jami masjid is because it was unnecessary to do so; he would assume that his readers knew the building to which he referred.

As Siri is nothing more than a mound of ruins, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what structures existed and what their locations were. Contemporary sources mention 'Alauddin's palace, the Hazar Sutun, and surely a jami' masjid would have been situated nearby. One might presuppose the magnificence of such a building, yet historical records make no mention of it. Ibn Battuta remarks on a costly jami' masjid begun by Mubarak Shah, of which only the qibla wall had been completed.¹¹ As Ibn Battuta ascribes the 'Alai Minar to Mubarak Shah,¹² it is possible that this mosque should also be attributed to 'Alauddin, rather than his son. In any case, this unfinished structure is not the one Barani refers to.

Whatever may have existed at Siri was not considered "The Jami' Masjid", at least not by 'Alauddin. In Chapter Two, 'Alauddin's monumental additions to the Quwwat al-Islam were examined. Judging from the attention accorded to this site, would it have been unreasonable for 'Alauddin to view this as **his** jami masjid? This indeed seems to be the case, and inscriptions on the structure bear this out.

Returning to the 'Alai Darwaza, we may now take a closer look at some of its myriad inscriptions. The architrave of the southern archway reads:

"By the grace of the peerless God and...'Verily the foundation of a mosque is laid on piety,' Whose command and glory are high and Whose justice and peace are great...commanded 'Turn your face towards the holy temple [of Meccal], as Muhammad the prophet of God, may peace be on him, said 'He who builds a mosque for God, God builds a house for him in Paradise,' the exalted, the lord of the kings of the age, the emperor of Moses-like splendour and Solomon-like dignity, the keeper of the commands of the law of Muhammad, the helper of the observances of the religion of Ahmad, the strengthener of the pulpits of the places of learning and mosques, the supporter of the rules of the schools and places of worship, the strengthener of the foundation of the observances of Islam, the builder of the foundation of the faith of Numan [Abu Hanifa], the uprooter of the dead [old] principles of evil doers, the destroyer of the doctrines of the infidels, the demolisher of the foundation of the places of idol worship, the exalter of the foundation of congregations of Islam [mosques], the medium of [Divine] signs, the suppressor of infidelity ..., the uprooter of evil-doing from the face of the earth, the conqueror of forts with lofty piers, the master of places of strong foundations...benificent God, [named] ABUL MUZAFFAR MUHAMMAD SHAH, the Sultan, the right arm of the Khilafat, the helper of the religion of God and the ally of the Amiru-l-Muminin [the chief of the faithful], may God extend the shadow of his dignity over the heads of mankind until the day of resurrection, **built this mosque**, which is the mosque of paradise for saints...men of piety and a place of assembly of the eminent angels, and an edifice inhabited by the souls of the chief prophets, on the 5th of Shawwal the year 710 [7th March 1311 A.D.]"¹³

And on the arch face:

"This mosque, which in extent and height is like unto Baitu-l-muqaddas, nay is the second Baitu-l-mamur [Ka'ba], **was built in pure faith and good intention by his exalted majesty**, the lord the diffuser of grace and beneficence, helped by the help of the benevolent king, great in the world and in faith, the victorious, [named] ABUL MUZAFFAR MUHAMMAD SHAH, the king, the right arm of the Khilafat, the ally of the Amiru-l-muminin [chief of the faithful], may God

continue the shadow of his majesty until the day of judgement."¹⁴

Since they are panegyric in nature, one would expect no less from the inscriptions than this. Some of the other historical inscriptions make similar references to 'Alauddin having built the mosque, so it would appear that although he only added to the existing masjid, 'Alauddin saw it as his, and immodestly enough as the second ka'ba.¹⁴

Nath makes it clear that as the Quwwat al-Islam is the mosque of Mu'izzuddin, it is the most suitable spot for his final resting place, and so the same applies to 'Alauddin. The Quwwat al-Islam site had three principal patrons, Qutbuddin Aibek under Mu'izzuddin, Iltutmish, and 'Alauddin. The location of Mu'izzuddin's tomb is a matter of debate but may reasonably be placed at the Ghurid capital, Ghazna.¹⁶ Qutbuddin Aibek was interred at Lahore,¹⁷ and the tomb directly west of the mosque has been ascribed to Iltutmish. It is unlikely that one such as 'Alauddin would not make preparations for his burial, and a site near the Qutb, his jami' masjid, would be the most auspicious location. This is the place to which spot Barani refers.

In his third point Nath discusses materials and methods of construction. He states that as red sandstone was in vogue during the reign of 'Alauddin the tomb cannot be his. Yet, as noted in chapter three, fragments of red sandstone and also marble were found on the site. Since the building

lacks most of its facing stone, it is impossible to say to what extent these materials would have been used here. Surely red sandstone did not face every building raised by 'Alauddin. During this time luxury materials were used on special places such as the 'Alai Darwaza, and the Jama'at Khana Masjid; extant structures show that the Khaljis did not rely on red sandstone as the only type of facing material. The white and gray stones sheathing the west block were widely used throughout the Quwwat al-Islam. That this type of stone was used on the madrasa reveals the desire for the buildings of the complex to stand in harmony.

In regard to the construction, one can hardly state that it is primitive. On the contrary, the combination of arcuate and trabeate methods reveals a phase of transition in Indo-Muslim architecture, directing the style to a more purely Islamic form. Although the true arch and the four eyvan plan were used at Ghazna, they were not incorporated into the architectural projects at Delhi during the Slave Period. In the founding years of the Delhi Sultanate, trabeate construction methods were used, dictated largely by available materials, that is, spoils from Hindu and Jain temples. If the 'Alai Madrasa dates from this time, one would expect it to include more of these reused materials in conjunction with native building techniques.

The utilization of the plank ceiling in the west block

is also not unusual; one cannot expect every room to carry a dome. Having been used for generations, the Hindu traditional lantern ceiling was a practical choice. As it is incorporated in portions of the masjid, an aspect of unity is created in the same way that the west block facade reflects the screen arch, or the employment of white and gray facing stones. Oddly enough, the original portion of the mosque built by Qutbuddin Aibek under Mu'izzuddin does not make use of the lantern ceiling.

The incorporation of the heavy transverse arches in the west block has provided stability for centuries, as they were intended to do. The imported voussoired arch of wide headers and narrow stretchers points not only to an increased use of Islamic forms, but an acceptance of Islamic construction methods as well. The madrasa displays the first widespread use of the true voussoired arch, an advance over structures such as the tombs of Iltutmish and Balban, where even squinches are created through corbelling. The pleasingly innovative development of the corbelled pendentive, while experimental, is scarcely crude, and one cannot ignore the presence of India's first muqarnas.

The form of the dome has broken away from the truncated Hindu type and facing stones were set radially, giving the appearance of a true dome. Nath claims that had 'Alauddin built this structure, the domes would not have collapsed;

therefore, the building cannot be his. Yet there are a number of possibilities as to why these domes are no longer standing. Time, for one, is against them. Since the rubble masonry dome was in an experimental phase, one might consider that the specifications of engineering had yet to be perfected. If we accept the conclusions drawn by the Archaeological Survey, the structure was never completed, and so may never have had all of its domes.¹⁸ I submit here an alternative explanation to account for the madrasa's condition, and resolve the question of patronage.

When 'Alauddin died in 1316, work on his projects came to a halt. The 'Alai Darwaza had been completed, but the vision of a monumental complex was left unfulfilled. Therefore it is not unlikely that the tomb/madrasa was also unfinished at the death of the sultan. In partial accord with Syed Ahmad Khan, I now propose that the building, at least in part, was constructed, or rather finished by Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah. It is known that a certain animosity existed between father and son;¹⁹ therefore the order by Mubarak Shah to complete the work would be derived from a sense of responsibility, or perhaps political expedience, but by no means out of filial piety. He would also not be under any obligation to employ the high construction standards of his father, or even follow the original plan. In this way the south block of tomb chambers could have been completed, though without the same

level of quality found in the west block or the 'Alai Darwaza. Mubarak Shah was not a patron of learning. To cut costs, the east block of cells was not built and a simple screen wall was raised. Such a wall cut with niches lacks durability, and if inferior construction techniques were employed, it would not withstand the passage of time.²⁰ As for the northern gateway, I am inclined to agree that this was never finished, as it would present an undesirably monumental task for Mubarak Shah.

While this theory may offer a solution for the patronage of the madrasa, the matter of Mu'izzuddin's tomb remains. Historians record conflicting reports, though many have him logically interred at Ghazna; other scholars have relied on Firuz Shah's *Futuhāt* to account for the presence of his tomb in Delhi.

So far, no evidence has been found to support the existence of monumental tombs in India before the time of Iltutmish. For now, the question of Mu'izzuddin's final resting place must remain unanswered.

CHAPTER SIX NOTES

- 1 Nath, **Monuments**, op. cit., p. 31.
- 2 Page, op. cit., p. 17, footnote 1.
- 3 R. Nath, "In Search of the Tomb of Muhammad Ghorī", **Indica**, vol. 12, 1975, p. 100. [Hereafter, Nath, "Muhammad Ghorī"]
- 4 Jaffar, op. cit., p. 38.
- 5 Williams, op. cit., pp. 122-123.
- 6 E&D, vol. 15, op. cit., p. 129.
- 7 E&D, vol. 14, op. cit., p. 129.
- 8 Fuller, op. cit., p. 154.
- 9 E&D, vol. 14, p. 75.
- 10 Ibid., p. 130.
- 11 Ibn Battuta, op. cit., p. 624.
- 12 Ibid., p. 623.
- 13 Page, p. 37.
- 14 Ibid., p. 38.
- 15 This term was also applied to the Masjid-i Shah at Isfahan by the Safavi ruler Shah 'Abbas (1587-1628). See N.N. Khoury, **Safawid Epigraphy in Isfahan: The Masjid-i Shah** (University of Victoria:1983) unpublished.
- 16 Nath, "Muhammad Ghorī", pp. 97-98.
- 17 loc. cit.
- 18 **Circle Report** 1913, op. cit., p. 14; **Circle Report** 1914, p. 37. Granted, the tomb may never have been totally finished, but visible evidence and documentation point to its completion.
- 19 CHI, op. cit., p. 429 ff.
- 20 One can compare this with the south enclosure wall which has fallen in several places.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE REIGN OF SULTAN 'ALAUDDIN

Having reasonably established the identity of the 'Alai Madrasa's patron, we may now take a closer look at this self-styled Alexander.

The major source of information for the reign of 'Alauddin would be the **Fathenama**, a multi-volume work of his court historian Kabiruddin, son of Tajuddin Iraqi.¹ Unfortunately, no known copy of his manuscript survives. Still, a fair amount of information exists, though one is obliged to confront histories veiled in panegyric, as well as material based on faulty memories, inadequate research, and strong imaginations. The most reliable of historians is Ziauddin Barani. Although he lived at the time of 'Alauddin, his work was produced some fifty years after the fact. His **Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi**² may be supplemented by the colourful writings of Amir Khusrau, and the seventeenth century historian Muhammad Qasim Ferishta.³

Modern historians have tended simply to repeat these earlier chronicles; however, there are some exceptional works such as K.S. Lal's **History of the Khaljis**. Also of note, and perhaps most objective is **The Comprehensive History of India**, edited by K.A. Nizami and Muhammad Habib.

Many historians are quick to judge 'Alauddin, applying

such labels as "vainglorious", "cruel", "cold-hearted", and "tyrannical", yet there is a great deal more to this man. Granted, one cannot deny the despotic nature of his reign. But without the determination of this Khalji sultan, the various states of the subcontinent would have continued under a period of restlessness marked by constant power plays of various factions, and may well have fallen to the near-invincible power of the Mongol hordes.

Successive waves of barbarians began pouring into India during the mid-thirteenth century. Apparently by parlay, Jalaluddin was able to halt one of these invading forces.⁴ 'Alauddin had scarcely taken the throne when the Mongols returned. They continued to come for the next dozen years, each invasion being repulsed or forced to retreat due to such circumstances as weather conditions and threat of famine.

As evidenced by his unscrupulous rise to power,⁵ 'Alauddin was a man of ambition. He devoted much of his reign to conquest, and the histories are mainly chronicles of his campaigns. His empire extended from Lahore south to Dwarsamudra, and from Gujarat east to Lakhanauti.⁶ However, 'Alauddin was wise enough not to overextend himself and did not annex lands that he could not consolidate. Often the sultan left the local rulers in power, and exacted a yearly tribute from them. In this manner 'Alauddin became the first ruler to unite the

greater part of the subcontinent. (fig. 1)

But to control the Rajput states and to keep the Mongols at bay required a substantial military force; 'Alauddin was the first Muslim ruler in India to establish and successfully maintain a standing army. The sultan foresaw that the cost of such a force would have drained the treasury in a few short years. Therefore 'Alauddin imposed a series of taxation measures.⁷ An income tax schedule was devised and taxes were levied on many market items. The most demanding of his measures was a 50% property tax. He even expected the Brahmins to pay the *jizya*, a tax levied on non-Muslims, although previous Muslim rulers had exempted them. The measures served a two-fold purpose; as they tended to relieve the upper classes of their excess wealth, the rich were made subservient, and a source of financial backing for revolts was eliminated. Needless to say it was the Hindus who suffered the most from these measures. Additional financial resources came from the *khums*, the one-fifth of the booty allotted to the state, as well as the annual tribute from the subjugated Rajput kingdoms.

These measures substantially increased the state coffers, but 'Alauddin took his program a step further. Price controls were set up in the market, regulating the cost of nearly every item, from grain to cloth to horses: Thus the soldiers could manage with a minimum wage. On

occasion, 'Alauddin would send his slave boys into the markets to make purchases so that he could confirm the prices.⁸ Merchants caught cheating were dealt severe punishments. Sometimes merchants received state subsidies as an inducement to trade in Delhi.

Grain stores were also developed, and when necessary, rationing was imposed. In this way a famine never occurred during 'Alauddin's rule.⁹ The drawback of 'Alauddin's measures is that they destroyed the free enterprise system, so that trade and commerce fell into a period of stagnation.

'Alauddin's reign was not free of intrigues. Revolts did break out and attempts were made on the sultan's life. As concern for political stability mounted, 'Alauddin set out to reduce these potential dangers. He imposed harsh measures on the nobility to cow them into submission; property was seized; the nobles were not allowed to congregate, and marriages required the sultan's permission.¹⁰

To supplement these measures, a spy system was developed, whereby the sultan received daily reports of the activities in Delhi and the provinces. Prompt receipt of information was facilitated by an efficient postal system which 'Alauddin had made more effective by clearing the highways of dacoits.¹¹

Wine lightened men's heads and loosened their tongues

to speak of revolt. Therefore strict prohibition was imposed, and wine was not allowed into Delhi. 'Alauddin, who was a heavy drinker in his early days, even had the palace wine stores publicly emptied, turning the the streets to mud.¹² However, in time there was an easing up on this restriction.

'Alauddin was by no means saintly, and indulged in a number of vices. Although he gave up his drinking habit, 'Alauddin apparently maintained homosexual relationships.¹³ Still, he made a concerted effort to clean up Delhi.¹⁴ Charlatans were made unwelcome and gambling dens were shut down. An attempt was made to curb prostitution by reforming the ladies and marrying them off. Thousands of people were executed or thrown into the Delhi prisons, often on false charges.

