

Conservation of the Royal Kitchens, Lahore Fort

About the book

Did you ever know about the Royal Kitchens in the Lahore Fort? This book will take you to a fascinating conservation journey of the lost and forgotten Royal Kitchens, which are located inside the Lahore Fort. Here you will get to know how this astounding place was hidden and erased from the memory of all – even the keenest of Lahorites.

It was a place situated a little outside the main premises of the majestic fort and thus was abandoned and turned into a no go area for all – even the tourists.

This book will tell you how the Kitchens were spotted by WCLA team and finally the conservation and its re-use was made after passing several upheavals and tough stages.

We are sure that once you go through this book you will be compelled to visit this awesome sight.

Enjoy the reading!

Kamran Lashari

(Director General WCLA)

Reaching the Royal Kitchens

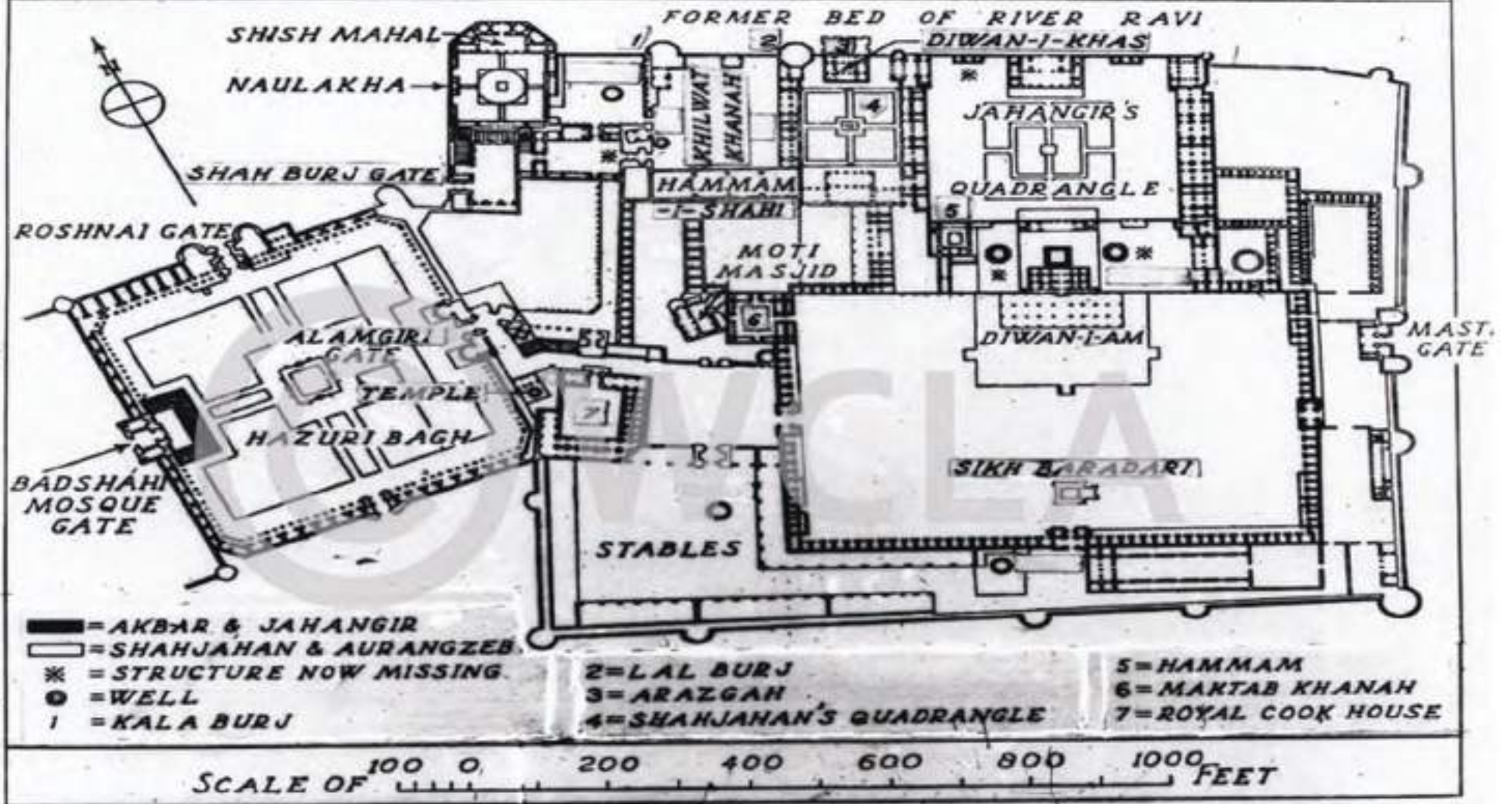
You must be thinking where it is if you have visited the Royal Fort long ago. This area does not exist in the main tourist circuit of Lahore fort and is a little out of vision and that is why it remained deserted and disused. These kitchens are located behind Alamgiri Gate and as you climb up the royal ramp while entering the fort through British era Postern Gate. You will find these kitchens on your right just behind the Archaeology Department of Punjab's offices.

A narrow passage will lead you to these kitchens and as you enter there, you will be awe stunned with its exquisiteness and open courtyard.

