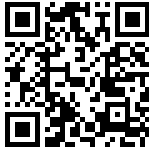


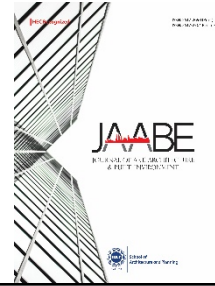
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Identity of Sikh Architecture in Lahore

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Abstract

The current research focused on the “analytical aspects of change in architectural style” of Lahore that took place due to ethnographical, anthropological, and administrative changes brought about by Ranjīt Singh and the shift of architectural identity of Lahore. The study focused on the process of planning and construction of streets and buildings. It also aimed to build a narrative about the shift of architectural identity of the city. Furthermore, it also highlighted the new identity of the city gained during the reign of Mahārāja Ranjīt Singh. Many stories and folklores are linked to the origin of the name “Lahore” as the city was inhabited about 2000 B.C. According to the Hindu tradition, the word “Lahore” is based on the name of Loh, one of the sons of Rāma, the king of Ayūdhya. Before the Sikh rāj, Lahore was governed by Mughals and was known as the “City of Gardens”. Afterwards, Lahore saw the Sikh period of devastation and extermination. Initially, Sikh sardārs fought for Lahore, looted the city, and then divided it into three parts. Each part was governed by a Sikh sardār. The anarchy of the Sikh period came to a halt with the beginning of Rāja Ranjīt Singh’s reign. He took a keen interest in the administration and construction of the city. Many new havelis and gardens were constructed not only by Ranjīt Singh, however, also by his courtiers.

Keywords: cultural impact, identity, Lahore, Ranjit Singh, Sikh architecture, Walled City

Introduction

Many stories and folklores are linked to the origin of Lahore as the city was founded about 2000 B.C. According to Hindu tradition, the word “Lahore” is based on the name of Loh, one of the sons of Rāma, the king of Ayūdhya (Khan, [1992](#)). The same has also been mentioned in the books “Lahore as it Was” (Kipling & Thornton, [1860](#)), and “Lahore, Architectural Remains and Antiquities” (Latif, [1994](#)). According to Rāja Tarangini, an ancient

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chronicle of Kashmir, Lahore was the capital of one of the early Rājput states founded in western India (Khan, [1992](#)).

The grandeur of Lahore was reduced by the attacks of Aḥmad Shāh Abdāli and Sikhs. Before Ranjīt Singh's era, Lahore was shared by Sardārs. Niaz Baig, Muzang, Ichra, and Chaurji constituted the southern parts of Lahore and were governed by Sardār Saubha Singh. Bāgh-i Zīb al-Nisā was announced as the place of his residence and Nawaṅkot, a residential settlement, was developed inside the garden. The area of Bāgh-i Zīb al-Nisā was also avowed as his capital (Rehman, [2013](#)).

The eastern chunk of the city was bounded by Shālamār Garden to the *haveli* of Kāblimal. This area was governed by Gujjar Singh. Qil 'ah Gujjar Singh (Gujjar Singh fort) was planned and erected by him. Even today, it is considered as one of the most densely populated areas of Lahore. Fort, Bādshāhi Mosque, Masti Gate, Kashmīri Gate, and Shīrānwāla Gate formed the centre of the city and were taken care by Lāhna Singh (Baqir, [1952](#)).

By 1767, the three Sardārs of Lahore got economically and politically stable and ruled Lahore till 1790s with no obstruction. During their governance, Lahore experienced fright and uncivilization. Buildings built during Mughal rule were vandalized. Finely carved metal works and valuable stones were broken and thrown away. The process of destruction and vandalism continued till the death of Gujjar Singh in 1791, followed by the death of Saubha Singh in 1797 and Lāhna Singh in 1798.

Literature Review

In 1793, Timūr Shāh went to his heavenly abode. Afterwards, Zamān Shāh, son of Timūr Shāh, struggled to regain the control of city of Lahore and environs that were once under the control of Aḥmad Shāh Abdāli, grandfather of Zamān Shāh. He invaded Punjab four times and remained successful in reaching Lahore twice. His first attack was from Kandahar in 1795. Administrative problems in Kabul compelled him to return from Rohtas Fort. He made another attempt in 1796-97, however, returned due to the revolt by Shāh Maḥmūd, brother of Zamān Shāh. Another attempt was made in 1798 and he conquered Lahore easily (Hugel, [1845](#)). After gaining control over Lahore, he rushed to Kabul due to upheaval by Shāh Maḥmūd. During his return, he lost twelve of his guns in the floods of River Jehlum. Ranjīt Singh recovered eight out of twelve guns and sent them back

to Kabul. Keeping in view his services to Shāh Zamān, Ranjīt Singh was made the governor of Lahore (Muhammad, [1962](#)).

