

# BAHRAM-KI-BARADARI NEAR ATTOCK

INAYAT-UR-RAHMAN\*

The graceful monument near Attock, known as Bahram-ki-Baradari; is believed to have been built by Bahram Khan, son of the great and renowned Pashto poet Khushal Khan Khatak. Bahram Khan was born in June, 1643 at Akora Khattak. Khushal had, more or less, sixty sons and a number of daughters. His eldest son was Muhammad Akbar Khan who lived only a week's life. His other sons namely, Ashraf Khan and Saadat Khan are counted among his elder sons and Bahram Khan was the fourth in this order.

Bahram Khan had opened eyes in the house of a Nawwab who was widely respected, so he got education and tutelage of the highest standard. A father as well as teacher, Khushal himself shared a significant role in the tutorship of his sons. It seems that Bahram Khan was very intelligent from his boyhood and this is why Khushal discerned and endeared his intellect and exoteric oratory.

Khushal Khan says;<sup>1</sup>

“When Bahram writes composition and orthography so excellently, then attarad (planet mercury) should drop his pen”.

Khushal was a great general too and the people of his tribe having the highest regard for him, were prepared to offer the greatest sacrifice at his call. Hence many grandees and tribal chiefs were jealous of the grandeur and popularity of Khushal.

Among his ill-wishers was also Syed Mir Khwafi who was the Governor of Kabul. He was always pre-occupied in framing cooked up schemes against Khushal to dwarf his political stature and totally eliminate him on one pretext or the other. At last, it was alleged that Khushal had deviated from the transit duties and so in a carefully clever manner he was arrested,<sup>2</sup> kept in confinement at Peshawar, then sent to Delhi, and thereafter shifted to Ranthembore Fort and imprisoned there. However, finding him not guilty of any crime, he was set free after about two and-a-half years of imprisonment. In the days of confinement, as he spoke about his other sons, he also mentioned Bahram in good words, Khushal says;<sup>3</sup>

“That is a wholly good country where my Bahram lives”.

When Khushal was freed and returned to his native territory, he decided to affront the Mughals and was not at all prepared for a minor compromise on any condition. Thus a difference of great magnitude surfaced between him and his sons who had some avaricious inclination towards the Mughals in the pursuit of dignity and rank.

It was in this background that Bahram Khan too emerged prominently on the political scene of the fast changing events. According to traditions of the Khattak tribe, Ashraf Khan being the eldest son, was the rightful person for the rank and fief. However, Bahram also considered himself equally deserving for the coveted rank of vicegerency.

On the other hand, the policies of Mughals, especially that of Emperor Aurangzeb, ran a wave of agony and anger among the Pathans. Meanwhile, the return of Khushal to his

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motherland worsened the already tensed situation creating more intensity in the political arena. In consequence, the great conflict of Khyber happened in 1672 in which nearly forty thousand Mughals were killed when wife of the Governor, Muhammad Amin Khan and his brother-in-law also died in the battle. After this great tragedy, fighting broke out between the Mughals and Pathans at Karah-pa, Khapash, Do-abah and Nowshera where the Mughal army was mostly outclassed. As Khushal Khan had active hand in these battles, he became the prime enemy of the Mughals.

Mahabat Khan,<sup>4</sup> the Governor of Kabul and Peshawar at that time, was an intimately good friend of Khushal Khan. He tried his best to please him at any price but Khushal who was fed up by the excesses of the Mughals, refused to barter away the Pathans' blood for the gains of ranks and wealth.<sup>5</sup> Inevitably, the Governor directed Ashraf Khan, the vicegerent to exterminate his father from the Khattak area.

However, Ashraf Khan could not dare doing such a mean act against his father. When the Mughals found it for sure that Ashraf Khan was not the man of their interest, they offered the overtness of rank to Bahram Khan who bargained with the enemy side against his father and brother. In this way, the Mughal Governor started direct interference in the family affairs of Khushal. In 1673, Bahram Khan assured the Governor Mahabat Khan that, as both Khushal Khan and Ashraf Khan did not remain faithful to the Mughals, they shall be handed over fettered and handcuffed to the government authorities if the rank and fief of the latter were bestowed on him.<sup>6</sup>

As the time passed, the gulf of enmity and differences between Khushal Khan and Bahram Khan had widened. Several battles had ensued between them in which Khushal was often victorious. In these wars, some of Khushal's sons also actively supported their father. But Bahram, as it is alleged, was a great opportunist and always kept a vigilant eye on how things were moving. When he would see no hope of success, he would entreat submissively his father and brother to forgive him.

