

such a trade-off struck a certain socio-cultural and political balance that worked – until, that is, it didn't.

Richard M. Eaton
University of Arizona, USA

MEHRDAD SHOKOOHY and NATALIE SHOKOOHY:

Bayana: The Sources of Mughal Architecture.

xi, 737 pp. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.

ISBN 978 1 4744 6072 9.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X21000252

The historical, political, and cultural processes instrumental in the manifold formations of Indo-Islamic architecture have roused concerted scholarly attention in recent years. A growing number of studies, not only invested in the Delhi sultanate or the Mughals, but especially centred on the sundry workings of regional sultanates, such as those of the Deccan, attest to this occurrence. As a singular contribution to this corpus, Mehrdad and Natalie Shokoohy's *Bayana: The Sources of Mughal Architecture* is exceptional, on the grounds that it brings under its academic scrutiny the Indo-Islamic architectural remains of a region auxiliary to principal centres such as Delhi – the study is dedicated to Bayana and its adjacent sites in northern Rajasthan – with resounding implications for redefining, challenging, and thus enriching our understandings of the architectural developments under the broad canopy of the sultanate period, and subsequently under the early Mughals. In exploring Bayana's history and studying the archaeological and architectural remains of its environs from the time of the Muslim conquest of the region up to the early Mughal period, the authors explicate at the outset that its importance lay in its key position on the old route from Delhi to Gwalior and the Deccan, which made it an exceedingly valuable possession of its medieval Hindu rulers, and later, of the Ghurid conquerors at the end of the twelfth century who provided the site with some of the earliest Indo-Islamic monuments. Clearly, the covetous attention garnered by Bayana was in no insignificant measure due to its strategic location, where a succession of Delhi sultanate dynasts from the earliest days of the political advent of Islam in the Indian subcontinent on the one hand, and the relatively subordinate ruling families such as the Auhadis or Jalwanis on the other, vied for its control. It is thus natural that successive rulers of Bayana over time dispensed substantial resources into its urban growth; the most enduring visage of the historical vicissitudes of Bayana and its proximate environs is manifest in the composite building commissions ranging from the sacred and the funerary to the military and the utilitarian. This repertoire, while presenting a very nominal relationship with the more ubiquitous architectural idiom of the Delhi sultanate, reveals a distinctive spatial, structural, and visual vocabulary which would become a source for later Mughal structures, most pertinently for Akbar's grand commissions at Fathpur Sikri.

To provide a contextual basis for the above-mentioned compositeness of Bayana's architectural remains, the second chapter relates the extensive history of Bayana and its environs, articulating their political, cultural, urban, and topographical relationships, until their relegation to the sidelines with the rise of Agra under the Mughals. Astutely working with an array of literary, archival, and epigraphic

sources, the authors recount Bayana's history, describing how the town and its environs were shaped and transformed under successive powers. Here, we witness a saga of shifting alliances, from Bayana's formative days under the hegemony of Baha al-Din Tughrul (a *mamluk* of the Ghurid crown, akin to Qutb al-Din Aibak) to the rise of the Auhadi family in the fifteenth century, the Lodi presence, and its eventual decline with the consolidation of Mughal empire. Amidst this, Bayana was inevitably implicated in intrigues where regional sultanates were involved; for instance, Bayana allied with the Malwa sultanate during the latter's advances against the Delhi sultanate in 1440, and earlier, the Auhadi ruling house, had allied with the Sharqi sultanate of Jaunpur to counter the hegemony of the Delhi sultanate over Bayana. On at least three occasions, we see the subordinate ruling families of Bayana trying to break away from the vassalage of the Delhi sultanate and proclaim themselves independent sultans.

The effects of these historical complexities are registered in the urban and topographical realities of Bayana, and the third chapter brings into its analytic orbit the site's urban configuration as it is constituted in three distinct groupings, three towns – the earlier Sultankot on which the town of Bayana now stands, the Bayana fort around six kilometres south-west of the town with its own urban settlement, and the remains of the unfinished Sikandra contiguous to the fort, named for the sultan Sikandar Lodi on whose directions it was created. In the subsequent chapters, which comprise the bulk of the study, the authors systematically classify and assess the vast array of monuments and their remains – mosques, minarets, semi-public edifices, waterworks, and *chhatris* among other structures – that adorned Bayana and its proximate towns such as Dholpur, Khanwa, and Sikri. Undertaking an exhaustive analysis of the Bayana monuments and their urban relationships, spanning the Ghurid, Khalji, and Tughluq periods to the advent of the Lodis and the Mughals, the authors outline a distinctive taxonomy based on these monuments' planar arrangements, typologies, forms, and structural–constructional methods. In so doing, they are successful in foregrounding the role of the now-peripheral centres such as Bayana in the manifold formations of the Indo-Islamic architectural repertoire – at the formal level of the language of forms and elements, and also at the level of the composite meanings that this repertoire harbours in the early Indo-Islamic context. More essentially, the authors accomplish the vital task of resurrecting the cultural and historical legacy of Bayana and its regions by bringing into the scholarly ambit the neglected repertoire of its architectural remains. As they mournfully emphasize in the epilogue, this task of recording and salvaging becomes all the more essential in the face of current institutionalized apathy towards Indo-Islamic cultural contributions, before all evidence of the Indo-Islamic legacy, in the form of material remains or otherwise, is lost to us.

Abundantly augmented with drawings, illustrations and images, and supplied with useful appendices and a rich bibliography, the Shokoohys' exhaustive study is a remarkable achievement. An exemplar of rigour and meticulousness in scholarship – a value that the authors have consistently demonstrated in all their works – this book will be central to enriching our critical engagement with Indo-Islamic cultural and architectural expressions.

Riyaz Latif
FLAME University, Pune, India