While outwardly strong, this burgeoning empire was a fragile construction, being founded on, and maintained by, force. Without the iron grip of its war lord, it could not stand. The sultan was a forceful man, but he was also wise; 'Alauddin often sought consultation from advisors, but all decisions were emphatically his. He made it his policy to distinguish secular from religious law, a practical move realized by few Muslim rulers of non-Muslim lands. He held sway over the ulema, the religious council, leaving to it the concerns of religion, not politics. 'Alauddin was indifferent to, if not ignorant of the

shari'at (religious law), implementing measures he felt were in the best interests of the people and the state.¹⁵

To play up the aspect of his megalomania, historians have often related two wild schemes of 'Alauddin. The first one reports that 'Alauddin saw himself, like the prophet Muhammad, with four friends, who by the sword would found a new religion, and thus be remembered down through the ages.¹⁶ The second plan is recorded by Barani as follows:

I have wealth, and elephants, and forces, beyond all calculation. My wish is to place Delhi in charge of a vice regent, and then I will go out myself into the world, like Alexander, in pursuit of conquest, and subdue the whole inhabitable world.¹⁷

'Alauddin took the title of **Sikandar-i Sani**, the second Alexander, and had it recited in the khutba and inscribed on his coins and buildings.¹⁸ However, Barani alone mentions these schemes, and accordingly it was the historian's uncle, 'Alaul Mulk, who made the sultan see the folly of such ideas. The other contemporary writers remain silent on these topics, ones that were supposedly common knowledge throughout Delhi. Professor Saksena views these projects as "baseless gossip" recorded by the historian, and points out that even Barani repeatedly states that the sultan's faith in Islam was firm.²⁰

'Alauddin was not the first to take the title of **Sikandar-i Sani**, and considering his achievements it was

not improper of him to do so. His ambitious character is apparent, but 'Alauddin was also a realist. He could not expect to conquer the world before subduing all of Hindustan and repelling the Mongols.

In his last years, the sultan's health began to fail. Overtaxed, he would no longer heed advice from his loyal officers. The darkest moment of his career came when an assassination plot by **neo-Muslims** (Mongol converts) was discovered. In reaction to this, 'Alauddin slaughtered an estimated 20-30,000 neo-Muslims, though the majority were wholly ignorant of the plotting.¹⁹

It is easier to damn than to praise as the saying goes, and many modern historians get carried away when discussing the sultan 'Alauddin. One cannot ignore the cruelties inflicted by the despotic ruler; yet it is all too easy to allow his "vainglorious" acts and misdeeds to overshadow his social and cultural achievements. Even Barani, who is often highly critical of the sultan, praises 'Alauddin in a rather lengthy conclusion²¹ As his writings come several years after the end of Khalji rule, they cannot be viewed as requisite panegyric.

During the first one hundred years of the Delhi Sultanate, the non-Muslim population was severely oppressed. Their temples were destroyed, and new ones were not allowed. Many people lost their fortunes, others their lives. It was often difficult to make ends meet, and

positions within the government were out of the question for non-Muslims. Barani relates that during the reign of Balban, persons of low status were dismissed from office, and members of the court received reprimands for employing them.²²

There was even a large degree of racism among the Muslims. Until the Khalji period, no non-Turk had ever achieved the rank of **khan**.²³ Under Khalji rule, the walls of racial distinction began to break down, initiating a period of greater tolerance. These changes were not immediate, and progressed over the following one hundred years, and more. For the first time in India a Muslim was not hindered by his background. Any capable Muslim, even a convert, had the opportunity to move up through the ranks, to achieve a position as high as vizier, or in the case of Khusrau Khan, that of sultan, however briefly.

Hindus were allowed to hold government posts, at least at the lower levels. It appears that Hindus were granted access to a madrasa education, although such activity seems to have been rarely pursued.

During the reign of 'Alauddin, as much energy seems to have been poured into the fine arts as the arts of war and conquest. We have noted the few extant structures, and seen in the historical writings that there was a great deal more building. Yet as much as modern historians wish to direct the issue simply to self-aggrandisement, it is

important to realize that these works of 'Alauddin were not just symbols of status, but constructions carried out as acts of piety, in the name of Islam. The **Hadith** inscribed on the 'Alai Darwaza states, "He who builds a mosque in this world, God will build for him one in Paradise".²⁴ In this way, 'Alauddin would, in effect, build the most magnificent houses in Paradise to honour God and himself.

The fine arts flourished under Khalji patronage. Of painting during this time, it is recorded that the walls of the **Hazar Sutun** were richly decorated with mosaic and fresco.²⁵ Unfortunately nothing remains, and nothing more is known about the visual arts.

One of the things 'Alauddin did have in common with his uncle Jalaluddin was a love of music. Musicians came from all over India and were even brought from Persia to play for the court at Delhi.²⁶ Competitions were a frequent occurrence, and musicians were well rewarded. Perhaps the greatest musician was Amir Khusrau, who had been appointed Imperial Librarian under Jalaluddin. Not only was he a fine musician, but a superb singer as well. He developed new modes of singing, and is credited with having invented the **sitar**.

The greatest attention was paid to poetry, and while the court retained many poets, Amir Khusrau was the most admired of them all. Well versed in both Persian and Hindi, he could compose in either language, and developed a

complex form that called for alternating verses in the two languages.²⁷ His works in the newly formed Urdu helped to strengthen that language's foundation.

'Alauddin was a man of incongruities. He ruled by his wits and intuition. Ambition governed many of his actions, determination and a sense of duty fuelled them. He was not a practicing Muslim; he did not say his daily prayers, nor did he attend the Friday prayer.²⁸ In his younger days he drank heavily, and did not observe the fast of Ramazan. Yet he saw himself as a true Muslim, a strong upholder of the faith. 'Alauddin's piety can be observed by the placement of his tomb, which was constructed in conjunction with a madrasa, as a pious endowment. In this way he would be looked after, and remembered. And eventually his tomb did become a place of pilgrimage.²⁹

CHAPTER SEVEN NOTES

- 1 Lal, op. cit., p. 355.
- 2 Elliot and Dowson vol. 14 is the most widely used translation; the Fuller version deals only with the reign of 'Alauddin and is edited to a lesser extent.
- 3 Elliot and Dowson vol. 11 is a drastically edited translation and most scholars rely on the Briggs version.
- 4 E&D vol. 14, op. cit., pp. 60-61.
- 5 As cruel as it was, 'Alauddin's method of accession was common and accepted practice.
- 6 Luniya, op. cit. p. 15.
- 7 E&D vol. 14, p. 111ff. and CHI, p. 378.
- 8 E&D vol. 14, p. 116.
- 9 Ibid., p. 112. Apparently these stores were intact when Ibn Battuta visited Delhi several years later.
- 10 Ibid., p. 96ff.
- 11 Sadly, such is not the case today.
- 12 E&D vol. 14, pp. 98-99.
- 13 CHI, op. cit., p. 421.
- 14 Lal, pp. 182 and 277.
- 15 I.H. Siddiqi, "The Nobility Under the Khalji Sultans", **Islamic Culture**, vol. 37, 1963, p. 58.
- 16 E&D vol. 14, pp. 84-85.
- 17 Ibid., p. 85.
- 18 Ibid.; Lal, p. v.
- 19 CHI, pp. 336-337.
- 20 Lal, p. 262.
- 21 Fuller, pp. 146-149. (E&D is greatly edited here)

- 22 CHI, p. 282.
- 23 Lal, p. 172.
- 24 Page, op. cit., p. 37.
- 25 Lal, p. 334.
- 26 Luniya, p. 623.
- 27 Ibid.; Lal, p. 336.
- 28 Lal, p. 271.
- 29 Aziz Ahmad, "The Sufi and the Sultan in Pre-Mughal India", *Islam*, vol. 38, 1962, p. 46.

CONCLUSION

...the empire never flourished so much as in this ['Alauddin's] reign. Order and justice prevailed in the most distant provinces, and magnificence raised her head in the land. Palaces, mosques, universities, baths, mausolea, forts, and all kinds of public and private buildings, seemed to rise as if by magic. Neither did there in any age, appear such a concourse of learned men from all parts. Forty-five doctors, skilled in the sciences, were professors at the universities.

-Ferishta

The Khalji dynasty was of short duration, but great in accomplishments and ideas. It was enough for Jalaluddin Firuz to reverse the damage inflicted by Balban's grandson Kaiqubad, but it took the energetic 'Alauddin to make something of the position of sultan. The reign of 'Alauddin was a time of change, and through numerous campaigns nearly the whole of India was brought under the sultan's control, while the Mongols were kept at bay. By all rights 'Alauddin Khalji should be regarded as the first emperor of India. Through his might and careful planning India was united and India was protected. This security allowed the arts and sciences to flourish. Scholars flocked to Delhi from other parts of the Islamic world, notably refugees from Persia who were welcomed at the Delhi court. This gave a fresh impetus to the arts and learning. With the fall of the Caliphate at Baghdad in 1258, Delhi

became the major centre of learning in the East, rivaled only by Cairo in the West. Many of the sultans at Delhi were great patrons of education, and their examples fostered further patronage from family members and the nobility.

Under 'Alauddin, Delhi went through the first of many grandiose building phases. He built Siri, the so-called second city of Delhi, originally to meet the threat of the Mongols who marched to the gates of Delhi. The city was noted for its magnificent palace and great reservoir. In later years other sultans set up endowments within the walls of Siri, but all was dismantled in the sixteenth century. While it was not novel for rulers to found new cities, 'Alauddin's project set a precedent at Delhi, and within the next fifty years Delhi saw the rise of other new cities such as Tughluqabad, Jahanpanah, and Firuzabad.

As so little remains of Khalji architecture, only through documentation do we know that many other structures were raised by 'Alauddin and that the sultan saw that gardens were provided throughout Delhi, so that over the generations it became a city of gardens, and is still so today.

In a most expedient political and religious move, the sultan sought to extend the Quwwat al-Islam. Here 'Alauddin reasserted Islam's presence in India when such an affirmation of strength was desperately needed. At the

same time, the sultan gave a new meaning to the site; not only was the faith of Islam great, but great under his strong leadership. The remaining buildings of the complex attest to the type of man the sultan was. The 'Alai Darwaza with its myriad inscriptions stated the position of Islam and the Sultan 'Alauddin. The 'Alai Minar, though only an incomplete stump, sought the heavens and God; 'Alauddin had the power to do this. He aimed to double the size of the Quwwat al-Islam Masjid so that over twice as many people could pray there, and founded the 'Alai Madrasa so that those who had the desire could learn there, and remember the Khalji sultan.

Islamic architecture during the Khalji period became more "islamized" than it was during the preceding one hundred years of the Delhi Sultanate. With the depletion of spoils, architects were able to proceed in new artistic directions, displaying a strong Seljuk influence. The style at this time ushers in a new period of experimentation and innovation, blending Pan-Islamic features with indigenous forms, producing a distinct style now described as Indo-Islamic.

With the limited number of extant Khalji structures, it is remarkable that scholars of Indian architecture have chosen to ignore the 'Alai Madrasa, always citing the 'Alai Darwaza and the Jama'at Khana Masjid as being exemplary of Khalji architecture. Yet however beautiful and innovative

the 'Alai Darwaza is, it is a gatehouse, and one structure cannot speak for all of Khalji architecture. The patronage of the Jama'at Khana has never been firmly established, and due to renovations and restorations, it is difficult to judge what portion is Khalji and what is from later times.

The 'Alai Madrasa can be noted for several of its innovative aspects. Notably, it is India's first definite tomb/madrasa, and as such holds a place in the development of monumental tomb architecture as the first multi-chambered sepulchre in Muslim India. The madrasa introduces to India the Seljuk four eyvan plan, which becomes the standard mosque form in India. In addition, the utilization of the true dome and true arch more deeply expresses this islamization of Indian architecture, which further sparks creativity in the handling and decorating of these forms. The pendentive and the muqarnas are introduced at this time, both serving to create a smoother transition in the upward movement from wall to dome.

Islam willingly accepted the ideas and trappings of the cultures it came into contact with, as long as those features did not go against the tenets of the faith. India offered many new ideas to Islam, and injected Islamic architecture with a sense of vitality. This process of assimilation reached a peak during the Khalji period, and did not attain such heights again until Mughal times.

It is quite evident that the 'Alai Madrasa is not an

unnoteworthy ruin. The college, humbly tied to Islam's greatness in India, reveals itself as a firm link in the historical development of Indo-Islamic architecture.

GLOSSARY

- amalaka-fluted melon shaped element crowning a spire.
- amir-commander; third highest rank during the Delhi Sultanate.
- arcuate-arched construction.
- ashlar-squared stonework in regular courses.
- caliph-lit. "successor"; the religious and temporal head of the community of Islam.
- caravanserai-an inn or hostel, usually set along trade routes.
- chaitya hall-An Indian shrine or Buddhist assembly hall.
- chajja-overhanging cornice or eave.
- chakra-Buddhist Sacred Wheel of the Law.
- corbel-stacked cantilevered blocks raised to create an arch form.
- dargah-In Muslim India, a noted tomb or shrine.
- drum-collar or circular wall on which the dome sits.
- eyvan (iwan)-roofed or vaulted hall open at one end.
- fiqh- jurisprudence.
- ghazi-warrior of the faith.
- gumbad-dome, domed chamber or tomb.
- Hadith-prophetic traditions
- haram-private quarters of a house or sanctuary of a mosque.
- headers & stretchers-bricks bonded with their short or long faces placed alternately.
- jali-perforated stone screen; a tracery.
- jami' masjid-Friday or congregational mosque.
- jihad-holy war.

jizya-a tax levied on non-Muslims.

ka'ba-focus of prayer; a pre-Islamic cube shaped structure at Mecca into which the sacred stone has been incorporated.

kalam-scholasticism.

karkhana-royal factory.

khan-highest group of officers in the Delhi Sultanate.

khanqah-monastery.

khums-one fifth booty granted to the state.

khutba-sermon.

madrasa (pl. madaris)-institution of higher learning; lit. "place of study".

maktab (pl. makatib)-elementary school.

mantiq-logic.

masjid-district mosque; lit. "place of prostration".

mihrab-niche whether concave or flat, indicating the qibla.

mu'id-teaching assistant.

mulla/maulvi-Muslim religious leader.

muqarnas-stalactite or honeycomb ornament or vaulting made up of small concave elements.

naskhi-a cursive script.

ogee-a form of moulding or arch with a reverse curve at the apex.

pendentive-curved or faceted inverted triangle of masonry supporting a dome.

qibla-direction of prayer, synonymous in some contexts with mihrab.

Qur'an-The Holy Book of Islam; the word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

sahn-courtyard (of a mosque).

shari'at-Muslim religious law.

shi'a-branch of Islam which upholds the legitimacy of the line of 'Ali, the fourth caliph.

squinch-an arch shaped element spanning a corner, forming an octagonal base for a circular dome.

stupa-a large mound shaped Buddhist shrine.

Sufism-mysticism.

sultan-in the Delhi Sultanate, the Muslim ruler practically independent of the Caliphate.

Sunni-largest branch of Islam, often called orthodox Islam.

sura-chapter of the Qur'an.

tafsir-exegesis.

trabeate-post and beam construction.

turbe-tomb (Turkish).

twba

ulema-Muslim religious council.

vihara-Buddhist or Jain monastery.

waqf (pl. awakf)-charitable endowment.

zakat-prescribed Muslim charity; poor tax.

zone of transition-structural system which allows the placement of a round dome on a square building.

