THE PATHAN TOMBS OF SARHIND

SARHIND, near Ambāla, has been one of the most important towns of India from the reign of Fīrōz Shāh Tughlaq (A.D. 1351-1388) who made it head of a district in 1360 to its final destruction by the Sikhs in 1763. It has played a conspicuous role in the history of the early Mughals: Bābur passed through the town on his way for Pānipat in A.D. 1525, and Humāyūn defeated Sikandar Shāh Sūr there in 1555 and thus regained possession of India. Under Bahādur Shāh I the wife and the children of Guru Govind Singh had, however, been executed by order of the Governor of Sarhind, and since that time the city had attracted the wrath of the Sikhs. 1709, 1713, 1758 it was plundered by their bands, and 1763 completely razed to the ground.

At present only the garden palace of the Moghul emperors (" 'Amm Khāss "), the mosque of Sadhna Qasai and the mansion (Jahāzgarh) of a Mughal grandee, Salābat Beg, survive. There is still a small town in the midst of the enormous city area where bricks, potsherds and occasional foundations betray the past existence of far-stretched rich quarters. The place is still visited for pilgrimages, Sikhs come to the Gurdwāra erected in memory of Guru Govind Singh's family, Muslims to the shrine of Shaikh Ahmad Mujaddad, Alf-i-Sānī, Fārūqī (971-1034 H.) where not only his descendants and Naqshbandī disciples but also Shāh Zamān of Afghanistan and his family have been found their rest in the precincts of the dargah.

But Sarhind possesses some other monuments of great archæological interest. During his visits to the place in 1838 and again in 1863 General Alexander Cunningham,[1] the father of Indian archæology, had discovered a group of tombs near the village of Mīr-Mīrān-kā-Dera, 1½ miles outside the old town. Probably they have been spared the fate of the rest of the city by the Sikhs because they were already outside the walls. Cunningham had not been able to get reliable informations on their history. Local tradition in his time still connected two tombs, popularly known as " Ustād " and "Shagird," with the names of a certain Sayyid Khān Pathān and of a Khōja Khān. Another little tomb was ascribed to a certain Pīrbandī Naqshwala (" Painter "), probably a misunderstanding

