



Architectural Synthesis in 18th -Century Lucknow

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ABSTRACT

The architectural heritage of Lucknow is a remarkable testament to Indo-Saracenic architecture, showcasing exquisite examples that transcend traditional Mughal practices. This unique style highlights the vibrant fusion of diverse cultures, reflecting the city's rich history and heritage. This paper explores the architectural synthesis in 18th-century Lucknow, highlighting the fusion of Indo-Islamic and European traditions under the patronage of the Nawabs of Awadh. *The study reveals how cultural, political, religious, and artistic factors shaped unique architectural identity of Lucknow by reviewing significant buildings and architectural developments during this time. The paper argues that the architecture of Lucknow represents a creative and intentional synthesis, which is not merely an imitation or decline of past traditions. The research explores the European influences and the Nawabs' efforts to forge a distinct identity of their city through architecture. This study aims to enhance understanding of cultural exchange and architectural innovation in 18th-century India by highlighting the complex processes in the architectural development of Lucknow.*

1. Introduction

Lucknow, the capital of Awadh in northern India, boasts a rich and diverse architectural heritage embedded in a complex, layered history. The city holds both historical and cultural significance, having served as a regional capital under the Nawabs of Awadh and later during British rule in the 18th and 19th centuries. Lucknow represents a unique synthesis of various cultural and artistic traditions. The architectural landscape is characterized by a remarkable fusion of Islamic, European, and indigenous Indian styles, evident in its numerous mosques, Imambaras, and palace complexes.

While previous studies have focused on specific styles, periods, or individual structures, there is a lack of a holistic account of Lucknow's architectural development, particularly during the 18th century, when many iconic structures were built. This study investigates the architectural development of Lucknow in relation to the Indo-Islamic and European traditions evident in 18th-century Lucknow. It also explores the complex interplay of cultural, political, and artistic forces that shaped the city's architectural landscape during the Nawab's rule and later under the Europeans. It also uncovers the processes of cultural exchange and adaptation that unfolded in Lucknow during the 18th and 19th centuries.

2. Setting the Historical Context: Architectural Synthesis in Lucknow

Lucknow was the largest and most prosperous precolonial city in India during the mid-nineteenth century. It served as the capital of the nawabs of "Oudh" or "Awadh", the wealthiest province in Mughal India. The only cities that exceeded Lucknow in affluence and size were Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay (Oldenburg, 1984). The British recognized Lucknow's importance and sought to control it after the 1857 mutiny. Although Lucknow lost its capital status in 1877, it remained a cultural hub, known for its unique art, architecture, language, and cuisine.

The architectural experience of the city showcases broader trends in 19th-century India, including the shift from Mughal to British power and the emergence of new, local forms of identity and governance. This era marked a pivotal shift as the Nawabs of Persian origin gradually evolved from warriors into refined courtiers, seeking to legitimize their rule (Casci, 2002; Kamleh, 2012). In order to express this changing identity, the Nawabs turned to architectural synthesis as a crucial tactic (Casci, 2002). This era witnessed a unique architectural blend influenced by European, Mughal, and Hindu styles (Gulati et al., 2019). Their patronage

extended from European-inspired palaces to mosques with Persian motifs, reflecting a cosmopolitan perspective which is open to diverse architectural influences (Susewind & Taylor, 2015). As noted by Susewind & Taylor (2015), *"Lucknow was a cosmopolitan blend of world civilisations under the urbane rule of the nawabs....: Edwardian verandas grace local houses that also have square Hindu- temple door frames, a Japanese pagoda covers a manor's outbuilding, and Persian motifs are etched in numerous mosques of the era."*

The Nawabs' penchant for European styles, particularly English, in their architecture stemmed from a desire for innovation and a departure from the Mughal architecture of Delhi (Kamleh, 2012). This choice also reflected the ease of construction using readily available materials like brick and stucco (Kamleh, 2012). The adoption of European architectural elements extended beyond just styles and included decorative techniques and layouts in their plans (Kamleh, 2012). This fusion of styles underscored the fluidity, creativity, and emphasis on "exchange" in Lucknow's architecture, moving away from a singular, unchanging stylistic categorization (Kamleh, 2012).