Ranjit Singh's Period

After getting permission, Ranjīt Singh tried to get hold of Lahore and remained successful on July 5, 1799. He ruled Lahore till his demise. The boundaries of Punjab were expanded till River Satluj on one side, Kashmīr on the other, Peshawar, Hazara, and Ārājāt. Areas stretching from Jamrud to Phalaur were under the command of Ranjīt Singh. Upon the orders of Ranjīt Singh, *taxāl* of Lahore dispensed his coin. Ranjīt Singh opted the title of *Sarkār* for himself. He made a treaty with the British on 25th April 1809 and, therefore did not cross River Satluj (Chaudhary, [2000](#)).

After Ranjīt Singh took control of Lahore, the city ceased to depict the grandeur of Mughal architecture and the ambience that it used to showcase some decades ago. A few people lived within the city walls otherwise; Walled City used to offer destroyed buildings and *muḥallās* with desolated places everywhere. As far as demolition outside the city walls is concerned, one could find many monuments, such as mausoleums, tombs, mosques, and gardens (Chaudhary, [1998](#)). As Ranjīt Singh declared Lahore his capital, Lahore Fort became the place of his residence. The vacated *ḥavelis* of Mughals were bestowed upon to Sardārs and courtiers of Ranjīt Singh. The city was guarded by a fortified double wall. The outer wall was further strengthened by bastions that were built at strategic locations. A moat was excavated in between the two walls and was irrigated from the river (Creswell, [2011](#)).

Ranjīt Singh ruled Lahore for forty years and prosperity prevailed in society during his reign. The population of city increased rapidly during Ranjīt Singh's reign. New *ḥavelis*, houses, *mandars*, *gurudawārās*, *samādhis*, and many other buildings were built. The skyline of Lahore saw emergence of new art and architecture (Ezdi, [2009](#)). Many variations were made in Lahore Fort according to the taste of Ranjīt Singh. Buildings built during his time included buildings built over Shīsh Maḥal and palace of Rāni Jindaṅ. Many bricks were required for the erection of these structures beside Rām Bāgh, Darbār Ṣāḥab, and Amritsar. The remains of demolished structures present in the vicinity of the Walled City acted as supply depots of bricks for the construction of these buildings. In this process, different

types of buildings were treated equally and holy places and monuments of Muslims were also damaged and destroyed (Fauq, [2005](#)).

People lived a peaceful life during Ranjīt Singh's reign. However, society was based on class differences at the same time. Sikhs were considered as the most esteemed class. They were followed by Hindus because they were considered as the mainstays of finance and various other managerial positions. Muslims comprised the lowest segments of the society and were hired on low paid jobs besides being artillery personnel. It appears that Sikhs were prejudiced against the Muslims. Some mosques already existed in the Walled City before Sikh reign. Few mosques were raised by Sikhs during their rāj, however, it is also a fact that significant mosques and monuments of Muslims were maltreated (Glover, [2008](#)). For instance, the courtyard of Badshāhi Mosque was transformed into a stable for horses, veranda and the prayer hall were converted into storage, and mihrāb area was changed to toilet. The mosques located in the outskirts of the Walled City were changed into storage areas (Muhammad, [1962](#)).

Many warehouses were built within the city walls since prostitution flourished during Ranjīt Singh's reign. Maurān was one of the prostitutes who became the courtier of Ranjīt Singh. She built a mosque in the area located between Shāh'Ālam and Lohari Gate. Gul Bahār Begum, a prostitute in Amritsar, became the rāni of Ranjīt Singh. Her ḥaveli was constructed in Rang Maḥal area (Goulding, [2006](#)).

The justice system established by Ranjīt Singh was based on courts called *panchāyat*. *Panchāyat* used to be held to resolve the common disputes among people. Disputes involving Muslims were heard and resolved according to Islamic *shariyyāh*. For this purpose, government patronaged judges or *qādi*, religious scholars, as well as *ālams* and *muftīs* were summoned to give decisions. Niẓām al-Dīn was appointed as the first *qādi* or judge of Lahore, whereas Muḥammad Shāh and Sa'dullah Chishti became the first *muftīs* (Latif, [1994](#)).

