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2025-02-0417

HIST 312: Mughal Architecture: Babar to Aurangzeb

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Research Essay Submission

9<sup>th</sup> April 2024

## Imperial Echoes: A Critical Analysis of the *Naqqara* Ensemble from Mughal Miniatures and The *Naqqarkhana* of Lahore Fort Reimagined

### Introduction:

The Mughal Empire, which ruled over the Indian subcontinent for roughly 331 years, from 1526 to 1857, had a significant impact on its history, culture, and architectural style. While Mughals introduced significant cultural and architectural elements from their Timurid heritage, they also embraced and advanced the existing traditions of the subcontinent. They constructed numerous fortified palaces throughout the subcontinent, housing significant architectural buildings like the Diwan-e-Aam and Diwan-e-Khas inside their walls, where the emperor would go to address public and private audiences. Within such context, it was crucial for the emperor to maintain a constant sense of presence to communicate his power and authority. In this regard, the

*Naubat* or *Naqqar Khana*, also known as the drum house,<sup>1</sup> played a significant role in the Mughal court setting by housing a *naqqara* ensemble which would announce the arrival and movement of the emperor. Historically, *Naqqar Khanas* were constructed on the upper storey of the fort gate, which was close to the Diwan-e-Aam section, because their elevated position enabled the sounds heralding the arrival of royalty to carry farther. Aside from their primary function of announcing the emperor's arrival, the *naqqara* ensemble had a set daily routine of musical performances, and they occasionally accompanied other court musicians on procession, wedding, and birth celebrations. *Naqqara* ensembles were directed by a Naubat Salar who was an official tasked with overseeing the operation of the *Naqqar Khana*. These appointments were formalized through *manshurs*<sup>2</sup> issued by the emperor. One notable instance is found in the Akbari *Manshur*, which appointed Ustad Muhammad Shamsuddin and Mihtar Imamuddin Mahmud as joint supervisors of the *Naqqar Khana*.<sup>3</sup>

The tradition of *Naqqar Khana* persisted throughout Mughal rule, as evidenced by the surviving *Naqqar Khana* from the Zafar Mahal pavilion of the last Mughal emperor. However, during the later British and Sikh periods, the tradition of the *Naqqar Khana* was discontinued, and changes were made to its structure, which was then repurposed for several other uses. Out of the surviving *Naqqar Khanas*, we have one in Delhi's Red Fort, Agra Fort, Fatehpur Sikri Fort, and Zafar Mahal. Historically, there was a *Naqqar Khana* in Lahore Fort as well, located on the upper most storey of Akbari or Masti (Masiti) Darwaza's western side, which was built by

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<sup>1</sup> The *Naubat Khana* featured a variety of kettle-drum instruments known as *naqqara* or *naggada*, which led to it being commonly referred to as the Drum House.

<sup>2</sup> *Manshur* was a royal mandate or missive issued by the emperor to privileged person of the imperial court.

<sup>3</sup> Sumbul Halim Khan and Masrat Ahmad Mir, "Deconstructing A Lesser-Known Mughal Document: *Manshur* of Mughal Emperors," *International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies* 7, no. 5 (May 2020): 3.

Mughal Emperor Akbar. The current state of the *Naqqar Khana* is almost non-existent, with only two of the uppermost storey's eight arched openings open, as well as a projected jharokha in the centre. The remaining six arched openings are now closed with solid bricks, speculating that these changes were made later in the Sikh period, when the tradition of Naqqar Khana was abandoned and the space was used for other purposes by the guards and officials stationed at the gate. With its loss, the mention of the *Naqqar Khana* also appears to have vanished from the history of Lahore, as no scholarly work has been conducted to investigate the *Naqqar Khana* of Lahore. Hence, this essay is an attempt to familiarize people with the *Naqqara Khana* structure; however, it is also crucial to learn about the *naqqara* ensemble before discussing it. For the very purpose, this essay explores the *Naqqar Khana* and *naqqara* ensemble, examining its historical origins, its ceremonial role within the Mughal Court, the diverse instruments it housed, and the sound of these instruments as speculated by the historians. Additionally, it provides a comparative architectural analysis of the Naqqar Khana at Lahore Fort, contrasting it with counterparts at the Red Fort and Agra Fort, as well as in miniature paintings, to reimagine the significance and design of Lahore Fort's *Naqqar Khana*.

