

to be ‘correct’ principles of design? The historian of Indian art and architecture Giles Tillotson suggests otherwise. He argues that, on the contrary, the maharaja and the people of Jaipur appropriated the colonial agenda for their own purposes. He points out that the Rajput state of Mewar traditionally had the highest ranking in the region, a position that the state and royal house of Jaipur had long wished to usurp. Jaipur also competed with Mewar in the spheres of trade and the manufacture of artefacts. According to Tillotson, it is local pride in Jaipuri identity that explains the spectacular success and popularity of the exhibition and the Albert Hall Museum. He concludes that they tell ‘a story not of British colonial curating, but of an Indian state’s self-fashioning and self-promotion as a commercial centre of the arts’; Jaipuri interest in craft exhibitions thus has less to do with embracing British notions of ‘authentic’ Indian design than with ‘the deliberate building of a reputation that Jaipur continues to enjoy today’.³⁴ As this example demonstrates, once transported to India, British notions of Indian crafts and of educational display were subject to transcultural appropriation in accordance with local politics and cultural contexts.

3 Anglo-Indian styles of architecture

In British India, the Public Works Department (PWD), founded in 1854, was in charge of all general construction work. A vast organisation, it inherited its structures, personnel and procedures from the Indian Corps of Engineer established by the East India Company in the late eighteenth century when, with the exception of prestige buildings, questions of architecture hardly arose; the emphasis was on infrastructural development.³⁵ The PWD was staffed with military engineers who were tasked with the building of all manner of structures. They erected bridges, sewage and irrigation systems, as well as functional buildings based on standard, utilitarian designs, with a basic classical vocabulary employed to dignify the more important ones. The results could appear bleak and dreary, as one contemporary observer emphasised: ‘Who does not know the sense of desolation that comes over one at first sight of some of our Indian cantonments, the straight and dusty roads, the rows of glaring white rectangular barracks, the barn-like church’.³⁶ A prime example of PWD building

was the bungalow, which will be discussed in Chapter 4 (see, for example, Plates 4.26 and 4.27).

After 1857, however, as building work in British India accelerated, civil engineers began to join the ranks of the PWD, soon outnumbering their military counterparts, who, however, continued to dominate the institution.³⁷ By the mid-1870s, the question of which architectural style was best suited to represent the British Raj was being hotly debated in Britain as well as India, and the PWD’s approach was increasingly being found wanting. In the following decade, growing awareness of the need for specialist expertise prompted the appointment of ‘consulting architects’ to the provinces of British India.³⁸ From an architectural perspective, the problem with the PWD approach was that buildings of low artistic standard set a bad precedent and undermined colonial prestige, while promoters of traditional Indian arts thought that PWD buildings blunted the spirit of the Indian people. From their point of view, the fact that Indians had to frequent ‘un-Indian’ municipal buildings suppressed their cultural sensitivities, which inevitably made them rebellious. This claim was based on the idea that architecture constituted the cultural core of any living ‘nation’, so that its vital presence was essential for its spiritual, cultural and social well-being. By implication, therefore, colonial architecture that reflected Indian traditions would lead to peace in the colony, providing a relatively straightforward solution to British post-rebellion anxieties by safeguarding against political unrest. Experiments with mixed architectural styles hence gained support.³⁹ This section will discuss two such styles, the Indo-Gothic and the Indo-Saracenic, together with an architectural example from Jaipur, which can be taken to exemplify a transcultural approach.

The Indo-Gothic style derived from the Neo-Gothic, which was adopted as the modern national style in Britain in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The emphasis on decoration characteristic of the Gothic style had the advantage of being able to accommodate Indian building traditions, which similarly emphasised sculptural embellishment.⁴⁰ The principal aim of Sir Bartle Frere, the governor of Bombay from 1862 to 1867, who played an instrumental role in creating the Indo-Gothic, was, however, to assert the city’s status as a modern metropolis by transforming it in accordance with the latest architectural fashions in Britain.⁴¹ An

adherent of Gothic Revivalism with good connections to British architectural circles, Frere commissioned buildings from British architects of high repute, a new departure in India on both counts since professional architects, let alone prominent practitioners in the field, had never designed a building in India before. Gilbert Scott, one of the leading architects of the Gothic Revival in Britain, was engaged, as were Owen Jones and Matthew Digby Wyatt, among others. Frere sought to foster an 'indigenous school of Anglo-Indian architecture' that would reflect what he saw as the more considerate post-1857 approach to British colonial rule under the Crown.⁴²