Once it happened so that Bahram was staying with his family at Jalbai and was attacked from the side of Akora Khattak. He ran away to the territory of Yousufzai. In those days, Khushal Khan was mainly engaged against the Mughals and was wandering to collect money and gain support at various villages and towns to strengthen his position. The Yousufzai, in the meanwhile, brought Bahram before Khushal who fell at the feet of his father and repented on his deed. While Khushal was then coming from the area of Yousafzai to the Khattak territory, Bahram also accompanied him. Khushal asked him to apologize to his brother Ashraf Khan, who with clean heart pardoned him for his past behaviour. Further, Ashraf Khan also recommended to Amir Khan (Mir Miran), then Governor of Kabul, the rank of *do sad panjahee* for Bahram which was granted and he was appointed as Thanedar of Ghali Dher.<sup>7</sup>

However, Bahram's heart did not move by these kind gestures and no real change in his attitude did accrue. In fact, he was a person to seek luxury and enjoyment infatuated by rank and dignity. He never thought that the great aims of his father for which he was knocking the doors of others, shall go in vain due to his inimical behaviour. What he actually wanted was only to eliminate his father and elder brother from the way of his vested designs.

In those days, it was an incidence of fortune that some bitterness arose between Khushal Khan and Ashraf Khan due to the battle of Dhodha. Khushal badly routed the Bangash tribe, an ally of Mughals, on which the Governor was naturally annoyed. These events were adversely affecting the position of Ashraf Khan and thus serious differences harboured to the fore between

father and son. So, Khushal badly trampled the Fort and other holdings of Ashraf Khan at Lachi and also strengthened the defence of his impregnable fort at Yout which was situated to the south-west at the hills. Similarly, another hilly fort was built near the place Takht called Takht-Kot. The remains of the two Forts survive to this day as a witness to the tale of their past.

At last Bahram Khan with the help of Allah Dad Khweshgi succeeded in his odious design and arrested Ashraf Khan, without assigning any reason for it. He was taken from Peshawar to Gowaliar and then sent to Bija-pur, Dekkan.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to mention here that a new situation emerged from the arrest of Ashraf Khan in the Khattak family. Khushal Khan, meanwhile entrusted the Chieftainry to his grandson, Afzal Khan in his life time. But due to tender age, he felt it an honour to be only his companion to learn the hints and enigmas of rank and not so keen to hold it. To handle the given circumstances, Khushal Khan had called a jirgah (assembly of people) at the *mazar* of Sheikh Rahamkar popularly known as Kaka Sahib.

In this connection, Afzal Khan writes, "Khan Azam was at Nizam Pur and asked Abid Khan to accompany me and we came to Sarwar Mela and Khushal also followed us to this place. "Thereafter, the meeting was held at the *mazar* and Bahram spoke in a very flattering and with such a speciousness of language that even Khushal Khan fell into his trap". "In the deliberations, it was decided that now when Ashraf Khan was in prison of the Mughals, a way should be found to free him from there". "Bahram, who had intimacy with Mughals' officials in those days, should take up the matter with them". "It was agreed that Ashraf Khan shall be given some rank while the chieftainry shall be conferred on Bahram".<sup>9</sup> However, the terms of the agreement were not honestly complied with; Ashraf Khan remained in prison for fourteen long years, and it was in 1694 that he died there. The heart breaking tragedy made Khushal Khan to express his agony in these words.<sup>10</sup>

"O' Bahram, my heart is unhappy with every one.

"I still maintain relation with every one under obligation".

