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ḴOŠ MAḤAL

ḴOŠ MAḤAL, Tughluqid audience hall in the Deccan, located in the southern Indian city of Warangal, which had served as the capital of the Kakatiya kingdom from the late 12th century until 723/1323. In that year, Warangal fell to forces of the Delhi Sultanate led by the Tughluqid prince Ologʰ Khan (the future Sultan Moḥammad b. Toḡloq), who occupied the city and reconstructed it as a provincial capital under the name of Solṭānpur. Ḵoš Maḥal had long been assumed to date from the 16th century, but recently it has been re-dated to the period of the city's occupation by the Delhi Sultanate on the basis of its clearly Tughluqid stylistic character (Michell and Zebrowski, p. 26 [citing Klaus Rotzer]; Wagoner and Rice, pp. 81-84). The building is a free-standing longitudinal hall, ultimately inspired by the Persian *ayvān*, but re-interpreted in accordance with established Indic architectural practice as an independent building with a fully developed exterior. As the best-preserved early audience hall to have survived anywhere in the territory of the Delhi Sultanate, the Ḵoš Maḥal bears a heightened importance for the light it sheds on less completely preserved buildings at other sites.

The Ḵoš Maḥal is one of three monuments known from the Tughluqid city Solṭānpur. The other two are a congregational mosque, constructed from spolia on the site of the former Svayambhusiva temple complex, and an urban plaza around the mosque, defined by the temple's detached stone entrance portals (Skt. *toraṇa*), which were carefully preserved. Of the mosque, nothing stands today except a portion of a single domed bay of the prayer hall, but from remains exposed through Ghulam Yazdani's excavations (*Annual Report*

… *1933-34*, pp. 6-10), it is clear that the building was patterned broadly after the main mosque in metropolitan Delhi, the so-called Qowwat al-Eslām (Wagoner and Rice, pp. 84-105).

The Ḵoš Maḥal stands to the west of the ruined mosque, and, like it, was constructed with materials recycled from buildings in the Svayambhusiva temple complex. The long, rectangular hall (38 by 17.5 m on the exterior) stands on a raised stone terrace and has the strongly battered walls and slightly horseshoe-profiled arches typical of early Tughluqid architecture (PLATE I). A projecting stringcourse of arches on brackets runs along the top of all walls except the northern one, where the main entrance is located. The building's eastern and western walls are punctuated by a series of six arched openings, each leading through the massive, six-meter thick walls to a doorway giving access to the interior. On the southern side, a single arched passageway and door provided access to the slightly elevated throne platform at the south end of the hall. The monumental portal, on the north, is conceived as a diminishing series of three shallow *ayvāns*, the last being subdivided into a doorway and a surmounting window arch (PLATE II). Inside, the hall is spanned by six great transverse arches that pull the eye irresistibly to the elevated throne platform at the south end of the hall. The hall would have been covered originally by a flat, timber roof, carried on longitudinal beams running between the walls that rise up from the transverse arches. A rectangular pool occupies the middle of the floor of the main part of the hall, and would have been filled via a water channel flowing in under the floor from the west (PLATE III). There is some evidence suggesting that a fountain once graced the center of the pool, fed by water from a cistern on the roof. With its pool and fountain, and the cross breezes from its lateral doorways, the building would have provided a cool and pleasant space for informal audiences and relaxation (Wagoner and Rice, pp. 79-84).

The architectural conception of the Ḵoš Maḥal clearly derives from that of the *ayvān* of the Diwān-e ʿĀm(m)erected in Delhi for Ologʰ Khan's father, Solṭān Ḡiāṯ-al-Din Toghloq (r. 1320-25), at his new capital of Toghloqābād (completed 1323). Although this structure is badly ruined, enough of its lower walls survive to convey a clear sense of its layout. According to the reconstruction of Mehrdad and Natalie Shokoohy (pp. 113-22), this was a typically Iranian-style *ayvān* hall, abutted by adjacent structures on three sides but opening up completely on the north to a large courtyard. The interior space of the hall would have measured approximately 40 x 18 m, and appears to have been

covered not by a single vault, but rather by a wooden roof carried on four transverse arches springing from piers incorporated in the lateral walls. This method seems to be an outgrowth of the 12th and 13th century Iranian *ayvān* vaults in sections between transverse arches, as seen, for example, in the northeastern *ayvān* of the Masjed-e Jāmeʿ at Herat (Shokoohy and Shokoohy, pl. 7.37). Doorways between these arches provided access to adjoining rooms on the sides, and at the southern end, there was an elevated throne chamber (7 m above floor level) overlooking the hall below it. The idea that the Ḵoš Maḥal is conceptually dependent on the Toḡloqābād *ayvān* is based on the many similarities noticed between the two buildings, including their proportions, northern orientation, transverse arches, lateral doorways, and elevated throne platform at the southern end. The throne platform of the Ḵoš Maḥal is only slightly elevated above the main floor, but this is in keeping with the hall's intended use by the city governor, and not by the Sultan himself, as at Toḡloqābād. Although there seems to be no evidence of a pool at Toḡloqābād, such features are attested in other palatial buildings of the Sultanate period, including the early Sultanate palace complex recently excavated at Lal Kot in Delhi, where there is a pool in each of the two rooms flanking the north-oriented *ayvān* (Mani, pp. 61-66 and figs. 19-20), and even earlier in the riverside *ayvān* ("salle I") of the south palace at Ghaznavid Lashkari Bazar (Schlumberger et al., IA, pp. 38-41, pl. 4, 13-16; the cusped water basin and channels belonged to its original Ghaznavid phase but were filled in during the Ghurid period).

While the Ḵoš Maḥal depended on Persianate models for its spatial conception, it departs from them decisively in its structural realization. Thus, the building is constructed not as an actual *ayvān*, which can only be perceived as an interior space, but rather as a free-standing building with a fully developed exterior. This is in apparent continuity with the region's pre-Sultanate traditions of stone temple architecture, which had similarly emphasized the building as a mass meant to be apprehended first and foremost from the outside. In the Ḵoš Maḥal, this exterior orientation has been further accentuated not only by placing the building on an elevated stone terrace (reminiscent of a temple *jagati*), but also by articulating its entrance as a nested series of diminishing *ayvān* arches (much like the concentric doorframes of a temple), which effectively serves to project the spatial form of the interior onto the surface of the entrance façade. In short, the design of the Ḵoš Maḥal reveals a creative interplay between Persian and Indic forms and ideas that would continue to be a hallmark of Deccani architecture well on

into the 16th and 17th centuries.

The freestanding, *ayvān*-inspired audience hall type remained current in the Deccan and adjacent regions of central India until the middle of the 15th century. Comparable examples are found at Mandu (the "Hindola Mahal," dated to the late 15th century by Yazdani, pp. 70-71, but redated to the early 14th century by Wagoner and Rice, pp. 82-83), Gulbarga (now encased within the "Bala Hisar," early 15th century; Michell and Zebrowski 1999, p. 27), and at Firuzabad ("Feature L" ca. 1400, Michell and Eaton, p. 54 and fig. 41). By the mid-15th century, the free-standing *ayvān* hall had yielded its position of dominance to a new type of audience hall inspired by the Iranian *tālār*.

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