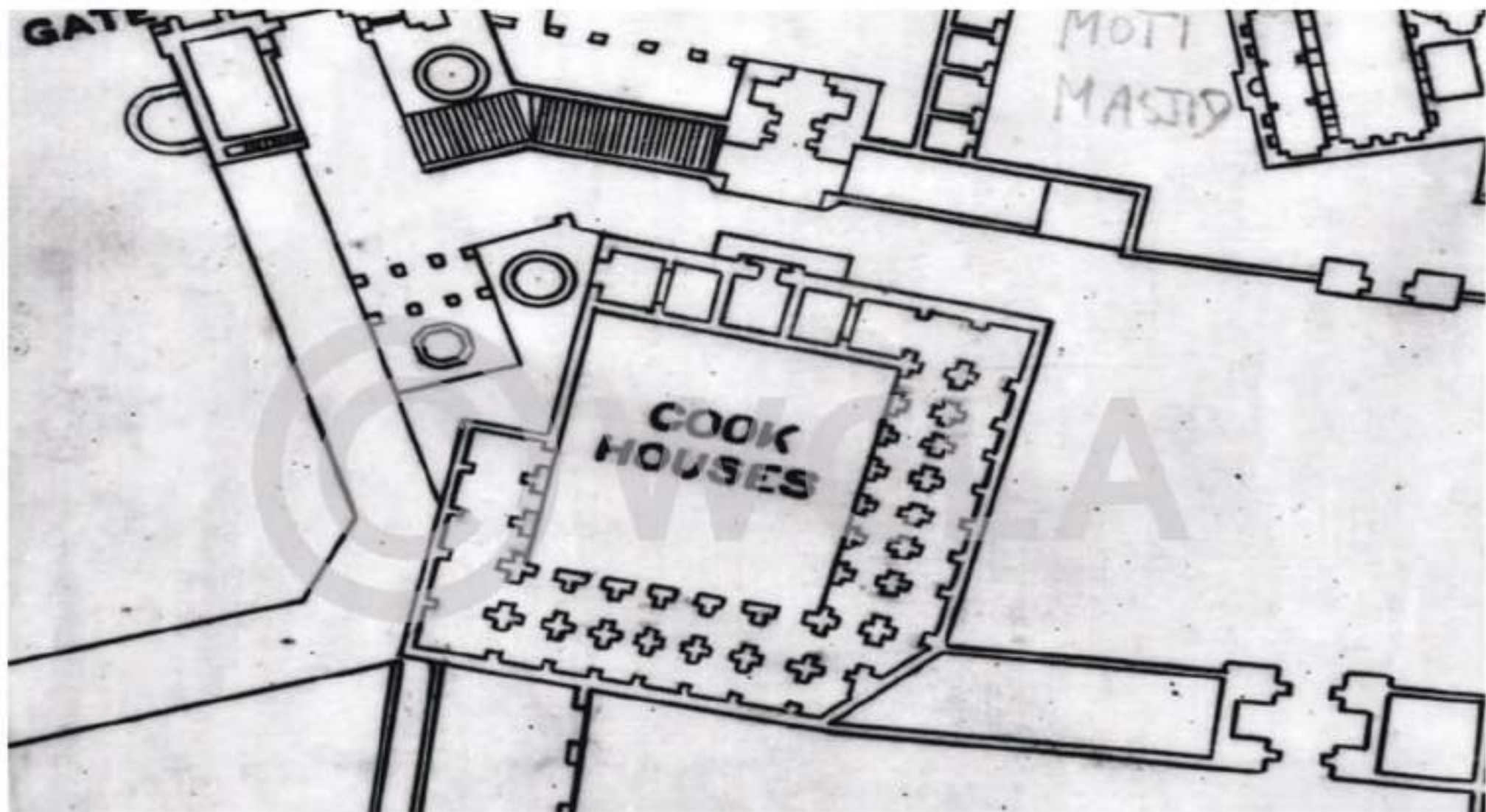
LA



LAHORE FORT (EXCLUDING POST-MOGHUL STRUCTURES)



An old map of Lahore Fort (Pre British era)



A close view of Royal Kitchens on an old map

Glorious and Horrific Features of History

Glory of Mughal Era

The Royal Kitchen also known as Shahi Bawarchikhana or Matbakh Shahi (in Arabic) was once the aromatic area - filled with enticing cuisines being cooked for the royals and aristocracy that resided or visited the Lahore Fort. The history of the building articulating, that it was one of the most utilized buildings at the time of the Mughals. It was the center of all majestic festivities.

Royal Kitchens or Shahi Bawarchi Khana was built during the reign of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. It was where the food and delicious cuisines with special Mughal recipes and spices used from Akbari Mandi were prepared along with a huge variety of drinks and sweets.

The helpers in their gaudy dresses, head gears and fine crockery, would carry the food from the kitchen to the chambers of the king, queen, princes, princesses and other courtiers. Any emperor or nobles of the neighboring areas were also served with food cooked in this very kitchen. But who knew it would be in shambles after the Mughals. The special ornamented pots for cooking and catering were used in Royal Kitchen i.e, Shub Dyk, Khas Dan, Taftan, Samwar, ornamented glasses for water, shurbat and Lssi were used and very much famous among other areas of Sub-continent.





According to old references and maps the Royal Kitchens of the Mughal era had a balanced rectangular courtyard which was created in the middle with four sided structures. The Temple of Prince Loh was located at northwest corner of Royal Kitchens while there were indications of a well which might have been constructed to supply water to the Kitchens. The Arches were opened and well connected while an entrance to kitchen was located in the middle of north wall for the purpose of serving to the Royal Palaces specially the Sheesh Mahal.

The Sikh Era

As the Sikh took over the Lahore Fort, the Royal Kitchens were damaged along with many other structures inside Fort. This kitchen was vandalized the most I think. It was converted into a food and grain store room and at the same time it was converted into a stable for horses and other animals. The kitchen was no more there; who knew it would be lost under the dust of times.

According to some historians once Maharaja Ranjeet Singh while visiting the Royal Kitchens came across a goat which was to be slaughtered for cooking. Suddenly the goat ran towards Maharaja and started bleating upon which the Maharaja felt pity and ordered the chef to release the goat. Some historians also claim that the kitchen remained in the same use. It is also said that a Gulab Khana at the back side of Royal Kitchens was made which was the part of Huzoori Bagh. This Gulab Khana was meant as a pharmaceutical center where special vine was prepared for Maharaja Ranjeet Singh.

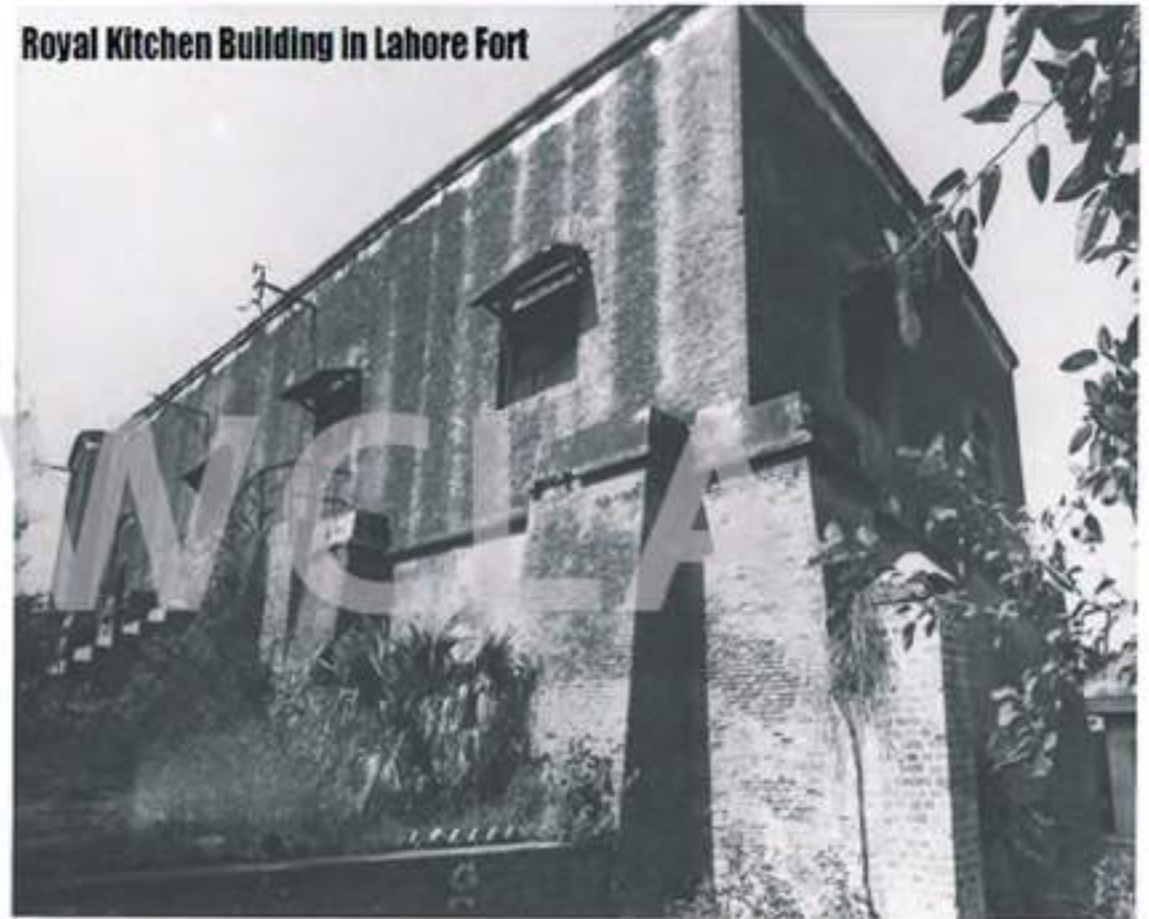


British Raj

Then the British Raj took over fort and later in 1856 the Royal Kitchens met another use. This place was given a name of "Special Jail" by the British. Prisons and torture cells were made there and rooms were added in the building for the officers. The Royal Kitchen was converted into an interrogation cell during British period and it remained until 1985.