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Figure 1. Map: India

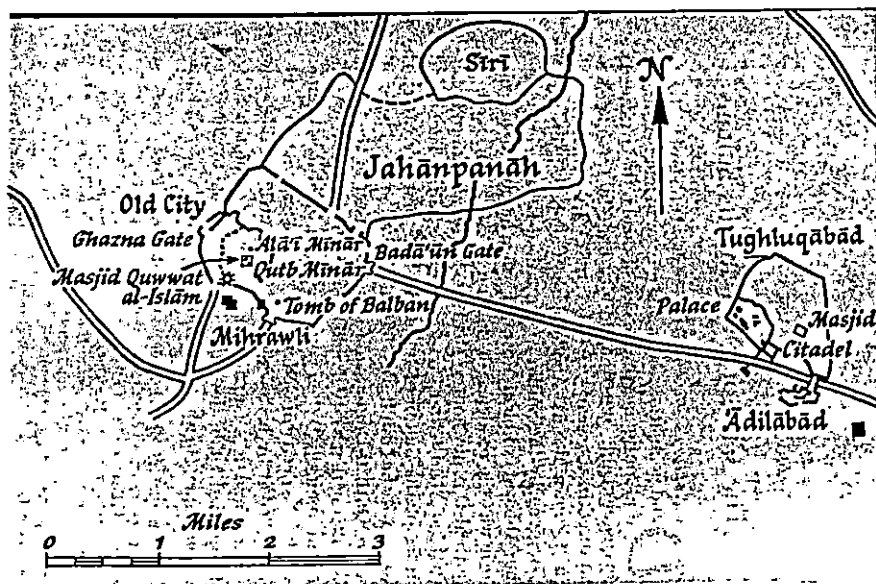


Figure 2. Map: Delhi

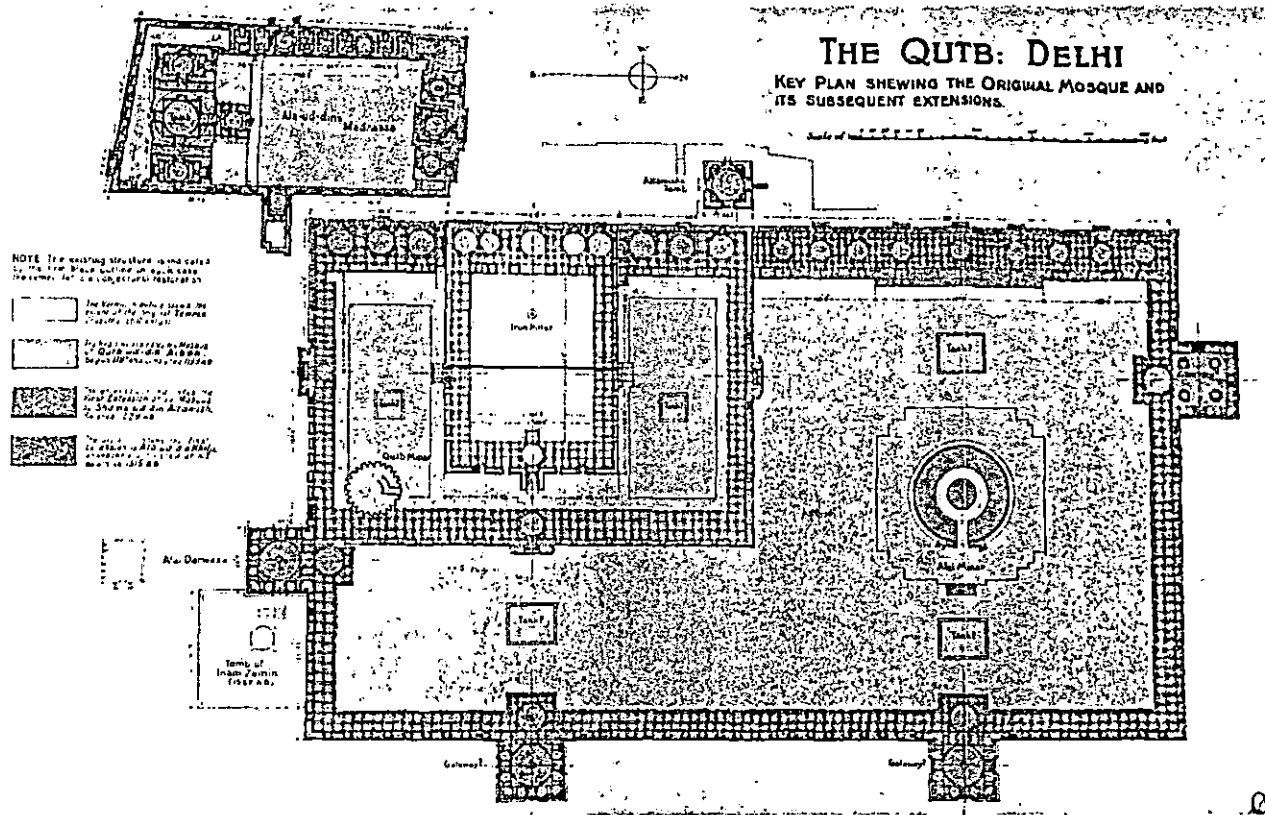


Figure 3. Quwwat al-Islam Complex - Plan

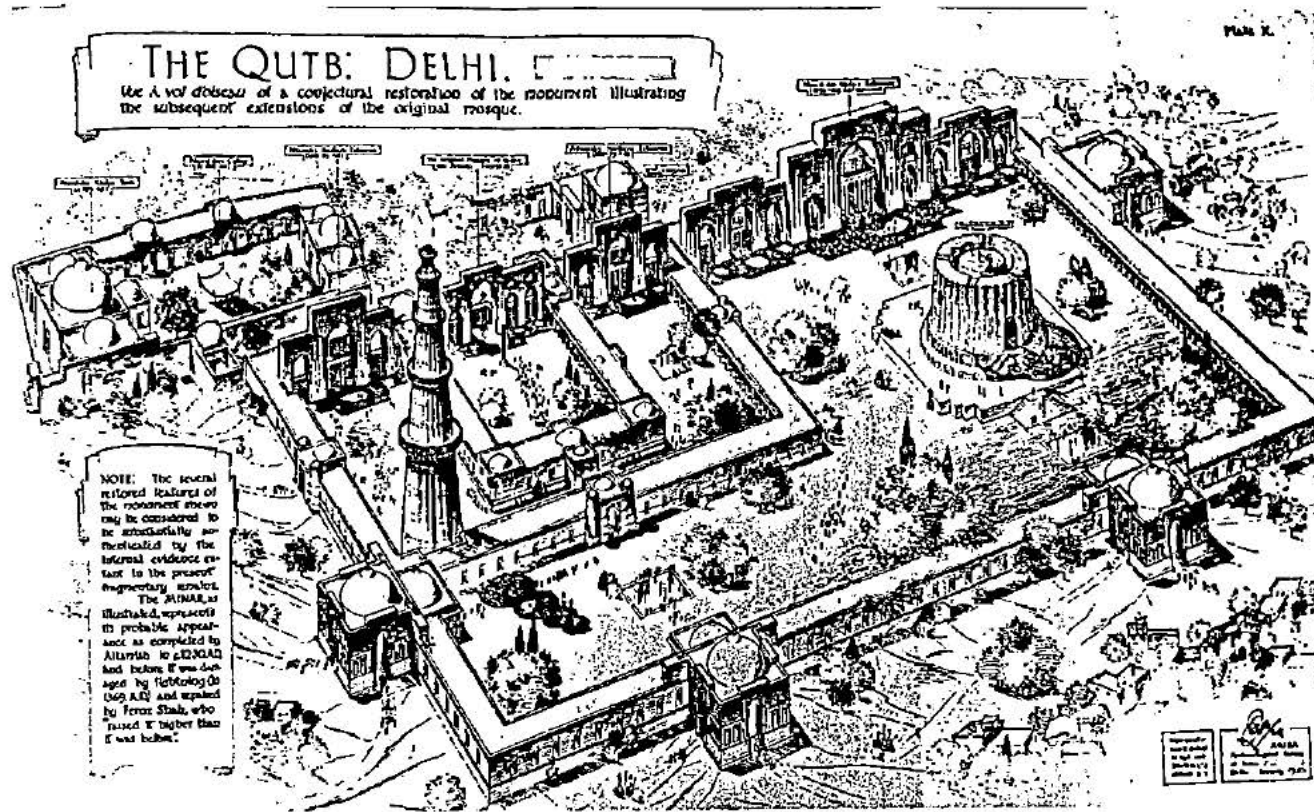


Figure 4. Quwwat al-Islam - Bird's eye view sketch, conjecturally restored

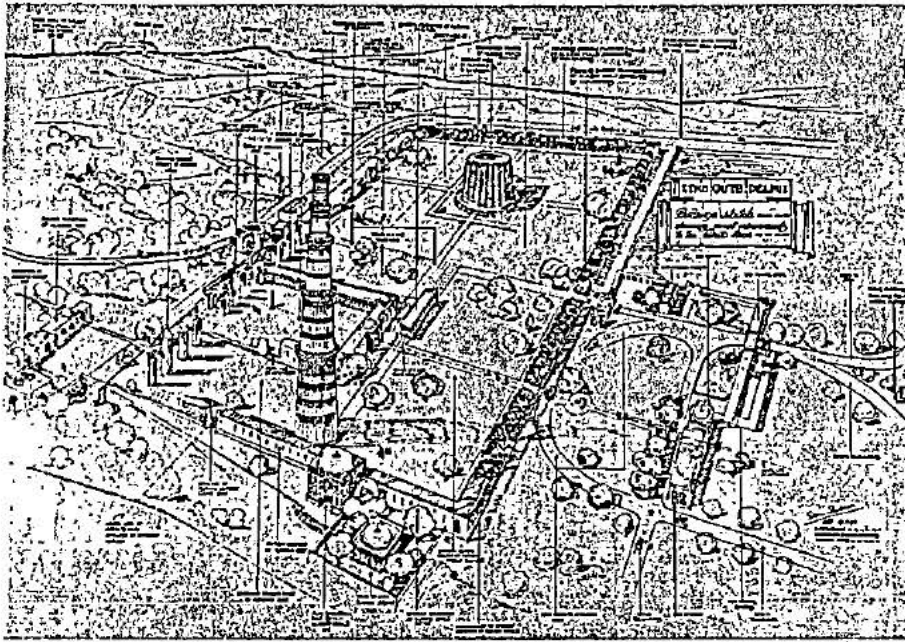


Figure 5. Quwwat al-Islam - Bird's eye view sketch, 1913

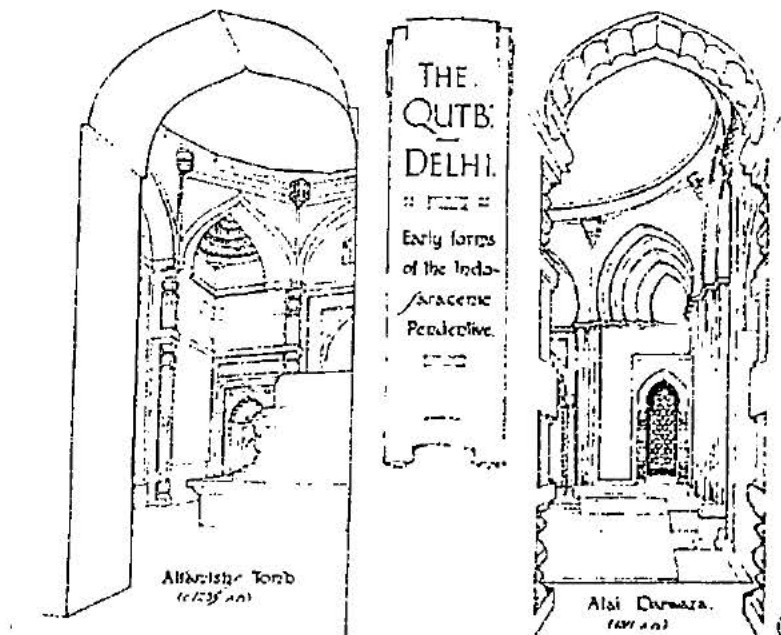


Figure 6. Interior Sketch - Tomb of Iltutmish/'Alai Darwaza

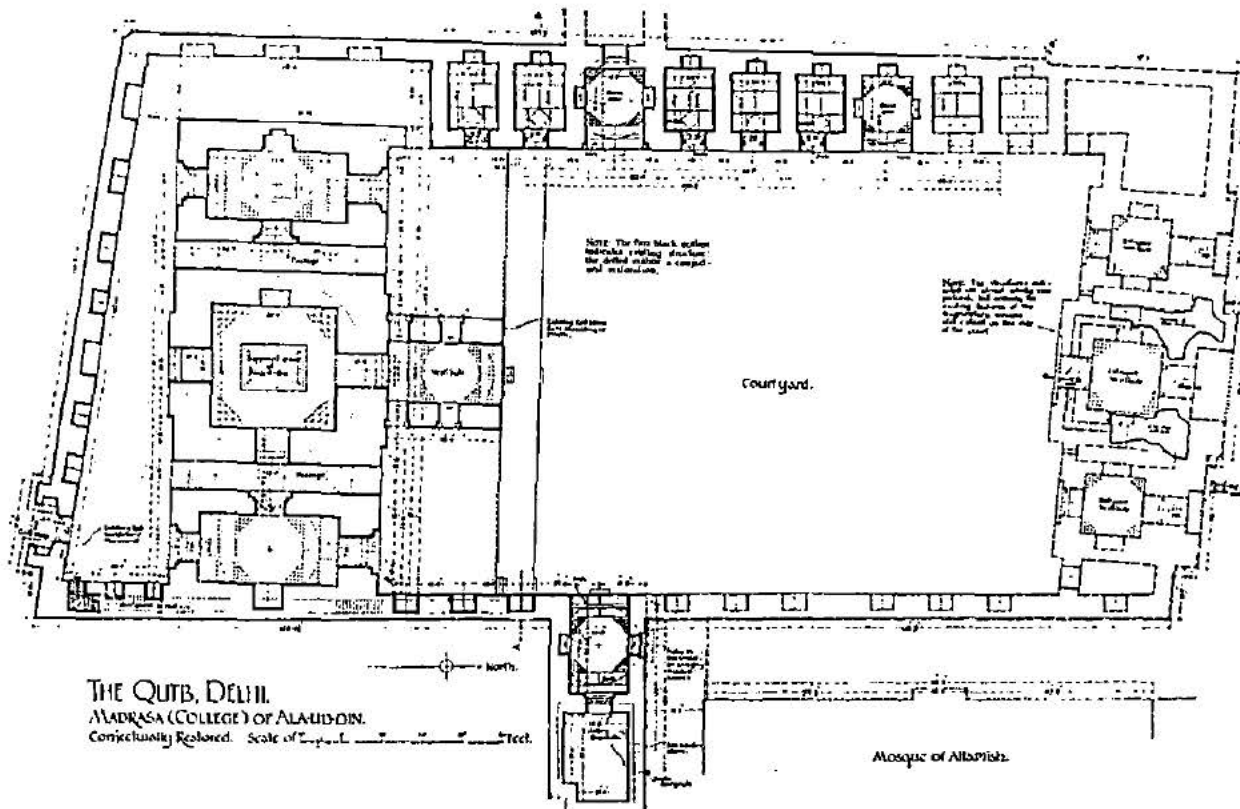


Figure 7. 'Alai Madrasa - Plan, conjecturally restored

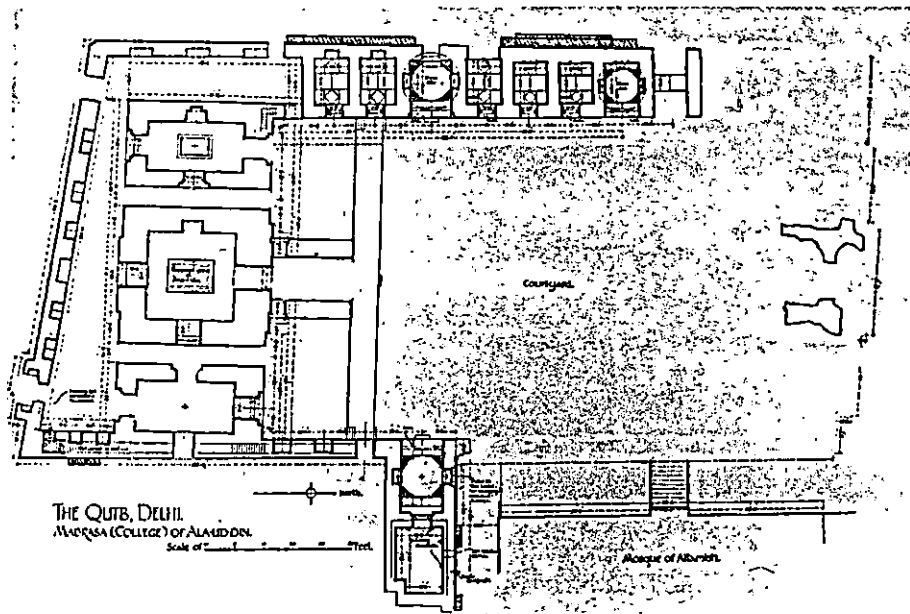