Lahore was segregated into various *muḥallās* and every *muḥalla* was managed by a representative. The dispersed craftsmen, who escaped due to the vandalism of Sikhs, were invited back and resettled in the premises of the Walled City. A variety of *muḥallās* were defined on the basis of the profession of residents, such as Kūcha Lauhāraṅ, Kūcha Tīrgirān, Kūcha Kamāngirān, Kūcha Qāzi khāna, Gujjar gali, Kūcha Naqqāshān, Kūcha

Naqqārchiyān, Kūcha Darziyān, Kūcha Dhaubiyān, Kūcha Māshkiyān, Kūcha Chābuksawārān, Kūcha Tizābiyān, Kūcha Kothidārān, Kūcha Kundigirān, Kūcha Daryaibāfān, Kūcha Munjkuttān, Kūcha Wānwattān, Kūcha Sirkibandān, Kūcha Chirīmārān, Kūcha Nayāriyān, Bazār Ṣadākārān, Kūcha Patauliyān, Kūcha Daftarikuttān, Kūcha Khurāsiyān, Kūcha Phulaihriyān, Kūcha Hawagirān, Kūcha Ghungrusāzān, Kūcha Mittiputtān, Kūcha Kumhārān, Kūcha Sarājan, Kūcha Changrān, Kūcha Dūgrān, Kūcha Taubyān, Kūcha Kāghaziyān, Rarah Tailiyān, Kātra Pūrbiyān, Kūcha Dafāliyān, Kūcha Patrangan, Kātrāh Tārkushān, Kūcha Lakkārharān, Kāchupura, Kūcha Koftgirān, Thātīrabazār, Kūcha Nāiyān, Kūcha Jaugiyān, Kūcha Muftiyān, Takyāh Sādhuwān, Kināribazār, and Bazār Shīshamauti (Karamat, 2019).

Many measures were taken by Ranjīt Singh to maintain safety, law, and order in the city. The city was taken care of by the police and *Kūtwāls* or judges. Imām Bukhsh Kharsawār was commissioned as the first *Kūtwāl* of Lahore. Charity-based dispensaries were introduced in the city with Ḥakīm Nur al-Dīn as the chief *Ḥakīm*. The city was guarded by a double boundary wall and a moat was dug between the two walls. The measures taken by Ranjīt Singh were quite helpful in maintaining peaceful lives of the citizens of Lahore, therefore, the era of civil war came to an end (Yunis, 1991).

Ranjīt Singh passed away in 1839. His reign spans over forty years. As far as prosperity of Punjab is concerned, it is evident that during his reign, there was an expansion in area as well as political and financial stability. Ranjīt Singh maintained justice and never showed mercy to his friends and foes, Muslims and non-Muslims for grabbing land in order to expand Punjab. He had an unexplainable love for nature and landscapes. Due to his love for nature, the area encompassing Dehli gate to Shālamār Garden along the royal route, that is, through Sultānpura, Ghauray Shāh, Bāghbānpura, Bhaugiwāl, and Shālamār Garden was cultivated and many plants were grown. In 1837, Sir Henry Fan stayed in Lahore and applauded its landscape designed according to the orders of Ranjīt Singh.

Ranjīt Singh built various gardens in Lahore. *Makān-i Dilkusha*, was built as a resting place of Ranjīt Singh in the center of each garden where he used to have rest. Despite all the progress achieved during Sikh rule, statistics showed that destruction pacified construction during Sikh rāj. On one hand, Ranjīt Singh destroyed numerous Islamic buildings, , whereas

also repaired and renovated various buildings including mausoleums and tombs.