### Historical Origins of *Naubat* Tradition:

To understand the purpose and functionality of *naqqara* ensemble, it is essential to first comprehend the foundational origin of the *naubat* itself. According to Steingass, the word "*Naubat*" refers to a large kettle drum struck at specific times at a "*Naubat Gah*," which translates to music gallery or a place where an orchestra tent is pitched.<sup>4</sup> He also discusses two variations of *naubat* practice: *seh-naubat* and *phanj-naubat*. The first was the time of dawn,

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<sup>4</sup> There might be a possibility that the term *Naubat Khana* is derived from this Persian word of *Naubat Gah*.

sunrise, and noon when the music was played, which was established by Alexandar, and the second was the five times of day that Muslims pray when this music was played.<sup>5</sup> The tradition of the *naubat* historically originated in ancient Iranian courts, as evident by its mention in Persian poetic texts. Its functionality was not limited to marking the time of the day and was also utilized for making important announcements.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the Naubat Salar often served as a messenger, a role highlighted in Ferdowsi's celebrated epic, the *Shahnameh*, particularly in the tale of Bijan and Manizheh.<sup>7</sup>

به سالار نوبت بفرمود شاه

که کودذر و طوس و کوان را بخواه

*The king ordered the Naubat Salar, to call (the people of) Kodzer,<sup>8</sup> Tus<sup>9</sup> and soldiers to the court.*

The *naubat* tradition gained popularity in Muslim world during the Abbasid court. The oldest record of such musical performances' dates to the tenth century, where a group of musicians, known as *nauba*, performed at designated times. Over time, the term *nauba* began to refer to the performance itself rather than the group, as the caliph's military band's renditions

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<sup>5</sup> Francis Joseph Steingass. *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1892. 257, 712, 1431.

<sup>6</sup> Affan Seljuq, "Some Notes on the Origin and Development of Naubat," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 49, no. 1 (229) (1976): 141-142, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41492127>

<sup>7</sup> Bijan and Manijeh is a poignant love story from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. Bijan was the son of Giv, a celebrated Iranian knight, and Banu Goshasp who was Rostam's heroic daughter. He falls for Manijeh, who was the daughter of Afrasiab, the Turanian king and Iran's arch-rival.

<sup>8</sup> A place close to the village of Mushk-Abad.

<sup>9</sup> An earlier name of country of Turkiye.

during the five prayer times came to be recognized as *nauba*.<sup>10</sup> From then on, it spread to the courts of Muslim rulers in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Egypt, and India, where the music was being played at regular intervals. Also, it is likely that the *naubat* tradition preexisted in the subcontinent and was not solely introduced by the Mughal emperors. Evidence suggests that a form of the *naubat* already existed in the South Indian region, as indicated by the presence of drum stations known as *naggara mantapa* located between Srivilliputtur and Madurai. Historically, these stations served the purpose of signaling to the ruler that the religious worship at Srivilliputtur had concluded, indicating that he could now eat his midday meal.<sup>11</sup>

### Ceremonial Role of *Naqqar Khana* in Mughal Court

As previously discussed, in addition to announcing the arrival of the emperor, *Naqqar Khana* were used for a variety of ceremonial purposes in the Mughal court. The specifics of such ceremonial purposes are the following:

#### 1. Time-Keeping Ensemble:

The five *nauba* routine of the *Naqqar Khana* was altered by Zaheeruddin Babar, the founder of the Mughal Dynasty in India. This is evident from his personal memoirs, where he describes the Hindustani time and states that the people of India divide the day and night into four sections, each known as *pahr*. A group of *gharialis* has been appointed in accordance with the division of watches, and they promptly announce the end of each watch by striking large *tabaqs* several times with their mallets.<sup>12</sup> Following Babur's death, the custom of the

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<sup>10</sup> Henry George Farmer. *History of Arabian Music to the 13th Century*. London: Luzac & Co., 1929, 153-154

<sup>11</sup> P. Sambamoorthy, *South Indian Music*, Vol. 4, 2nd ed. (Madras: Indian Music Publishing House, 1954), 333-334

<sup>12</sup> Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur. *Babur Nama: Journal of Emperor Babur*. Translated by Annette Susannah Beveridge. London: Luzac, 1922. 516-517.