It transpires from the above that Bahram did not adhere to the assurances given in the jirga'h at the *mazar* of Sheikh Rahamkar and also could not even conform to the importunity of his mansab. Therefore, the couplet clearly indicates the heavy heart and unhappiness of Khushal. It can easily be conjectured how he was broken hearted from the excesses of Bahram.

In the last days of Khushal's life, Bahram is said to have troubled him tremendously. It was, it is alleged, his greatest ambition to arrest Khushal and hand him over to his overlords and benefactors. The house of Khushal was too attacked several times. On one occasion, Bahram asked his son, Mukaram Khan, to bring his grandfather in fetters before him. But some of Khushal's sons did not leave their father alone and this mean objective of Bahram did not touch the ladder of success.

Once even Khushal Khan was all alone in his house but there still remained the awe inspiring dignity of youthhood in the eyes of the brave Khan that no body could dare to advance and attack him. Disheartened from these circumstances, he moved to Danbra village in the Afridi territory and lived there. He died at that place in the month of February, 1689.<sup>11</sup>

Thus Khushal Khan and Ashraf Khan were both eliminated from the ambitious way of Bahram. However, Afzal Khan Khattak with all his probity and fitness kept on constantly competing with him. The struggle and wrangling between them continued for the acquisition

of mansab and power. In these distractions which spread to the areas of chuntra'h,<sup>12</sup> majority of Khushal's sons, sided with Bahram.

It, however, appears that the last days of Bahram passed in poverty, indigence and straitened circumstances. Afzal Khan says, "the evil minded Bahram was at Nowshera in the year 1712 and I was at Nizampur in those days. "While I was going to Shadipur for the settlement of Mahal Tari Bolak, I heard the news of his death. "Some persons of Nowshera were carrying his bier and brought it to a place Chashmai. "Due to his malevolent disposition, no body attended his funeral".<sup>13</sup>

He further writes, "Khushal Khan at the agonies of death bequested his sons present there in these words, "whenever Bahram comes to your hands, cut him into two pieces, one of which be burnt beside my head and the other towards feet, and then my soul shall be at rest".<sup>14</sup>

Khushal and some of his sons mentioned about Bahram in their poetry. Khushal himself, however, presents a vivid picture about him and says;<sup>15</sup>

"Come to see the way of Bahram's hypocrisy.

"Some times he becomes orthodox and at times schismatic and infidle".

According to Khudeja Ferozuddin, Bahram came to prominence when Khushal was in war with the Mughals. And Bahram had arms in hand in alliance with Mughals against his father. His eyes were concentrated on chieftainry of his tribe and once taking advantage of Khushal's compulsion, he obtained the vicegerency. It is, however, difficult to make a correct review about Bahram Khan because the chief source of information about him is the pen of Khushal who rather disowned him and used very harsh language for him in his poetry and account book. Besides, the circumstances of domestic bickering and civil feuds which regularly continued till the death of Bahram, were committed to writing by Afzal Khan Khattak in *Tarikh-i-Murassa*, who mentioned him with very impolite words. He alleged him bitterly for his malicious disposition and behaviour of cupidity. Nevertheless, the ability and intelligence of Bahram was beyond doubt because an ingenious and capable man has the subtlety and excellence of a *modus operandi*.<sup>16</sup>

In this connection, H.G. Raverty says, "Most unfortunately, the *Tarikh-i-Murassa* is very imperfectly arranged: matters which happened in Khushal's time, are placed near the end: in many places the text seems imperfect, for an hiatus occurs every here and there".<sup>17</sup>

In the eyes of Preshan Khattak, Bahram is that son of Khushal whose character assassination is being done for the last three hundred years. Its base and main source are *Tarikh-i-Murassa* or the poetry of Khushal. In the latter, there are also found good material which, in fact, can lead us to the real Bahram. However, he was not that much criminal as has persistently been stated till now. Actually, the facts have mostly been omitted by biased approach in his case. The credit of this falls to the lot of Afzal Khan, who was his great antagonist.