A number of gardens were built by Sikhs in the environs of Walled City. These gardens remained handicapped to come up to Mughal gardens apropos of architecture and aesthetics and vanished with the passage of time. Although, ruins of some gardens may still be found. A few of these gardens include Bāgh Mahā Rāja Ranjīt Singh, Bādāmi Bāgh, Bāgh Rāja Dhayān Singh, Ḥaḍūri Bāgh, Bāgh Miṣr Dīwān Chand Zafar Jang Bahādūr, Bāgh Dīwān Kirpa Rām, Bāgh Sardār Jawāla Singh, Bāgh Dīwān Ratan chand Dārhiwāla, Kuri Bāgh, Bāgh Kanhayyalāl Kampu Wāla, Bāgh Bhāi Mahān Singh, Bāgh Rāja Dīna Nāth, Bāgh Rāja Tīja Singh, Bāgh Jam‘adār Kḥushḥāl Singh, Bāgh Sardār Līhna Singh Sindhiyānwāliya, Bāgh Hari Singh Nalūh, Bāgh Maurān Wala, Bāgh Sardār Ratan Singh Garjākhiya, Bāgh Himmat Kuhār, Bāgh Chhāūni Jam‘adār Kḥushḥāl Singh, Bāgh Rāni Gul Begum, Bāgh Chhju Bhagat, Faid Bāgh Rāja Dīna Nāth, and Bāgh Thākūr Dawāra Bhūri Sarkār (Muhammad, 1962).

Analysis shows that the British historians and writers of Sikh period ridiculed the architecture produced during Sikh rule in the Punjab. It has always been a policy of all agonistic imperialists to deride the defeated culture and architecture and there was no excuse for Sikh architecture. Many British and local writers of post-independence period called Sikh architecture as vulgarization of Mughal forms. They caused confusion as even a quick study can reflect the exclusive form of Sikh architecture which is not an imitation of Mughal architecture from any angle.

The above discussion can be grasped by apprehending the *Gurudawāra* architecture. The *Gurudawāra* represents freedom from melancholy, equality of people, and inspires people through the symbol of human wisdom, the Guru Garanth Ṣāḥab, holiness personified. The theories and philosophy of the faith carved the arrangement of different spaces in the form of *Gurudawāra*. One such example is *langar khāna*. It is a large hall where food is served to people. It is in sharp contrast to Muslim and Hindu faith and is a pivotal element of *Gurudawāra*. Here, everyone gets served with food without any discretion of religion, caste, creed or race. In short, the Sikh faith believes in breaking all the taboos that segregate people. It is an exceptional example in South Asian region where people are divided on the bases of religion, caste, creed, and colour of skin (Karamat, 2019).

On one side, the reign of Mahārāja Ranjīt Singh can be termed as an era of development, expansion, and construction of many gardens, markets, and residential settlements in Lahore. However, the Walled City of Lahore was neglected badly. The streets and *muḥallās* of the city were filthy and remained obstructed with garbage and dung. The dead bodies of animals used to make the surroundings unbreathable. The drainage was built in the center of the streets which remained filled with waste and dung. Rain was the only source to clean the drainage and discard waste. Aristocrats and lords used elephants and horses as a means of transportation. Due to the passage of horses and elephants, the waste in the canals became troublesome for the pedestrians.

Education sector was badly neglected during Sikh rule and rarely any government, school or *madrassa* was recognized in Lahore. Some private *madrassās* were established in Lahore, such as *Madrassa* by Khalīfa Ghulām Rasūl and Ghulāmullah in Maurān Mosque, *Madrassa* by Maulwi Jān Muḥammad in Mosque Nūr Imānwāli, *Madrassa* in Mosque Khurāsīyān, and *Madrassa* by Faqīr ‘Azīz al-Dīn and Nūr al-Dīn in their *Faqīr khāna*. Similarly, printing and publication of books was also considered primitive since books were handwritten, vended outside Wazīr Khān Mosque (Lal, [2001](#)).

As stated above that destruction blurred construction during Sikh period, many residential units encroached Wazīr Khān Chauk which dominated the mosque. The chauk was regenerated in 1850 as a vast open public space and the houses that encroached the chauk were pulled down by the orders of the government. Rāja Suchīt Singh Daugra constructed his haveli in the neighbourhood of Lahore Fort during Ranjīt Singh’s government which is among the examples of “destruction dominated construction”. The haveli was shaped after pulling down numerous houses that stood in the neighborhood of tomb built beside Lahore Fort and its garden (Munir, [2018](#)).

Within the Walled City, numerous houses were demolished to raise havelis. These havelis, after some time, were again divided into smaller units to be demolished to build other havelis. The process of construction followed by destruction kept on recycling during Sikh period. Environs of the Walled City matured rapidly due to two factors. First factor was ṣufi saints who dwelled in the suburbs of Lahore to preach Islam. Ḥaḍrat Dāta Ganj Bakhsh, Ḥaḍrat Pīr Makki, Ḥaḍrat Miān Mīr, Ḥaḍrat Shāh Chirāgh,

Shāh Abu-al Ma‘āli, Ḥaḍrat Mauj Darya, Shāh ‘Ali Rangrīz, Mādhu Lāl Ḥusain, Ḥaḍrat Ishān, Ḥaḍrat Miān Wadda are few of the examples. The second factor was generous obligation of land by the Sikh rulers to their loyals, such as Mihr Muḥkam Dīn was given the area of Nawān Kot by Ranjīt Singh.