The Nawabs' patronage extended even beyond European influences, as Lucknow also witnessed notable inter-Islamic and local architectural exchanges. One striking example is the incorporation of Shiite architectural elements from Iraq with European and indigenous building techniques. This fusion underscored the dynamic, multifaceted nature of architectural exchange in the city. The city's Shia Muslim rulers maintained strong connections with significant religious centers in Iraq, such as Najaf and Karbala. They sent financial support for religious endowments and, in return, received skilled builders who recreated Shia architectural styles in Lucknow. These exchanges were reflected in structures like those modelled after the shrines of Najaf and Kazmain, demonstrating the multifaceted architectural exchanges in 18th-century Lucknow (Kamleh, 2012). The Nawabs also incorporated aspects of ephemerality into their patronage of architecture and urban design. This was demonstrated through the Muharram procession, which utilized temporary structures, ornamental lighting, and symbolic representations to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. This tradition of displaying ephemeral architecture is practiced even today in the city (Shaffer, 2017).

The 1857 uprising was a turning point for Lucknow's architectural landscape when the city faced significant destruction (Shaffer, 2017). This altered the visual narrative of the city, as the Nawabi Architecture became increasingly juxtaposed with colonial power and aesthetic sensibilities (Freitag, 2014; Gordon, 2006).

3. History of Nawabs of Awadh (1722-1856)

The Nawabs of Awadh played a key role in shaping Lucknow's artistic and architectural landscape, particularly from the mid-18th century onwards (Caschi, 2002; Kuldova, 2009). The Nawabs, being of Shiite Persian origin, established a distinct Indo-Persian cultural blend in Lucknow. Though they drew inspiration from Mughal traditions but also adapted local variations and European influences (Aftab, 1981). The period from Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula's reign (1774-98) to Wajid Ali Shah's reign (1848-56) was particularly significant for Lucknow's cultural and architectural prosperity (Kuldova, 2009).

Asaf-ud-Daula (1775–1798) moved the Awadh capital from Faizabad to Lucknow in 1775, which marked a turning point in the city's architectural history. He is credited with shaping Lucknow's architectural character through extensive building projects. One of his notable architectural contributions is the Asafi Imambara complex, which includes a mosque and the Rumi Darwaza. This complex exemplifies a more traditional Indo-Islamic style. As a patron of poets and artists, Asaf-ud-Daula attracted them to Lucknow from Delhi, fostering a vibrant cultural atmosphere. He was also a poet himself, contributing to Urdu poetry, which thrived during this period (Aftab, 1981; Kamleh, 2012).

Ghazi-ud-din Haider (1814-1827) held the title of 'Badshah' (King) which was bestowed upon him by the English. He promoted Shia religious practices, establishing Lucknow as a significant pilgrimage site for Shia Muslims. Nasir-ud-din Haider (1827-1837) is described as a benevolent ruler who was particularly devoted in fine arts (Singh, 1992).

During Wajid Ali Shah's reign (1847-1856), Lucknow's architecture focused on "palace culture," characterized by extravagance and luxury, which significantly shaped city's image. The Nawabs, including Wajid Ali Shah, were patrons of garden design, and Lucknow became known as a "garden city" during this era. They incorporated elements like 'baghs' (gardens) into the urban landscape, extending the city along the Gomti River (Singh, 1992).

4. Built Heritage of Lucknow

The architecture of Lucknow showcases a rich blend of Islamic, European, and Indian influences. The Nawabs' emphasis on Shia religious practices and their patronage of religious structures also established Lucknow as a significant pilgrimage site for Shia Muslims. This style represents a fusion of Islamic and European architectural elements. It incorporates features such as intricate jali work, elegant arches, grand domes, and ornate minarets, alongside European elements like classical columns and Gothic arches (Singh, 1992).

This synthesis creates a unique architectural vocabulary that distinguishes Lucknow from other Indian cities. This eclectic mix reflects the city's historical evolution as the capital of the Nawabs of Awadh and its

subsequent colonial past. Numerous examples of built heritage in Lucknow stand as a testimony to different era, architectural style, and cultural influences. Few of the relevant examples are being discussed here.

Nawabi Era (1720-1857)

The nawabs, being patrons of art and architecture, commissioned numerous buildings, each reflecting their era's cultural influences. The nature of buildings varied from religious, palaces and gateways, to kothis and mansions.

