Ancient Pakistan, Vol. XXXVI, 2025: 77–98
ISSN: 0066-1600(print)/ 2708-4590(online)

Wall Paintings in the Secretariat Mausoleum, Lahore

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Abstract: Recent conservation of a mausoleum located within the Punjab Civil Secretariat, Lahore has uncovered an exceptional body of wall paintings previously concealed under layers of plaster, paint, and architectural interventions. Three distinct layers of wall art have been revealed, making this the only known Mughal-period funerary structure in Lahore to preserve a chronological sequence of untampered murals. This paper presents a stylistic and scientific study of the paintings, documenting the three layers of major artistic shifts. The earliest layer, attributable to the Mughal period, is executed in *fresco buono* on *pucca qala'i*, using mineral pigments. The second layer, stylistically aligned with Sikh-period artistic production, is painted in *secco* in a variety of regional styles. A change of material is visible in the Sikh layer. The third layer is a blue wash, painted during the Colonial period. The findings enrich current knowledge of the chronology of wall painting practice since the early modern period in South Asia and underscore the unique significance of the Secretariat Tomb as a site of complex artistic, cultural and architectural expression, highlighting the adaptive history of this fascinating site.

Keywords: South Asian History, Material Analysis, Mughal Mausoleum, Mural Painting, Anarkali.

Introduction

The iconic tomb of an unknown royal figure stands in the southern corner of the Punjab Civil Secretariat, Lahore (Fig. 1). It is designed in the typical late 16th- to early 17th-century Timurid-Mughal style, with an octagonal, two-storied plan, arched verandas and a central double dome. Its early history is controversial. It is said to have originally stood in the middle of a pomegranate garden on the banks of the River Ravi. The only clue to its interred occupant and royal patron is a cenotaph. The original facing has been eradicated and to date no literary or visual documentation has surfaced to shed light on the tomb's facade. Surviving evidence on the dome, in the form of three-petalled stucco decoration made of mortar, suggests that the dome's facing would originally have been executed in *kaashikari*, similar to that found at other contemporary Mughal sites.

During Sikh times, the tomb, no longer on the banks of the Ravi, was repurposed into residences for Sikh royalty and army chiefs. With the advent of the British, the mausoleum became Lahore's single most important site, multifunctioning as accommodation for Punjab's first British Resident Henry Lawrence and his family, Lahore's first church and the first British administrative quarter. When the Lawrences shifted to another site (which remains the Governor of Punjab's residence to date), this famed mausoleum became the church of St. James, the city's first Protestant place of worship, and when the church found its own site near the Anarkali bazar, the tomb finally evolved into the Punjab Government Archives (Walker 1894: 296). The administration of the Punjab Archives returned the marble cenotaph, found lying in the precincts of the tomb garden, to the church altar, leaving the central chamber of the tomb vacant. Accounts vary as to the location of the grave, as the bones were reportedly exhumed by the British and reinterred beneath one of the octagonal side towers of the building (Baqir 1984: 430). WCLA's attempts at locating the underground chamber or its bones have been unsuccessful.

The tomb's re-adaptive journey over the past 400 years has witnessed several interventions; verandas covered, mezzanines, windows, doors and railings added, and wall paintings plastered and painted over. As the Punjab Archives, the tomb retained the renovated church flooring, adding additional interventions to the structure. The space was packed with free standing wooden shelving, leaving the walls largely undisturbed.

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Figure 1. Front (North- Eastern) elevation of the Secretariat Tomb, aka Tomb of Anarkali, Punjab Civil Secretariat, Lahore, June 2025.

As time passed, the layers of white paint began to flake and fall, revealing hints of hidden paintings.

The decision to remove the layers of white covering was taken by the Punjab Civil Secretariat and the Walled City of Lahore Authority in 2024. Removal of the paint and plaster layers revealed severe structural interventions. Besides enclosing verandas, the arch sizes had been modified, re-aligning the design to deviate from the perfect symmetry of Mughal architectural design. Doors and windows had also been added to form rooms all around the top floor, and a grand exterior staircase constructed opening on the first floor. Steps had been added within the structure, as well as 'secret' passages. Numerous variations in brick masonry clearly revealed evidence of Sikh and British interventions in an originally Mughal structure. The most astonishing revelation are the wall paintings, often showing signs of chipped hacking but preserved in many places intact, presenting several mysteries frozen in time. Questions pertaining to the patrons, subjects and artists arise. Another intriguing mystery is why only one section of the mausoleum contains Sikh period paintings.