Royal Kitchen Building in Lahore Fort



The British made several municipal changes in building. An upper floor was added for residential and official purposes. The outer historic wall was supported by providing 18 numbers of inclined heavy buttresses, these interventions are still complementing in distribution of building loads and safeguarding historic walls from deterioration.

During the same era the eastern and southern levels were raised and a new lime floor around building was laid down. The north east corner of Royal Kitchen was converted into ramp for the purpose of giving access to the building. A sewage system, water and electric supply lines were also laid during this period.

According to British era Map of Lahore Fort Royal Kitchens were converted into storage and godowns some of the areas were converted for different uses like workshop, storage, infantry barracks etc.

During the same time, there were not many political or personal rivalries by the British, but this jail served those who were a part of freedom movement. Many of the freedom fighters were put into this special jail and tortured to death. This place was known for torturing and many people dreaming of freedom lost their lives in this jail.





This image covers whole building of Royal Kitchen. It shows an upper floor that was constructed over east part while other portions contains only single floor. A 10 to 12' height wall is in the surroundings of Loh Mandir. At present this wall around Mandir is missing.



Major interventions in the form of staircase, walls, windows and doors can be seen



A view of royal kitchens... many structures are not found today

1947 – 1988

Finally Pakistan became an independent state in 1947, but the use of jail did not end with the British Raj, rather it increased. The only difference this Jail saw was the change of prisoners. Once it had the freedom fighters as prisoners and later it had the political and personal rivals of our influential and politicians. Most of the prisoners in this Jail were the Indian agents right after partition till the two wars between India and Pakistan. During the war of 1971 some prisoners escaped from this jail, a few were caught back but some were able to cross the border.

Some of the important personalities that remained imprisoned in this Special Jail were Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Prime Minister of Pakistan, Wali Khan head of a political party, Samlan Taseer Governor Punjab, Hanif Ramay Chief Minister Punjab, Agha Shorash Kashmiri Journalist, Akbar Bugti Baloch Leader, Molana Abdul Sattar Niazi leader of Pakistan Movement, Maulana Mododi, Tufail Muhammad of Jamat-e-Islami, Muhammad Khan Daku and many political workers and politicians of different political parties.

Till many years this place was used for torturing people because of personal vendettas. Many died of the torture, some became mentally ill and disabled, and some escaped but were caught by different diseases. Nobody could ever get over with the tortures they met with in this jail. Lahore Fort had become a tourist spot right after partition but who knew the ongoing stories in this Special Jail.

No tourist could imagine the atrocities being carried out in this cell while they were in Lahore Fort. This cell was designed in such a way that there was no source of light and during the day also it remained dark.

Finally this cell was closed for such activities by Benazir Bhutto in 1988. She declared that no prisoner would be tortured there and thus a time of tranquility touched this cell as well.

In 1987, a plan to restore the Royal Kitchen was initiated by Archaeology Department Punjab. The proposal included a site survey, photographic documentation, detailed study of architecture. During same period demolition of the structural additions by the British includes, cell walls, the upper floor, girders, ventilators and stairs cases leading to the upper portion were removed.

In 1989, Pakistan Institute of Archaeological Training and Research (PIATR) proposed to establish an auditorium along some other activities within immediate surroundings of Royal Kitchen but it did not materialize. The project did not take off.



Finding the Royal Kitchens -

A Thrilling Journey

2015-2018

One fine day in 2015, with winters at peak, the Marketing and Conservation teams of WCLA were taking a round of Lahore Fort while ideas were budding to carry out some new activities in the russet walls of the Lahore Fort. The Lahore Fort was transferred to Walled City of Lahore Authority in the same year and the teams were passionate to do something new at the distinguished world heritage site.

During the exhausting tour of Lahore fort, the Director General Walled City of Lahore Authority Mr. Kamran Lashari stumbled upon a horrific, no go area, which was right behind the Archaeology offices at Fort. Walking briskly behind the Director General the team made its way to a huge courtyard, which was a little scary as well. The entire courtyard had waist high shrubs, wild plants and of course reptiles of all types, including snakes.

"Watch out don't step here there is a hole in the ground here"

"Hey be aware of the snakes as I can hear the rattling"

"Watch out the wild plants don't get any allergy from them"

"Oh there's a huge pit here don't come to this side"...

These were the only dialogues that the team was shouting at each other with eyes on the ground. The entire team scattered in a horribly terrifying place to take a look at the place.

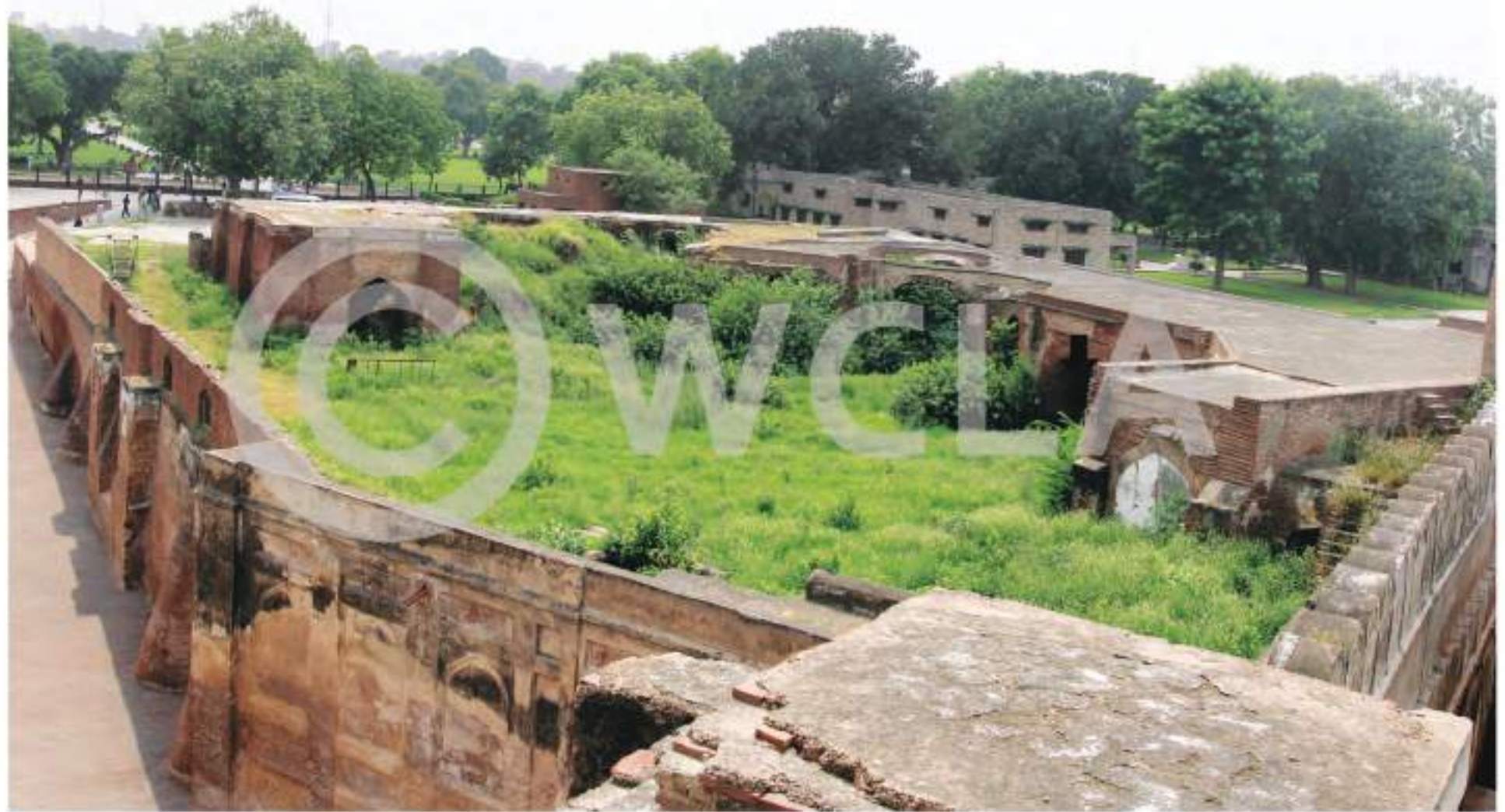
That was the point when the entire team rushed towards those arches without fearing the waist high wild growth, pits and the reptiles...and from those broken arches the story of Royal Kitchens triggered!