Figure 8. 'Alai Madrasa - Plan, present condition

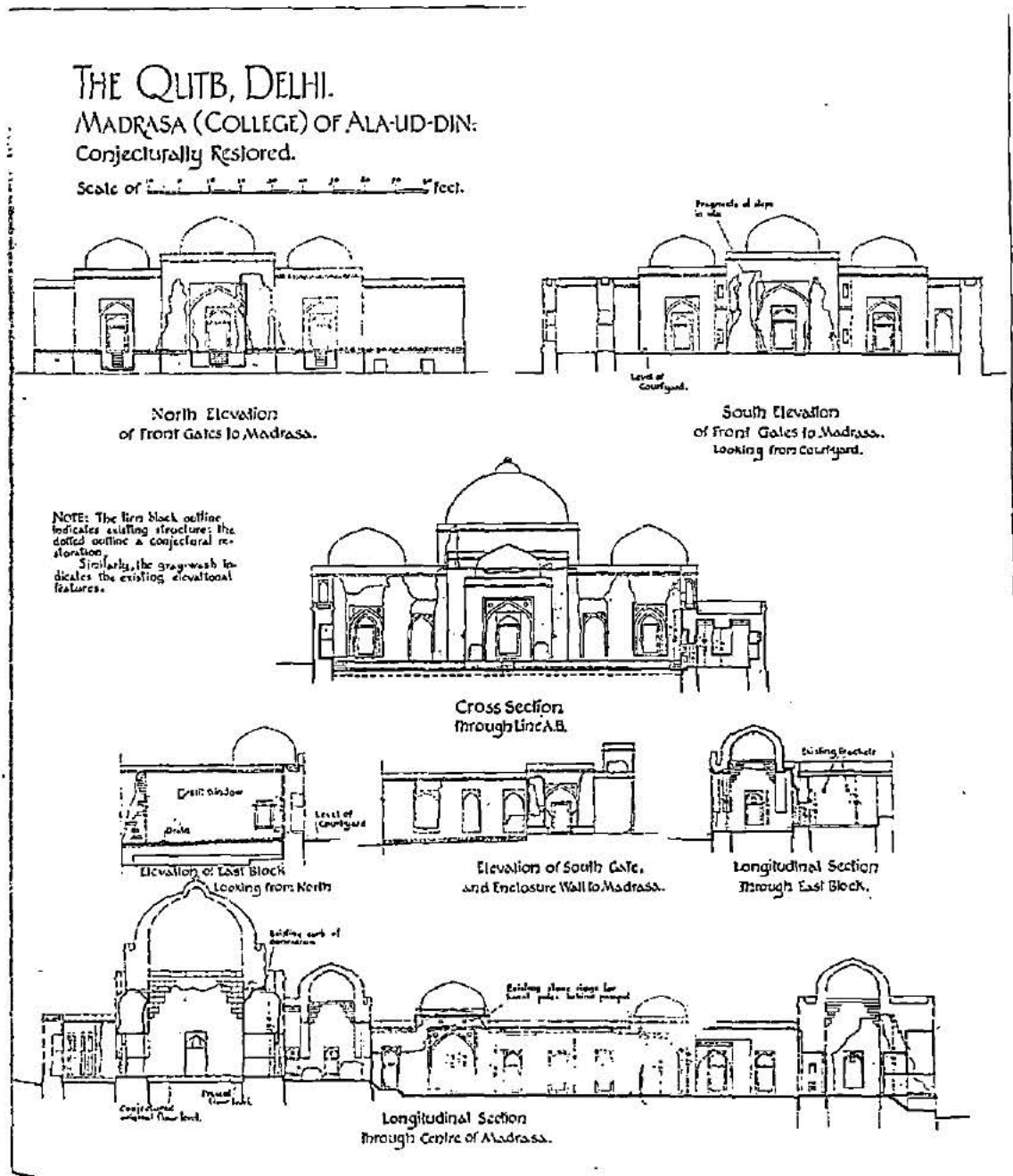


Figure 9. 'Alai Madrasa - Elevation, conjecturally, restored

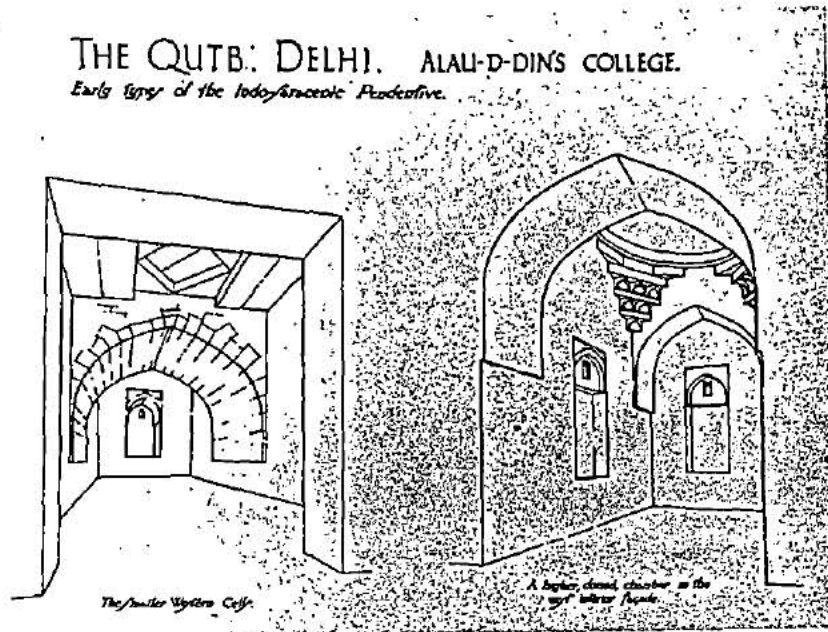


Figure 10. Interior sketch - Cells/domed chambers

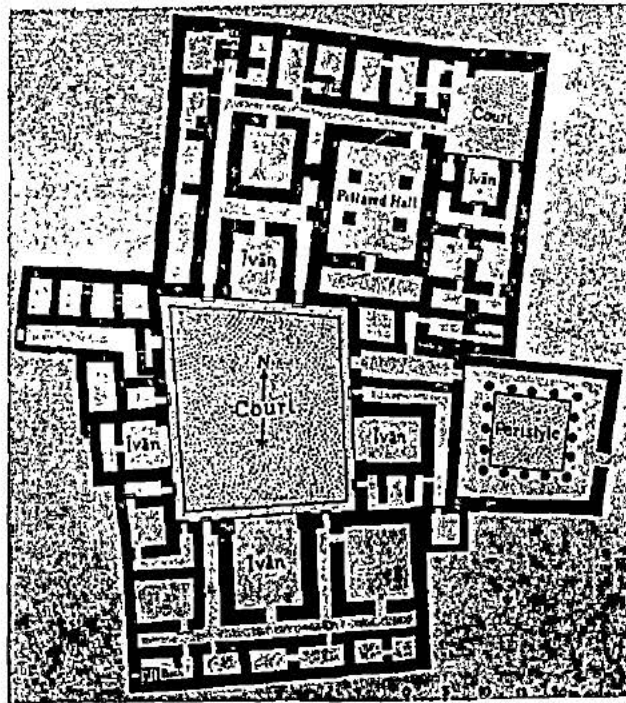


Figure 11. Parthian Palace, Ashur - Plan

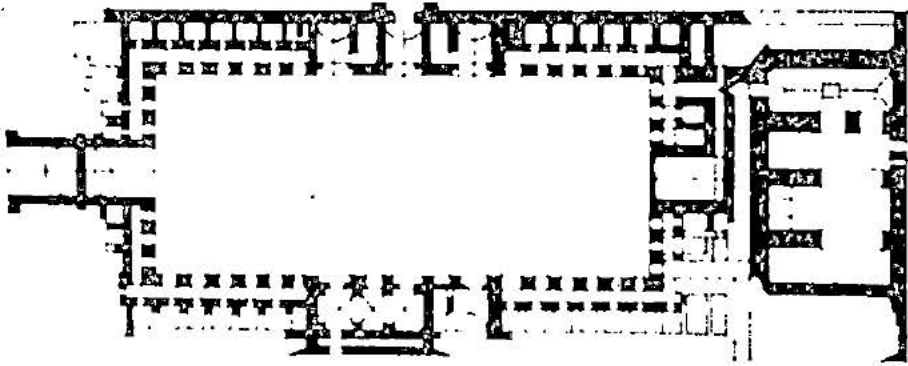


Figure 12. Mustansiriya, Baghdad - Plan

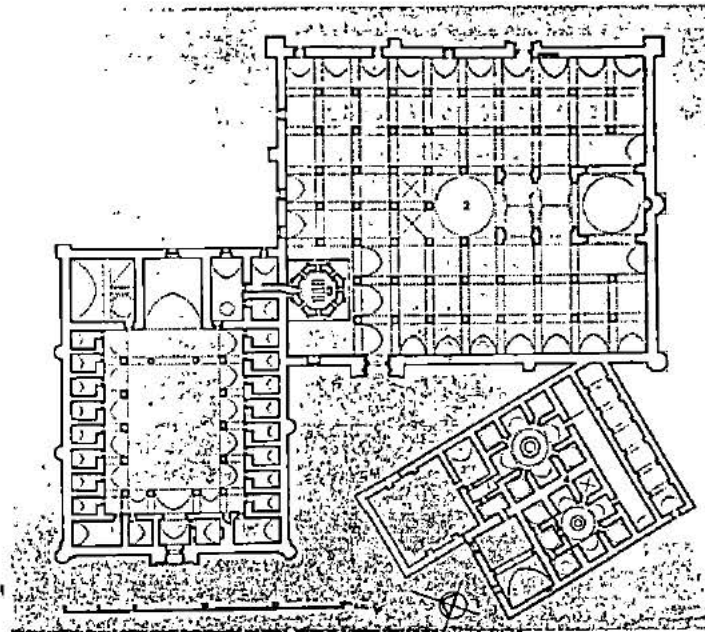


Figure 13. Haud Hatun Complex, Kayseri - Plan

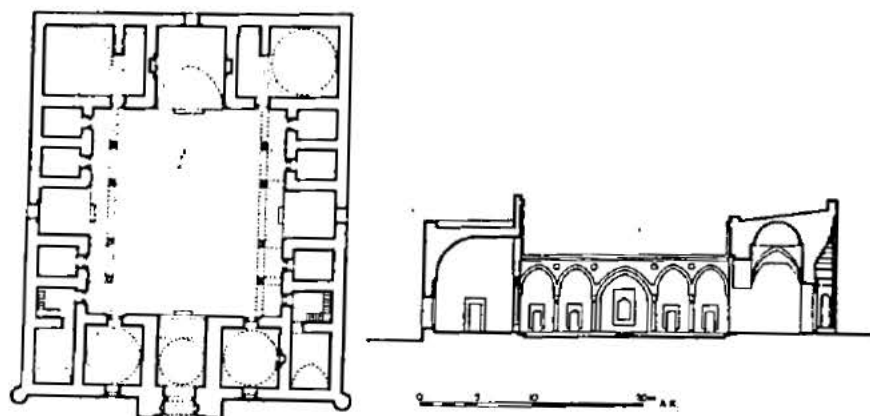


Figure 14. Burciye Madrasa, Sivas - Plan and elevation

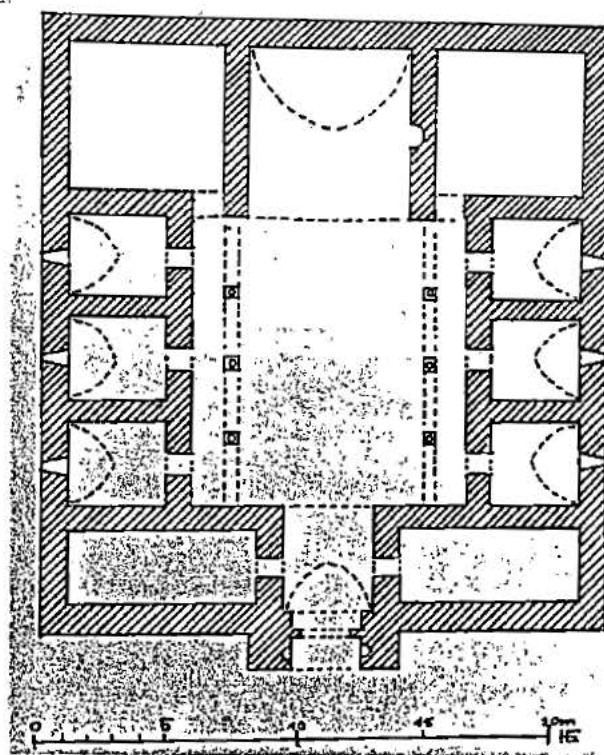


Figure 15. Madrasa at Korkuteli (Istanos)