eight watches was continued by his successor Humayun as referenced by his daughter, Gulbadan Begum. In her memoirs of Humayun, "Humayun Nama," she recounts an event saying, "Next day he (Humayun) came to the tent of this lowly person, and the entertainment lasted till the third watch (*pahr*) of the night. Many Begams were there, and his sisters, and ladies of rank and of position, and other ladies, and musicians and reciters. After the third watch (*pahr*) his Majesty was pleased to command repose. His sisters and the Begams made resting places in his presence."<sup>13</sup> Although this account does not mention the striking of the *tabaq* or *naqqara*, it is reasonable to assume that the eight *pahr* tradition persisted. This practice, however, changed significantly during the reign of Humayun's successor, Akbar, who introduced a four-ghari (*pahr*) system. Abu'l Fazal describes the functionality of this ensemble in his accounts of *Ain-e Akbari*, specifically in *Ain* 19 titled "Ensigns of Royalty" and states that the previously played eight *gharis* were replaced by His Majesty's order to become four *gharis*. The division of timing for these *gharis* was as follows. One *ghari* was played at midnight, another at dawn, one before sunrise, and one after sunrise.<sup>14</sup> After Akbar's reign, it is unknown how the tradition of this time-keeping ensemble continued. Although the court chronicles of later Mughal emperors Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb do not discuss this *ghari* announcement music specifically, we do find accounts of foreigners describing the music of *Naqqar Khana* being heard in the later period.

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<sup>13</sup> Gul-Badan Begum. *Humayun Nama* (The History of Humayun). Translated by Annette S. Beveridge. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1902. 130

<sup>14</sup> Abu'l Fazl Allami ibn Mubarak. *Ain-i-Akbari*. Vol. 1. Translated by H. Blochmann. Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1867-77; 2nd ed., 1927. 52-53.

Berneir,<sup>15</sup> during the reign of Akbar's great grandson Aurangzeb, reports that the music at *Naqqar Khana* was played at specific times of day and night, particularly at night when in bed and afar; on the terrace, this music sounds grand and solemn to my ear.<sup>16</sup> Given that the time of day is mentioned in this account, it is likely that Bernier meant of the ghari system for keeping track of time, and that practice persisted in some form to a later era.

## 2. The Concert Ensemble:

Under Emperor Akbar's rule, the *Naqqara* ensemble also served a distinctly musical role, as detailed by Abu'l Fazal in the same Ain 19. Following the musical announcements that marked the time, the ensemble would begin a series of seven performances, lasting several hours. The following is a concise explanation of the performances as outlined by Abu'l Fazal:<sup>17</sup>

- i. “The *Mursali* which was the name of the tune played by a mursil, and afterwards the *bardasht*, which consists likewise of certain tunes, played by the whole band. This is followed by a pianissimo, and a crescendo passing over into diminuendo”  
The probable description of these tune could be a type of tune that carried a royal message or praise in the name of the emperor instrumentally or lyrically started by the *mursil*<sup>18</sup> and then joined and improvised by the whole band. This performance would conclude with changing paced instrumentals, and the

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<sup>15</sup> François Bernier was a French physician and traveller. He stayed (14 October 1658 – 20 February 1670) for around 12 years in India.

<sup>16</sup> François Bernier. *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656-1668*. 2nd ed. Translated by Archibald Constable and edited by Vincent A. Smith. London: Oxford University Press, 1916. 260.

<sup>17</sup> Abu'l Fazl Allami ibn Mubarak. *Ain-i-Akbari*. Vol. 1. Translated by H. Blochmann. 54

<sup>18</sup> Mursil in Arabic refers to the messenger or *qasid*.

equivalents of pianissimo, crescendo, and diminuendo in the context of Indian music settings could be Vilambit, Drut, and Madh Lay, respectively.

- ii. “The playing of four tunes, called *ikhlati* (improvised notes), *ibtidai* (leading note), *shirazi*, *qalandari nagar qatra* which occupies an hour” Historically, these melodies were linked to the specific regions of their origin and predominantly featured the resonant beating of kettle drums (*naqqaras*).
- iii. “The playing of the old *Khawarizmite* tunes. Of these the Majesty has composed more than two hundred, especially the tunes *Jalalshahi*, *Mahamir karkat* and *Nawrozi*.” The basics of these tunes originated from the Khawarizm region encompassing parts of Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and surrounding areas. Akbar is thought to have a good understanding of music and was a great naqqara player and according to Abu'l fazal, he also composed some new tunes, but there might be a possibility that these tunes were created by Akbar’s court musicians and attributed to Akbar himself due to his position as patron.
- iv. “The swelling play of the cymbals”<sup>19</sup>. Cymbals commonly have an indefinite pitch, so it interesting to note that these instruments were used delicately to make various melodies at that time.
- v. “The playing of the *Bamiyan daur*”. The *Bamyani Daur* is similar to the *dugdugi* instrument used by madaris, but it is larger in size and played with a stick on one side and a hand on the other.
- vi. “The passing into the tunes *azfar*, also called rah-i-bala after which comes a pianissimo”. This could be the tunes that were played in the *taar-saptak* (upper

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<sup>19</sup> Cymbals, which are typically used in pairs, are made up of thin, round plates of various alloys.



octave) of the instruments that concluded with a gradual transition to the Vilambit lay.

