

Shrines Shaping the Cities

Lahore: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT:

Lahore, exhibiting the architectural remains of various ruling dynasties, is an old settlement with known history of more than one thousand years. Historians have explored in political context its dynamism mostly keeping in view the impact of ruling authorities who contributed in its physical shaping and reshaping by adding various buildings like Lahore Fort, Badshahi Mosque, Shalimar Garden, Mausoleums of Mughal Emperor Jahangir and Princess Noor Jahan etc. Contrary to these royal personalities and their constructed buildings, *Sufis* and their *khanqahs* have played vibrant role in expansion of the old city from within walls to its immediate surroundings. This phenomenon has not been taken into account by architectural historians and urban experts. No comprehensive studies in urban design, anthropology and sociology have been yet carried out to trace the impact of various Sufis and their *khanqahs* on the urban settlement and its expansion.

Story begins with the arrival of Hadrat ‘Ali Hujwiri (d.1072 A.D.) at Lahore from Ghazani.¹ Hujwiri settled outside Bhati Gate.² Prior to the Mughal period, Lahore was probably confined to the area West of Shah Aalimi bazaar, and North of Bhati Gate in today’s old city. Tombs from the pre Mughal era (Glover, 2011), including those of Malik Ayyaz (1040 C.E.), Ali Hujveri (1072 C.E. outside Bhati Gate), Qutb-ud-Din Aibak (1210 C.E. outside Lohari Gate, in Anarkali Bazaar), and Syed Muhammad Ishaq Gauzroni (1400 C.E. in the courtyard of Masjid Wazir Khan, presently inside Delhi Gate), all lie outside the perimeter of this area and since tombs were usually sited outside the city walls, they suggest limits to the original walled city. During

¹ Ghazani was a small town located in today’s Afghanistan. Hujwiri came to Lahore during the mid years of 11th century A.D.

² Walled city of Lahore has 12 entry gates. Outside Bhati Gate, Hazrat Ali Hujwiri settled and buried after death. These gates were reconstructed later on during the Mughal and British eras.

the Akbar residency (1585-1598) at Lahore, the periphery wall was extended and area of Masjid Wazir Khan as called *Rarra Maidaan* (open field) was included inside walled city. During 16th and 17th centuries, Lahore earned its reputation as a popular centre of *Sufism*. Among the mostly practiced, four Sufi orders³ in Indian Subcontinent, the *Qadiri* order was practiced largely in Lahore. *Qadiri* Sufis believed in the ideology of *Wahdat al-Wajud*.⁴ They influenced the populace of Lahore at socio-religious and cultural levels. There are number of *khanqahs* of *Qadiri* Sufis in and around the old city of Lahore. This paper explores the role of *khanqahs* of Sufis in shaping the city. These *khanqahs* can be divided into two categories based on their location. Firstly, *khanqahs* that were established just outside of the city gates and secondly that were located at a distance from the city, mostly on the road sides linking the neighborhoods with the city. These *khanqahs* were cultural hubs for local residents. Various commercial and residential activities took place that finally controlled and oriented the expansion of the city in forth coming centuries.

Keywords: shrine, *khanqah*, urban design, garden, Sufism, colonial city.

³ In India, after Hadrat Ali Hujwiri, four Sufi orders i.e. *Suhrawardiyya*, *Chishtiyya*, *Qadiriyya*, *Naqshbandiyya* were introduced and practiced.

⁴ The doctrine of *Wahdat al-Wujud* meaning “the unity of being or existence” asserts that everything that exists can only exist because it is a reflection of Divine Reality, hence an aspect of Divine Unity itself.