The team started exploring the place and thus by using references from books and old maps of the Fort it was revealed that the place was Royal Kitchens which with the passage of time had lost its royalty and splendor.

The team was actually sad to see a part of Lahore Fort in such a derelict condition with a huge structure collapsed and rest waiting to meet the ground...

The entire team got to know upon investigating that this part of Fort which was once the Royal Kitchens of Mughals had been abandoned as the structures had collapsed and Archaeology Department Punjab could not restore it because they lacked funding.

That was the time when the Director General took up the risky decision to conserve this place and this decision froze many among the team because clearing the site was an uphill task.



The image shows the Royal Kitchens before Restoration

Cleaning the **Royal Kitchens** -
A Uphill Task and Salute to
Horticulture Staff of **WCLA**

The growth of wild vegetation had deteriorated the appearance and character of the Royal Kitchens. The growth of wild vegetation was directly harming structures as well as architectural finishes. The external parts of building where ground level had been raised had also become a dense location of wild vegetation as a result; a substantial part of structure damaged and became a big cause of dampness.

The Director General Mr. Kamran Lashari held a meeting with the Marketing, Conservation and Horticulture teams of Walled City of Lahore Authority and geared up all to conserve and save the place from any further deterioration. The teams with high spirits took up the directions and so the next day the horticulture staff with a uniform and all safety kits entered the Royal Kitchen and started cleaning the wild growth and waist high shrubs.

During all this cleaning phase which lasted for a month, some of the team members did meet reptiles and some got severe bites but the enthusiasm and morale were sky touching.

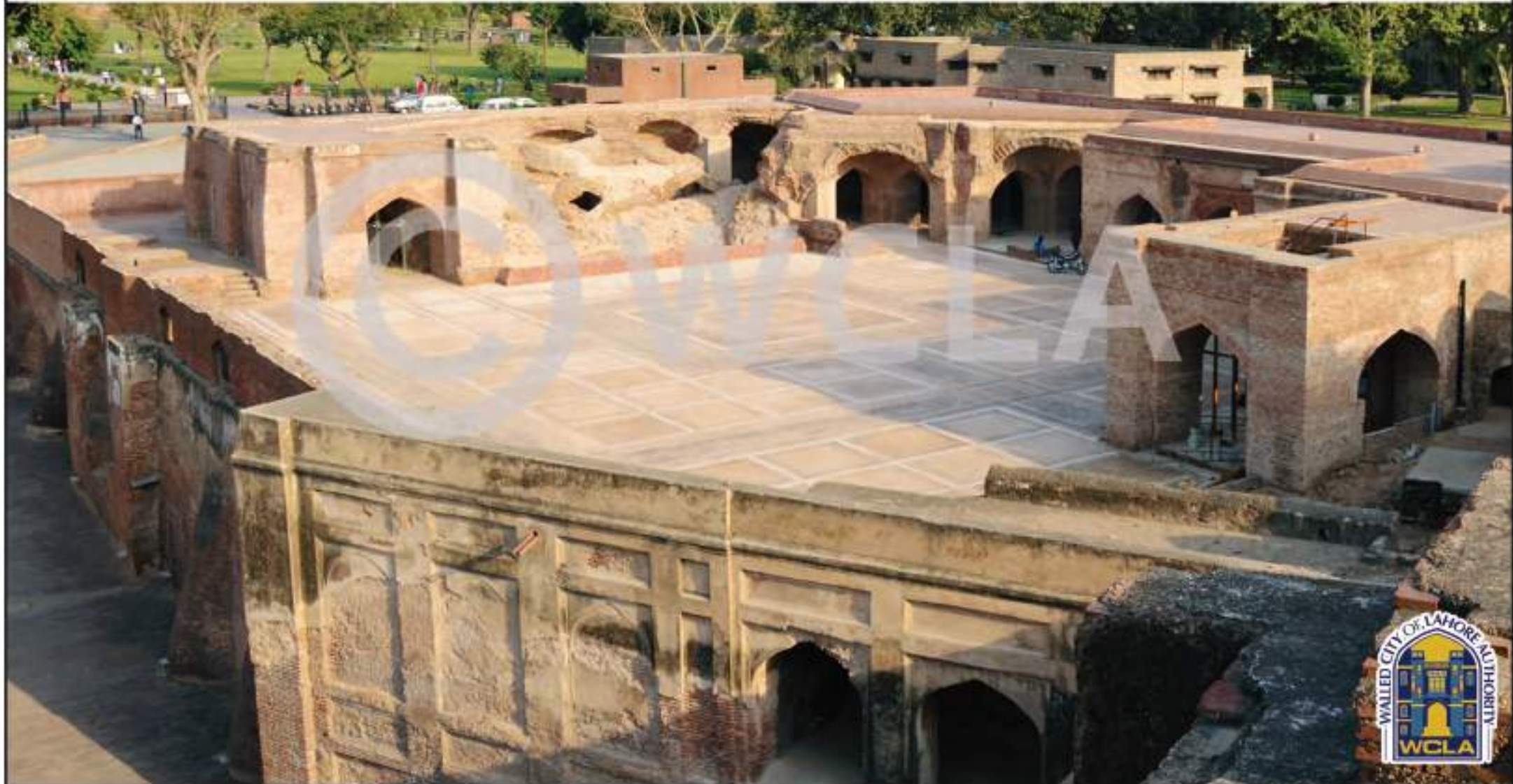
Finally the Royal Kitchens' arches were exposed which were buried under the wild growth and the conservation team started with the documentation and planning.