- vii. “The Khawarizmite tunes played by the *mursil*, after which he passes into the *mursali*; he then pauses and commences the blessings on His Majesty, then follows the reading of beautiful sentences and poems”. The performance concludes with another rendition of the Mursali in honor of the emperor, thereby emphasizing the authoritative presence of the ruler in this context.

### 3. The Ensemble in Processions, Birth, and Wedding Celebrations:

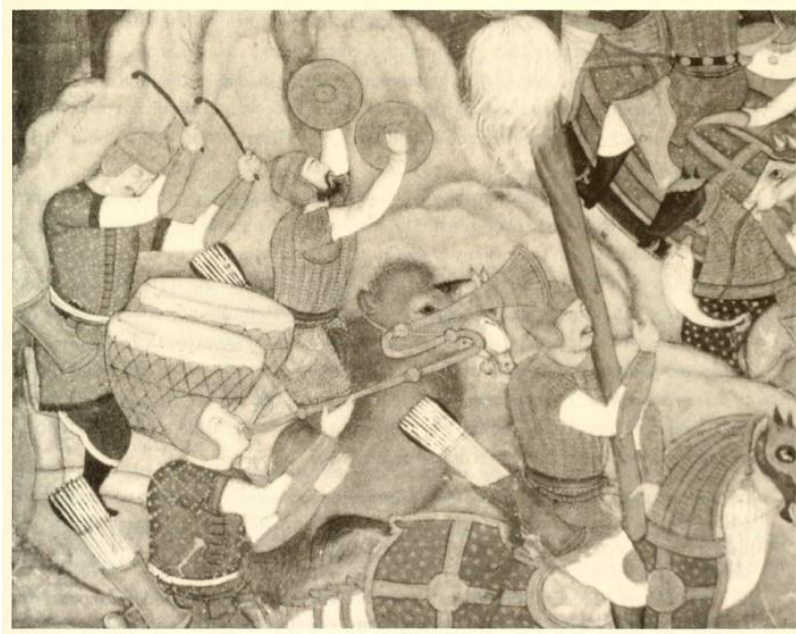
Not only did the naubat ensemble herald the emperor in his palace-fortress, but instrumentalists accompanied him almost everywhere he went, informing everyone along the way of the sovereign's presence. Akbar considered his ensemble to be military troops rather than just *naqqara* players, as evidenced by the miniatures commissioned by Akbar (See Figure 1), which clearly show a double reed *surna* (pipe instrument), cymbals and a large pair of kettle drums, all of which were essential naqqar khana instruments.<sup>20</sup> Ain 19 from the Ain-e-Akbari also provides an account of the personnel appointed to the naqqar khana, detailing their salaries as documented by Abu'l Fazal: " Mansabdars, Ahadis, and other troops are employed in this department. The monthly pay of a foot-soldier does not exceed 340 and is not less than 74 dams."<sup>21</sup> The inclusion of officials like mansabdars and ahadis, who held significant military positions, along with the specified foot-soldier,

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<sup>20</sup> Bonnie C. Wade, *Imagining Sound: An Ethnomusicological Study of Music, Art, and Culture in Mughal India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1988. 9

<sup>21</sup> Abu'l Fazl Allami ibn Mubarak. *Ain-i-Akbari*. Vol. 1. Translated by H. Blochmann. 54