Documenting these remarkable paintings is an essential first step towards understanding and preserving them. Having remained concealed

beneath layers of plaster for approximately 400 and 200 years, the paintings are now exposed to a significantly different environment, including changes in relative humidity, atmospheric pollutants and light exposure, as well as the risks associated with conservation and restoration work. Comprehensive documentation through photography, scientific analysis and descriptive recording provides a baseline before conservation begins and makes it possible to monitor changes throughout the conservation process. In this way, documentation not only preserves a record of the paintings as they are found but also supports informed decisions about their long-term conservation.

This paper describes the wall paintings found in the Punjab Civil Secretariat Mausoleum according to stylistic and available scientific research[1], along with a brief history of the technique of wall painting in Pakistan, placing them within the context of early Mughal and early Sikh era wall painting. The paper outlines the scientific methodology employed, gives a historical background of the tomb and its changing functions, and discusses traditional methods of wall painting in Lahore. The main body describes the paintings, identifying historical layers, chamber by chamber, beginning with the ground floor and ending with the first, along with a scientific analysis (as much as was accumulated at the time) of predominant painted surface material. The paper concludes with a stylistic review, placing the Secretariat Mausoleum as one of the most primary art historical sites in South Asia.

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The Discovery of Wall Paintings in the Mausoleum

The South Asian tradition of painting on walls goes back to ancient times. The *Vishnudharammottara Purana*, the oldest treatise on traditional South Asian Painting, penned in sixth century CE, presents clear evidence of the expanse and extent of wall painting development in South Asia, encompassing not just its technical aspects but also its philosophical and spiritual angles (Kramrisch 1928: 3). Ancient Buddhist paintings and petroglyphs, the earliest of which belong to a time 200 years prior to the *Purana*, embody the ideals of the scripture. They are found in areas as far apart as the caves of Ajanta, South India, Sigiriya, Sri Lanka, numerous sites in northern Pakistan, and in the Kizil Thousand Buddha cave paintings of south China. Aesthetic evolution in South Asia has organically maintained many of the same visual ideals to this day, such as an admiration for line quality, image flattening, and spiritual sanctity (Ahmed 2004: 22). Many basic materials remain the same, such as the use of lime as mural surface, as well as the addition of organic binders and varnish. The ancient knowledge and practice of painting on lime in the northern areas of the Subcontinent have continued despite massive disruptions throughout its history.

The city of Lahore, home to some of Pakistan's most historically significant murals, rose to economic prominence as a pivotal southern juncture on the Silk Route during Muslim rule. The ancient origins of the city are based on historical sources that refer to a small settlement traditionally founded by Lau (Lav), the son of Rama, the hero of the Ramayana (Baqir 1984: 7). The strategic location of the settlement, close to the Hindukush- Himalayan and Sulaiman Ranges, and easily accessible from the Indo- Gangetic plain, has played a key role as an eastern or western centre of a border province in various empires. The city has, as a point of passage for ambitious conquerors, suffered massive destruction and revival several times.

In today's Lahore, evidence of walls painted earlier than the Mughal era has so far not been uncovered. Recent excavations at the Lahore Fort have yielded objects such as terracotta figurines, indicating several layers of civilization which have yet to be researched, but it is unlikely that painted evidence will have survived[2].The earliest surviving archaeological structures in Lahore are remains of ancient temples, repurposed after 1947 as residential quarters. No traces of the original paintings survive at these sites. Sufi *dargahs* and *khanqahs* of the Ghaznavid era still stand, signifying the first missionary Muslim settlers, but as active sacred sites, they have been

re-embellished regularly, with no evidence of original paintings. Some wall paintings from the Mughal period have been more fortunate, and it can be speculated that in the next years, evidence of more paintings will be found as excavations continue. Prominent mural sites include two chambers on the north wall of the Lahore Fort, known as the Kala Burj and Sehdara Bangla, which feature early Mughal period paintings in their original form. The two sites have come into the notice of notable scholars[3] since the 1980s.