The building programme formed part of a larger urban regeneration plan, which, as the architectural historian Preeti Chopra has shown, was unique in being a collaborative effort on the part of the colonial authorities and Indian elites. As a result, some Indian engineers were able to rise through the ranks of the PWD in Bombay; one of them, Khan Bahadur Muncherji Coswasji Murzban, was responsible for the design of many buildings in the city and became a fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1889.⁴³ This ambitious remodelling of the city reflected Bombay's recent rise to prosperity, due to increased demand for Indian cotton during the American Civil War (1861–65). After the end of the war, Bombay's boom was sustained by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which made it the first point of disembarkation for travellers coming from Europe. Also crucial in this respect was the arrival of the railway, which transformed the city into an economic hub by facilitating the flow of raw materials from its hinterland to Britain. The railway also allowed for the dissemination of British goods in India, not to mention a steady flow of European travellers in both directions. The Indo-Gothic style, however, remained largely confined to the Bombay Presidency and flourished above all in its capital city.

Bombay's pride in its new-found success found expression in the grandeur of its central railway station, the Victoria Terminus, a symmetrical three-storey building consisting of a central section flanked by two wings, which was completed in 1887 (renamed Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in 1996, and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in 2017) (Plate 2.14). Considered one of the city's foremost Indo-Gothic

buildings, it served as the administrative head-office of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway (GIPR). Frederick William Stevens, a young civilian architect attached to the Bombay PWD, was entrusted with designing the building. He drew inspiration from Gilbert Scott's St Pancras Station in London (completed in 1868), but also from the Venetian Gothic tradition, of which Ruskin was the most celebrated admirer. Stevens's 'tropicalised' these models, however, by adjusting them to Indian climatic conditions: open verandahs, for example, wrap around the building and offer protection from heavy monsoon rains, while also shading the offices from the heat and glare of the sun. The style thus reflected the joint leadership of the city's building programme; so too did the sculpted lion (symbolising Britain) and tiger (representing India), each atop a plinth on either side of the entrance to the forecourt of the central section.

The Victoria Terminus's claim to Anglo-Indian status also rests on the use of local building materials, together with a range of Indian decorative and symbolic features. They include a bas-relief of 16 carved Indian heads representing the city's diverse population on the drum that connects the left wing to the central section. The main façade of the Terminus, moreover, is decorated with 10 terracotta portrait roundels, a speciality of Kipling and of John Griffiths, another British art educator in Bombay; these depict GIPR officials and local community leaders. Among the latter are two Indians, including Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, the founder of the art school which was named after him (Plate 2.15). In fact, many of the embellishments mentioned above were executed by the staff and students of the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art in Bombay (Sir JJ School of Art). The building also features a plethora of decorative carvings on capitals, arches, cornices and other stone-masonry elements that show local creatures and regional flora and fauna (Plate 2.16). Reflecting colonial hierarchies, the high-profile sculptural elements of the building were, however, commissioned from the British sculptor Thomas Earp: the allegorical figures of 'Progress', 'Civil engineering', 'Agriculture' and 'Commerce' that top the dome and gables, the statue of Queen Victoria that originally occupied a niche below the dome, and the lion and tiger flanking the entrance to the forecourt were executed by Earp in Britain and shipped to Bombay.



Plate 2.14 Victoria Terminus (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus), c.1887–90, albumen print, Taurines Studio. Photo: The Hugh A. Rayner Photograph Collection.

The other major Anglo-Indian architectural style, known as the Indo-Saracenic, was based on Indo-Islamic architecture, which derived from Persia (now Iran), Afghanistan and central Asia as well as regional Indian traditions. The label by which the style is known is thus a misnomer, since the word ‘Saracenic’ derives from Europe’s encounter with the Arabs in the Middle Ages, whether in the eastern Mediterranean or Islamic Spain, and disregards the cultural differences between Indo-Islamic and Mediterranean Islamic cultures. It will, however, be used here, in accordance with the usage at the time, which reflected how the style came to be conceived in the first place. As with the Indo-Gothic in Bombay, the creation of the so-called Indo-Saracenic style was informed by the architectural vision of a British governor, in this instance, Lord Napier, the governor of Madras from 1866 to 1872. He considered India’s Islamic architectural tradition to be artistically rooted in European culture, on the grounds that Islamic art had developed in the late seventh century CE

out of Byzantine architectural precedents in the eastern Mediterranean, which in turn had developed from the culture of classical Greece. For Napier, therefore, Indo-Islamic architecture, which combined Hindu and Islamic architectural elements, entailed a historical European Christian dimension.

