



AJMER

AJMER (Aĵmēr, from Skt. Ajayameru), a city in Rajasthan, western India, of great strategic, commercial, and cultural importance from the 6th/12th to the 12th/18th centuries. It was the single most important site for the transfer of elements of Islamic (mainly Persian) culture to the Rajput nobility, especially by way of two institutions: the cult of saints and the Mughal court. The tomb of the martyred governor Sayyed Ḥosayn (d. 607/1210), who had been appointed by Qoṭb-al-dīn Aybak (602-7/1206-10), founder of the Delhi Sultanate, was the oldest object of a saint cult; it received new buildings even from the Maratha governors in 1807 and 1813. But the most influential was the *dargāh* of the renowned Sufi saint K̄vāja Moʿīn-al-dīn Češtī, who worked in the city from 589/1193 till his death in 633/1236. By the 10th/16th century the shrine complex which grew up around his tomb had become the most important center of Muslim pilgrimage in the subcontinent, and it has remained so until the present day. Sultan Maḥmūd Kaľjī apparently built the first permanent tomb about 859/1455; this was added to by Akbar, Shah Jahān, and others. Akbar appointed his own officer to administer the *dargāh*, and throughout the Mughal period the shrine's executors often appeared at court using grandiose titles.

During the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal periods new techniques and styles, mainly of Persian origin, were introduced into the repertoire of the skilled Hindu architects and stone workers of Rajasthan. The Aṛhāī Dīn kā Jhoṁprā mosque, built about 595-97/1198-1200 and embellished in 623/1226 “shows the translation of Iranian architecture into Indian stone” (O. Grabar, *Islamic*



Architecture and its Decoration, London, 1967, p. 72).

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