Religious buildings

Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula commissioned Asafi Imambara (1784), popularly referred to as the Bara (Great) Imambara. The structure is one of the earliest and most significant examples of Lucknow's architectural traditions. It is noted for its grand scale and innovative design. Its large vaulted hall and hidden cells showcase a blend of Mughal grandeur and Awadhi craftsmanship. The building is made of brick, plaster, and stucco, reflecting the limited resources of the time compared to the marble used in earlier Mughal structures (Aftab, 1981; Keshani, 2006; Madan Sharma, 2013).

The Chota Imambara (1838), also known as the Sibtainabad Imambara, while less renowned than the Bara Imambara, is notable for its intricate stucco work and grand dome. Its unique architectural style, often compared to the Kremlin due to its blend of minarets and domed cupolas, highlights the diverse influences present in Awadh's architectural vocabulary. The complex embodies both architectural and historical significance apart from religious. It was built as a mausoleum for Amjad Ali Shah, the Nawab of Oudh, upon his death in 1842-47 by his son Wajid Ali Shah (Krishna, 2014). It also served as a religious site for Shia Muslims during Muharram, commemorating the martyrdom of Ali and his sons (Gordon, 2006).

It has lavishly decorated interiors, which house taziyas (portable shrines) and elaborate chandeliers. The vibrant colours and rich materials in the decoration of these structures suggests a fusion of religious and aesthetic sensibilities.

Palaces and Gateways

Rumi Darwaza (1784), built alongside the Asafi Imambara complex, is a testament to Lucknow's syncretic architectural style. While it draws inspiration from Ottoman gateways, it blends seamlessly with the Indo-Islamic elements of the Imambara complex, showcasing the era's cultural confluence (Aftab, 1981; Madan Sharma, 2013).

The Kaiserbagh (Qaiserbagh) Palace Complex was initiated by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the last ruling Nawab of Awadh, between 1848 and 1850 (Krishna, 2014). It is characterized by an eclectic architectural style, blending elements of Indian, European, and Persian influences, reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of the Nawabi court (Casci, 2002; Krishna, 2014; Shaffer, 2017; Singh, 1992). Within the complex stood numerous palaces and structures, including the Pari Khana, Khas Muqam, Lanka, Badshah Manzil, and Chandiwali Baradari, showcasing the grandeur and scale of the Nawab's vision (Krishna, 2014).

A prominent feature of Kaiserbagh is the presence of 'Baradaris,' twelve-doored structures originating from Persia that became an integral part of Lucknow's architectural vocabulary. These structures, often nestled within gardens, served as spaces for cultural performances and gatherings (Singh, 1992). The Safed Baradari, also known as the Kaiserbagh Baradari, served as a space for religious gatherings and cultural events. While the name suggests a white structure, it is believed that the original stonework was a reddish-brown, and the present white color is a result of layers of paint applied over time. The Lakhi Gates, intricately designed gateways named for their exorbitant cost of one lakh rupees each, exemplify the Indo-Saracenic architectural style prevalent during the period (Krishna, 2014).

Due to its strategic location and defensive capabilities, the complex became a focal point of resistance against British forces during the 1857 rebellion. Following the suppression, the British demolished large sections of the palace complex between 1858 and 1861, significantly altering its original layout and symmetry. The gardens were reorganized, and roads were constructed, cutting through the once-harmonious design (Krishna, 2014).

Kothis and Mansions




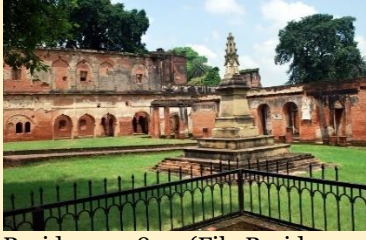


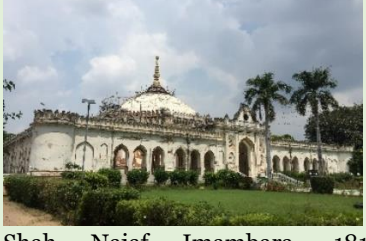





Chattar Manzil is a grand palace complex situated on the banks of the Gomti River. It was built in 1781 by Nawab Ghaziuddin Haider, but later underwent significant expansion in the 1820s, which further strengthened its status as a symbol of royal authority and grandeur. Its longevity as a seat of power underscores its importance in Lucknow's political landscape during the late Nawabi era.