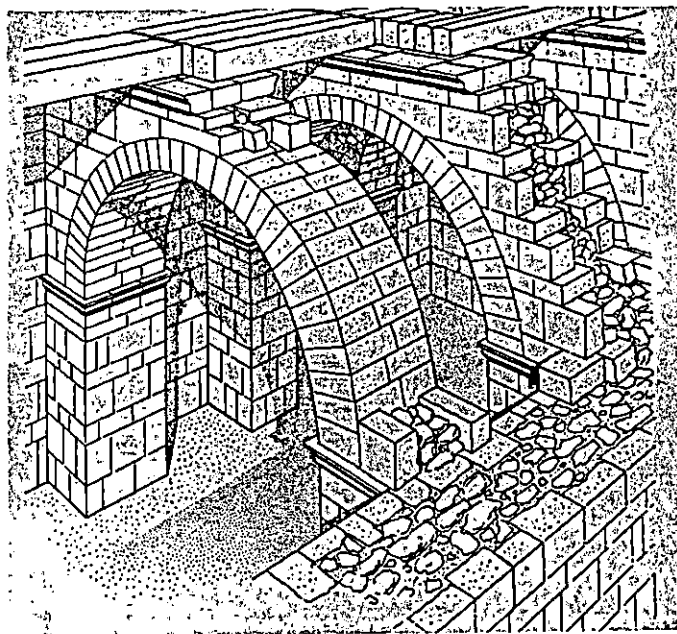


Figure 16. Parthian Palace, Hatra - Roof Scheme

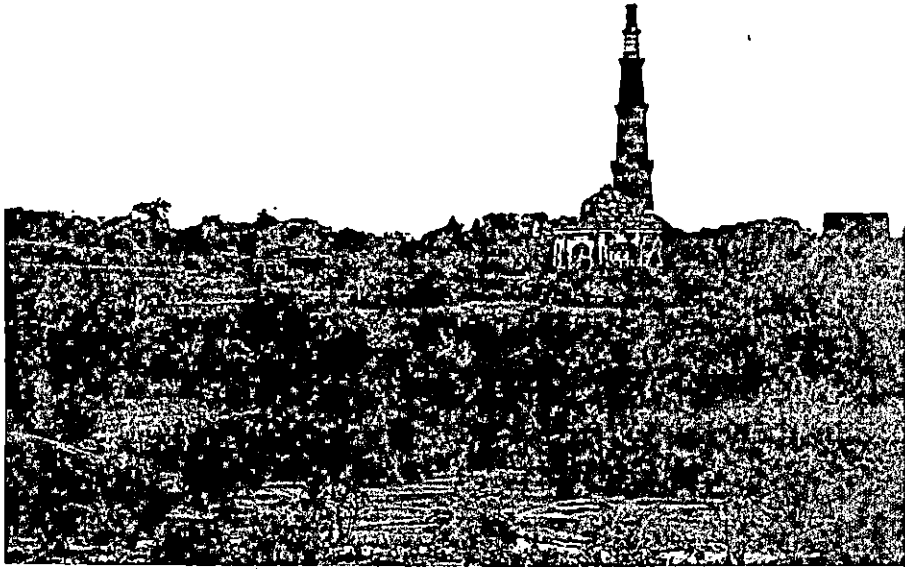


Plate I. Quwwat al-Islam Complex - General view

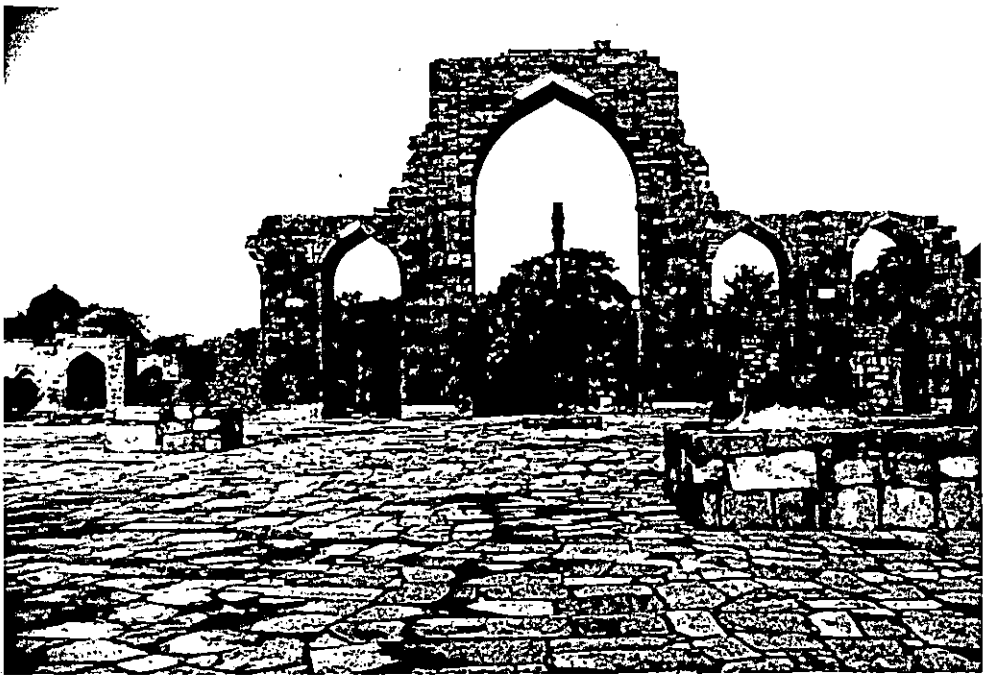


Plate II. Quwwat al-Islam Court

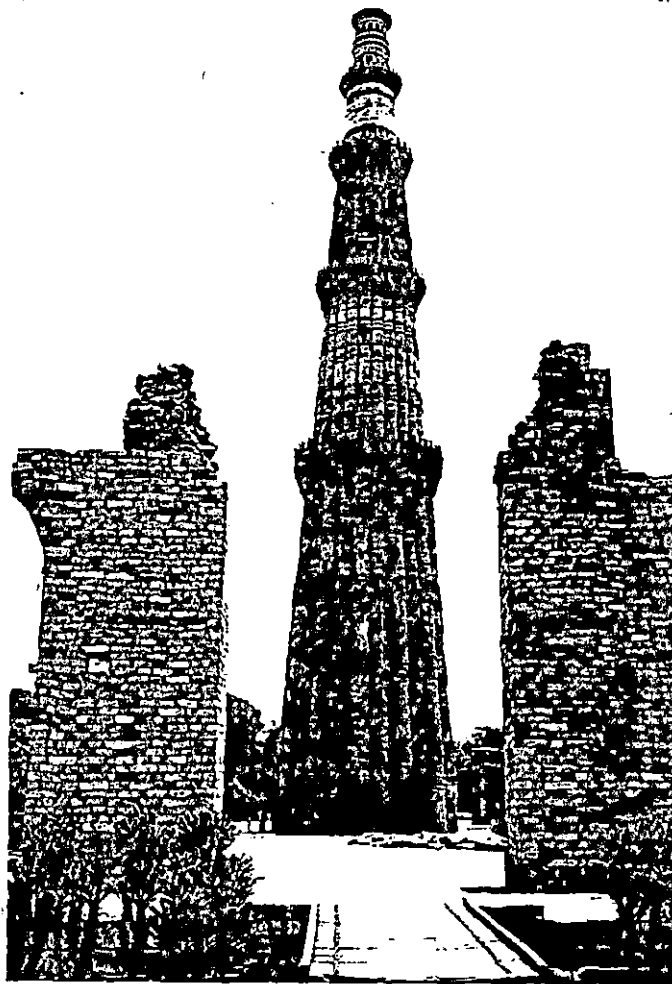


Plate III. Qutb Minar



Plate IV. Colonnade of Itutmish

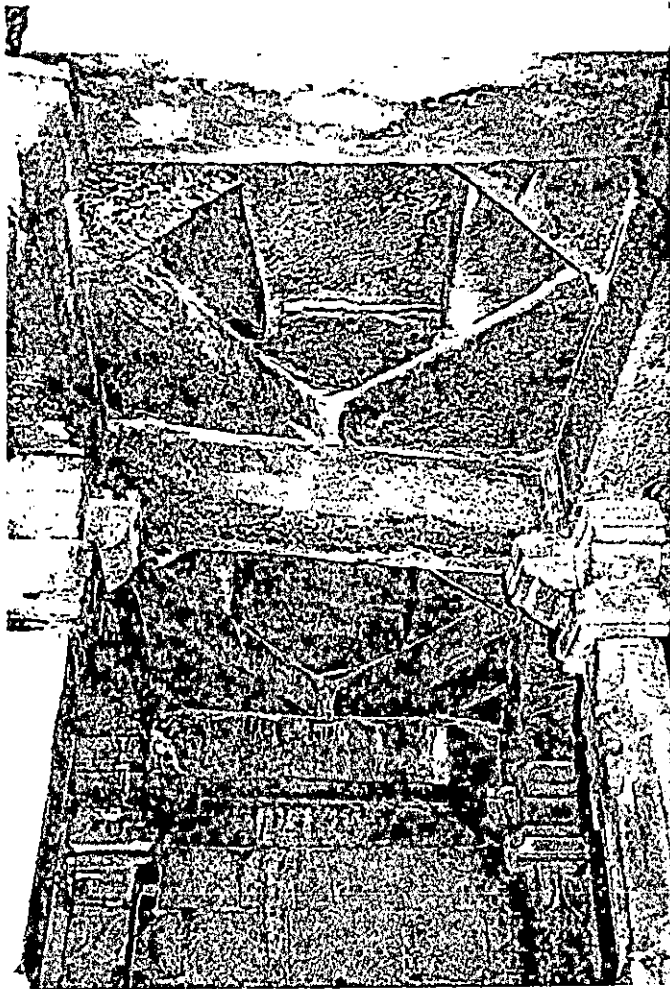


Plate V. Colonnade of Iltutmish - Lantern ceiling

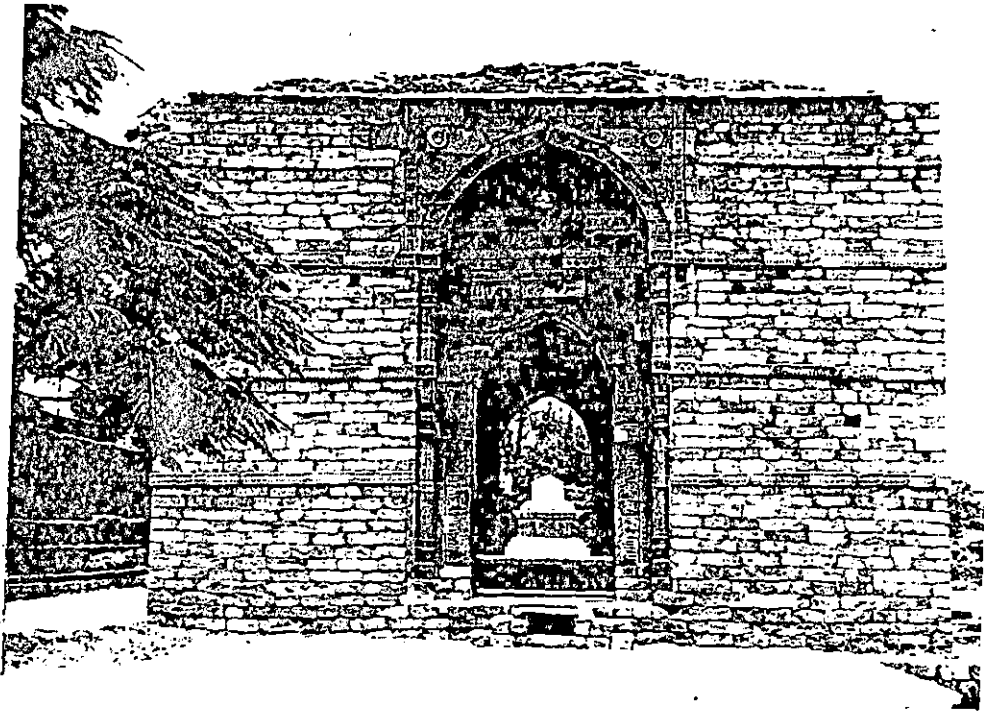


Plate VI. Tomb of Iltutmish

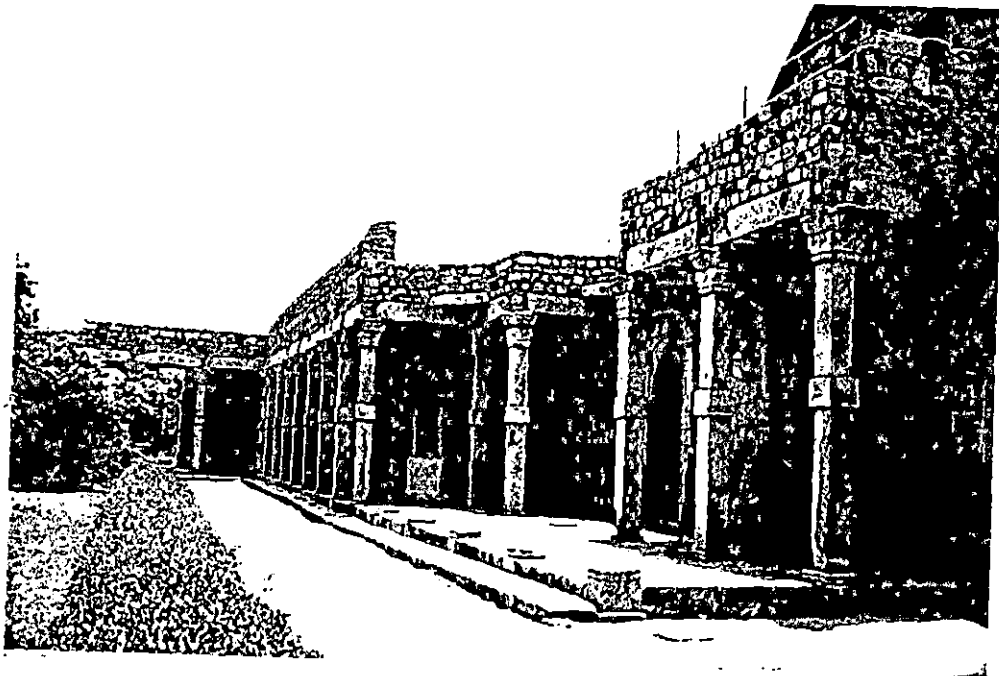


Plate VII. Colonnade of 'Alauddin

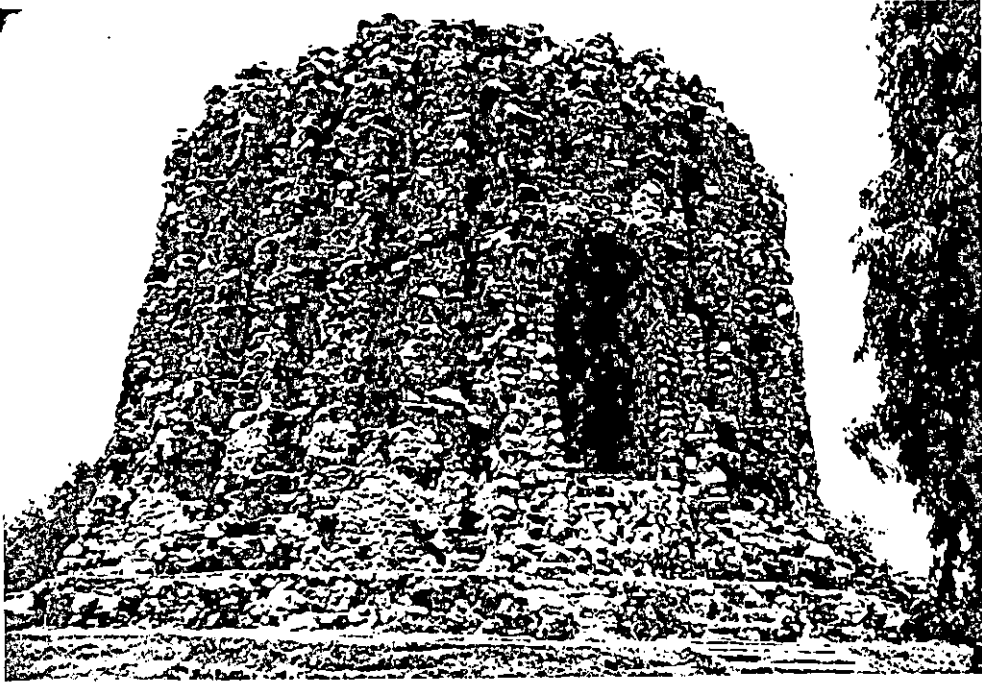


Plate VIII. 'Alai Minar



Plate IX. 'Alauddin's Northern Gateway

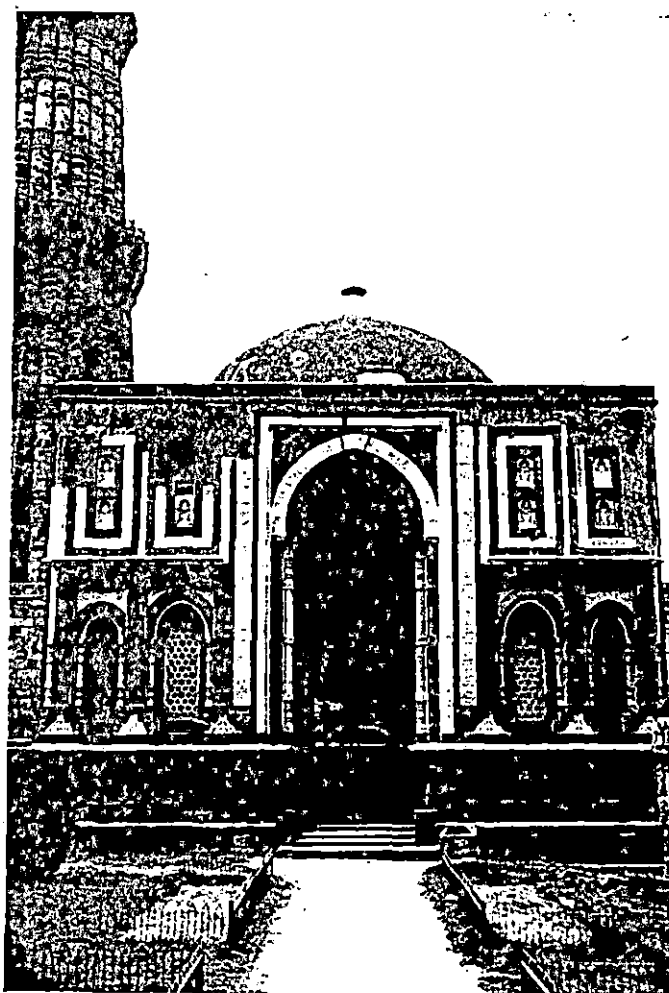


Plate X. 'Alai Darwaza - Exterior

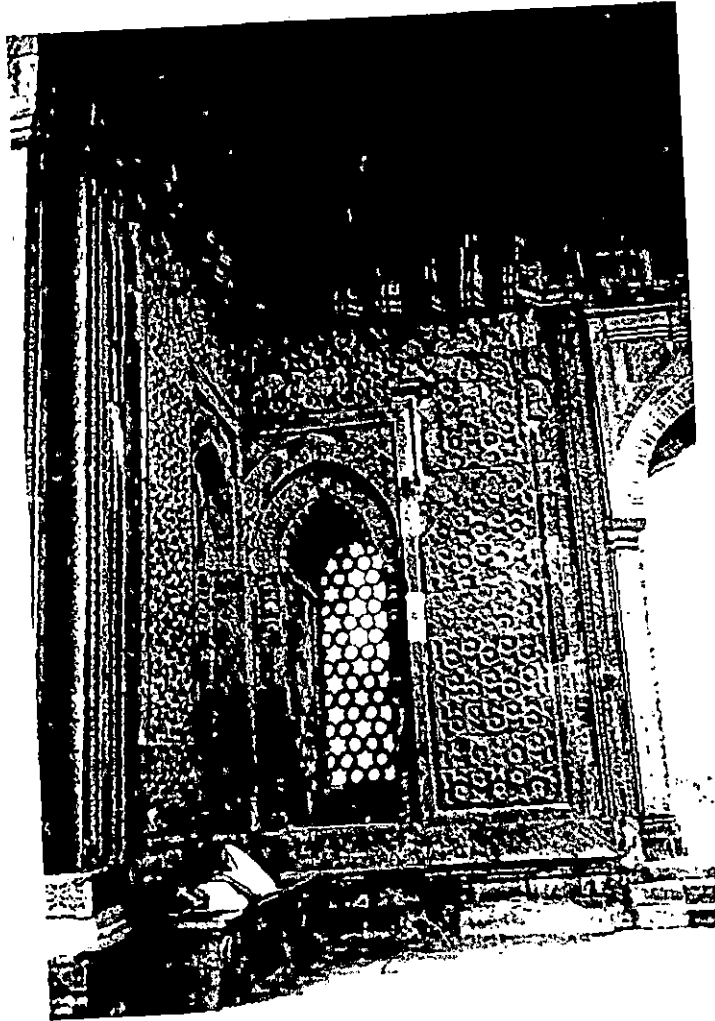


Plate XI. 'Alai Darwaza - Interior'