After Afzal Khan became *mansabdar*, the suzerainty continued hereditary among his descendents. The character assassination of Bahram, started by Afzal Khan, went unabated for centuries. In this context, it is important to mention that the books of Bahram's brothers namely, Ashraf Khan, Saddar Khan, Abdul Qadir Khan and Sikandar Khan, are preserved even to this time. Surprisingly, the writings of Bahram Khan, are neither available anywhere nor mentioned in any document of the Khattak family. It seems that Afzal Khan and his descen-

dants, besides the character assassination of Bahram, also unfortunately eliminated the entire collection of his writings.

Thus, may Bahram be avaricious, hopeless or unfortunate, but he was indeed an active and live character in the domestic drama of the Khattak tribe staged in those years in the run for rank and grandeur. Bahram kindled vitality in the political game and seems conspicuous along the succeeding events in the contest for suzerainty.<sup>18</sup>

As stated earlier, the name of Bahram is preserved in the pages of *Tarikh-i-Murassa* and in the poetry of Khushal Khan. Significantly, his name is also associated with a baradari located beside the National Highway near Attock. It is said that this magnificent monument was built by him in the time of his chieftainry in 1681 or a little after.

Bahram-Ki-Baradari is delightfully situated at the lape of the mountainous ridge on the southern side of the National Highway near Attock. To its north, are the modern Tourist INN and River Indus which, with sky-blue water, descends from the eastern side to a low and broad bed and flows curving on to southern direction. To the south and east are the hill ranges and to the west are Begum Ki Sarai and the Attock Fort.

Not far away from the baradari on the north and east there also survive to this day in the area, a number of other ancient buildings including the so-called Kanjri's tomb, which creates a remarkable harmony in respect of the material used in their structural composition. These buildings are vaulted with cap-shape and pyramid domes and built in stone bonded by courses of brick masonry. Yet inspite of the ravages of time and the indifference of vandals, these structures still retain layers of plaster which once covered their interior and exterior.

The elegant structure of Bahram Ki Baradari also combines in its masonry the use of local stone and brick which is a distinguishing feature of the architecture of all the monuments found in the vicinity of Attock. The baradari is enclosed by a boundary wall erected higher on the right side which clings to the natural formation of the rising crag on the east. The wall is constructed in rubble masonry in conjunction with courses of bricks. It is plastered and worked with moulded band in the middle and is beautifully merloned. The baradari has two rooms each measuring 8' x 8' on the right and left flanks with a *dalan* (chamber) between them measuring 12' – 5" x 8'

The ceiling of the room to the right on the eastern side is nicely vaulted. Evidence of squinches is also clearly visible in the structure. There are niches worked in the thickness of walls. The room has a ventilator to the northern side and an entrance which opens into the *dalan* on the west. The room to the left on the western side has exactly the same composition with entry obtained into the *dalan* on the east. The *dalan* is tastefully facaded with *sang-e-abri* pillars headed by cusped arches and provided with stone eave which adds beauty to its imposing composition.

It is interesting to mention here that the floor of the *dalan* has a narrow channel right in the centre connected with a flushing cascade of stone slab to the south. The channel is made of stone with a hole at the northern end for taking water down to the channels and cistern in the courtyard. There are also mounting stone steps to the baradari from the east and west sides.

The underground room on the western side of the baradari, has a small ventilator and vaulted roof finished in usual small sliced bricks. The walls of the room are mostly made of stone originally plastered.

The entrance of the underground room opens into a narrow corridor under the water tank connected with another such passage on the west. To the south-western nook of the

corridor at higher level, is a well ringed in brick masonry where water is still visible. It seems that water to the cascade and channels in the baradari was supplied by this well through a pre-planned system. The courtyard measuring 90' x 72' with a central platform (13' x 13') of the baradari is divided in four parts crossed by channels with stone cascades and has in its centre a square cistern (5' – 2" x 5' – 2") which appears to have originally contained a fountain to play.

In the south-eastern corner of the courtyard is a rectangular platform made of stones. There seems to have been originally a verandah over the platform because the holes in the structure of walls on the south-eastern sides, indicate such possibility.