Horticulture staff cleaning the area of Royal Kitchens

Conservation of *Royal Kitchens*

Lahore Fort, **2015-2018**





The image shows the cleaning of Royal Kitchens before Restoration



The image shows the cleaning of Royal Kitchens before Restoration

RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION PHASE,

A Road Map to Revive the Lost Glory of

Royal Kitchens

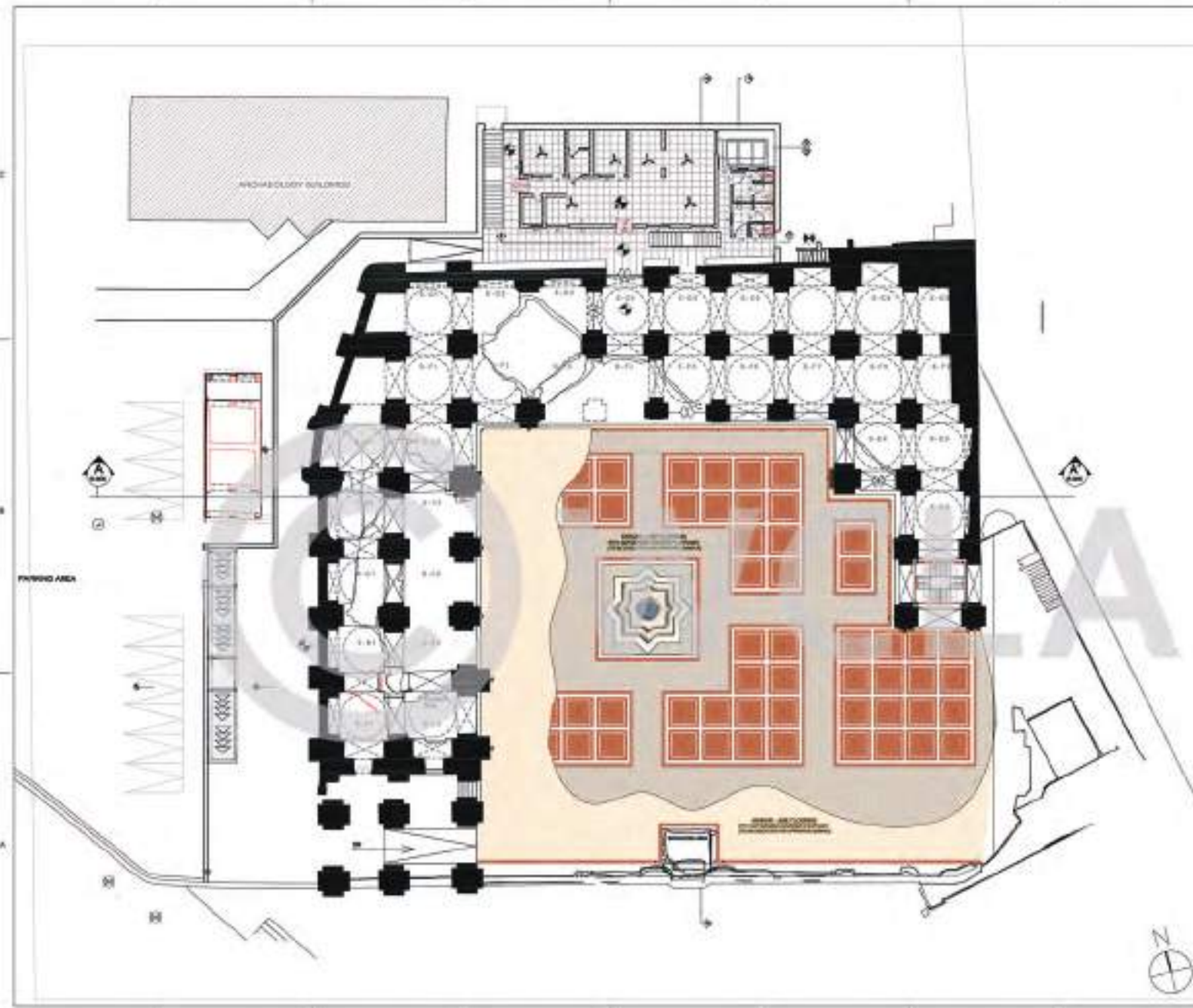
Walled City of Lahore Authority discussed the plans of conserving the site with its technical partners Aga Khan Culture Services Pakistan and with a mutual consent the documentation began. The Conservation and Planning Wing headed by Najamussaqib took up the lead and assigned tasks to the team members. At the same time a meeting of the Heritage Conservation Board of WCLA was held and the future plans for the Royal Kitchens were put before them.

The Marketing team started researching about this wonder which was revealed and thus figured out the stages which the Royal Kitchens went through and met an ill fate after the downfall of the great Mughals till 2015. On the other hand, the Marketing Wing also started working on the re-use plans of the kitchens.