Plate XII. Sultan Ghari Tomb - Exterior

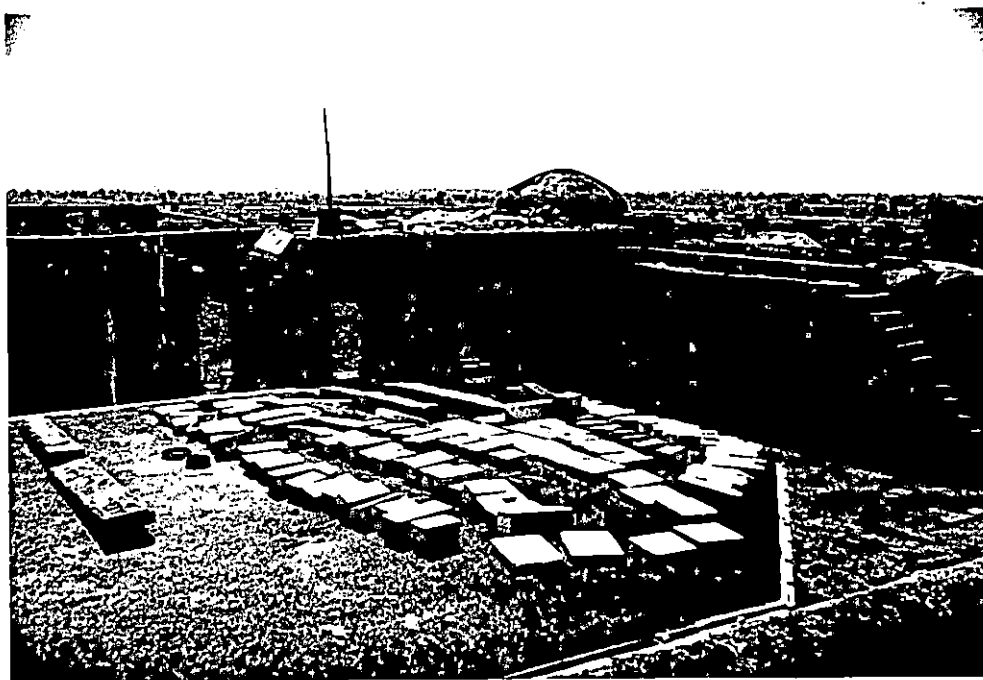


Plate XIII. Sultan Ghari Tomb - Interior



Plate XIV. Tomb of Balban

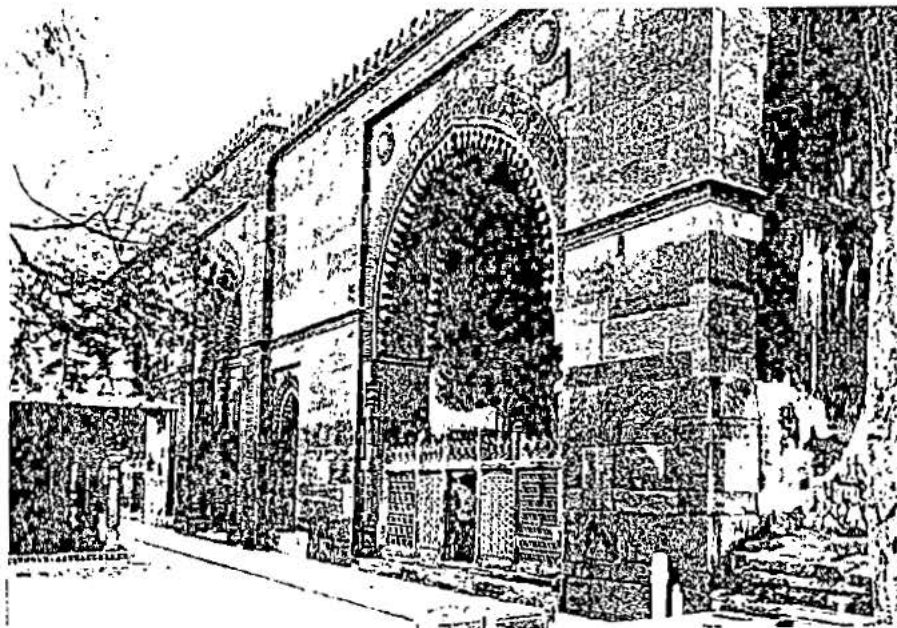


Plate XV. Jama'at Khana Masjid - Exterior

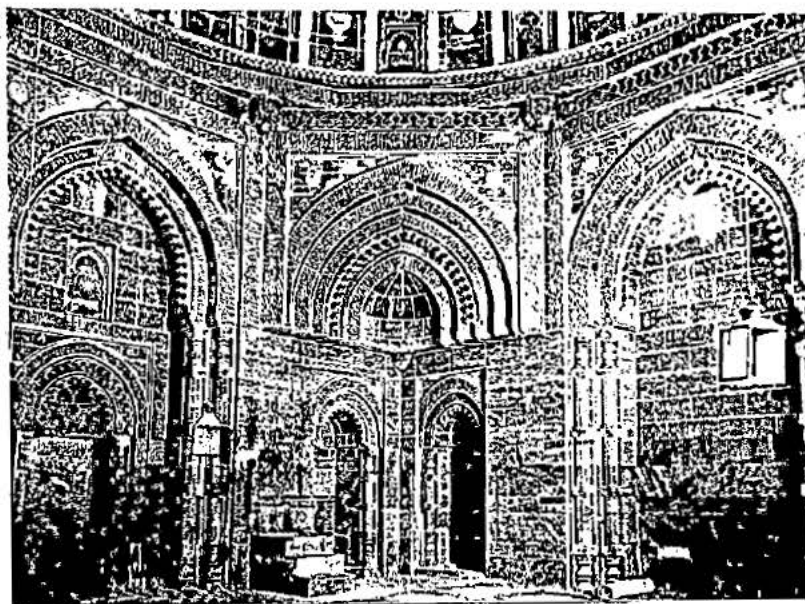


Plate XVI. Jama'at Khana Masjid - Interior

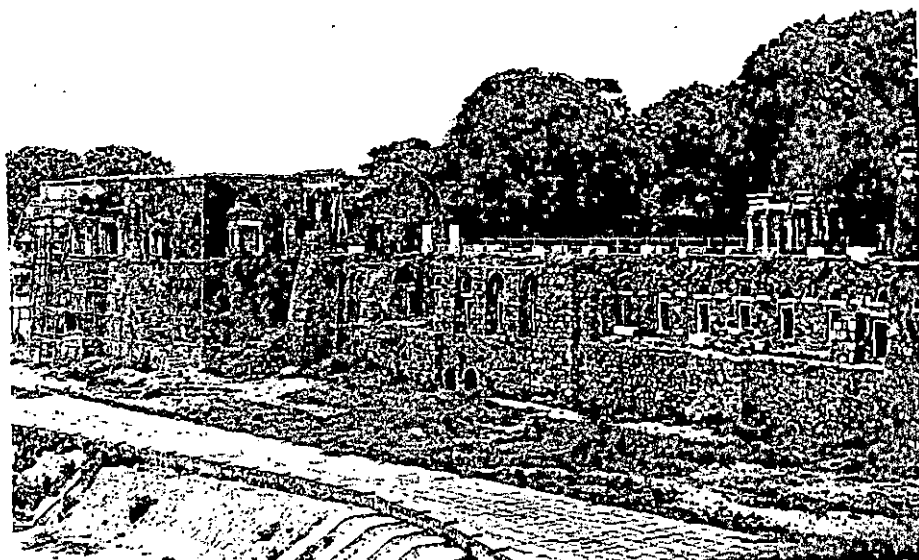


Plate XVII. Hauz Khas

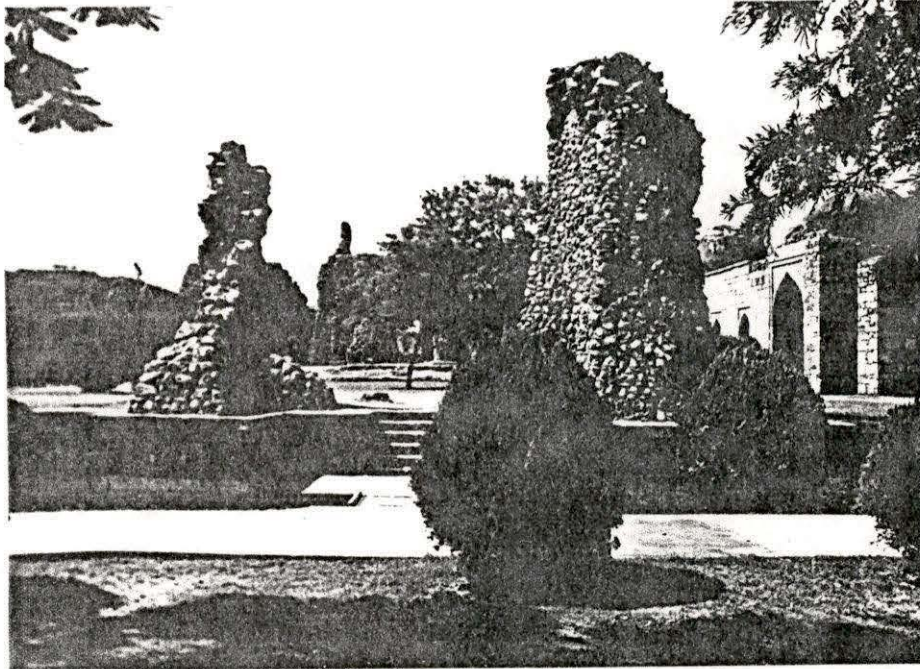


Plate XVIII. 'Alai Madrasa, North Block - General view

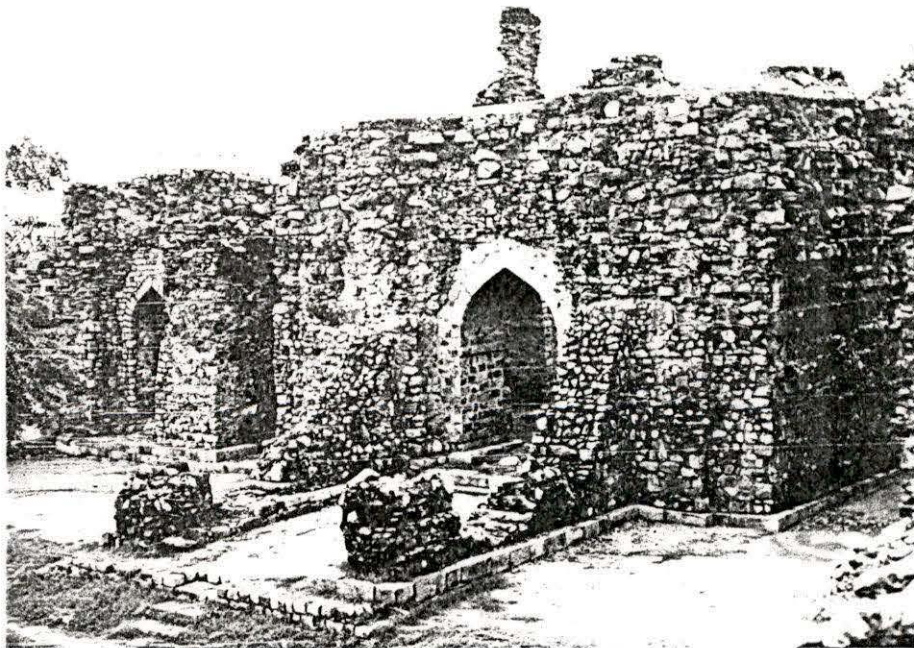


Plate XIX. "Alai Madrasa, South Block