Bricks were the core requirement of new buildings. The requirement was achieved by demolition of dilapidated buildings due to the vandalism by Sikhs. The old buildings were excavated till their foundations to fulfill the need of bricks in order to construct new buildings. Contractor Muḥammad Sulṭān erected numerous buildings after pulling down the abandoned buildings and mosques. Sikhs looted everything, from environs of Lahore to the Walled City. After looting portable goods and structural elements, such as iron girders or steel used in the roofs, doors, and door frames, windows and window frames were looted and structures were burnt to ashes.

Kanehia Lāl mentioned about 64 ḥavelis in the Walled City. All were ramshackled except a few. One such ḥaveli was Ḥaveli Miān Khān. It was built by Nawāb Sā‘d Ullah Khān, a *wazīr* of Shāh Jahān. It was a three storeys structure. Rang Maḥal storey was designed for males, while the other was designed for females. The third storey was called as Qalaī Khāna. To save themselves from being looted by Sikhs, the successors of the ḥaveli flew away. Later on, the ḥaveli was encroached and dwelled by many people. The owners of the ḥaveli returned during Ranjīt Singh’s reign, however, the ḥaveli was handed over to numerous residents on cheap rates. Thus, a masterpiece of architecture became an ordinary cluster of houses.

The ḥaveli built by Nawāb Sā‘d Ullah Khān is another example. It was built in the area of Mochī Gate. It was known as Pathrān Wāli Ḥaveli due to cladded stones and was transformed into a factory of gun powder by Ranjīt Singh. The ḥaveli worn-out due to a blast triggered by fire in the gun powder factory.

Mubārak Ḥaveli constructed by Mīr Bahādur‘Ali, Mīr Nādir‘Ali, and Mīr Bābar‘Ali was another example. Sardār Kuhr Singh Sandhiyānwāla took over its charge and added many new buildings, verandas, and courtyards after alteration. A huge gateway was built in the eastern wall of the ḥaveli. Similarly, Pari Maḥal was another ḥaveli that was abandoned and altered by Sikhs. It was built by Wazīr Khān in the Shāh ‘Ālam Gate

area. Valuable stone claddings and embellishments were damaged and pulled out. Later on, it was transformed into a gun powder store and army's residence upon the orders of Ranjīt Singh. A number of buildings were destroyed to give way to an open courtyard for the purpose.

On the other hand, numerous new buildings including *ḥavelis* were also erected during Sikh period. After snatching Lahore from its Sikh rulers, Ranjīt Singh began reconstructing the city which was abandoned during Sikh Rāj before Ranjīt Singh. People started to resettle in the city after forgetting the barbarianism of Sikhs. As the city became peaceful, the Walled City began to take shape. New mosques, guru dawārās, Hindu temples, and *ḥavelis* were added to the skyline of the city.

Maharāja Kharāk Singh built a *ḥaveli* near Lohari Gate which was burnt to ashes during British period. Similarly, Kaṅwar Naunihāl Singh, son of Kharāk Singh constructed a *ḥaveli* near the Mori Gate. Wide terraces, verandas, and basements were the identity of this *ḥaveli*. *Āinakāri* and gold plating were exercised to decorate the false ceiling.

Jam'adār *Khushhāl* Singh also constructed a *ḥaveli* in *Chūna Mandi* inside Masti Gate. Many public residences were pulled down to construct this gigantic structure. Its sturdy southern and western wallsit appeared to construct another fort in front of Lahore Fort. A multi-storey *ḥaveli* was also built by Rāja Tīja Singh, nephew of Jam'adār *Khushhāl* Singh, adjacent to the *ḥaveli* built by Jam'adār *Khushhāl* Singh.

Some other examples of *ḥavelis* include *ḥaveli* built by Sardār *Suchīt* Singh which was constructed on the land of *Ḥaveli Āṣif Khān*. Moreover, another *ḥaveli* was constructed by Faqīr family. It was constructed in *Bāzār-i-Ḥakīmān* inside Bhāti Gate. One such *ḥaveli* was erected by Nawāb Imāmal-Dīn *Khān*, Governor of *Kashmīr* near Lohari Gate. RājaNāth raised a *ḥaveli* near Wazīr *Khān Chāuk* inside Dehli Gate.