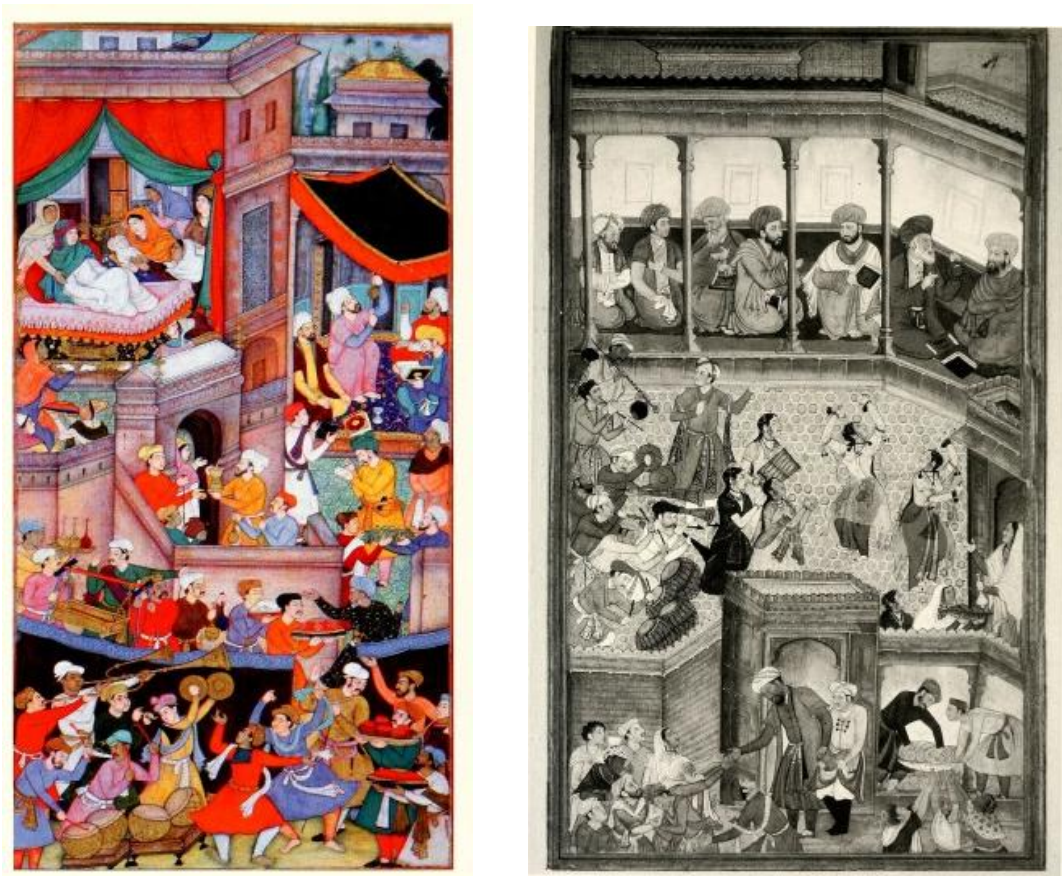
supports the assertion that the naqqara ensemble also fulfilled percussion roles in a military context.



(Figure 1. Illustration of a Military procession from Babur Nama)

The birth celebrations of the various princes depicted in the Mughal miniatures of Akbar Nama represent another noteworthy instance of the *naqqara* ensemble. In these representations, the *naqqara* ensemble is positioned alongside a variety of other musicians and dancers to signify that naubat is performed both as a celebration and to announce the arrival of the emperor's new heir (See Figure 2 and 3). And from the Jahangiri and Shah Jahani periods, illustrations of processions were combined with scenes of imperial marriage celebrations. In these post-Akbari paintings, the wealth of the empire and the size of the royal establishment are suggested not only by the *naqqara* khana players, but also by a variety of other instrumentalists and vocalists. The wedding

celebrations were given ample illustration space in Shah Jahan's *Padshanama*,<sup>22</sup> which is not common in Akbar, Tuti, or Babar Nama. Wedding processions and the Shah Jahan's honoring of princes Dara Shikoh, Shah Shuja, and Aurangzeb on their weddings are a few examples of the grandeur of this naqqara ensemble from the *Padshanama*, which also includes many other musicians. These miniatures are the most and best examples of featuring such a large number of musicians in one frame. In addition to the essential naqqar khana instruments, this miniature depicts *dafli*, *rubab*, *sarangi*, *nai*, *tanpura*, and *rudra veena* among many other instruments. (See Figure 4-7)



<sup>22</sup> Milo Cleveland Beach, and Ebba Koch, with new translations by Wheeler Thackston. *King of the World: The Padshahnama*. Azimuth Editions in association with the Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

(Figure 2: Birth of Timur, Akbar Nama)

(Figure 3: Birth of Salim, Akbar Nama)

Padshanama Paintings:



(Fig 4: Shah Jahan Honoring Dara Shikoh)



(Fig 5: The Wedding Procession of Shah Shuja)





(Figure 6 and 7: The Wedding Procession of Prince Dara Shikoh)

### Instruments of Naqqar Khana and their Sounds:

In Ain 19 of the Ain-Akbari, Abu'l Fazal details the Naqqara ensemble at Akbar's court as a substantial assembly, necessitating the participation of approximately 60-70 musicians to operate effectively.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, Abu'l Fazal included a list alongside a sketch-diagram representation (See Figure 8) that illustrates the instruments used in the *Naqqar Khana*. The *naqqara* ensemble as described by Abu'l Fazal consisted of:

- 18 *damama* 'large kettle drums'
- 20 pairs of *naqqara* 'smaller kettle drums'
- 4 *duhul* 'cylindrical or barrel-shaped drums'