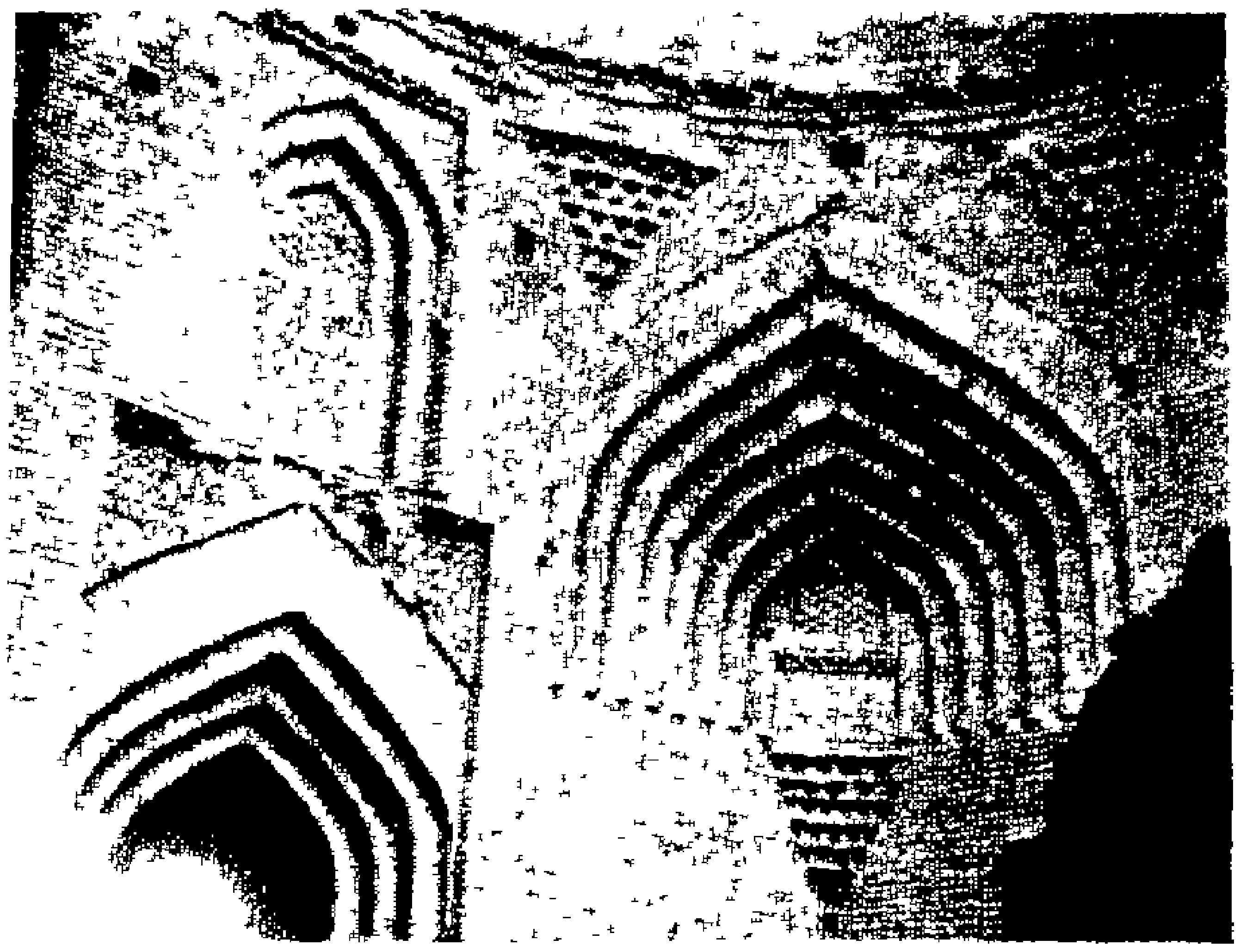
1. Archæological Survey Report, II, 1871, pp. 205-12.—Extract in Murray's Handbook of India, Burma and Ceylon, 1933, p. 340 f.

for Pīr Naqshbandī-walla, the faqir order connected with the shrine of Shaikh Ahmad Mujaddad. It had aroused the special enthusiasm of Cunningham; it was an octagonal building on open arches, surmounted by the usual pear-shaped dome of the Mughal period; its body was profusely covered with floral paintings, the dome was covered with encaustic tiles arranged in thin ribs, marked by dark blue lines, and the intervals were filled by coloured tiles, laid in herring-bone fashion, from yellowish green at the top to dark green at the bottom. Other tombs were connected with a daughter of Sikandar "Zū'l-qarnain," wife of a local saint Mīr-Mīrān, and with two ladies, Hāj-un-Nisā and Tāj-un-Nisā. In 1888/9 Chas. J. Rodgers,[1] archæological surveyor of the Punjab, visited Sarhind again. Inside the mausoleum at Mīr-Mīrān-kā-Dera he found an inscription telling us that Subhān, daughter of Sultan Bahlōl Lōdī died on Friday, the 11th Safar 901 H. and that this tomb was erected in the time of Sikandar Lōdī, king of the world, the next year 902 or 1497/8 A.D.; it is the only inscription which gives us any clue as to the real history of these buildings, at the same time blowing up all the nonsense of popular tradition round the place.