The discovery of the paintings in the Secretariat Tomb (often referenced as the Tomb of Anarkali) is singularly significant for its display of relatively well- preserved imagery and technique from 3 eras (Fig. 2). Painted one upon the other, the pre- colonial layers were covered over by light blue paint followed by layers of plain white paint (Fig. 3). Some areas were also plastered over. The layering of light blue and white paint is found in the interiors of many Mughal sites repurposed by the British (Smith 1894: 37). Removal of the covering layers began in 2024 through the Walled City of Lahore's (WCLA) 'Tomb of Anarkali at Secretariat Wall Painting Conservation Project.'

Traditional wall painting material and its analysis

Scientific analysis of wall paintings is a complex investigation. Although Mughal period wall paintings were dependent largely on natural earth and mineral pigments such as Lapis Lazuli (*Laajverd*) and Azurite for blue, Indigo (*Neel*), Cinnabar and Vermilion (*Shingraf*) red, Indian yellow (*Peori)* and Orpiment yellow, lamp and bone blacks, Celadonite Malachite and green ochres (Nagpall 1988: 27), Umbers and Siennas for browns, and Gypsum for whites, they were often mixed to produce required hues. Additionally, these pigments were either coated or mixed with plant or animal binding mediums (Singh and Sharma 2021: 1972), which tend to disintegrate and become difficult to identify with the passage of time. By the early 19th century, artificial pigments were also in use in the region.



Figure 2. The white paint and plaster layer (also visible) has been removed to expose Sikh and Mughal period layers.



Figure 3. Top layer (1): white paint, underpainting (2): blue, underpainting (3): Red ochre, yellow and white pattern.

Technique: The paint is applied on a 'paint-receiving layer' made of slaked lime, which is also the primary constituent of several layers of plaster and mortar under the paint- receiving layer. This final layer is made of the finest and purest slaked lime and can be blended with a touch of marble dust. From this point the painting process diverges into a number of techniques: a) When pigment mixed with water (paint) is painted over a wet layer of plaster, carbonisation traps the pigments within the dried top strata, permanently preserving their freshness. This is known as *fresco buono*. A variation in the fresh plaster- paint technique, called '*sgraffito*' exposes the base layer through scratched incisions on the top layer. b) A second type of painting is executed on dried lime plaster, in which a binder is added for adherence to the wall. This is known as *secco* painting. c) A third technique called *lustro*, is a variation to fresco buono, and is indigenous to Rajasthan. The painted lime surface, once almost dry, is burnished to produce a lustrous shine, embedding the pigment layer deeply into the lime layer. A binder in the form of gum is also used. The mausoleum under discussion shows evidence of sgrafitto, lustro and secco techniques. Interestingly, where in other contemporary buildings such as the Kala Burj and Sehdara Bangla buono and secco techniques are found often used together on the same surface, in the Secretariat Mausoleum, there is no convergence. It should be noted that in Pakistan, wall painting is referred to traditionally as '*deewari* or *imaarti naqqashi*', the word bearing no reference to any technique, but rather to the scale and placement of the painting.

Scientific Methodology

Step-by-step documentation and investigation are being carried out through non-invasive and invasive techniques using the following equipment and applications:

1. Colour photography, using a Canon Rebel T2i with 55, 77mm and macro lenses, Canon Mark ii 6D Lens 24.70 G2 Tamron, Sony mirrorless camera, iPhone Promax 12, contrast filters iD Stretch application
2. Polycam and Agisoft Metashape photogrammetry applications
3. QGIS
4. PL (Photo-induced Luminescence) imaging for UV excitation using 390nm and 360nm UV torches
5. Infra- Red reflectography using a Nikon D-80 camera with a 77mm lens, 750nm IR pass (to be repeated with a more contemporary converted camera)
6. Cross-sectional investigations (invasive) (in process): SEM-EDX[4], XRD[5], FTIR-ATR[6], Py-GC/MS[7]
7. Optical microscopy

Currently 5 samples have been studied; further investigations are underway.