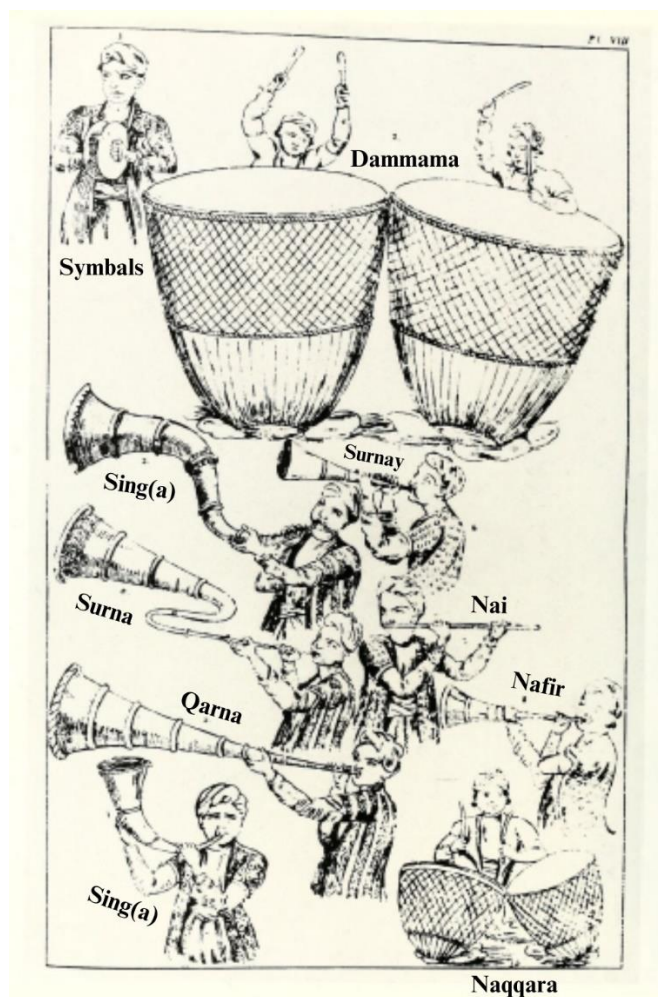
<sup>23</sup> Abu'l Fazl Allami ibn Mubarak. *Ain-i-Akbari*. Vol. 1. Translated by H. Blochmann. 54

- no less than 4 *qarna* 'long trumpets'
- 9 *surmay* 'oboes' of both Persian and Indian types
- some *naḡir* 'smaller trumpets'
- 2 *sing(a)* 'brass horns' resembling cow's horns
- 3 pairs of *sanj (jhanjh)* 'cymbals'

The sounds of these instruments, as investigated by Wade, were as follows: *dammamas* produced deep, resonant sounds that traveled long distances. Originating likely in Persia or Central Asia, they contrasted with the smaller *naqqaras*, which emit sharper, higher-pitched sounds. The *duhul* or *dhol*, varying in sound by size and material, produced a deep, loud tone ideal for rhythmic support in processions and dances. The *qarna*, traditionally used in battles and for announcements, had a loud and piercing sound with a limited note range, tracing its roots back to ancient Persia or Egypt. The *surmay* (*sehnai*) offered a vibrant, reedy tone that suited open-air performances well, reflecting regional musical styles. *Sing(a)* brass horns, shaped like cow horns, produced a mellow sound, and were often featured in religious and cultural ceremonies. Lastly, *sanj* or cymbals, when played in pairs, provided high-frequency clashes that enhanced the dynamic range of traditional music and dance, particularly in the context of the Mughal Court's Naqqar Khana.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bonnie C. Wade, *Imagining Sound: An Ethnomusicological Study of Music, Art, and Culture in Mughal India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1988.



(Figure 9: Sketches of Instruments of *Naqqar Khana* from AiA)

### Reimagining the Naqqar Khana of Lahore Fort:

Now that the discussion on the background and functionality of the *naqqara* ensemble has concluded and a comprehensive foundation has been established, this paper will now attempt to reimagine the *Naqqar Khana* of Lahore Fort. The Lahore Fort was built in 1566 by Mughal Emperor Akbar and was surrounded by strong brick masonry and magnificent gates.<sup>25</sup> During Akbar's reign, the fort had only two gates: Akbari Gate (later Masti or Masiti Gate) on the east

<sup>25</sup> The Walled City of Lahore. 2009. Lahore: Lahore Development Authority.

and Alamgiri Gate on the west, which was replaced by the latter during Aurangzeb Alamgir's reign in 1084 A.H./1673-74 A.D. During the court of Akbar, the Akbari Gate was the main entrance to the fort and was located close to the Deewan-e-Aam section.