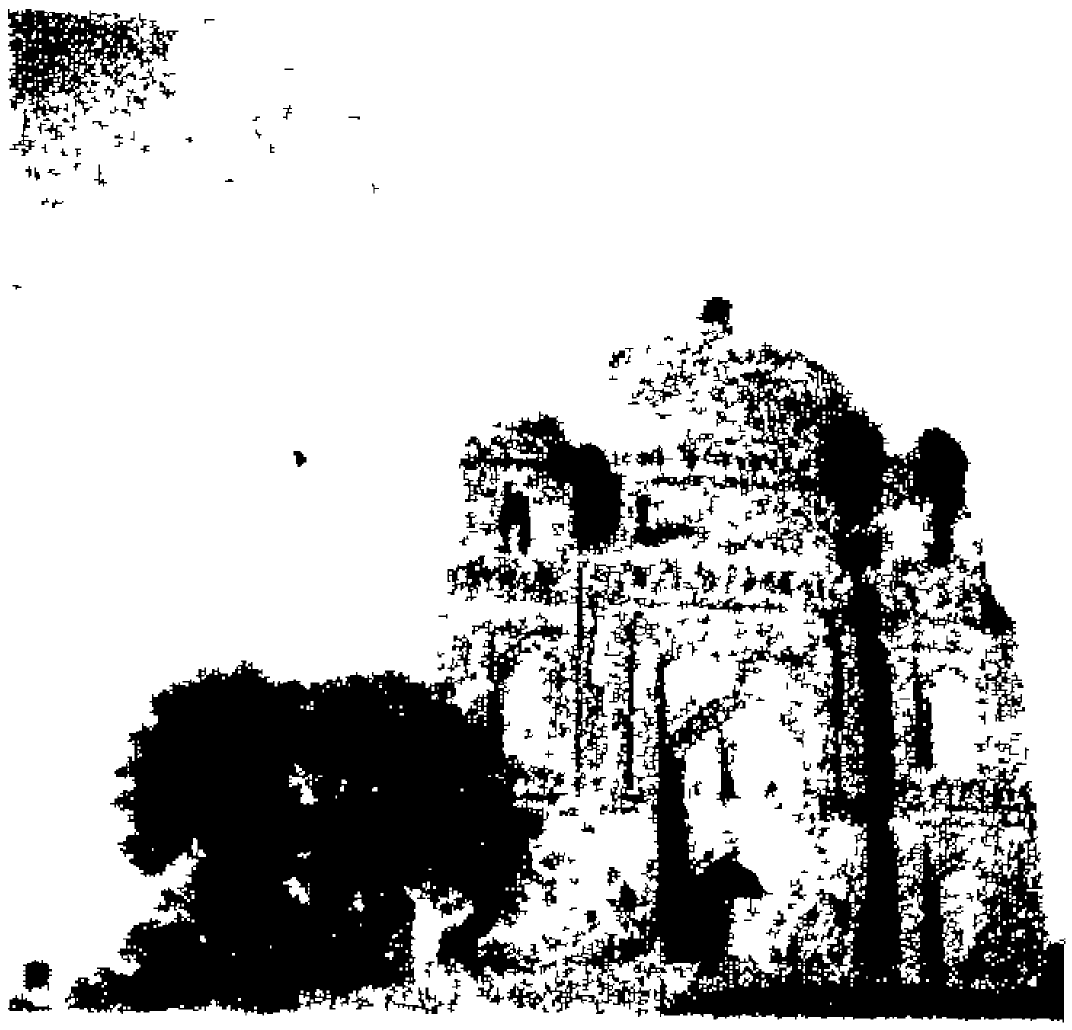
Since that time the tombs had again fallen into oblivion. During my research tour an opportunity for another detailed study of the ruins was offered me during several visits to Sarhind in October 1938, thanks to the kind assistance offered us by the government of H.H. the Maharaja of Patiala. Unfortunately it was even with the help of several local officers and of a friendly mullā from the shrine of Shaikh Mujaddad not always possible with certainty to identify the different buildings which we found amidst the fields with the popular traditions and with the descriptions left by General Cunningham and Mr. Rodgers. The beautiful tomb of Pīr Naqshbandī-wala has in the meantime completely disappeared, Mr. Rodgers had already seen only some poor fragments and was told that the monument had for its bricks been blown up with gunpowder. Also the mosque had further decayed. But the earlier mausolea are still in an excellent state of preservation, and proved to be very interesting as they belong to a little-known period of Indo-Muhammedan art, representing not only a hitherto unknown local school of the Punjab, but also the missing link between the late Tughlaq, the Lōdī and the early Mughal architectural styles of Northern India; besides, the mausoleum of Khōja Khān (Khwaja Khan?) is decorated with remains of rich wall paintings, which must be reckoned amongst the earliest Muslim wall paintings in India if not the earliest at all.