To the east of the main entrance of the baradari on the northern side of the courtyard, is an oblong platform (46' – 6" x 15' – 3") which is dressed on sides in panels worked in stone slabs. It is a solid structure entirely executed in stone masonry. It is enclosed with a wall having exit towards the courtyard on the southern side. The enclosure wall has niches created in the stretch of its structure on the north and western sides. Maybe there was roof over this platform in its hey-days which has perished over the years due to the tide of time. The platform probably served as an important portion of the baradari for special meetings or for entertainment.

Adjacent to the main gate of western side is a small mosque with a single prayer chamber measuring 14' x 8' – 9". The mosque has arched openings with *sang-e-abri* pillars and its roof is graced with eaves on the south and eastern sides. It is interesting to note that *sang-e-abri* has been used in the Mughal's buildings in flooring, at dado level in Badshahi Mosque and in the Zigzag pattern wrought in the minarets of Jahangir's tomb, Lahore. However, the pillars made of *sang-e-abri* in the mosque and the main baradari, seems to be a rarity.

The top of the mosque's Mihrab at arch level, preserves traces of greenish and red colour. The ceiling of the mosque is wrought in stone slabs and its interior has niches created in the extent of structure. The mosque has arched entrance opening to the courtyard on the south.

The defensible nature of the baradari with underground room, small ventilators piercing the walls of the rooms and guarded by the massive boundary wall, suggest that protection and safety of the occupants from outside danger were the prime objective. The carefully laid stone pieces bonded in brick masonry, must have involved a great outlay of labour which could only be afforded by a headman of dignity and substance.