Map Drawing for Royal Kitchens Conservation

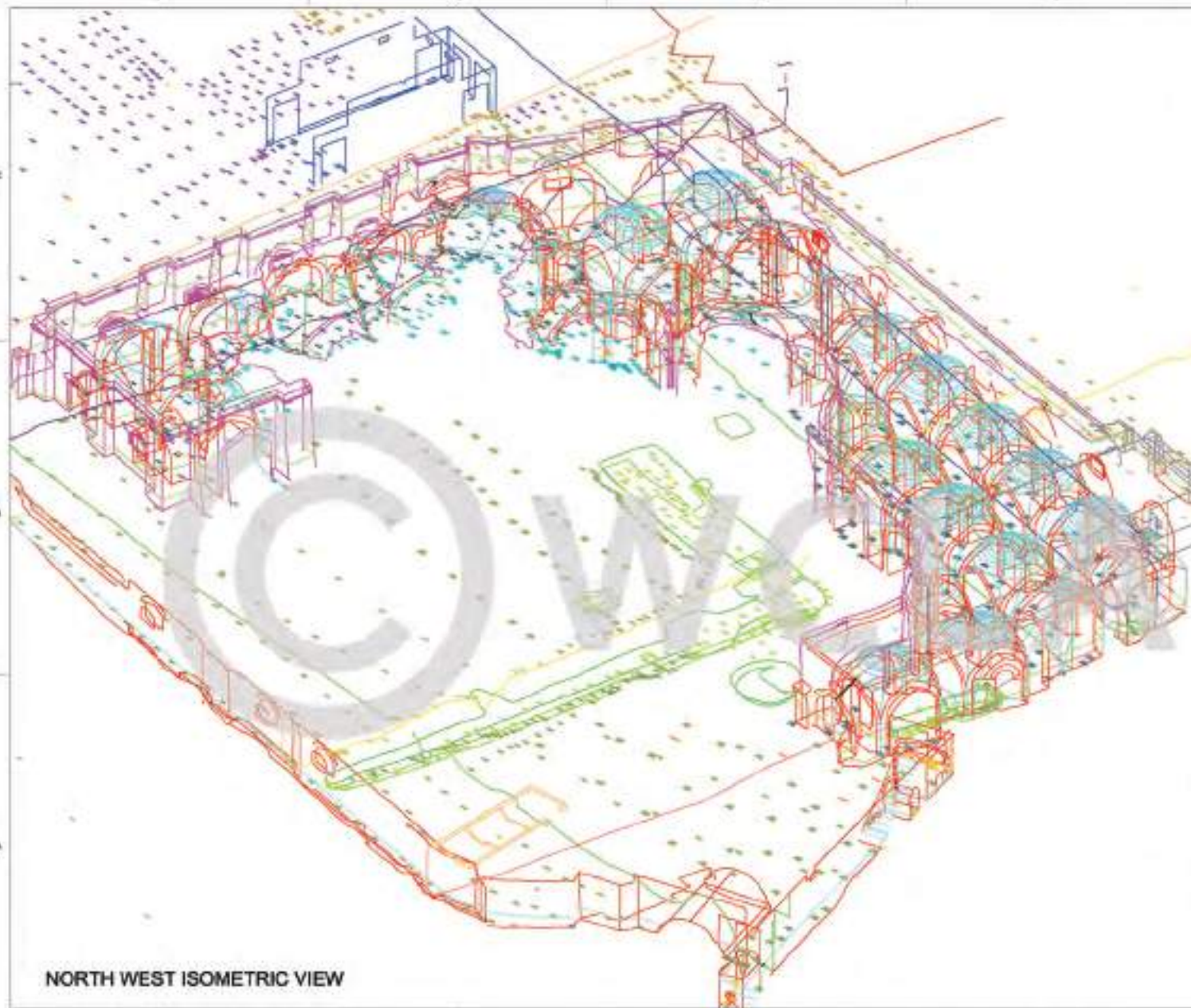


3-D Laserscanning, Royal Kitchens, Lahore Fort



WALLED CITY LAHORE			
PRESERVATION & RESTORATION OF LAHORE FORT			
PROJECT TITLE			
 Government of the Punjab			
 WALLED CITY OF LAHORE AUTHORITY <small>Regd. No. 12042-10001-07 Pct. 1543 2008</small>			
 AGA KHAN CULTURAL SOCIETY PAKISTAN <small>14-P-10, Main Block, Lower Middle East, Lahore-54000</small> <small>Telephone: (91 99) 5746711, Fax: (91 99) 4214000</small>			
PROJECT COMPONENT			
ROYAL KITCHEN			
DRAWING TITLE			
ROYAL KITCHEN FLOOR PLAN			
DATE			
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Drawn by:	Checked by:	Approved by:	Date:
Reviewed by:	Approved by:	Approved by:	Date:
Designed by:	Approved by:	Approved by:	Date:
Project Manager:	Approved by:	Approved by:	Date:
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Map Drawing of Floor Plan



NORTH WEST ISOMETRIC VIEW

WALLED CITY LAHORE
 LP-P115-11C
PRESERVATION & RESTORATION
OF LAHORE FORT

PROJECT TITLE:
CONSERVATION PLAN
 ROYAL KITCHENS LAHORE FORT


Government of the Punjab


WALLED CITY OF LAHORE AUTHORITY
 Telephone: 042- 65400111 Fax: 042- 6540011


Asia Research Cultural Services Pakistan
 8-P/116, Wazir Khan Lane 1, Industrial Area, Lahore, 54000
 Telephone: 042- 65884711 Fax: 042- 65884711

PROJECT DOCUMENT:
DOCUMENTATION

DRAWING TITLE:
TOTAL STATION DOCUMENTATION

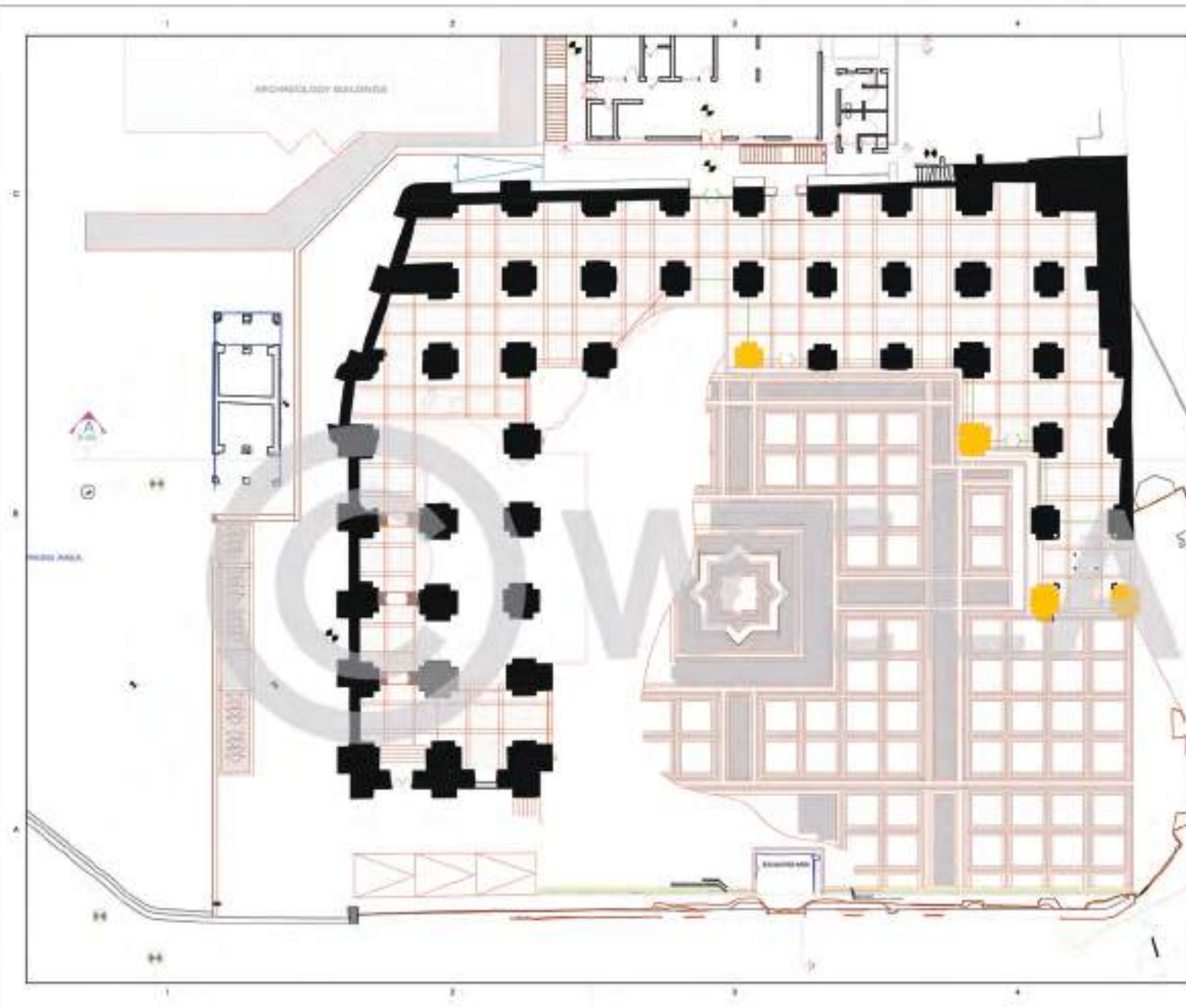
DATE:
 15/04/2016

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Total station documentation of Royal Kitchens

PRESERVATION & RESTORATION
OF ROYAL KITCHEN



No.	Date	Description	By

Final Working of Royal Kitchens

Documentation of the Royal Kitchens - 2016

Initially the photographic documentation was made and then came in the technical documentation using Total Stations and other tools.