With the exception of the mausoleum of Subhān, daughter of Sultan Bahlōl Lōdī (1451-89), at Mīr-Mīrān-kā-Dera, all these monuments have been built in red bricks; the plaster on the exterior wall has fallen down except in the painted porches of Khōja Khān's tomb and on a somewhat later small, octagonal tomb almost at its side with charming, but not so

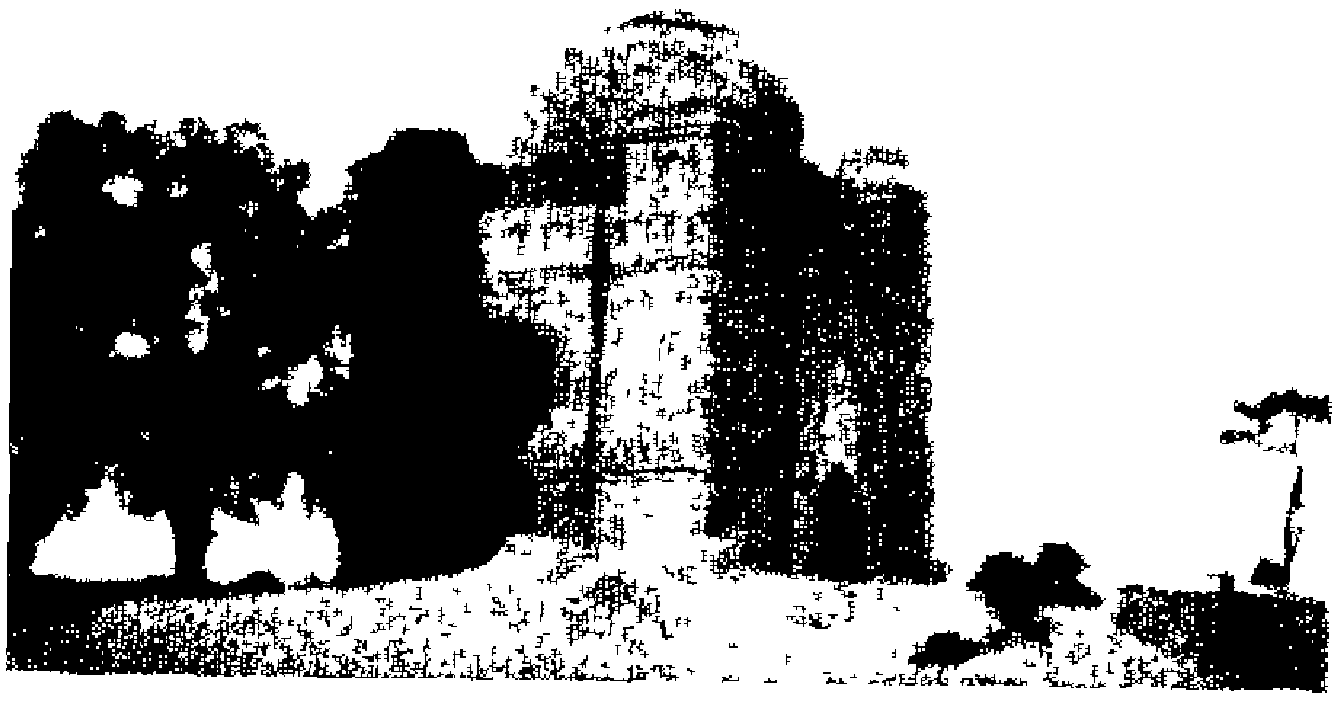
1. Report of the Punjab Circle of the Archæological Survey for 1888-89, Calcutta 1891.