Indo-Islamic architecture was therefore seen to be ideally suited to represent the Raj, which brought Christians, Hindus and Muslims together in a single political entity. The Indo-Saracenic style flourished in Madras, with Napier’s support, but also expanded beyond the city. It flourished throughout the subcontinent, particularly for public buildings frequented by Indians.⁴⁴ English-educated Indian princes likewise adopted the style, especially for the ‘modern’ residences they built (which were also used to entertain British officials), since they well understood the advisability of appearing to be appropriately ‘traditional’ in compliance with British expectations of them.⁴⁵ Indo-Saracenic architecture



Plate 2.15 Façade of the Victoria Terminus (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus) showing left corner drum with carved heads and main section with terracotta portrait roundels, Bombay. Photo: Jackie Britton.

was considered the most appropriate architectural style in British India between the 1860s and the 1900s. Its influence waned in the early twentieth century, which witnessed a resurgence of classicism in Britain. This development strengthened the hands of critics of the Indo-Saracenic style, who held that British rule should be proudly marked with a true 'Anglo-Saxon' architecture, unquestioningly identifying Neo-classicism as such.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the Indo-Saracenic style was only to some degree more Indian in character than the Neo-Gothic. Despite drawing on a much larger array of Indian architectural features, most buildings in the style were fundamentally based on European principles of design,

construction and spatial organisation. Furthermore, the eclectic mix of mostly northern Indian design elements that characterised Indo-Saracenic buildings ignored the different cultures of the rest of the subcontinent and must have seemed incongruous to local populations in other regions. It also ignored differences between historical periods. The style's features were gleaned from architectural publications, of which the most influential were those of Fergusson. In addition however, a collection of designs was assembled by Jacob, the six-volume *Jeyapore Portfolio of Architectural Details* (1890) (see Plate 2.18), which served as the basis for his design of the Albert Hall Museum. The portfolio contained scaled drawings of architectural features



Plate 2.16 Carved stonework detail with monkey, lizard and local plants, Victoria Terminus (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus), Bombay. Photo: Jackie Britton.

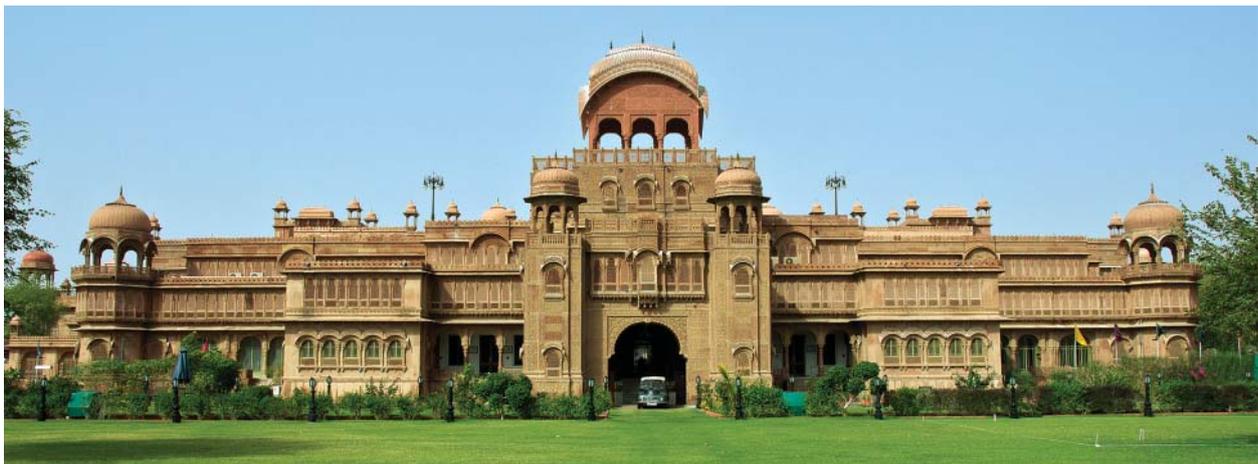


Plate 2.17 Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob, Lallgarh Palace (now the Laxmi Niwas Palace Hotel), 1902–26, Bikaner, India. Photo: David South/Alamy.