The Mausoleum

The popular title '*Anarkali ka Maqbara*' (Tomb of Anarkali), refers to an epic tragedy centred around a courtesan by the name of Anarkali (lit. Pomegranate Bud), her affair with prince Salim and its macabre ending. The legend has no factual basis and is not referenced in any contemporary Mughal text. The earliest references allude to *"the King [Jahangir], in token of his love, commands a sumptuous tombe to be built of stone in the midst of a foure-square garden richly walled, with a gate and divers rooms over it. The convexity of the tombe he hath willed to be wrought in workes of gold, with a large faire jounter with roomes over-head…."* by English travellers William Finch (Foster 1921: 166) and Edward Terry (Foster 1921: 330) in 1611CE. Contrary to popular belief, there is no reference to any courtesan; rather Finch and Terry identify the tomb as that of Akbar's wife. Since then, historians have speculated an impressive variety of identities in connection to the inhabitant interred at the mausoleum. The only testament to ownership is the exquisitely carved white marble cenotaph (Fig 4) bearing prince Salim's name as a *majnun* (madman) and 2 dates: 1024 AH and 1008 AH, which correspond to 1615 CE and 1599 CE respectively. The

architectural scheme is the first giveaway to the Jehangiri nature of the tomb. As a major funerary site it would have been well looked after during the early Mughal period, but there is no mention of it in contemporary texts until the Sikh period.

Lahore became the capital of Ranjit Singh's empire in 1799. At this time many Mughal monuments were abandoned, presenting readymade accommodation for the new rulers. The mausoleum depicted in a map from 1837, shows an expansive garden surrounding the tomb, belonging to General Ventura. Initially, the tomb functioned as the residence of Prince Kharak Singh (Shorto 2007: 155) until he relocated to his new haveli at the Lahore Fort, allotting the tomb to the Italian General, who also built a mansion on the precinct. With British takeover in 1847, the tomb was used for clerical offices alongside use as residence of the Chairman of the Board of Administration. Henry Lawrence's wife, Honoria, wrote in detail about the repurposing of the structure (Shorto 2007: 157). It was converted into Lahore's first Anglican church, the Church of St. James, in 1851 (Goulding 1924: 14). The church was relocated in 1891, after which the mausoleum became the Punjab Public Records Office (aka the Punjab Archives) and remained thus until 2024.

Architecture

The *hasht bahisht* (eight-fold) structure of the mausoleum, like all early Mughal buildings, continues with characteristic elements of *"…. Timurid architecture, such as the perfect symmetry of plan reflected consistently in the elevations, as well as complex vault patterns,"* (Koch 1991: 14). The octagonal central chamber of the tomb supports a central double- dome, flanked by a double- storeyed veranda (which was later enclosed). The interior height of the tomb is approximately 14m. The central chamber measures approximately 3.75m per octagonal side. The external height of the edifice is 21m at the apex of the dome (Fig 5).

Arch netting in the vaults, creating a transition from the square base to the circular central dome, is further enhanced by the Timurid- Safavid origins of the star stucco that became one of the characteristics of Jehangiri architecture. There is also extensive use of the Persian *girih* (interlocking star pattern). It is noteworthy that Jehangir asserts his own imprint even at this early time in his reign through grand innovations such as the radiating star pattern, continuing to aspire to Timurid roots and influence.



Figure 4. 'Majnoon Salim Akbar' carved on the cenotaph.

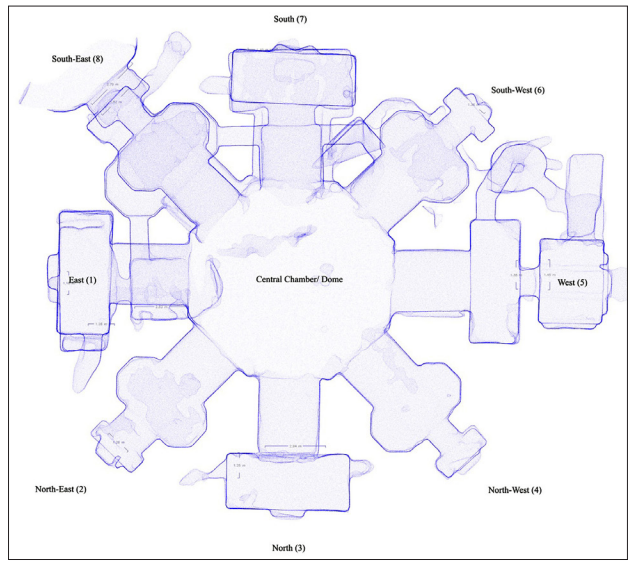


Figure 5. Numbered Plan of mausoleum (blueprint created by terrestrial LiDAR scan).