The name "Chattar Manzil" translates to "Umbrella Palace," derived from the distinctive gilded umbrella-shaped domes (chhatris) that once crowned its roof. This architectural element, a common feature in Mughal architecture, underscores Chattar Manzil's connection to this grand architectural tradition. The architecture is an example of a "hybrid style," blending elements of European and Indian architectural traditions (Aftab, 1981; Krishna, 2014). Photographic evidence from the 1850s reveals that Chattar Manzil, in its prime, boasted a "dense and elaborate" layout. This suggests a complex network of interconnected courtyards, chambers, and passageways, a hallmark of grand Indian palaces, similar to descriptions of the subterranean levels found in some colonial-era structures. Following the 1857 uprising, Chattar Manzil faced significant destruction. A

significant portion of the palace complex was razed between 1859 and 1861, and its original layout was lost due to extensive demolition in the years following the uprising.

Dilkusha Kothi (1800-1805) was a country house built by the Nawabs using readily available brick and stucco, with the help of East India Company engineers. The Dilkusha Kothi emulated English country houses, showcasing a direct European influence in design (Kamleh, 2012). Bibiapur Kothi (late 18th century) is another example of Nawabi adoption of European architectural elements and themes using brick and stucco. Several other palaces, including those in Musa Bagh, Alam Bagh, and Dilaram Kothi, dotted Lucknow's landscape during the Nawabi era. These palaces often incorporated a mix of Indian, Islamic, and European elements, showcasing the era's eclectic tastes.

Table 1. Architectural heritage of Lucknow built under different Nawab's reigns

<p>Aurangzeb's reign</p>  <p>Teele Wali Masjid, 1696 (File:Teele Wali Masjid Lucknow lrd014.JPG - Wikimedia Commons, 2017)</p>	<p>Asaf-ud-Daula</p>  <p>Bara Imambara, 1784 (Author, 2019)</p>	 <p>Rumi Darwaza, 1784 (File:Rumi Darwaza - DSC2797-01.jpg - Wikimedia Commons, 2018)</p>
<p>Saadat Ali Khan-II</p>  <p>Residency, 1800 (File:Residency at Lucknow 1.jpg - Wikimedia Commons, 2012)</p>	 <p>Dilkusha Kothi, 1805 (File:Dilkusha Palace 3.jpg - Wikimedia Commons, 2013)</p>	<p>Claude Martin</p>  <p>La Martiniere, 1802 (Bombman, 2013)</p>
<p>Ghazi-ud-Din Haider</p>  <p>Shah Najaf Imambara, 1816 (File:IMAMBARA SHAHNAJAF - DSC 002.jpg - Wikimedia Commons, 2020)</p>	<p>Nasiruddin Haider</p>  <p>Chattar Manzil, 1830s (Lalwani, 2013)</p>	<p>Muhammad Ali Shah</p>  <p>Chota Imambara, 1838 (Author, 2019)</p>
<p>Muhammad Ali Shah</p>  <p>Jama Masjid, 1840 (File:Jama Masjid, Lucknow (5164466010).Jpg - Wikimedia Commons, 2010)</p>	<p>Wajid Ali Shah</p>  <p>Kaiserbagh Palace, 1850 (File:- Mermaid Gateway, Kaiser Bagh, Lucknow, India- MET DP71331.jpg - Wikimedia Commons, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Safed Baradari, 1854 (File:Safed Baradari 2.jpg - Wikimedia Commons, 2018)</p>
Religious	Palaces & Gateways	Kothis and Mansions

Colonial Era (Post-1857):

After the 1857 uprising, Lucknow's architectural landscape saw the emergence of colonial influences, leading to the construction of buildings that served the British administration and showcased their distinct style.

Palaces & Gateways

The Residency (18th Century), though predates the colonial era, became a significant site after the 1857 uprising. Originally housing the British Resident General, this collection of buildings embodies the colonial presence in Lucknow, which later served as a reminder of British resistance during the uprising (Freitag, 2014). It features a picturesque landscape characterized by lush green lawns and shrubs, intermingled with ruins, obelisks, and cenotaphs, creating a visually striking contrast (Sinha, 2010).

Kothis and Mansions

La Martiniere (late 18th Century), also known as Constantia, is located in Lucknow and is named after its founder, Claude Martin, a French military engineer in the Awadh court. He amassed considerable wealth after settling in the city. Martin died in 1801, and donated Constantia to become a boys' school, demonstrating his enduring legacy in the city (Singh, 1992; Thapar et al., 2004).