from buildings in and around the city of Jaipur, as well as nearby Mughal monuments in Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Delhi. They were drawn by Indian draughtsmen attached to Jacob's department whom he instructed to document designs of local buildings with the aim of ensuring that the Albert Hall Museum was based on examples of regional architecture.

Jacob's concern to draw on regional architectural traditions can be demonstrated by comparing a drawing of a dome-shaped pavilion or *chatri* from the portfolio with the completed Albert Hall Museum (Plates 2.18 and 2.19). The comparison demonstrates that the drawing served as the basis for the four open kiosks that mark the corners of the museum. With its stepped-back

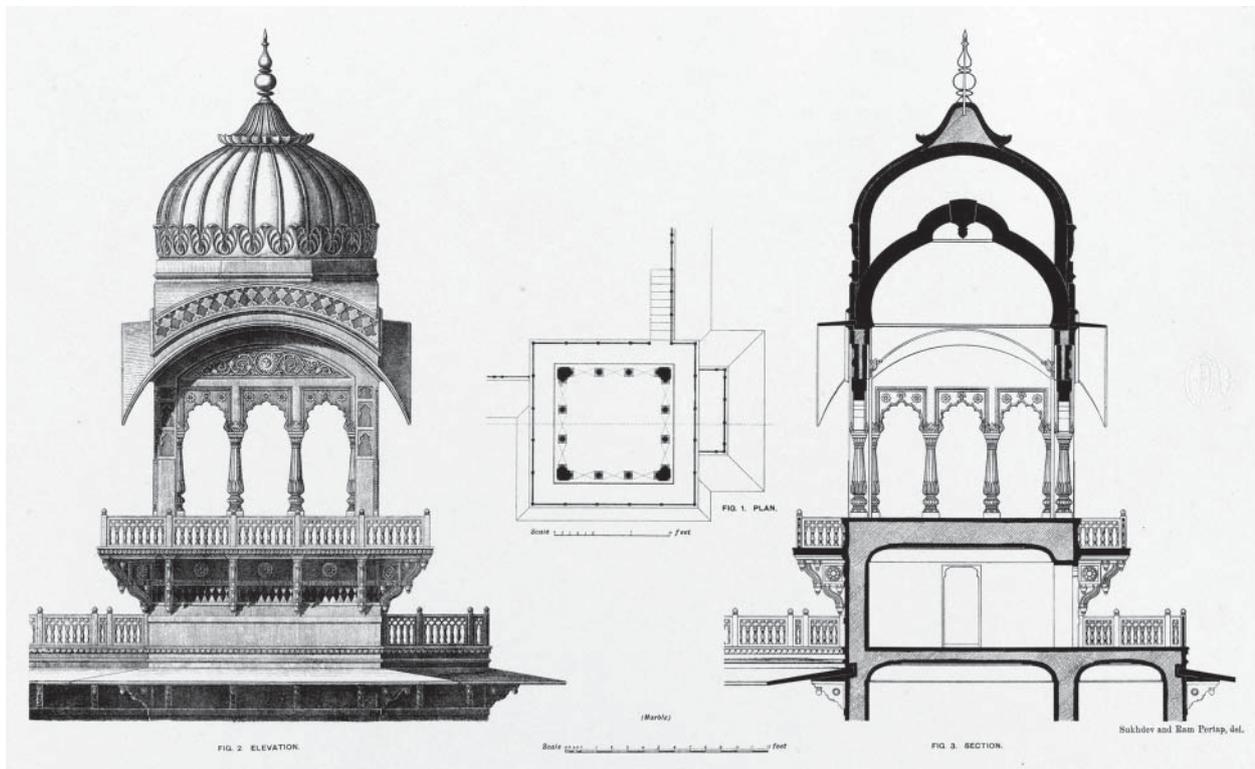


Plate 2.18 Elevation and section of a dome-shaped pavilion or *chatri* commonly found in Rajput and Mughal architecture and featured in the Albert Hall Museum, Jaipur, in Samuel Swinton Jacob, *Jeyore Portfolio of Architectural Details*, Part XI, London, 1890, Plate 12. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