The gate's architectural design features a double-storyed central *iwan* flanked by two massive semi-octagonal bastions, all raised on a tall plinth. The gateway leads to a square portal with arches on all sides: two arches open into side chambers, and another directly opposite the gate which provides access to the fort itself. The western facade of the gate includes a central arch raised till the first floor and a projecting *jharoka* on the uppermost tier. The facade is embellished with three levels of arched niches on both sides of the central arch and *jharoka*, with the uppermost tier's two niches left open and the rest closed with solid bricks (See Figure 10). The structure suggests that this uppermost tier was the place where the naqqara ensemble would play the *naqqara* and would announce the arrival of the Emperor towards the Deewan-e-Aam section. It is believed that these closed arched openings were closed by either the Sikh or British rulers to give accommodation to their soldiers following the decline of the Mughal Empire in Punjab. Given the Mughal emphasis on symmetry in architecture, it is unlikely that the Mughals would have made such modifications themselves.



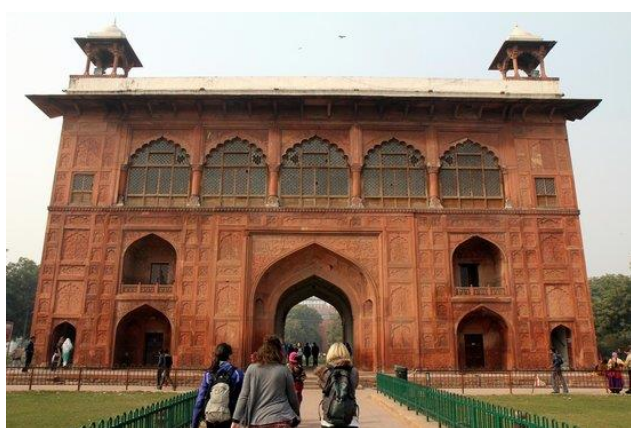


(Figure 10: The current situation of Western Facade of the Akbari Gate)

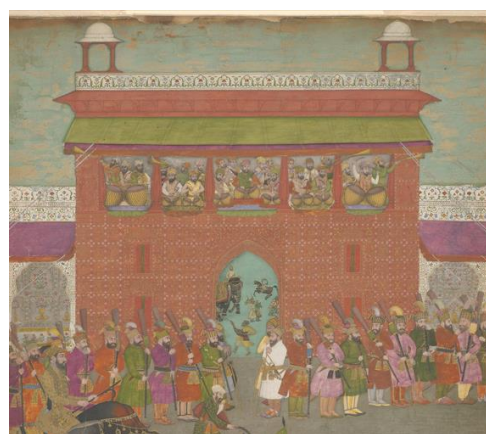
On one hand, while the Naqqar Khana of Lahore was altered in the periods following the Mughals, the Naqqar Khanas at Delhi and Agra Forts have survived with little to no changes to their structures. Considering that both the Lahore and Agra forts were built by Akbar, who had a profound appreciation for architecture. And this sentiment continued during the reign of his grandson Shah Jahan, who constructed the Delhi Fort, this paper uses these surviving Naqqar Khana structures as valuable references for reconstructing the Naqqar Khana at Lahore Fort. In addition to these architectural examples, miniature paintings, particularly those in Shah Jahan's *Padshahnama* and Akbar's *Akbar Nama*, depict the physical *Naqqar Khanas* of the Mughal era, hence they are also being used as a reference.

The Delhi Fort Naqqara Khana is a quadrangle three-tiered structure with a central double-storey iwan similar to the Akbari Gate. This structure is flanked by double alcoves on each side, and the uppermost tier has cusped arched openings, which served as a venue for the naqqara ensemble to perform (See Figure:11) The dimensions of the two *Naqqar Khanas* are

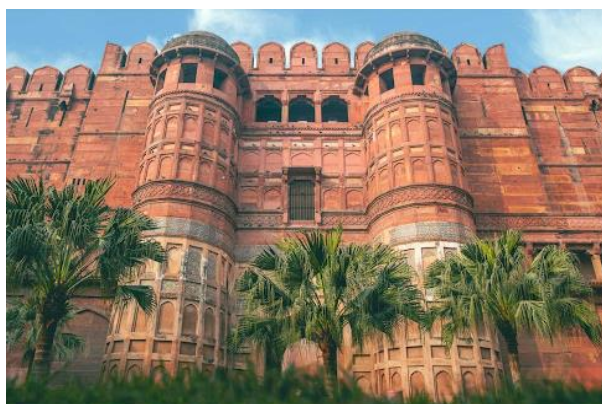
very similar. Such a structure is also depicted in one of the miniatures, where a similar pavilion is shown with slight changes and can be imagined for the Lahore Fort's Naqqar Khana as well (See Figure 12). Similarly, the naqqar khana at the Agra fort which is located on the uppermost tier of the Delhi Darwaza, near the Hathi Pol Gate (See figure:13) has three trabeated openings are present on the top where the musicians would sit, and a similar depiction of the seating is shown in the Akbar Nama miniature. (See Figure 14)