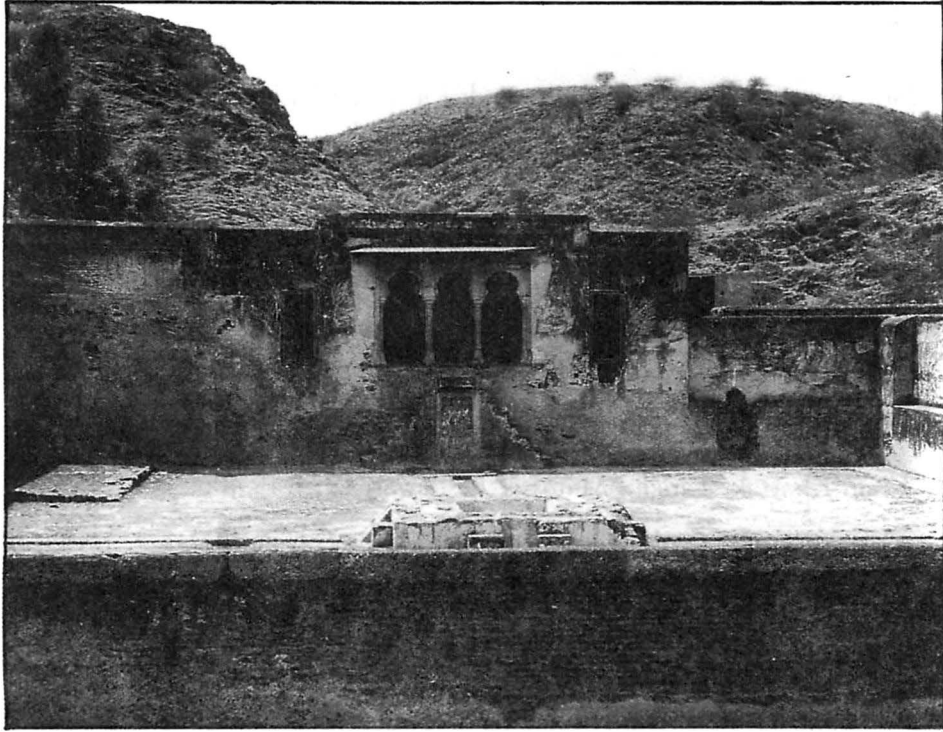
#### *Acknowledgements:*

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## References

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5. Muhammad Shafi Sabir, *Tarikh Suba Sarhad*, Lahore, 1986, P. 348.
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12. This area is now included in Karak District, N.W.F.P.