The architectural style of Constantia is described as a "Gothic chateau". The building is notable for its grandeur and elaborate ornamentation, featuring elements like pointed arches, vaulted ceilings, and decorative sculptures. This is in contrast to the Indo-Saracenic style prevalent in Lucknow structures, suggesting a conscious choice by Martin to use a distinctly European architectural vocabulary (Aftab, 1981; Thapar et al., 2004).

Constantia also incorporates elements from traditional Indian architecture, such as subterranean levels, reflecting an adaptation to the local climate. Constantia's central core was also similar to the central massing of forts in the region, such as the Red Fort of Delhi deriving from Mughal architectural practices (Kamleh, 2012). Several artistic details contribute to Constantia's unique aesthetic. The façade is lavishly decorated with animals and mythological figures, illustrating a fusion of architectural grandeur with artistic embellishment. The presence of "two cannons on the terrace, one cast by Martin himself, along with the bronze bell," further accentuates the personal touch Martin imbued in Constantia's design (Thapar et al., 2004).

Situated on a 26-hectare estate, Constantia was strategically positioned on the banks of the Gomti River, which was a deliberate choice to enhance its visual impact and accessibility through water (Nagpal & Sinha, 2009; Singh, 1992; Thapar et al., 2004). However, with time, the relationship between Constantia and the river has diminished due to silting and the construction of an embankment. Constantia's architectural influence on subsequent buildings in Lucknow, such as Dilkusha Kothi, depicts the impact of European architectural styles in the region (Kamleh, 2012).

5. Building typologies in Lucknow:

The Nawabs left a lasting impact on the city despite their short reign, by evolving a unique architectural language. The diverse nature of Lucknow's architecture is shaped by centuries of cultural exchange and is influenced by religious practices, political ambitions, and the availability of local materials.

Religious Architecture

Lucknow has numerous religious heritage structures, making it a significant center of Shia Islam. The Nawabs, being Shia Muslims, placed great importance on construction of Imambaras, which are used for mourning ceremonies during Muharram (Casci, 2002). These grand structures, such as the Asafi Imambara and Husainabad Imambara, served as important venues for Shia rituals, especially during the mourning period of Muharram. They are characterized by large vaulted halls, intricate stucco work, and hidden cells or labyrinths (Aftab, 1981; Casci, 2002; Shaffer, 2017).

Karbala, which are symbolic representations of the Battle of Karbala, became prominent features of Lucknow's skyline (Casci, 2002; Thapar et al., 2004). They served as symbolic burial grounds for the ritual objects (taziyas) used during Muharram. Talkatora Karbala and Kazmain Karbala are notable examples, drawing inspiration from the holy city of Karbala in Iraq (Shaffer, 2017). Both Imambaras and Karbala became prominent features of Lucknow's skyline (Casci, 2002; Thapar et al., 2004). While lesser than Imambaras, mosques like the Aurangzeb-era Friday mosque also represent the Mughal influence on Lucknow's religious architecture (Casci, 2002; Keshani, 2006).

Palaces and Gateways

The Nawabs constructed grand palaces and gardens along the Gomti River, which served as expressions of their power and wealth. These complexes often featured a blend of indoor and outdoor spaces, echoing Mughal influence (Nagpal & Sinha, 2009). Nawabi palaces, such as the Chattr Manzil and Kaiserbagh, exemplify the grandeur and richness of Awadhi courtly life. These palaces often featured sprawling gardens, intricate water features, and a fusion of architectural elements (Casci, 2002; Krishna, 2014; Singh, 1992).

Gateways (*darwaza*) serve as prominent architectural feature in Lucknow, marking entrances to palaces, gardens, and important city areas (Aftab, 1981). *Rumi Darwaza*, with its iconic semi-lunar dome, is a witness of Lucknow's architectural prowess (Singh, 1992). This gateway, along with others like the *Lakhi Darwaza*

and the *Sher Darwaza*, demonstrates the skillful blending of Hindu and Muslim design elements, emphasizing the city's composite cultural identity (Singh, 1992).

Kothis and Mansions

Besides palaces, Lucknow is also dotted by Kothis or mansions such as the Dilkusha Kothi, Asafi Kothi, and Bibiapur Kothi. These kothis tend to adopt elements of European architecture, notably Palladian and Picturesque styles, into the Awadhi context (Kamleh, 2012). Following the annexation of Awadh by the British, a new wave of colonial architecture emerged, characterized by functional design and imposing structures. Examples include administrative buildings, military barracks, and the La Martinière (Krishna, 2014; Oldenburg, 1984).