Research Methodology

The current study was mainly based on secondary sources describing the historic evolution of Lahore city. Primary data was also collected from multiple locations through site visits. Data was collected using different tools and techniques. The built environment of Walled City, Lahore has changed over time. Moreover, the ambience that was produced as a result of the change of built environment is stored in the hearts of the residents of

Walled City as untold stories. Socialization, with the residents of Walled City, was used as a tool to built a comfort zone in order to hear those untold stories. Multiple secondary resources were consulted and compared. Random sampling was done to conduct interviews. Two types of filters were applied in this regard. First filter was that the interviewees' age should be more than 60 years so that they may have seen Sikh development. Second filter was that they should be in good mental health. All ethical measures were practiced during the process of interviews. Interviews were conducted after taking appointments from interviewees according to their comfort, so that they may not miss any detail in hurry. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended statements about the architecture and urban design of Walled City during and after Sikh period, especially Ranjit Singh's period.

Focused group discussions were arranged to analyze the architecture designed and built during Ranjit Singh's period. Discussions were made with architectural historians, architects, and urban designers. Libraries played a pivotal role in the collection of secondary data. Libraries were a major source of books, periodicals, magazines, gazetteers and newspapers. Transliteration was done for the terms imported from languages other than English. In this regard, transliteration system used by the Encyclopedia of Islam was incorporated. Plurals of the terms were made by adding "s".

Analysis of Sikh Architecture

Analytical study of the *havelis* constructed during Sikh period clarifies a lot of aspects about design and construction techniques and makes it easy to understand the change that initiated in the architectural style during the Sikh period. The *havelis* constructed by Sikhs were sited either in neighborhood of Lahore Fort or gates of Walled City. The *havelis* constructed by the courtiers and *wazirs* of Sikh period simulated the construction process of houses built within the Walled City. Since the houses in the Walled City were built in phases and represented different time periods, so were the *havelis* which were raised by seizing land of number of smaller housing units. The land of the houses was grabbed in phases to construct one *haveli* on a large piece of land. After some time, the *haveli* used to become deserted due to unrest that prevailed during Sikh period. The deserted *haveli* would then be converted into many small houses by people.

Analysis of the *haveli* erected during Sikh period depicts that many smaller rooms used to surround a central courtyard. These rooms were

further classified as *mardān khāna* and *zanān khāna* and featured timber roof decorated with paintings and glass mosaic work. Basement was another domineering aspect of the *havelis* constructed during Sikh reign. It acted both as a storage space for money and valuables, however, also as a protection against the unrest prevailed during Sikh period.

Figure 1

Haveli Naunehal Singh Showing Two Phases of Construction with Off-centered Entrance, Lohari Gate, Lahore



Note. Photo by Muiz Khalifa Ahmed, 2024

While examining elevations and façades of the *havelis* raised during Sikh reign, it was noticed that contradictory to Mughal structures where focus of the façade was found in its center, *havelis* constructed during Sikh period had off-centered point of focus as depicted in Figure 1. In some cases, multiple centers of focus could be found in a façade. A balcony or *jharoka* was designed in the center of a façade. It was bordered by small windows. It reflects that the *haveli* was constructed in phases at different time periods. The phenomenon becomes clearer when it is examined as part of a bigger picture where street pattern exists to dictate the layout of the housing units and other buildings. One can conclude that a particular

element or a small part of *haveli* did achieve aesthetics, however, the complete façade failed to achieve such level of aesthetics. This was different to the Mughal philosophy according to which not only complete building was aesthetically pleasing, however, aesthetics were achieved in the complete setting of group of buildings. The *havelis* built during Sikh period were clearly divided into different parts, such as *mihmān khāna*, *mardān khāna*, *zanān khāna*, and *fil khāna*.

Figure 2

Courtyard of Haveli Dhayan Singh, Lohari Gate, Lahore



Note. Photo by Muiz Khalifa Ahmed, 2024

Figure 3

Courtyard of Haveli Dhayan Singh Showing Original Wall and Division of Haveli, Lohari Gate, Lahore



Note. Photo by Muiz Khalifa Ahmed, 2024.