13. Afzal Khan Khattak, *Tarikh-i-Murrassa*, Peshawar, 1974; P. 337.
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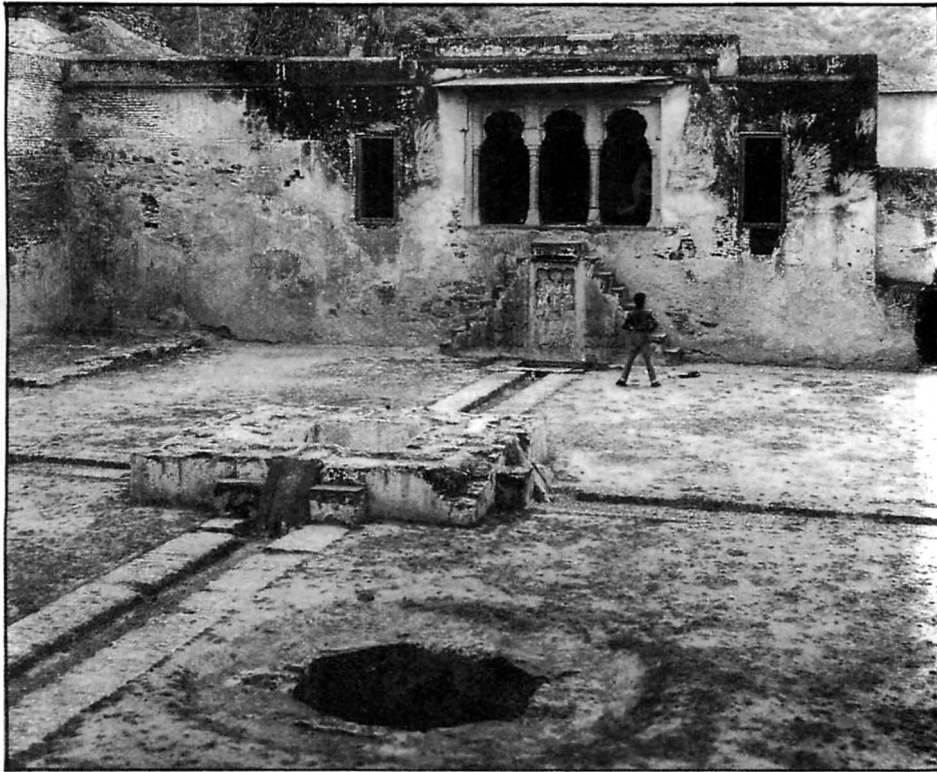


Pl. 1. Attock: Bahram-ki-Baradari General view.



Pl. 2. Attock: Bahram-ki-Baradari From North.





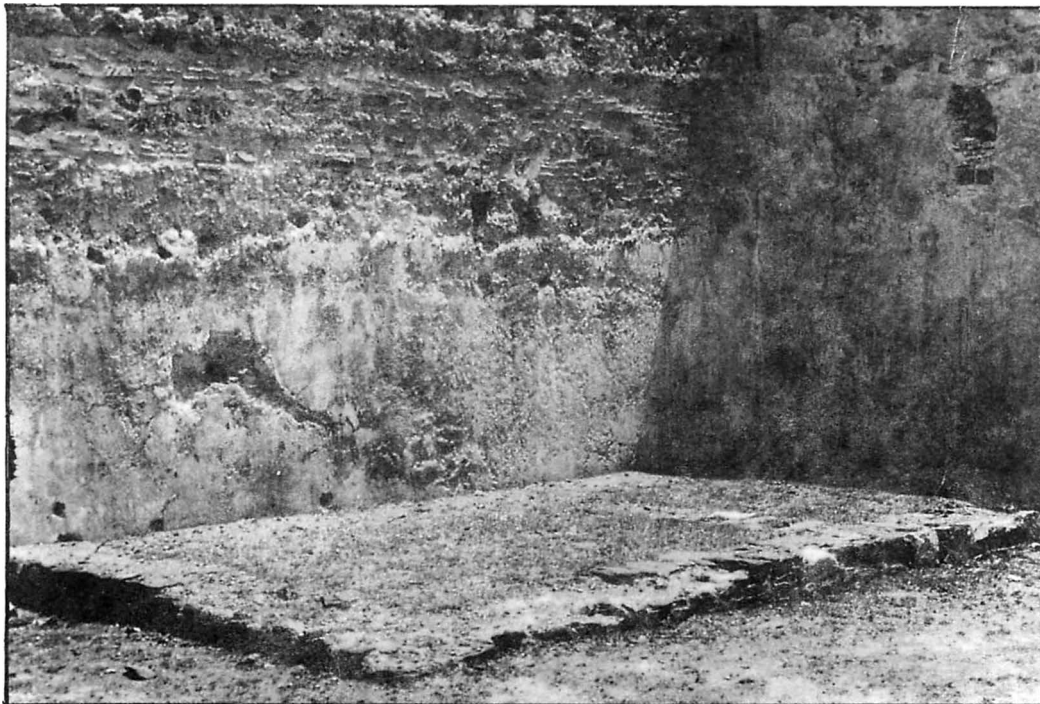
Pl. 3. Attock: Bahram-ki-Baradari Close view From North-West.