Decorative Art and Building Materials

Lucknow's buildings are adorned with a rich decorative elements that highlight the city's legacy of craftsmanship (Markel, 2010). Unlike Mughal structures, which often featured marble or sandstone, the Nawabs of Lucknow primarily used brick, stucco, and plaster in their constructions (Aftab, 1981; Krishna, 2014).

Lucknow's stucco work is a highly skilled craft, using a plaster made from lime, sand, crushed marble, and other materials, which enabled intricate detailing and ornamentation on walls, ceilings, and minarets. The stucco, often derived from lake bed shells, created a bright, durable, and visually appealing finish (Aftab, 1981; Krishna, 2014). Stucco work was often praised for its elegance and was even likened to the visual effect of marble (Kamleh, 2012; Krishna, 2014; Shaffer, 2017). Floral motifs, arabesque designs, and the use of fish emblems in arch spandrels are recurring features in Lucknow's stucco work (Aftab, 1981).

Due to the scarcity of marble and sandstone in the region, brick and mortar became the primary building materials in Lucknow. These materials also allowed for faster and more economical construction (Kamleh, 2012; Singh, 1992). A specific type of brick called "lakhori" or "lakhaori" was used in Nawabi-era Lucknow. Brick, being more adaptable than stone, provided greater creative freedom to craft intricate designs and experiment structural innovations (Krishna, 2014; Shaffer, 2017).

Most of Lucknow's architectural landmarks, such as palaces, mosques, and imambaras, demonstrate the extensive use of brick and stucco (Kamleh, 2012; Oldenburg, 1984). Rumi Darwaza stands out as a prime example of Lucknow's traditional style, constructed with brick and elaborate stucco ornamentation (Aftab, 1981).

Lavish Ornamentation and Calligraphy

The architecture of this era often featured intricate ornamentation and calligraphy, indicating the Nawabs' patronage of the arts (Singh, 1992; Thapar et al., 2004). The Chhota Imambara, for instance, is noted for its elegant calligraphy and lavishly decorated interior. The use of fish emblems, foliated patterns, and running borders moulded in stucco are particularly distinctive features of Lucknow's architectural details (Aftab, 1981; Krishna, 2014).

Construction Techniques

Awadhi builders displayed considerable skill in vaulting techniques, creating large, unsupported spaces within the Imambaras. The Bara Imambara's massive vaulted hall, considered an engineering marvel, was constructed without the use of iron or any other supporting structure. Many Awadhi structures, such as Imambaras, incorporated hidden cells, secret passages, and complex labyrinths, adding an air of mystery to these buildings. The multiple underground chambers in Chhattar Manzil serve as a prime example.

6. Cultural and Religious Influences

The Nawabs were seeking to make architecture of Lucknow distinct from the established Mughal style, due to which they incorporated diverse influences (Kamleh, 2012; Krishna, 2014). This is evident in the construction of grand palaces, gardens, and religious structures (Krishna, 2014; Singh, 1992).

As a prominent trading hub, Lucknow attracted artists, architects, and craftsmen from various regions, including Persia, Europe, and other parts of India (Aftab, 1981; Jones, 2015; Kamleh, 2012; Singh, 1992; Susewind & Taylor, 2015). This confluence of cultures resulted in a fusion of architectural styles and motifs, as seen in structures that incorporated elements from English country houses, Shia shrines in Iraq, and local Indian traditions (Kamleh, 2012; Oldenburg, 1984). The presence of European trading companies and immigrants further contributed to the exchange of architectural ideas (Kamleh, 2012).

European influence

The Nawabs of Awadh, during the 18th and 19th centuries, utilized European architectural exchange to craft a distinct identity that diverged from their Mughal predecessors in Delhi and embraced their vision of a modern and cosmopolitan Lucknow (Casci, 2002; Kamleh, 2012). They incorporated European architectural elements, primarily English, to create a novel architectural landscape. The nawabs aimed for innovation and visual impact rather than mere replication, utilizing European styles to create a sense of novelty in their buildings.

The nawabs saw the English East India Company's presence in Calcutta, and the European-style mansions in Lucknow and Faizabad as models to emulate. This led them to commission palaces and country houses inspired by English architectural patterns, such as the Dilkusha Kothi, which drew inspiration from English country houses.