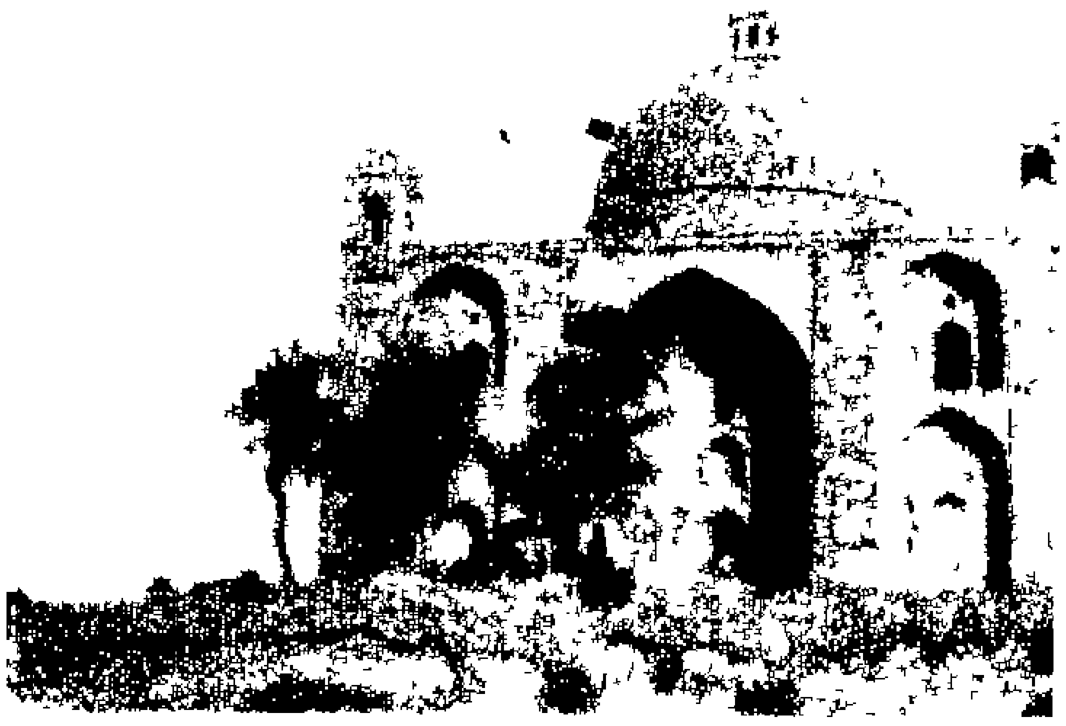
1. Corner vault in one of the late Tughlaq tombs