The Paintings

The surface embellishment techniques used on the walls include the application of pigment on fine lime, lime stucco, and mirror work with gilding. On the ground floor, large areas of painting have been lost. The surviving paintings present a consistent colour scheme, repeated patterns and motifs, and a single application technique. The palette is earthen. Red and yellow ochres, terra verte with some instances of malachite green, light green, blue and some black. The technique, simple yet effective, is a fresco application of flat pigment on *qala'i*[8], on which incised detailing, or a fine engraving '*sgraffito*' has been etched. This technique, known as *nehernay ka kaam*, was widely employed during the Mughal period to form permanent pattern outlines (Fig. 6). It served as a guide for the execution and later maintenance of decorative designs as well as to produce imitation brickwork and geometric detailing (Ahmed 2024: 20). Today it is commonly practised as *taazakari* (brick imitation), in which colour is laid out on a fresh lime base and etched to reveal the white lime underneath through a white line. The Maryam Zamani Mosque in Lahore is an excellent example of *nehernay ka kaam,* featuring '*sgraffito* or intaglio lines' to create and subdivide geometric and floral motifs. The Secretariat paintings are the first evidence observed in Pakistan of *nehernay ka kaam* as the only form of detailing used to depict a variety of images. Clear evidence of early Mughal origins is presented by the exquisitely fine quality of line, style, palette, design and technique. The imagery varies from geometric, biomorphic, floral and faunal depictions.

The ground floor paintings are decidedly early Mughal. The use of mineral earth pigments applied on fresh lime, incised to produce patterns, along with the flattened style and proportion in which cypress trees, date palms, tree of life, arches and geometric *girih* patterns are etched, are consistent with contemporary sites including those of the Maryam Zamani mosque and some of the painted surfaces in Akbar's mausoleum at Sikandra in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Construction on the upper floor shows two layers of painting, with additional late 20th century paintwork in areas where there is no evidence of underpainting[9]. The eastern chambers of the building feature a second layer of paintings superimposed on the original Mughal paintings. The second layer of painting points toward a historical intervention during the Sikh era (see Fig. 3 above). The paintings consist of Persianate fairies, gilded lotus mirrors, female portraits,



Figure 6. North Eastern entrance showing details of a Saroo (Cypress) tree with sgrafitto (nehernay ka kaam) outlines.

a version of putti, a forest of foliage, birds and butterflies, and arches brimming with petals and leaves. The scheme contrasts with the imagery, colour palette and technique used in the first layer, featuring distinctive red, blue and yellow colours, along with a flowing paint texture and glaze.

Eastern Chambers

Ground Floor:

The ground floor of the eastern chamber was reconstructed for use as the altar during the mausoleum's pastoral period (Fig. 7). The exquisitely carved marble cenotaph (retrieved

after being removed to the exterior environs) has been placed on the dais which would probably have served as the altar of the church in the mid-19th century. Removal of covering wall plaster has found the presence of a layer of blue paint under the white layer, and a Mughal period layer under the blue. The flanking walls have revealed brick imitation rectangles with geometric rosettes (*girih*) in red ochre, dark green, yellow ochre and some black. An unusual arabesque motif is present above the archway, which shows evidence of dark blue pigment, along with red and black (Fig 8). Most of the pigment is however not present in this motif, and the pattern has been disrupted by the arch which had been enlarged during British repurposing.

The area above the window enclosing the veranda features a mirrored four petalled flower and sword stucco, typical of Sikh symbolism, although the popular motif used for the *khanda* is not quite this.

First Floor

The upper eastern chamber contains both Mughal and Sikh motifs. The archway shows remains of arabesque borders painted in yellow, and a lintel level *Pahari Patti* border. For some reason, the archway opening into the enclosed veranda has been cordoned off by steps, perhaps for the congregation to be able to get a better view of the lower floor. The veranda, therefore, is at a height of approximately 0.6m above the level of the floor. Structurally, the veranda had been enclosed by brick masonry, and a large arched window installed, which has now been removed. These interventions have cut off the motifs in most places.