This architectural strategy served several purposes. It distanced the nawabs from the Mughal architectural heritage of Delhi, signifying a departure from the past and embracing of a new aesthetic direction. They actively sought to differentiate the built environment of Lucknow from that of Delhi and Mughal rule. Moreover, by adopting architectural elements associated with the then-dominant power in India, the East India Company, the Nawabs aligned themselves with the new locus of political authority.

Beyond mere stylistic imitation, the nawabs actively participated in the design process by collaborating with European military engineers employed by the East India Company. They acted as "architects" themselves, ensuring that their preferences and visions were embedded in the final structures. The nawabs blended architectural elements from diverse geographical contexts – England, France, and Iraq – to shape an architectural language that reflected their cosmopolitan aspirations and distinguished Lucknow as a vibrant center of cultural exchange. The European military engineers introduced styles ranging from Palladian to neo-classical, as seen in buildings like the Dilkusha Kothi, Asafi Kothi, and the Constantia (La Martiniere) (Aftab, 1981; Casci, 2002; Kamleh, 2012). European influence is also seen in the wide boulevards, such as Hazratganj, inspired by the urban planning of Calcutta.

Several European architectural styles influenced the architecture of Lucknow, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries under the rule of the Nawabs of Awadh. The nawabs were particularly attracted to English architectural patterns for their palaces and country houses (Kamleh, 2012; Susewind & Taylor, 2015). The presence of the East India Company in Calcutta, and the European-style mansions built by figures like Claude Martin in Lucknow and Faizabad, served as direct inspiration. Buildings like Dilkusha Kothi drew inspiration from English country houses. The availability of English architectural books further facilitated the adoption of these styles (Kamleh, 2012).

Other European styles emulated in Lucknow were the French, Gothic and Baroque. Farhat Bakhsh (Lakh-e-pera) and Bibiapur Kothi, both built in Lucknow, exhibited a French neoclassical aesthetic, incorporating features like pediments and colonnaded skylines (Kamleh, 2012). Gothic elements though less prevalent, were also incorporated into Lucknow's architecture. Constantia Palace (La Martiniere College) was built in the style of a Gothic chateau (Aftab, 1981; Thapar et al., 2004). Baroque influences can be seen in the formal gardens of Lucknow, which drew inspiration from geometrically conceived spaces at Versailles in France (Casci, 2002). The use of stucco, a material common in Baroque architecture, also became popular in Lucknow (Kamleh, 2012).

Shia Identity

Besides European architectural styles, the buildings of Lucknow also exhibit a significant influence from Shiite architecture, particularly from the Iraqi cities of Najaf and Karbala. The Shiite nawabs of Lucknow incorporated architectural elements inspired by shrines and mosques located in Najaf and Karbala, revered Shia holy sites, into their building projects. This was aimed to strengthen their image as leaders of the Shia faith (Kamleh, 2012). For example, the Shah Najaf Imambara in Lucknow is believed to be modelled after a shrine in Najaf, though with local variations (Kamleh, 2012).

The nawabs also sought to recreate aspects of Shia pilgrimage within Lucknow, to reduce the need to undertake difficult journeys to distant sites. This is evident in the integration of "karbalas" into the city's landscape (Casci, 2002), where Shia community could perform mourning rituals associated with the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, a central figure in Shia Islam. The presence of these karbalas underscores the nawabs' ambition to establish Lucknow as a hub for Shia religious practice (Shaffer, 2017), particularly during Muharram (Keshani, 2006). Both imambaras and karbalas often feature intricate stucco work, calligraphy, and geometric patterns characteristic of Islamic architecture (Casci, 2002; Freitag, 2014; Kamleh, 2012; Keshani, 2006; Singh, 1992).

Mughal Legacy

As a former Mughal province, Awadh inherited rich architectural traditions. The city's imambaras, while distinctly Shia, reflect a continuation of Mughal architectural vocabulary, notably in their scale and ornamentation (Keshani, 2006). The use of charbagh (four-square garden) layouts, domes, minarets, *chattris* (domed kiosks), *jali* (latticed screens), and intricate geometric patterns reflects the continuing Mughal influence (Sinha, 2010).

However, the nawabs sought to create a distinct visual identity, moving away from the Mughal style, and embracing European innovations in their later constructions (Kamleh, 2012; Singh, 1992). The use of brick, plaster, and stucco as primary building materials, instead of the Mughal preference for marble and sandstone further differentiates Lucknow's architectural character (Aftab, 1981).