2. Big tomb of the early 15th century



3. Mausoleum of Princess Subhān, daughter of Sultan Bahlōl Lōdī, A. D. 1497—8



4. Tomb of Sayyid Khān Pathān, beginning of M

5. Wall paintings in the Tomb of Khōja Khān, same period

interesting wall paintings. The oldest buildings are two small mausolea erected in the later part of the 14th century, probably the same as those formerly brought in connection with the legendary two ladies Hāj-un-Nisā Begam and Tāj-u-Nisā Begam. In fact, nobody on the spot was certain where to locate the burial places of those ladies. Both are of the same type as Fīrōz Shāh's mausoleum at the Hauz Khāss, Delhi, though the exterior decoration of one of them more resembles the tomb of Tughlaq Shāh near Tughlaqābād. But the dome is slightly pointed and the sloping of the walls, already considerably less marked in Fīrōz Shāh's mausoleum, has been still further reduced. And the monumental entrance with its pronounced buttresses indicates the coming transition to the style of the 15th century. On the other hand there is also an undeniable connection with certain Persian buildings of the time of the last Īl-Khān rulers of Persia or with some smaller Mameluke tombs in Egypt. The interior contains an extraordinarily high sarcophagus constructed of bricks not much dissimilar to that of Sultan Iltutmish (Altamsh) at Delhi, and a *mihrab* with a decorative little window over it. The *mihrab* with its beautiful spandril medallions of cut-plaster and the corner vaults leading from the quadrangular groundplan to the octagon of the drum and finally to the round of the cupola are framed by superposed projecting keel arches complemented by a primitive stalactite motive formed by the projecting corners of simple bricks. Only the small window over the *mihrab* possesses an archaic form of the pointed horseshoe arch so characteristic for the Lōdī and Sūr buildings. In the tomb with the less elaborate exterior the wall fillings consist of a simple but charming *jali* work of brick stars composed of innumerable little moulds.

Quite near to these two tombs is another two-storeyed mausoleum which must be of the early 15th century, and contemporary with the last Bahmanī mausolea at Gulbarga (A. D. 1347–1428), which, too, developed from Tughlaq architecture. To a certain extent it might well be compared with the " Robber's Tomb " at Gulbarga which represents the intermediary stage of a development leading first to the mausolea at Ashtur near Bīdar, then to the tomb of Ibrāhīm Qulī Qutb Shāh at Golconda and the later tradition of the Deccan. But our tomb has still the sloping walls, and at the four corners the massive roof pavilions round the central dome which are so characteristic for the architecture of Gulbarga. On the other hand none of the Sarhind mausolea has those two storeys of blind niches to be found in all the earlier Deccani buildings. Like in the just discussed early tombs the middle of each front is occupied by a monumental porch between two strong buttresses, with an entrance of ca. half the size of the big decorative cusped arch, a last survival of the Khaljī tradition. The brick walls are decorated with friezes of separate blue encaustic tiles filling the battlements of the friezes which crown every storey, the drum of the dome and the pavilions as well as the buttresses on both sides of the central porches ; these separate blue tiles are a common feature in the architecture of Māndū, Jaunpur and of the Sūr Sultans as well as in the Lōdī tombs at Delhi. The interior rests on a system of decorative arches and niches very similar but more elaborate than that described in the two early tombs; the big arches in the walls are of the Lōdī pointed horse-shoe type, whereas the arches of the smaller niches already show those concave points or those bizarre curves and cusps over a very small neck which we can later on find also at Māndū, in the Great Mosque of Gulbarga and finally in those arches of the Rajput buildings at Datia, Orchhā and Bhāngarh which must be regarded as the prototypes of the Mughal cusped arches of Shāhjahān's time.

The next building in the chronological order is the tomb of Subhān, daughter of Sultan Bahlōl Lōdī erected in 1497/8 A.D. It is built in a dark grey stone taken from a former Hindu temple, as it was not seldom the habit of Sultan Sikandar (1489-1517); part of the battlement frieze still shows the old Hindu decorations cleverly adapted to their new purpose and one of the waterspouts of the roof, with its *makara* head, is the former sacrificial discharge of a Hindu shrine. In spite of its solid workmanship of the friezes of single blue tiles, and of the dados which once must have covered its now barefoot of tuff-stone, it is a rather heavy building, which can compare neither with the above-described mausoleum nor with the Lōdī tombs at Delhi. These latter show much more resemblance with that first building of the early 15th century, though the arrangement of the blind wall niches is nearer to the Deccani tradition, and though the central porches are still more pronounced and the heavy roof towers replaced by small makhbaras.