Pl. 4. Attock: Bahram-ki-Baradari Close view showing the chamber with arched openings.



Pl. 5. Attock: Bahram-ki-Baradari Close view showing cascade in the chamber.



Pl. 6. Attock: Bahram-ki-Baradari Close view showing platform in south-east side of the courtyard.



Pl. 7. Attock: Bahram-ki-Baradari General view from south-east. Courtyard, showing water channel and Cistern.



Pl. 8. Attock: Bahram-ki-Baradari Close view showing mosque with arched openings.



Pl. 9. Attock: Bahram-ki-Baradari General view showing the platform.

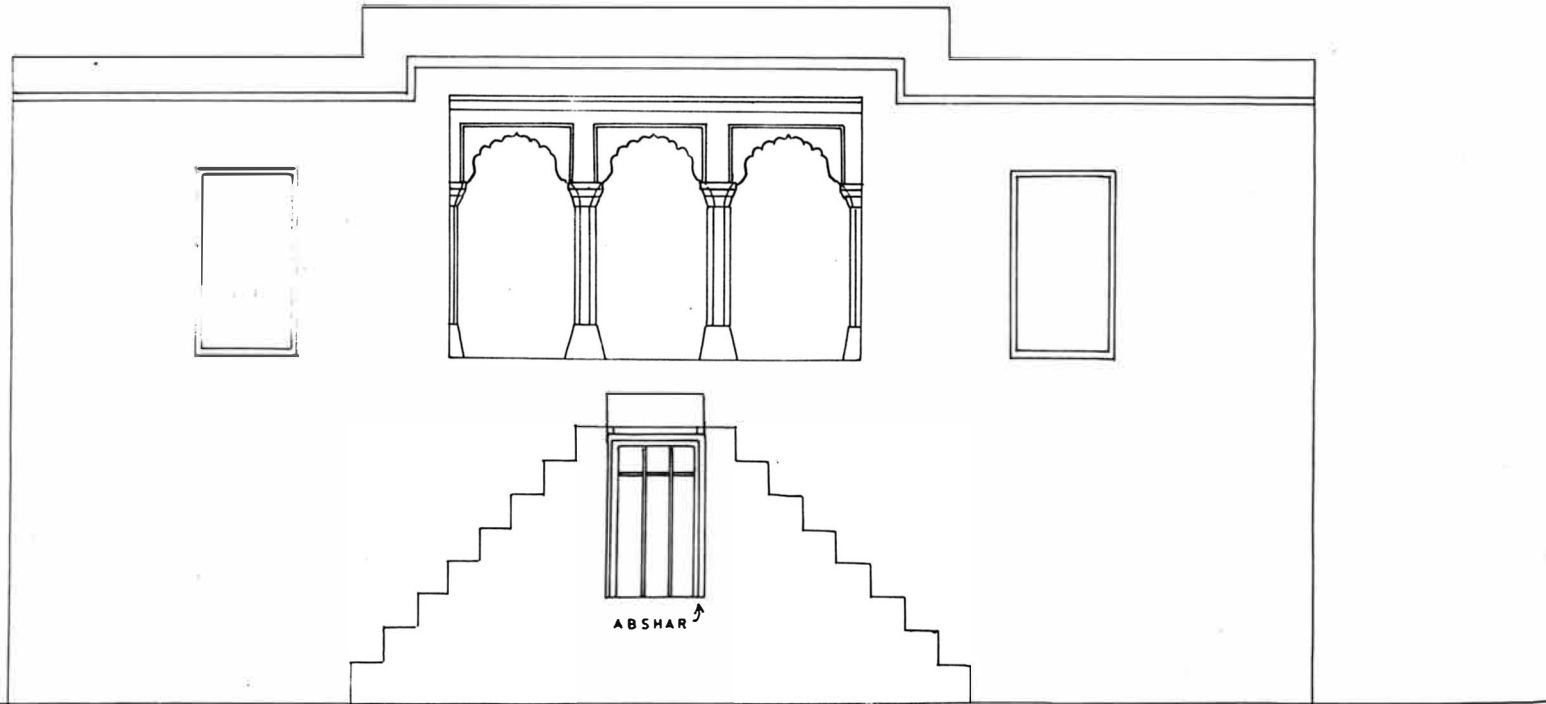


Pl. 10. Attock: Bahram-ki-Baradari General view showing the western perimeter wall with merloned band in the middle.

# BAHRAM-KI-BARADARI

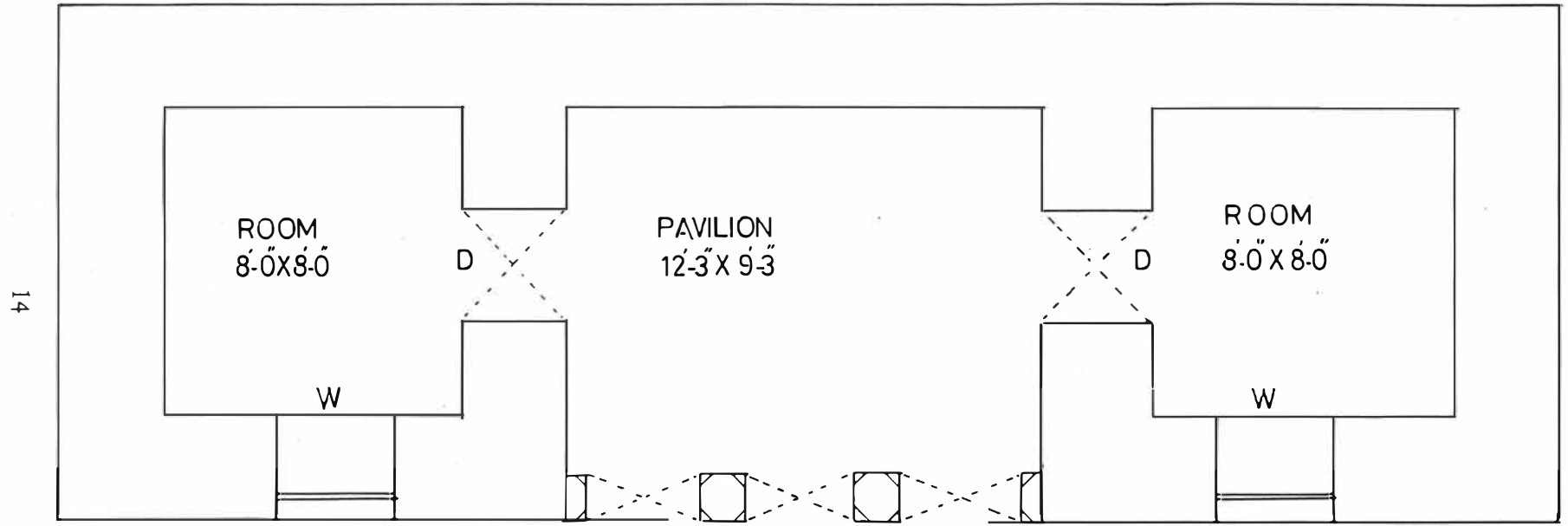
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ABSHAR ↗

ELEVATION



PLAN