The archway opening into the veranda is painted in a curled and enlarged version of *Pahari Patta* (Fig. 9) (Solangi 2006: 52). The motif is systematically reproduced in mirrored formations. Painted in dark green and black, remains of a red background are visible. Above the dado, a rectangular boundary painted in red still exists. On the north wall, a border of yellow leaves is barely visible (Fig 10), and is cut off by the enclosing wall, as is the brick imitation border on the opposite side. Within the veranda, large arabesque medallions are to be found painted within brick imitation arches on both side walls (Fig 11), evidence of the Mughal layer, however the quality of the layer is courser than its counterparts, pointing to an intervention possibly during the Sikh period. The medallions feature a rhombus shaped motif at each end, but the bottom motif has been cut off because of the addition of

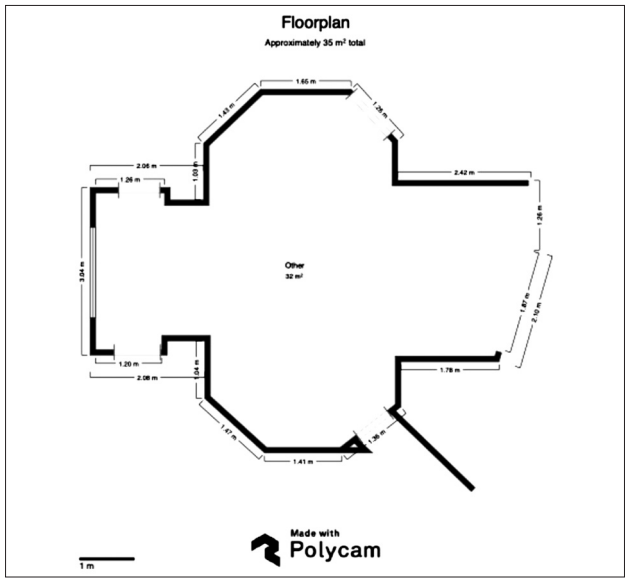


Figure 7. Plan of the Eastern chamber (terrestrial LiDAR conversion).



Figure 8. Unusual biomorphic pattern in the ground floor eastern chamber (pattern has been disrupted by the enlarged arch).



Figure 9. Arabesque style *Pahari Patta*



Figure 10. Indian yellow leaf- border with traces of green.



Figure 11. Medallions painted on a coarse preparatory layer, unlike the finely reinforced Mughal plaster surfaces.

the floor. The medallions on the north wall are superimposed by a second layer of leaf motifs. Lotus capped pillars in stucco have also been added, and some presence of pinkish-red pigment remains on the capitals. A *jaal* pattern is barely visible on the domical ceiling and is cut off at the centre by the addition of the wall. When exposed to UV light, the *jaal* design on the dome becomes almost fully visible, as does the yellow pigment on the borders and leaf designs, pointing to the possibility of Indian Yellow pigment.

North- Eastern Chambers

Ground Floor

The paintings now used as the entrance (established by the British Resident), are above eye- level at a height of approx. 2m. Three sets of paintings flank the central archway. Each set is symmetrical, their condition in varying degrees of damage.

The paintings flanking the archway are vertically oriented rectangular arched compositions featuring centralized palm trees with stylized phoenix, cranes peacocks and birds mirrored on both its sides, enclosed in the characteristic arch shaped *taazakari*, featuring a central palm tree surrounded on both sides by mirrored animal motifs. Cranes at the bottom, red phoenix in the centre and an elongated dark grey winged bird at the top, amidst a profusion of blooming and budding vines in red, malachite green and brown (Fig. 12). The patterns and intricacies are etched out, exposing the base white lime layer. These unique panels are exquisitely engraved. The panels have been truncated on the sides by arches that were enlarged during the British period.

Adjacent to this set is a pair of arched panels featuring a rounded red ochre vase. The shape is found in 16th century miniature paintings[10] as well as that of the jars (*matkas*) found in Harappa. Vines sprout in symmetrical arabesques, from

earthen mounds. Trace evidence of a pair of mirrored *cheetahs* is found below the vase, while peacocks balance themselves above them. Red headed parrots (?) sit on flowering stems. A profusion of pink flowers with green stems spills out of the mouth of the vase. The vessel is outlined in a thick black line. Black boundary lines run at the edge of the arched panel, enclosing red- ochre *taazakari* (brick imitation work) (Fig. 13). Stars fill the muqarnas webbing in the half dome above.