storeys culminating in a central raised dome also topped by a kiosk, Jacob's scheme differs markedly from European museums of the same period, whether classical or Gothic. The overall design draws on Jaipuri sources, such as the maharaja's city palace, together with Mughal ones, including the Panch Mahal Pavilion in Fatepur Sikri and Akbar's tomb in Sikandra (see Chapter 1, Plate 1.18 and Chapter 3, Plate 3.2).⁴⁷ Jacob's sensitivity to regional styles is also borne out by his design of Lallgarh Palace, which was built for Ganga Singh, the Maharaja of Bikaner (r.1887–1943) (Plate 2.17). The building displays a recognisable Bikaneri style of ornamentation; the architectural elements specific to the region include the local pinkish-red sandstone, the multi-tier stone lattice screens, or *jalis*, and projecting windows. However, the interior of the palace betrays elements of European spatial organisation.

Not all buildings in British India were designed by British architects or engineers, however. The high degree of independence granted to Jaipur in its treaty with Britain meant that the Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II (r.1835–80) retained his authority over architecture within the city's walls; he maintained a traditional *Imarat*, or building committee, which was exclusively staffed by Indian master builders. Ram Singh, who had received an English education and was a keen amateur photographer, was adept at negotiating British expectations of an Indian prince by appearing 'Oriental' and 'Other', while also presenting a modern and reform-oriented image when it came to running his state. He initiated irrigation projects, for example, in order to curry favour with British officials. In 1866, he founded an art school, for which a building was constructed within the city walls according to his specification;



Plate 2.19 'Opening of the new Albert Hall, at Jaipur, India', engraving in *The Illustrated London News*, London, 24 November 1888. Private collection. Photo: © Look and Learn/illustrated Papers Collection/Bridgeman Images.

the training it offered differed somewhat from that provided by government art schools, which, he thought, over-emphasised drawing.

Ram Singh also founded the Albert Hall Museum, which was modelled after the one in South Kensington and named after Albert Edward, Prince of Wales (later Edward VII), who laid the foundation stone during a royal visit in 1876. The maharaja challenged British authorities, however, by retaining control over the design of the museum despite its being built outside the city walls; according to the rules set down in his treaty with the British, responsibility for the building should have been handed to the local PWD and thus to Jacob. In so doing, he offered a wholly unprecedented snub to British authority; it has been interpreted as a symbolic 'counter-invasion' on the part of the maharaja, who thereby reclaimed authority

over a part of his state where he officially had no jurisdiction (which the British authorities chose to ignore).⁴⁸ Ram Singh II died in 1880, however, before the building work had begun. Since his heir, Madho Singh II (r.1880–1922) had not yet come of age, the administration of the state was handed to British officials in the interim, in accordance with Jaipur's treaty. During this period, they restructured the *Imarat* by appointing Indian craftsmen trained in the British manner, thereby gaining control over building work within the city walls. The PWD also took over the building of the Albert Hall Museum, with Jacob leading the project.

Despite the sensitivity towards local traditions for which Jacob was renowned, the eclectic mix of Indian architectural and decorative styles employed in the Albert Hall Museum in fact reflects distinctively

British notions of what constituted ‘traditional’ Indian design. When the museum opened, for example, Hendley especially commended the interior decoration: ‘Almost every pillar and every inch of wall space is a copy of, or an adaptation from some well-known and admired native building’. The masons who worked on the building, he added, had trained at the Jaipur School of Art where they had been instructed to make copies of ‘the ornament on the palaces, tombs and other important edifices at Delhi, Agra or Fatehpore Sikri’. This training continued under Jacob, until these hereditary masons ‘were so imbued with the spirit of the Indo-Saracenic style that they could produce works which were no longer copies but creations’, stating that ‘[m]uch of the internal decoration of the hall is therefore original’.⁴⁹ As Jacob explained to a gathering at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London in 1891, the design of the building was thus integrated into the conception of the museum, since it was ‘not only the content of the museum, but the walls themselves’ that constituted it.⁵⁰