The plans were made and meetings were held every other day with the Director General who wanted to revive the past glory and turn around the no go area a tourist spot.

The documentation of the Royal Kitchens started and comprehensive reports were prepared. The documentation revealed that according to the plan of Lahore fort a major portion of Royal Kitchen was missing while the eastern side had collapsed and turned into relics. During investigation and documentation phase of Royal Kitchen it was validated that the original entrance was located on northern wall in the approximate alignment of existing Musaman Darwaza which had also collapsed and its remains could be seen from the Royal Kitchens.

During British era when the functions of building were changed a new entrance was introduced from north east corner with gentle slope connected to courtyard than the arcaded rooms of kitchen though, the same entrance is functional up till now.



This is how the wild growth was at the Royal Kitchens



Relics found during excavation-an old oven



Some pottery found during excavation



Structures revealed during excavation

Detailed inspection revealed that the structure of the Royal Kitchen had suffered from serious damages; number of the structural components had been converted into the form of ruins as a result of biological and manmade causes. The structures showed the majority of damage which were in the form of cracks, subsidence and leaning. The cracks in the domes and arches showed the alarming situation in near future. Each space assessment had been carried out to understand exact condition of structural components.



Wild plantation and collapsed structures

All structural and architectural elements of The Royal Kitchens had been significantly affected by environmental factors such as direct rain water, which increased the damaging effects of humidity on the surface. The brick masonry structures also decayed and had cracked. The open in-filled portion was allowing the water ingress into the inner walls and structural elements. Huge cracks in domes, arches and wall were seen because of the settlements in the foundations. The structure had collapsed because negligence, drainage and rain water penetrations. Penetration of rain water to the building structure is causing several types of decay.



Arches fallen apart inside Royal Kitchens



Dilapidated arches of Royal Kitchens



Derelict structures of Royal Kitchens



During comparative analysis between historic and existing structures, it was concluded that about 30% of the structures of Royal Kitchens were missing. The roof of Royal Kitchen which was constructed in bricks covering with thick layer of lime was also derelict and collapsing. Due to subsidence and tilt in structure mortar was sliding down from the bricks, and at most of the places the structural elements had lost their strength because of reduced cross sections.



Collapsed and dilapidated structures of Royal Kitchens amidst debris and wild growth

Finally the
Conservation
Began

2016-2018

AN ACHIEVEMENT OF THE CONSERVATION
AND PLANNING WING WCLA

The Conservation and Planning Wing of Walled City of Lahore Authority started the on ground conservation and initially took up the excavation process. During excavation pots and pottery was also found. The most amazing thing revealed was the fresco wall of Temple of Prince Loh.

The conservation began with the aim -- "The best way to conserve a heritage building without compromising its heritage values, is to use it. This is because building adaptation links the past to the present and projects into the future."

Special small bricks, kankar lime plaster and other mortars were prepared which were to be used in this conservation. The structures were strengthened and the missing ones were re-built as the available references.

The plans were being made to develop the Royal Kitchens into a tourist spot and a fine dining restaurant where the tourists could enjoy the mesmerizing ambiance and fort by night.

Some unwanted hurdles that slowed down the conservation

While the teams were enthusiastically and energetically working on the conservation of the Royal Kitchens a notice from the Lahore High Court Lahore was received at Walled City of Lahore Authority head office stating that some civil society representatives had filed a case against the conservation and establishment of a restaurant there. All had to be paused at once and hearings and summons at the Lahore High court started. This activity lasted for two years from 2016 till 2018. The court passed orders and banned the construction of the restaurant kitchen area but was kind enough to allow the conservation of the dilapidated and colliding structures.

At that time the UNESCO mission also visited the site as they were keen to know about the interventions being made at the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The UNESCO Team was happy to see the conservation as per best international practices.

Finally the case was over in 2019 and the Lahore High Court Lahore resolved the matter amicably. A cost of Rs. 86.4 million incurred on this entire project, which was used from the Lahore Fort Funds (self generated funds of Lahore Fort) and funding by the Government of Punjab. This cost included the works like debris removal, documentation, conservation, restoration, provision of public facilities (toilets), drainage systems, electrical works (dedicated transformers), illumination, retaining wall and the parking area.