Removal of the intervening wall raised during the colonial period (north- east veranda), has unveiled fresh paintings under the masonry. It can be assumed that the remaining ground floor veranda walls too have paintings underneath. However, to maintain the historical fabric of the building, the rest of the walls have been left intact. Behind the wall, at eye- level, Mughal period *tilli- murabba* patterns have emerged in red ochre, yellow ochre and black (Fig 14). Freshly exposed, the colours indicate the richness of original hue and the characteristic Rajasthani method of burnishing labelled by Mora, Mora and Philippot (1984: 78) as 'Lustro' (also see Agarwal and Wickramasinghe 2002: 39). The same panel is found across the opposite side of this section. The pattern is typical of the Mughal period, and is found replicated in folio paintings, carved in rock and used as a device for Mughal landscaping.

Above the lintel, a centralised cyprus tree composition in a recessed arch has been discovered. Above it, tracings of a pattern are visible in black outline behind the last layer of covering white plaster.

The ceiling, an intricate webbing of stucco celestial geometry, has some remains of green and orange malachite stars with the same intaglio etching which uses the revealed white of the lime to create patterns within the frescoed images.

There are no remains of painting within the chamber itself.



Figure 12. Arched panel on the North- Eastern entrance showing *taazakari* outline with sgrafitto/*nehernay ka kaam* etching.



Figure 13. Arched panel in North- Eastern entrance exhibiting rooted mound with green- leafed trees.

First Floor

The first-floor paintings of the North East chamber require detailed descriptions, as they are rare examples of large, intricate Mughal inspired Pahari style renditions from the Sikh period, refined and yet at once at variance with any other wall painting in Lahore, with a close connection to the paintings on the walls of Gul Begum's tomb in Miani Sahab Graveyard Lahore (Fig 15).

Other close counterparts are the Badal Mahal paintings at Bundi, the Sikh paintings at the Bedi Palace in Kalar Saidaan and Mihan Singh's Haveli in Gujranwala.

The chambers on the first floor are generally divided into 2 portions:

1. The main chamber, which overlooks the central octagon.
2. The side chamber, enclosing the veranda and overlooking the lawns of the Secretariat.

Windows have been added in the British period wall which enclose the veranda. Turreted chambers flank the window chamber. The arches on both sides of the windows are painted with *parees* (Persian fairies) wearing long red skirts, waistcoats, sashes or girdles, blue caps and pointed blue shoes (Fig. 16). Their facial features are intact and finely painted. Most of the colour is no longer on the wings, only a black outline and some black pigment remain. A layer is visible behind these fairies, revealing parts of the original paint layer- brick imitation work, as is present in most of the tomb. Floral imagery surrounds the fairies, which are enclosed in arches within red and black lined boundaries. The flora depicted include pomegranate buds and flowers. A turtle dove-like bird sits in both corners under the *paree*. A *Pahari Patta* (leaf- pattern) in dark green, also repeated in larger scale in the eastern chamber next door, is used for the border, while a mirrored image of a *Pahari Patta* fleur- de- lis is painted on each corner of the arch- motif on both sides of the window. The pigment has darkened in patches. This motif is very unusual, perhaps unique, and seems to have been added as an afterthought on top of the arched border. The dado area has been painted in a deep yellow background, with a *Phool Batan* vine working its way through the border. The same vine is found in the larger chamber, painted at a smaller scale to fit the requirements of the composition. The area on top of the fairy-arch rises to a half-dome and is divided into a floral composition with red corners that are surrounded by a white top division painted in flowering vines.

The centre of the North East chamber rises to a full dome. Remnants of a central blue flower are visible, flanked on 4 corners by descending fairies in yellow long skirts, waistcoats and caps (Fig. 17). These *parees* are found repeated in sites from the Mughal and Sikh eras in Lahore, for example in the *hamam* of Haveli Khharak Singh (Fig. 18a) and Shahi Hamam (Fig. 18b).