(Figure:11- *Naqqar Khana*, Delhi fort)



(Figure 12: *Padshanama* Depiction)



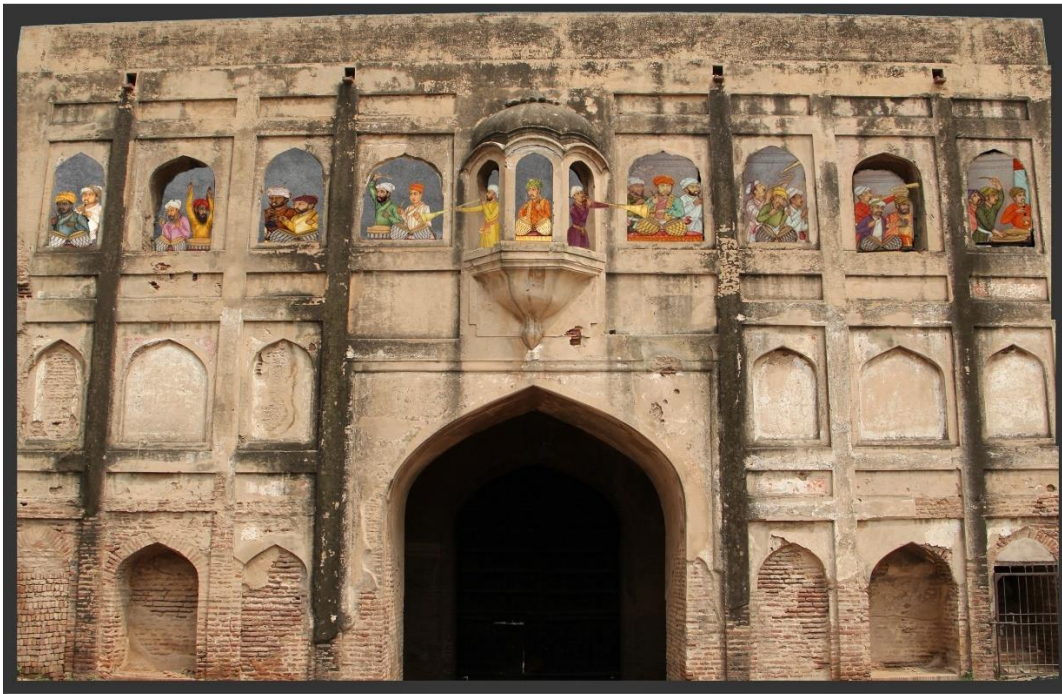
(Figure 13: *Naqqar Khana*, Agra Fort)



(Figure 14: *Akbarnama* Depiction)

By combining all the elements of these depictions and placing the musicians on the upper tier, the visual imagery of the Naqqar Khana Lahore can be as imagined as following: (See Figure 15)





(Figure 15: The *Naqqara* ensemble musicians are placed in the *Naqqar Khana* section of the Akbari Darwaza, Lahore Fort.)

### Conclusion:

This research essay has explored the rich tradition of the naubat ensemble by tracing its origins, examining its ceremonial uses, and detailing the instruments typically housed within it. Throughout the first part of the paper, we delved into the historical and cultural significance of the *naqqara* ensemble, which played a pivotal role in the daily rhythms and ceremonial settings of the Mughal courts. In the latter half, an attempt was made to reconstruct the Naqqar Khana of Lahore Fort. This reconstruction drew on architectural parallels from existing Naqqar Khanas in the forts of Delhi and Agra, which have survived in much better condition. Additionally, miniature paintings were used as visual aids to reimagine the lost Naqqar Khana of Lahore Fort with as much historical accuracy as possible. While this paper serves as a valuable resource that

provides extensive information on the *naubat* and its architectural enclosures, it is important to acknowledge the speculative nature of the reconstructions. The depictions of the Lahore Fort's *Naqqar Khana* are ultimately hypothetical, informed by similarities with other structures and depicted in historical art. As such, they should be seen as educated conjectures rather than definitive reconstructions. This acknowledgment invites further research and exploration to refine our understanding of Mughal architectural heritage and ensures that our reconstructions remain respectful and informed by the best available evidence.