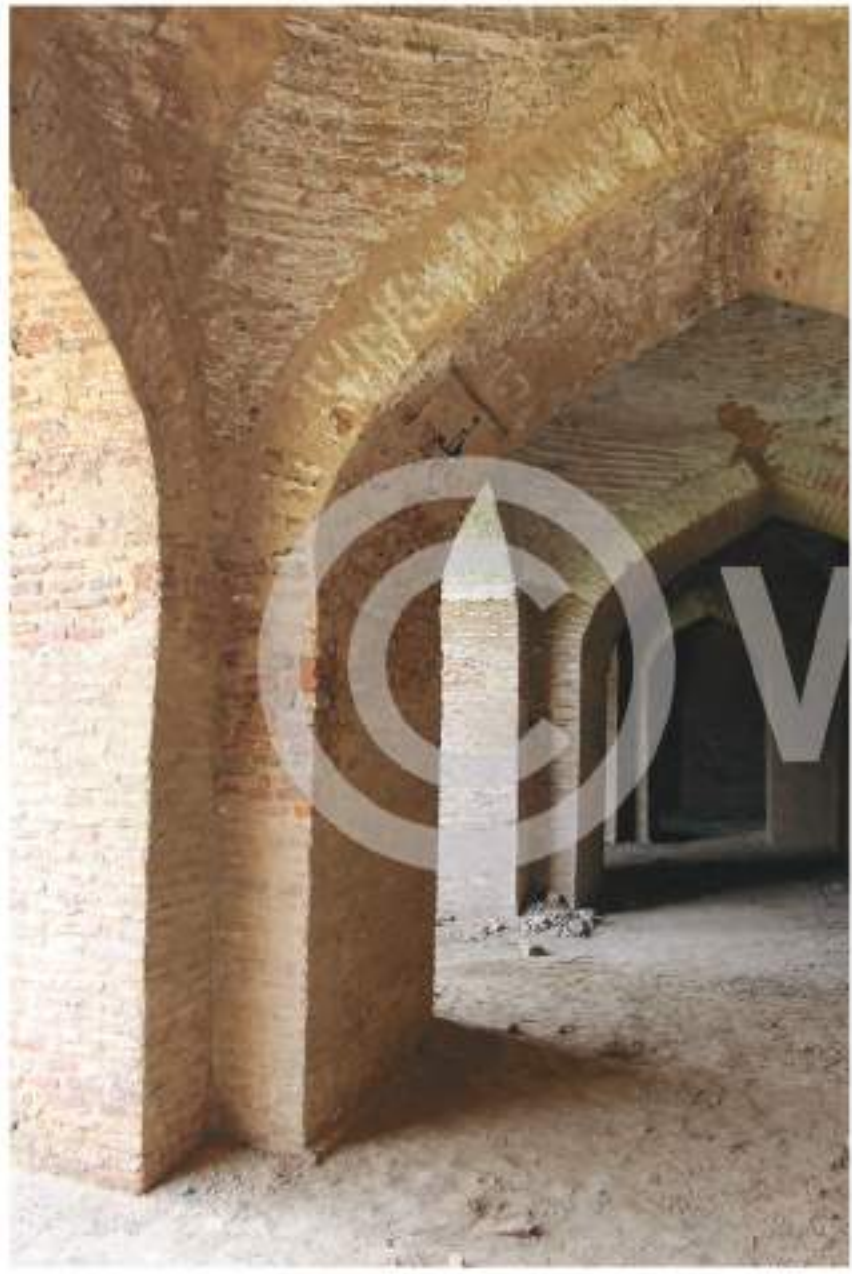


These images show the work in progress at Royal Kitchens

The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process



The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process



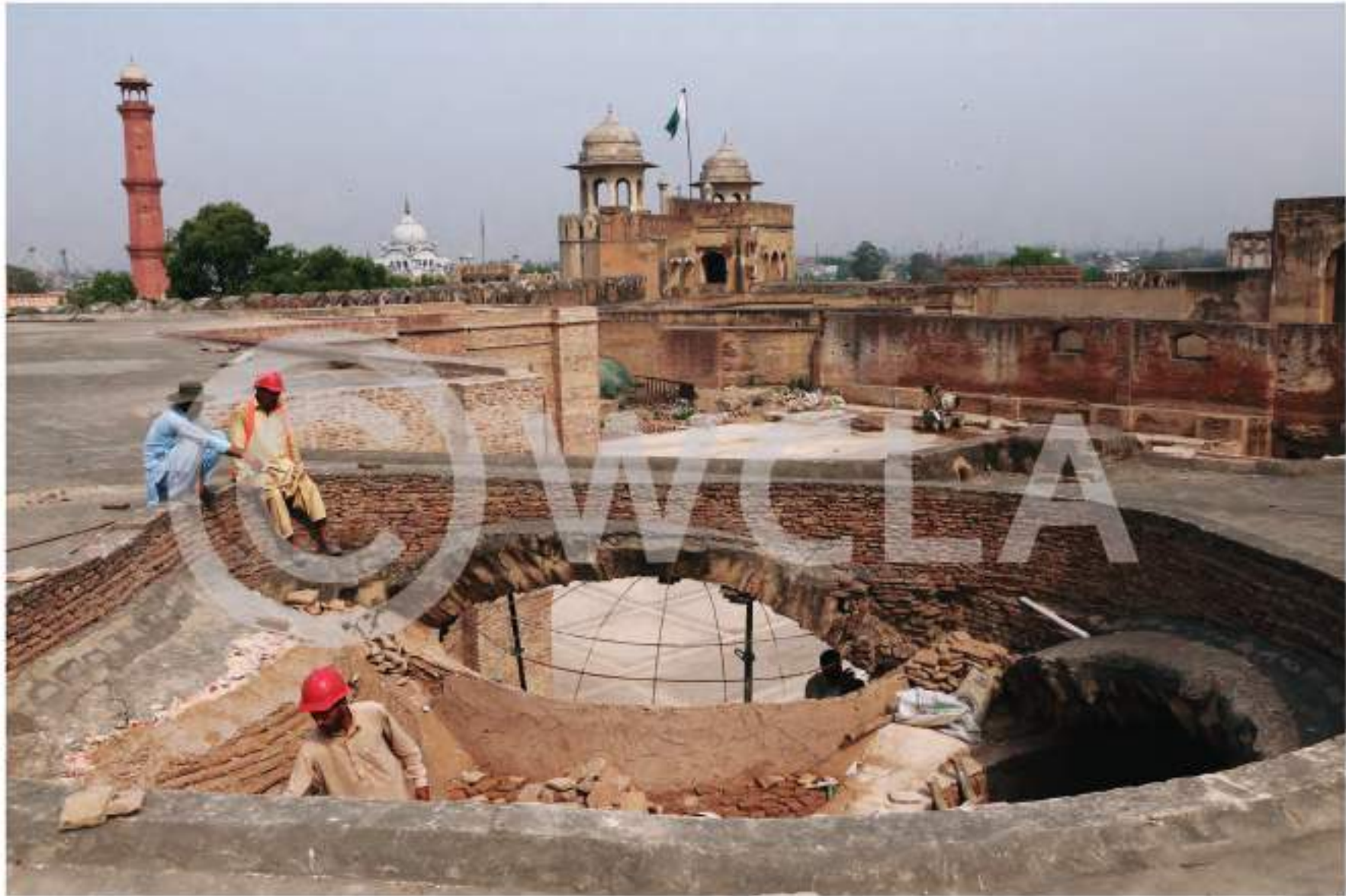
The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process



The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process



The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process - Roof top



The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process - Roof top



The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process



The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process



The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process



The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process



The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process



The Conservation of the Royal Kitchens During Process



Royal Kitchens – **Before & After**



Before



Before



After



After



Before



Before



After



After



Before



Before



After



After



Before



Before



After



After



Before



Before



After



After

Royal Kitchens **Now !**

Royal Kitchens or Shahi Bawarchi Khana, an astounding revelation inside Lahore Fort has fascinated many who are now visiting the Fort. A 'no go area' inside the fort has surprisingly altered into 'a tourist spot' but still many are unaware of the magnificence of this undetected portion inside the magnificent Fort of Lahore.

You will see a mesmerizing structure now conserved aesthetically and delicately by the Walled City of Lahore Authority. After conservation the entire complex of Royal Kitchens was illuminated by the Conservation Wing of WCLA.

The building was extremely tumbled down and later some of the dilapidated parts were demolished and the offices of Archeology Department were constructed there. The building that we see today is the remaining part of the huge kitchen complex. Much of the parts are demolished and many collided with the passage of time.

Royal Kitchens Now!



Cultural Evenings at

*Royal
Kitchens*





Walled City of Lahore Authority holds cultural evenings and gathering at Royal Kitchens now and soon it will be converted into a Mughal themed restaurant. So far events like Dastaan Goi, Sufi Nights and many other cultural evenings have been held at this site.



Walled City of Lahore Authority holds Bullah Shah event at Royal Kitchens



National Heritage and Tourism Workshop-2020
held at Royal Kitchens





An event of Dastan Goi was held at Royal Kitchens by Walled City of Lahore Authority



Publication

Credits:

Research, Write-up & Compilation – Tania Qureshi (Deputy Director Media, Marketing & PR)

Photography – Fareed Ahmed Khan (Photographer)

Designing – Roshan Ghaffoor (Graphic Designer)



Conservation

Team:

Najam Us Saqib (Director Conservation & Planning)

Azeem Dad Khan (Senior Architect)

Mubashar Hassan (Deputy Director Conservation)

Ayzed Abrar (Assistant Director Fort & Monuments)

Syed Faseeh Gilani (Assistant Director Architect)

Mehmood Munawar (Assistant Director Engineering)

M Waqar (Assistant Architect)

Hassan (Sub-Electrical Engineer)

Contact

WCLA

For general queries &
information:
042-99204237

Marketing & Events:
042-99204196

Tourism & Guided Tours:
042-99205723



Email:
walledcitylahoreauthority@gmail.com
Facebook:
facebook.com/walledcitylahoreauthority
Twitter:
twitter.com/WCLAAuthority
Website:
www.walledcitylahore.gop.pk
Instagram:
www.instagram.com/walledcitylahore