

GOLDEN TEMPLE AT AMRITSAR, PUNJAB.

Amritsar was founded in A.D. 1574 around a sacred tank from which the city takes its name "Pool of Immortality." The site granted by the Emperor Akbar to Ram Dass, the Guru of the Sikhs, became covered with temples and huts, and was at first named Ramdasapur, from the founder. He made Amritsar the proper seat of his followers, the centre which should attract their worldly longings for a material bond of union, and the obscure hamlet with its little pool has grown into a populous city and the great place of pilgrimage of the Sikh people. In A.D. 1756 Prince Timur, the son of Ahmed Shah Durani, expelled the Sikhs from Amritsar, demolished the buildings, and filled the sacred reservoir with the ruins. In A.D. 1762 the army of the Khalsa assembled at Amritsar, the faithful performed their ablutions in the restored pool, and the first diet, or Gurumutta, was held. The same year Ahmed Shah destroyed the renewed temples and polluted the tank with the blood of cows. In A.D. 1764 the Sikhs became masters of Lahore, the chiefs again assembled at Amritsar, proclaimed their own sway, and rebuilt the temples. In A.D. 1802 Ranjit Singh repaired the principal buildings and roofed the temple with sheets of copper gilt.

The tank, as it now exists, is about 500 feet square, and is fed by the old Hasli Canal. The Golden Temple stands on a platform in the centre, and is approached by a pier, at the end of which is the Darshani Door, or "Gate of Sights." The tank is surrounded by bangahs, *i.e.*, dwellings for visitors and pilgrims. To the east is a garden with several fountains, called the Guru-ka-Bagh, made in A.D. 1588, and due south of this is the Kaulsar Tank, 410 by 170 feet. Further east stands the tomb of Baba Atal (built in A.D. 1628). The whole place is full of interest, although so comparatively modern. In repairing the Golden Temple, Ranjit Singh used many of the inlaid decorations and marbles carried away from the tomb of Jahangir and other Muhammadan monuments at Lahore. It is stated in the official list of buildings of interest published by the Punjab Government in 1875 that the design of the temple repaired by Ranjit Singh was borrowed from the shrine of the Muhammadan saint Mian Mir, near Lahore (1635 A.D.).

The doors of the Darshani Gate are of shisham wood, the front overlaid with silver, the back inlaid with ivory. The silver plated front is ornamented with panels only. The back is arranged in square and rectangular panels with geometric and floral designs, in which are introduced birds, lions, tigers, and deer. Some of the ivory inlay is coloured green and red, the effect being extremely harmonious.

Probably the earliest specimen of Oriental marquetry occurs in the famous Somnath Gates, now in the Agra Fort. The elaborate Saracenic patterns on them prove that, even if the wood frames were originally in the Somnath Temple, they must have been re-carved by Mahmud of Ghazni. They date, at all events, from the early part of the eleventh century, and having been cleaned are discovered to be really of sandalwood.

Mr. Fergusson writes—"The carved ornaments on them are so similar to those found at Cairo in the Mosque of Ebn Touloun (A.D. 885) and other buildings of that age, as not only to prove they are of the same date, but also to show how similar were the modes of decoration at these two extremities of the Moslem Empire at the time of their execution."

The wooden mimbar, or pulpit, in the mosque of Qous, Cairo (twelfth century A.D.), and the marquetry in the mihrab of the mosque of Nesfy Qeyçoum, also at Cairo (fourteenth century A.D.), are inlaid with ivory, the geometrical and floral patterns, which are most elaborate and beautiful, resembling Indian work of the same class. The doors of the mosque of Khazrete at Samarkhand (the building dates before 1405 A.D., when Tamerlane died) are of wood inlaid with ivory, in patterns very Indian in design, and as we know Tamerlane to have been much struck with Indian architecture when he invaded India in A.D. 1398, and to have carried off Indian workmen from Delhi to Samarkhand, it is probable that examples of marquetry existed there before the fourteenth century.

The earliest existing specimens of Indian marquetry are probably at Ahmedabad and Bijapur. The wooden canopy over Shah Alam's tomb (A.D. 1475) at the former place is handsomely incrustated with mother-of-pearl. The doorways of the Ashar Mahal (A.D. 1580) at the latter place are inlaid with ivory. The canopy over Sheikh Salim Chisti's tomb (A.D. 1581) at Fathpur Sikri is of wood, covered with tesserae of mother of pearl.

The doorways in the Amber Palace near Jaipur (A.D. 1630) are of wood, variously ornamented with—(1) Carved panels; (2) Inlays of ivory; (3) Small lozenges of ivory, incrustated with what is known as Bombay inlaid work, which is the least effective of any of the Indian wood inlays, being extremely minute and monotonous in design.

The doors of the Bari Mahal (A.D. 1711) at Udaipur are of another species of marquetry, some being ornamented with small panels of wood overlaid with ivory, like the modern work done at Vizagapatam, only in far better taste. The modern Hoshiarpur work resembles that in the Darshani Gate. It is a promising and rising art manufacture, and could derive material for new patterns from the examples above quoted.