The integration of European elements, while initially driven by the novelty factor, was often adapted and combined with existing Mughal and Islamic traditions, resulting in a hybrid style unique to Lucknow (Aftab, 1981; Kamleh, 2012; Keshani, 2006). This fusion extended beyond grand monuments to residential architecture, where European verandas complemented traditional Indian elements (Gulati et al., 2019;

Susewind & Taylor, 2015). The planning of Lucknow, with its wide ceremonial avenues juxtaposed with the dense, organic fabric of the old city, further exemplifies this co-existence of influences (Casci, 2002; Nagpal & Sinha, 2009; Susewind & Taylor, 2015).

The Nawabs didn't simply replicate European styles, but adapted these foreign elements and combined them with existing Indo-Islamic traditions to create a unique hybrid architectural language (Kamleh, 2012). This blending of styles, while viewed as a decline by some European critics, reflects the dynamic cultural exchange that characterized Lucknow during this period (Aftab, 1981).

7. Eclecticism vs Criticism

The eclectic architectural style of Lucknow also drew criticism from some European scholars who viewed the fusion of styles, particularly the incorporation of European elements, as a deviation from "pure" architectural forms. Despite the complexity and richness of Lucknow's architectural synthesis, European scholars often misunderstood and criticized it. Their focus on rigid stylistic categories led to misinterpretations of the Nawabs' intentions and innovations. Several sources document the severe criticism levelled by European scholars at Lucknow's architecture, particularly its fusion of Islamic and European elements. They often characterized Lucknow's architecture as "debased", "decadent", "jumble", "frivolous" and "grotesque" or "vulgar" imitation, reflecting their discomfort with its hybridity (Casci, 2002; Kamleh, 2012; Keshani, 2006). Instead of recognizing the creativity and fluidity in Lucknow's architectural exchange, they dismissed it as a chaotic fusion of styles, indicating a decline in aesthetic standards (Kamleh, 2012). For instance, some European historians criticized the use of European Baroque elements, especially in stucco, who viewed it as a debasement of Indo-Islamic building traditions (Kamleh, 2012).

In contrast to the European criticism, local poets and residents of Lucknow held more favourable views of the city's architecture, often celebrating it as a symbol of cultural sophistication and refinement. They recognized the intent behind the Nawabs' patronage of a hybrid architectural style that blended elements from diverse traditions, viewing it as a reflection of Lucknow's cosmopolitan character rather than a sign of cultural decline (Kamleh, 2012; Madan Sharma, 2013; Singh, 1992).

8. Conclusion

The history of Lucknow reveals its dynamic evolution from a humble settlement to a vibrant city renowned for its art and architecture, shaped by various rulers and historical events that shaped its urban fabric and cultural identity. The Nawabs of Awadh, particularly from Asaf-ud-Daula to Wajid Ali Shah, significantly shaped Lucknow's architectural identity. Their patronage and desire to create a distinct urban identity, blended Islamic, European, and indigenous Indian elements. The integration of Shia religious structures, such as imambaras and karbalas, further distinguished Lucknow's architectural landscape from its Mughal predecessors. The involvement of European military engineers and the adoption of European architecture significantly contributed to Lucknow's unique architectural language. However, these influences were not blindly imitated, but rather selectively adapted and integrated with existing Indo-Islamic traditions. The use of readily available materials like brick, plaster, and stucco, along with innovative construction techniques, often embellished with intricate stucco work, became characteristic of Lucknow's architecture.

Despite criticism from some Europeans, the architecture of Lucknow reflects a cosmopolitan and diverse cultural tradition, resulting in a unique architectural expression. The rebellion of 1857, followed by British annexation of Avadh brought significant alterations in Lucknow's urban fabric. Many Nawabi structures were destroyed as part of British attempts to reshape Lucknow to fit their imperial vision. Despite these changes, aspects of Nawabi culture continued, particularly in public spaces, although with altered meanings.

This study contributes to the understanding of cultural exchange and architectural innovation in 18th-century India by examining the complex processes that shaped the Lucknow's built heritage. Rather than supporting simplified narratives of decline, this research presents Lucknow's architecture as a testament to the creative potential of cultural synthesis. Future research could explore the influence of Lucknow's architectural synthesis on other regional styles.

9. References

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