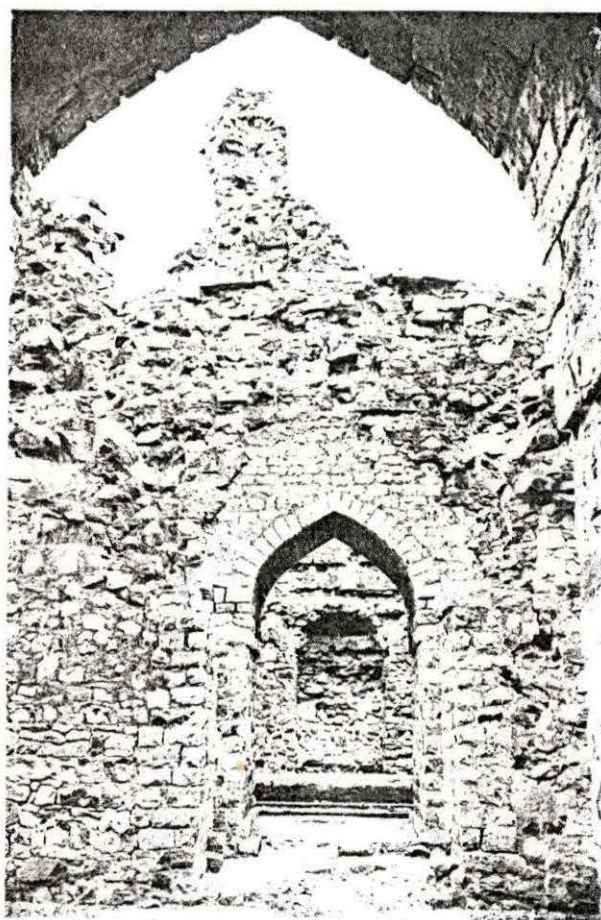


Plate XX. Tomb of 'Alauddin (facing west)

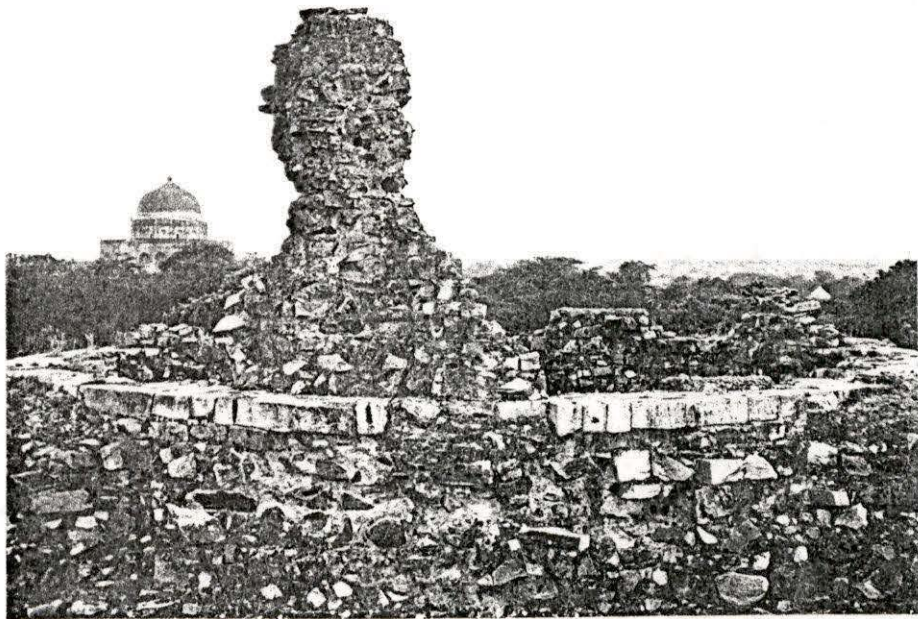


Plate XXI. Tomb of 'Alauddin - Detail of Drum Collar

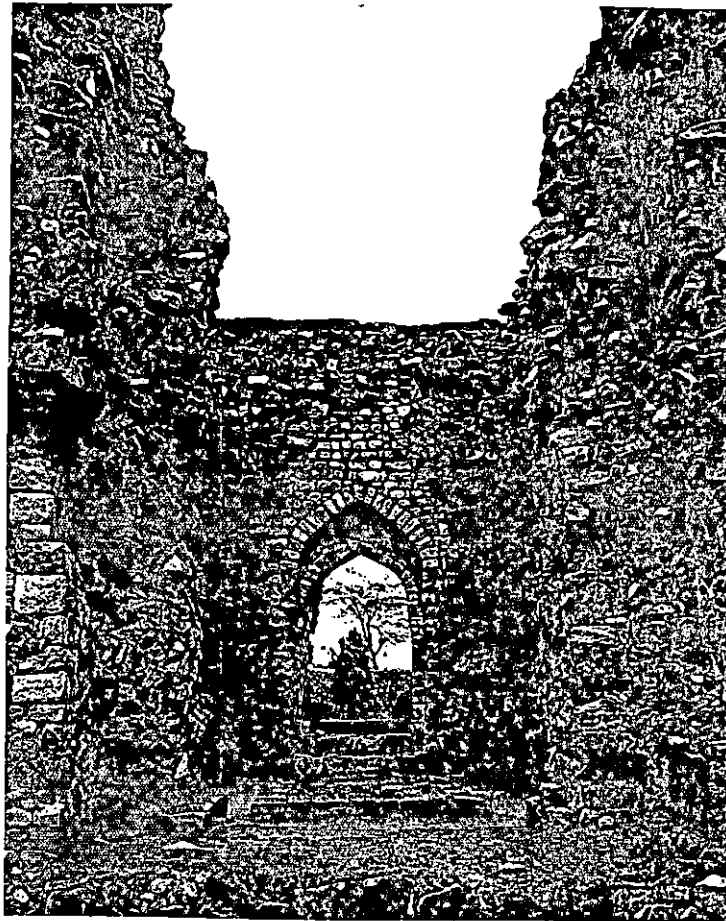


Plate XXII. West Tomb Chamber



Plate XXIII. Southern Enclosure

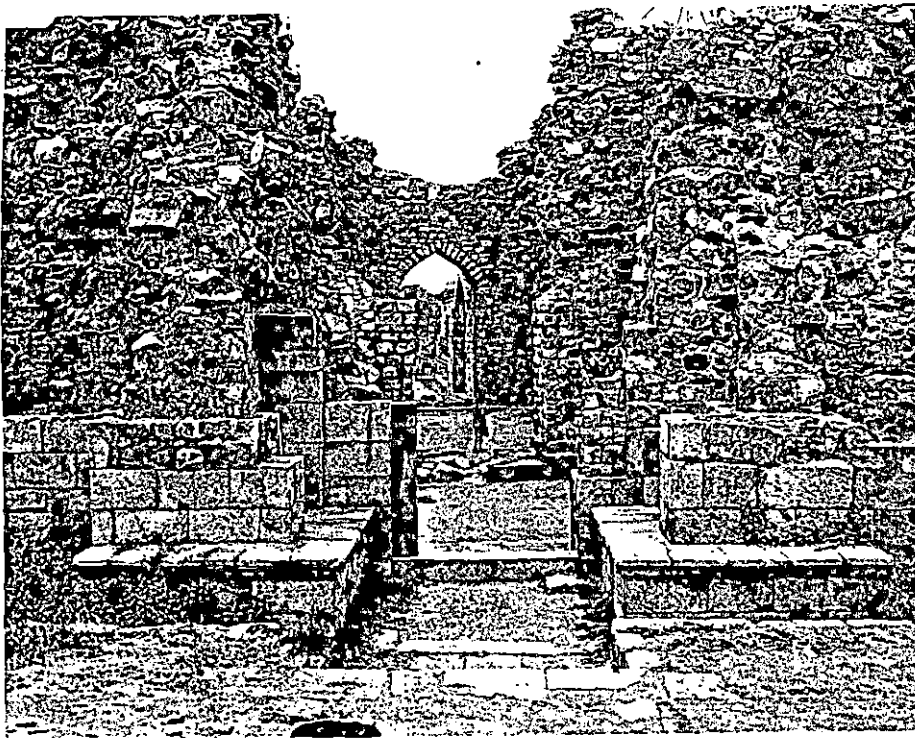


Plate XXIV. South Gateway

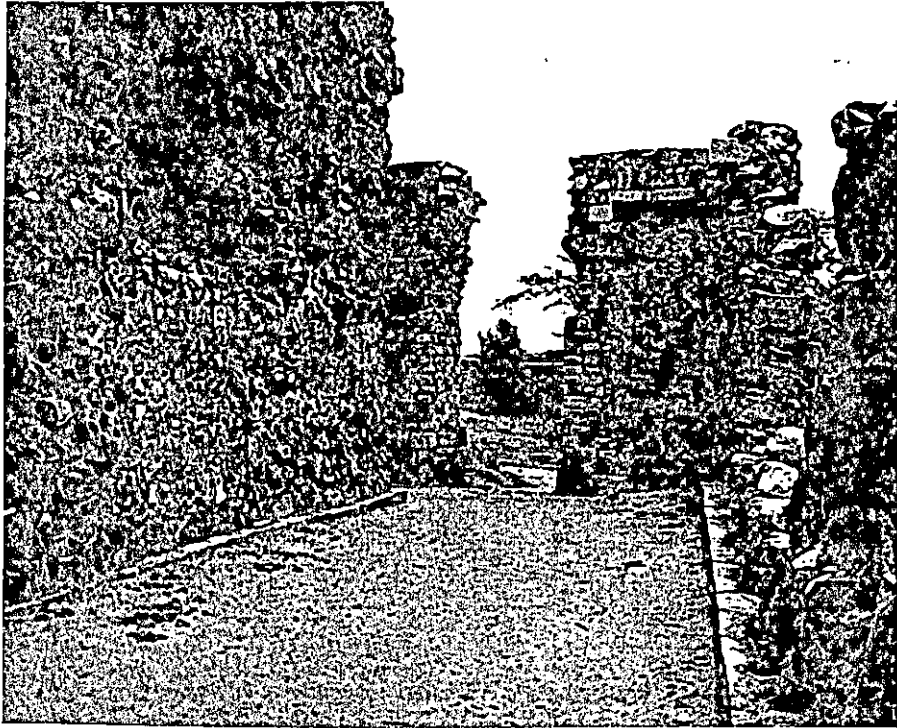


Plate XXV. West Corridor of Ambulatory



Plate XXVI. West Block Facade



Plate XXVII. West Block Exterior Wall



Plate XXVIII. West Block Exterior Wall (detail)



Plate XXIX. West Block Facade (detail)