The two latest of these buildings are the mausolea of "Ustād-u-Shagird," more exactly of Sayyid Khān Pathān and Khōja Khān, according to the tradition still alive in the time of General Cunningham. All the fronts of their main bodies show the high and deep central porches and the four smaller flanking porches, so characteristic for the Timurid buildings of 15th century Turkestan and for the early Mughal architecture of India. But their domes have the characteristic curve of the Lōdī tombs in Delhi and their roof pavilions preserve still the heavy forms of the early 15th century. It is, therefore, rather difficult to fix the exact date of these buildings. Were they erected during the last decades of Lōdī rule? It would not be impossible that the style of 15th century Turkestan got a foothold in the Punjab already before the invasion of Bābur. This would easily explain the side of Lōdī and Mughal conceptions. Or were they erected in the first years of Mughal rule in India? Is it possible that some of Humāyūn's followers who had been killed in the battle against Sikandar Sūr near Sarhind, have found their last rest in these mausolea? In this case the cupolas and the roof pavilions must be a local survival of the Lōdī tradition. This might well be possible, as the tomb of Fateh Jung at Alwar, erected in A.D. 1547, still preserves the same dome, inclusive the charming lantern on its top, which we find on the tomb of Sayyid Khān Pathān. But at Alwar the two main storeys and the smaller third one with their open galleries make you rather think at the architectural style of the Deccan, and the whole conception of the structure has already undergone such a considerable development that some time must have elapsed between its erection and that of the Lōdī tombs at Delhi and Sarhind. The most probable theory, therefore, is that our two Sarhind tombs are somewhat older, of the time of the first beginnings of Mughal rule under Bābur who had passed through Sarhind in A.D. 1525.

Now the smaller of these two buildings still contains vestiges of fine wall paintings of which I could take some photos under great difficulties because of many hives of poisonous bees which swarmed out as soon as we came near the building. These wall paintings fill a number of flat-arched niches immediately under the network of the semi-cupola of the porch. They show cypresses and other trees between flowers, clouds in the delicate style of the late Timurid period. But there are certain archaic features in these paintings which must go back to an earlier Muslim tradition. For all these plants rise from little hillocks or heaps of earth designed in such a way as is else to be found only in the Jāmī'-ut-Tawārīkh of Rashīd-ud-dīn, written and illustrated at Tabrīz in A.D. 1306-14 and now in the library of the Royal Asiatic Society in London.[1] We still know practically nothing about the pictorial art under the early Muslim and Pathān rulers of India. It may be that certain features of this early Il-Khānī art had survived in some local Punjab school up to the 16th century and thus found a place in the less important parts of our paintings which as a whole were the work of some Mughal artist in the service of Bābur (or Humāyūn ?). Thus they are the earliest Mughal paintings in India. Whether they are the earliest Muslim paintings, this will depend on some chronological considerations. At present we know only two works of Muslim pictorial art in India which might be contemporary or somewhat earlier. We may, of course, discard the portrait of Muhammed bin Tughlaq published by Havell ;[2] it is a late Deccani work. But there is the portrait of Fīrōz Shāh of Bengal (A.D. 1533) in Paris.[3] The other are the two portraits in "Gadā Shāh's House" at Māndū.[4] Do they represent the dictator Medinī Rāi and his wife, in the reign of Sultan Mahmūd II (1510-26)? The theory rests only on the popular name of "Gadā Shāh's House" and on the equation of Gadā Shāh = Medinī Rāi. Both rest on very weak foundations. The other interpretation is that the pictures represent Bāz Bahādur (1555-61) and his famous beloved Rupmatī. This is far more probable from the stylistic as well as from the archæological point of view. As both pictures are pure portraits, but the Sarhind wall paintings purely floral designs, a stylistic comparison is impossible the more as it would account for the differences of local styles. In case our wall paintings were executed under Humāyūn, they are later

1. E. Blochet, Musulman Painting, XIIth-XVIIIth century, London, 1929.
2 Indian Sculpture and Painting, London, 1907.
3 F. R. Martin, Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey, 1912, II, pl. 176.
4. Yazdani, Mandu, 1929.

than Fīrōz Shāh's portrait and somewhat earlier than the Māndū paintings. But if they are really of the time of Bābur—which is at present merely most probable—they are the earliest Muslim paintings still existing in India.

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