The entire museum project thus represented a contribution to the larger goal of protecting and reviving ‘good’ Indian design. Accurate draughtsmanship was seen to play a key role in the reinvigoration of the ‘right kind’ of Indian architectural and design traditions. For Hendley, drawing constituted a crucial corrective to what he saw as the tendency of Indian craftsmen to copy blindly, without any real understanding of their native artistic traditions.⁵¹ In his eyes, this tendency made them highly susceptible to the corrupting influences of European design. Intensive training in the skills of drawing was thought to promote a higher level of appreciation that would make it possible to transcend the present stagnation of Indian artistic traditions, thereby reinvigorating the spirit of the entire culture. In other words, India needed British guidance to survive the corrupting onslaught of Britain’s cheap industrial products, and, ultimately, of its rule.

However, besides the Indo-Gothic and Indo-Saracenic styles, other architectural endeavours of the period represented a different approach to negotiating the artistic encounter between Britain and India. A case in point is the façade of the Naya Mahal (see p. 86), which blends European and Indian architectural elements in a way that, according to the architect and architectural historian Vikramaditya Prakash, testifies

to a subversive approach on the part of Ram Singh II (Plate 2.20). Evidently, the maharaja had a rather different view of what constituted authentic Indian design from British officials such as Hendley. Located within Jaipur’s city walls, the building fell under the jurisdiction of the *Imarat*, at least until the death of Ram Singh II in 1880.⁵² Completed in 1883 (possibly with some involvement from Jacob), it housed the Jaipur Exhibition held in that year and now serves as the Sawai Man Singh II Town Hall Museum.

Exercise

What elements of Indian and European architectural styles can you discern in the middle section of the Naya Mahal (Plate 2.20)? How might you interpret their use together here? You may find it helpful to take a quick look at some of the illustrations in later chapters of this book, such as Plates 3.2 and 4.11.

Discussion

The red of the façade, heightened with white accents, is distinctively Mughal, as you may have recognised by comparing it to such monuments as Akbar’s Tomb at Sikandra and the Red Fort in Delhi. The composition of the ground floor is classical, however; each window is framed by a post and lintel composition, surmounted alternately by a rounded or triangular pediment, for example. The middle level of the façade, by contrast, presents two rows of windows with a mix of architectural features. The windows of the lower row are grouped in units of three, demarcated by white interwoven bands. Within each unit, the windows are framed by white lines that trace a pointed arch, a form commonly used in both Islamic and Gothic architecture. The second tier of windows presents a simplified version of the ground-floor decorations, with an alternating repeat of rounded and triangular pediments. The top level of the façade features a mix of design elements suggestive of Mughal architecture, including balustraded openings topped by pointed arches again arranged in groups of three.

At first glance, the composition may seem an incongruous and random mix of stylistic features. It could, however, also be interpreted



Plate 2.20 Façade of the Naya Mahal (now Sawai Man Singh II Town Hall Museum), Jaipur, completed in 1883. Photo: Dinodia Photos/Alamy.

as a deliberate attempt to present an alternative view of the cultural encounter between Britain and India. The middle section of the façade, for example, embraces cultural mixing, yet maintains the identity of both cultures. The plausibility of the reading is reinforced by the way that this section is framed by ‘pure’ European designs on the ground floor and the Indian architectural features on the top one. The whole façade might thus be read as presenting a critique of the European obsession with tradition and the purity of design in a way that defiantly asserts the Mughal practice of appropriating foreign features into Indian visual vocabulary, thus artistically reclaiming past Mughal power and greatness.



The architectural decoration of the Naya Mahal undoubtedly defies the neat binaries of colonial stereotypes (‘East is East and West is West ...’) and, in so doing, disrupts the boundaries of superior/inferior and civilised/uncivilised characteristic of colonial ideology. The playful approach that it embodies could be seen as offering a riposte to the way that, in the words of Chopra, the British used ‘Indian architectural elements in their buildings as a demonstration of their knowledge and mastery over India’s past’.⁵³ Rather than being unique to Jaipur, however, a similar approach can also be found in other buildings throughout the Indian subcontinent, mostly built by Indian landed classes who laid claim to Mughal inheritance, even if not as deliberately as Ram Singh. They creatively deployed European architectural styles, commissioning