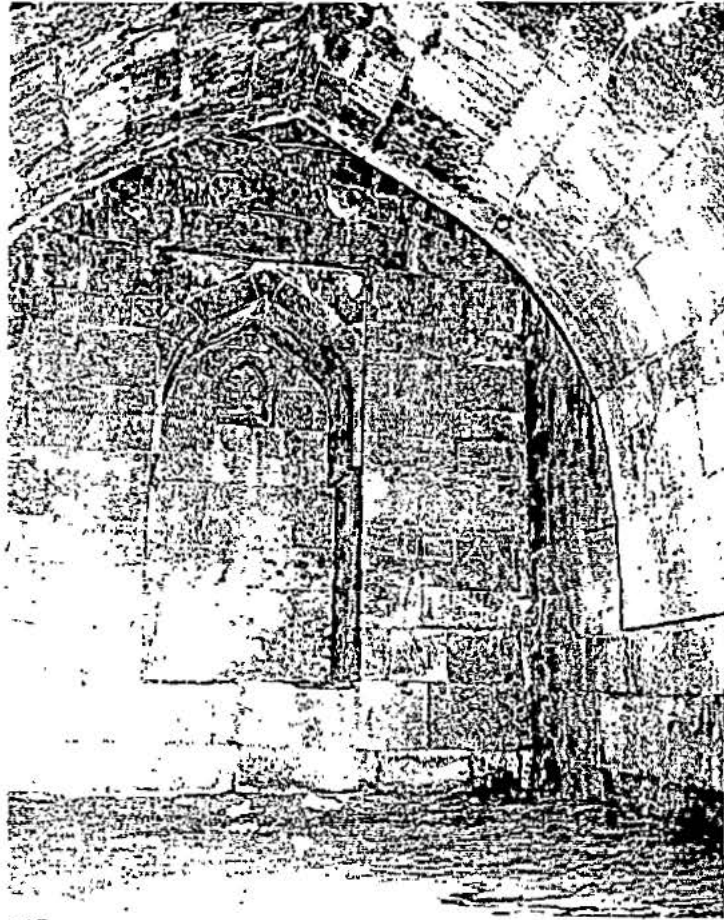


Plate XXX. Cell Interior

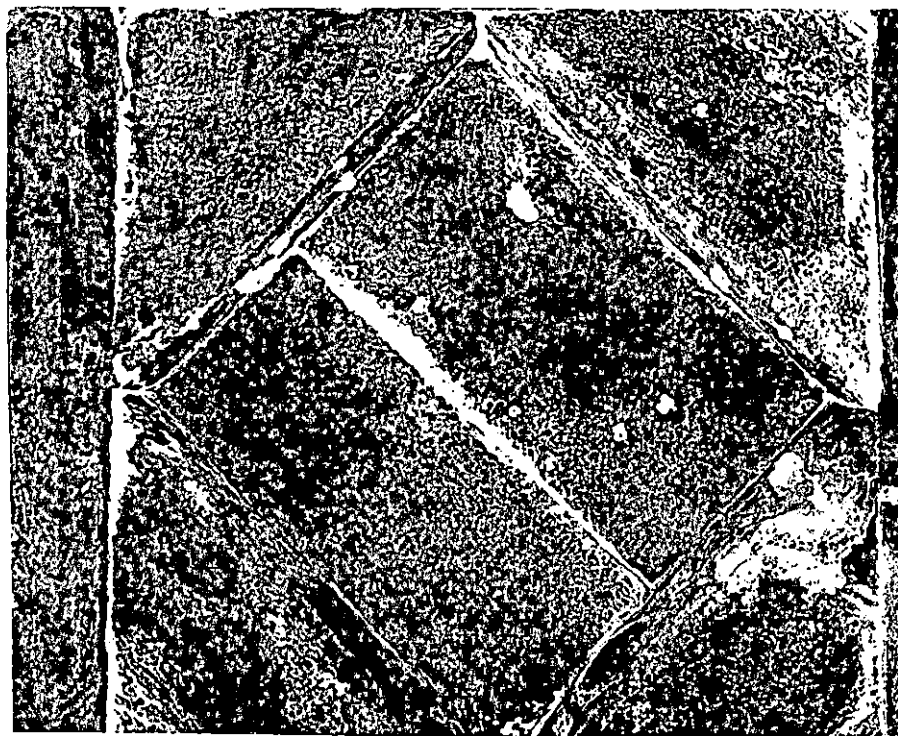


Plate XXXI. Cell Interior - Lantern Ceiling

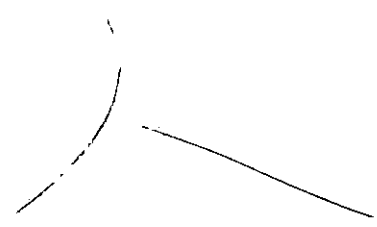




Plate XXXII. Chamber G Exterior

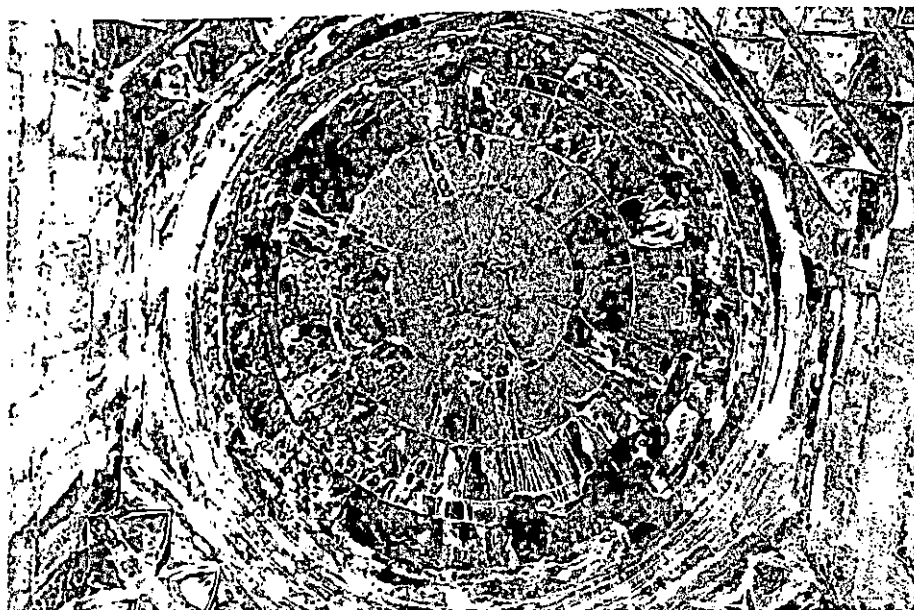


Plate XXXIII. Dome Chamber - Interior View

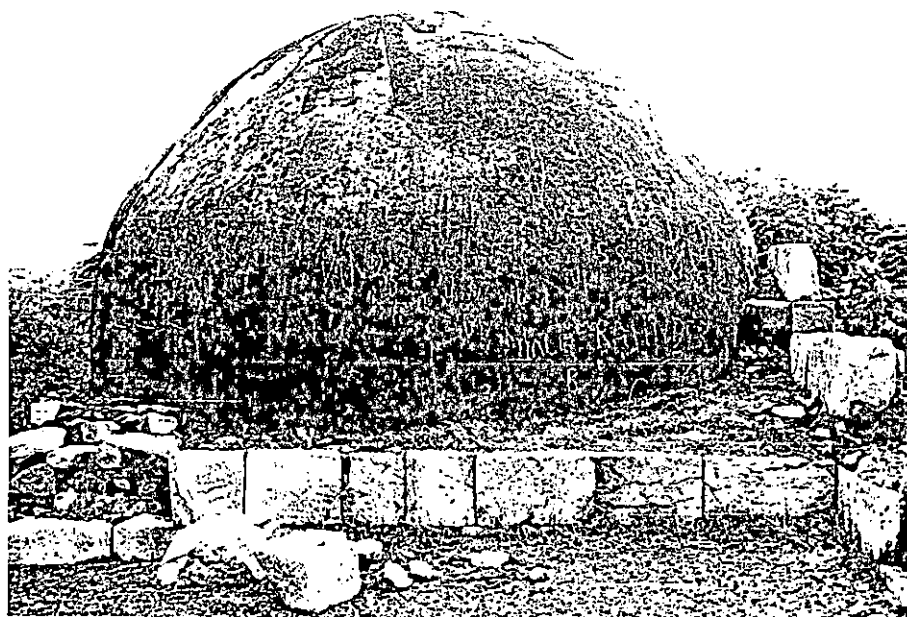


Plate XXXIV. Dome Chamber - Exterior View



Plate XXXV. Chamber G - Corbelled Pendentive

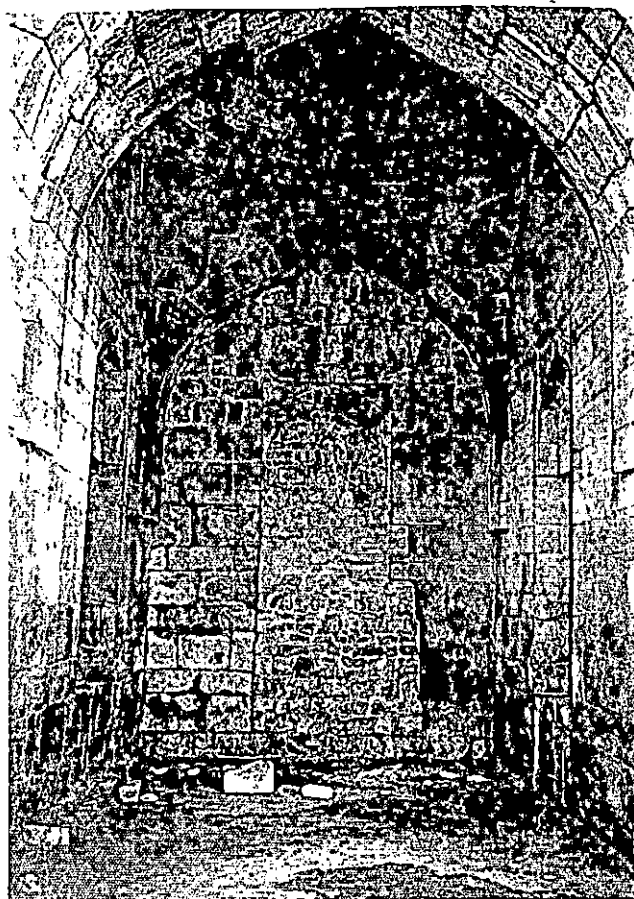


Plate XXXVI. Chamber C Interior



Plate XXXVII. Corbelled Pendentive with Muqarnas

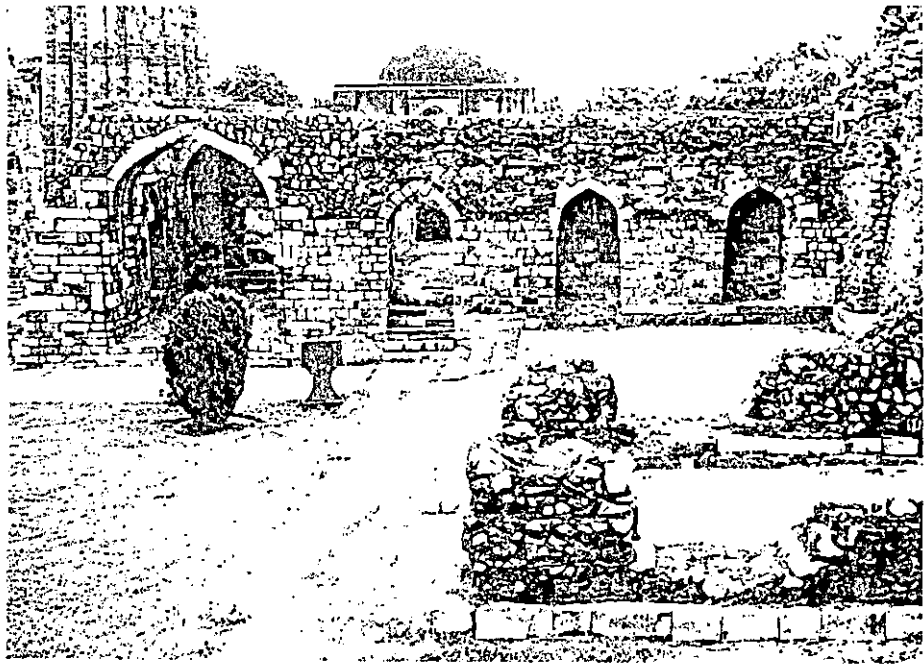


Plate XXXVIII. East Block Facade



Plate XXXIX. East Chamber Interior

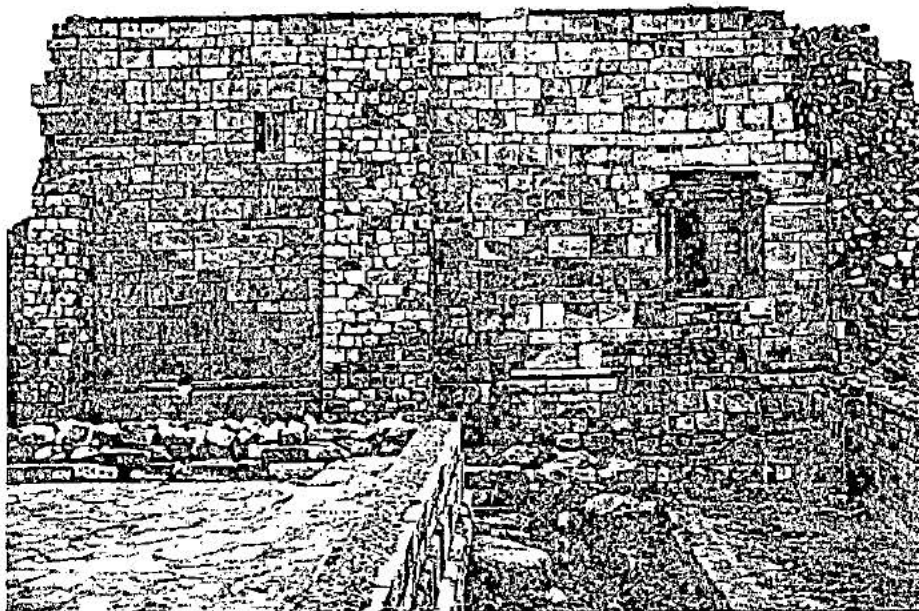


Plate XL. East Chamber Exterior

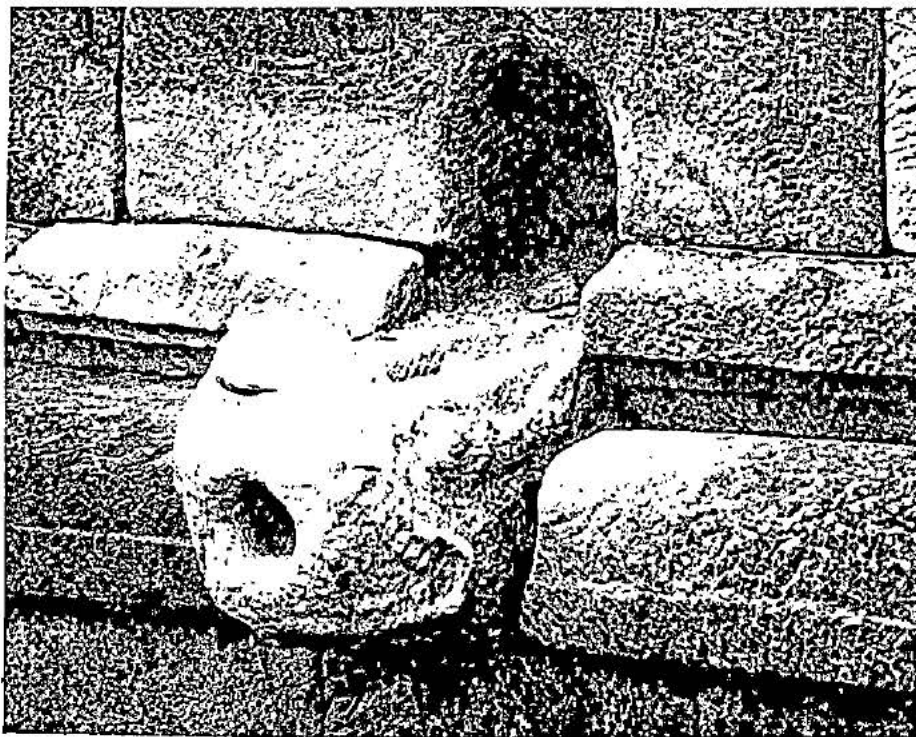


Plate XLI. Hindu Gargoyle

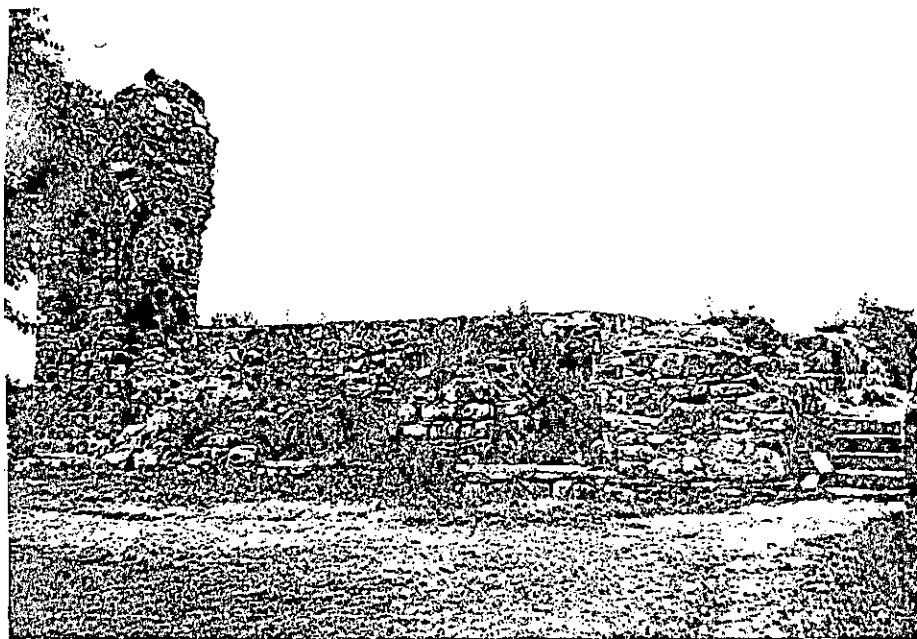


Plate XLII. Unidentified Ruins Southeast Corner

VITA.

Surname: COHN Given Names: Jeffrey Bruce

Place of Birth: Long Beach, CA. Date of Birth: March 6, 1956

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and leaving:

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES 1980 to 1981

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA, B.C. 1982 to 1984

Degrees, Diplomas, Etc., Awarded, with Dates and Names of
Institutions:

B.A. (Magna cum laude) 1981 UCLA

Honors and Awards:

University of Victoria Fellowship, 1983/84

Flora Hamilton Burns Fellowship, 1983/84

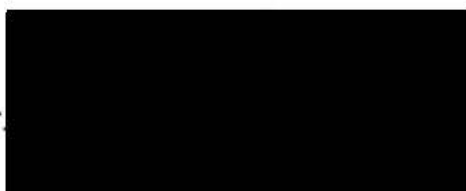
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