Figure 4

Division of Haveli Dhayan Singh, Lohari Gate, Lahore



Note. Photo by Muiz Khalifa Ahmed, 2024

Figure 5

Division of Haveli Dhayan Singh, Lahore.



Note. Photo by Muiz Khalifa Ahmed, 2024.

Figure 6

Division of Haveli Dhayan Singh into Smaller Housing Units



Note. Photo by Muiz Khalifa Ahmed, 2024

The *havelis* constructed during Sikh period had a prominent feature in the form of entrance door which was built for the passage of elephants. Up to two storeys high *mihmān khāna* or guest houses were built adjacent to the entrance door. Central courtyard was designed adjacent to *mihmān khāna* in such a way that it gave privacy to family area that surrounded the central courtyard. Family area included rooms for family activities including *mardān khāna* and *zanān khāna*. Analysis of the plan of these *havelis* shows construction on plots of irregular shapes which intensifies the concept that *havelis* were constructed on encroached plots. *Haveli* was encroached according to the shape of the available land. This was contradictory to the Mughal's concept of symmetrical beauty where buildings were built on regular plots of either square or rectangular shape. Moreover, Sikhs used old bricks which were of different shapes, sizes, and chemistry for the construction of their *havelis* (Shahzad, 2007). The fact can be understood from the example of Haveli Dhayan Singh shown in Figures 2 to 6.

For the purpose of protection against vandalism by Sikhs, the *havelis* were built with massive and high boundary walls. It is appropriate to claim that the *havelis* were built like forts as the most important function of *havelis* was defence against loot by Sikhs and turmoil. Baron Charles Hugel claimed that numerous buildings were constructed during the *rāj* of Ranjīt Singh. The buildings constructed during Ranjīt Singh's period were unique in style and were constructed extravagantly, however, lacked aesthetics. The haphazard planning of Sikh period did not match the aesthetics and planning of Mughal period (Hugel, [1845](#)).

Discussion

As far as architectural identity is concerned, the term “identity” may include products that are produced as a by product of culture, geography, and social values through a timeframe which defines the context and its sensitivity to its ongoing social, geographical and political influences. Time plays an important role in the process of maintaining architectural and urban identity as already discussed and highlighted earlier (Chaudhary, [1998](#)). When different types of components live for a long span of time in an urban setting, architectural and urban identity is achieved through their physical presence as they have stood the test of time.

It is evidently clear and perhaps proven that a city gains its identity over a long period of time and is formed of its geographical character, culture, architecture, traditions, customs, and life style. For this reason, the factors that make a city gain its unique character or identity are handled together as a whole and not one by one since they have a complex relationship with each other and have a strong influence and interaction with other variables as well. However, it is a fact that this completeness is formed of independent elements being through their presence as the first aspects and then their interaction as a second aspects. Over a long span of time, these elements evolve through intercaiaon of social, cultural, political and environmental influences (Glover, [2008](#)) and hence provide new characteristics to the city. The city continues to evolve as a system as well as an organism which is live, carrying traces of different time periods due to the change that occurs in society and culture as an expression of historical accumulation. As different components need to live together and have a an interaction or influence over each other for a long period of time for any city to achieve architectural identity, it is important to treat these components together and

not individually though, the completeness is indebted to the independent variables and aspects just like a system is indebted to its components.

Buildings of Sikh period in the context of Lahore as explored through multiple mediums exhibited development and varied aesthetics during different time periods and governing regimes. It is difficult to call these buildings contemporary besides the fact that one of the key elements was the usage of small brick extensively in these buildings, most of these reflect lack of harmony and unity in planning and construction. The architectural culture of Lahore was severely damaged by such constructions where buildings lacked harmony and unity both in planning and elevation. The turmoil and devastation of Sikh period had an effect on the architecture of Lahore as explored earlier (Baqir, [1952](#)). The roughness of Sikh culture was reflected in the buildings constructed during Sikh period. Identity of the buildings built during Sikh rāj can be subjective, since these did not have any identity or elements that may give rise to a new identity while challenging the existing one through recent times.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of not having lack of identity or modified, severely damaged the process of continuity through which cities claim to carry and hold a unique identity and are known for that particular architectural character. The discontinuity of architectural character which was practiced due to the political and social influence during Sikh raj gave way to an uncontrolled and non-directional process of change and allowed different styles of buildings to be part of skyline of Lahore which overall damaged the architectural identity of Lahore as it had already evolved through previous times and eras.

Conflict of Interest

The author of the manuscript has no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

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