Figure 14. North Eastern entrance, north wall newly uncovered tilli murabba pattern in red, yellow, black and green.



Figure 15. North- East Chamber Secretariat Mausoleum and Maqbara Gul Begum.



Figure 16. *Paree* holding fruit bowl, in painted arch with green *fleur-de-lis* type motif, phool Batan vines and bird.



Figure 17. Dome featuring *parees* with *ghagraas* (skirts).



Figure 18a. Haveli Kharak Singh (Photo credit: Saba Samee).



Figure 18b. Shahi Hamam Lahore.

The colour scheme in both North East chambers is painted in a combination of a striking bright red, deep yellow and bright blue.

The dado in the central chamber features a cinnabar red background. On each wall flanking the window chamber opening, three bushes are painted: mango (*aam*), Jasmine (*chambeli)* and Iris (*sausan*) (Fig 19). Pale yellow birds, moths and butterflies, fly above the bushes (Fig 20), while ducks are found at the base. The moths and butterflies closely resemble those painted on the hallway paintings of Jehangir's Tomb and the Kala Burj. The ming vases painted above the dado are also very much like the vases of Jehangir's tomb paintings. The vases in the Secretariat Tomb are painted flanking plain white lime rectangles, found at eye- level, which would probably have looking glasses, keeping in mind the profuse use of mirrors in this chamber. Knocking produces a hollow sound, indicating a vacuum behind the plaster. The vases, although of clear Chinese inspiration, are painted with minute architectural drawings of places. Narcissus, Irises and Poppies are placed in them. The vases are composed in fluted arched compositions, on red backgrounds. The arches are composed within a yellow rectangle which features floral border compositions (Fig. 21), and these are bound by dark green borders of simple *Phool Batan* vines. Above the green border runs a continuous border of red, painted with a bird and flower motif which is repeated throughout the chamber. Under the

lintel, a version of *Pahari Patti*, composed in vertical leaf formations, is found in red and dark green. The composition forms a design in which the red areas form vase like motifs. A thick rounded moulding, now in white, separates the lintel from the area underneath. Photo Luminescence imaging has revealed luminescence from the yellow pigment (Fig. 22).

Above the lintel height, six portraits are painted, three on each side, above the doorways, of women in three-quarters or full profile. These are painted in the Pahari style, and some evidence of foliage and clouds in the background is visible in some panels (Fig. 23). Each woman, donning a printed dupatta and a *bazooband* (arm band), holds a different item in her hands. The vermilion



Figure 19. North East Chamber: Sausan (Iris).



Figure 20. Gul-e-Lala (Poppy) and butterfly.



Figure 21. North East chamber Ming style vase with blossoming flowers and fruit, painted in a fluted mihrab.



Figure 22. Yellow fluorescing under UV exposure.

orange ground of the figure (some kind of bole?) is exposed. Evidence of light flesh colour that had originally been painted on top of the orange ground, is still to be found on some areas of the face and hands. The central portrait on the eastern wall holds a rose in full bloom on one hand and a bowl of fruit in the other (Fig. 24) Another subject rests one hand on the oval outline in which she is composed. She sports a gold dupatta and a black shirt (Fig. 25). Her face has lost its features, as has the face of the lady in the central panel. UV exposure has shown a large amount of fluorescence indicating organic content (Fig. 26). The woman on the extreme left sports a black dupatta with a three- petalled flower *chatta* (a repeat flower pattern still popular in South Asia). On the Western wall, the central and right- side panels feature women in ¾ view. Their gaze looks back at the viewer. The lady on the right holds a slim- necked bird (a stork?) in her hands. The lady on the left is painted in profile, looking at the two other panels flanking her. She holds a lotus in bloom in one hand, and a conch in the other. Her *dupatta* is red with white polka dots. Three women are clothed in yellow, and all six are richly adorned with *jhoomers*, *maatha pattis*, earrings and rings. Their hands are red with henna, and they smile pleasantly, seated in plush flowering gardens. Each arched panel is flanked by a zigzag (*lehriya*) faux- pillar which has a lotus base whose capital erupts into flowers painted on stucco ribs which form star formations as the walls ascend to the ceiling of the chamber. Floral panels divide the women, featuring flowering bushes of Irises and some generic flower, with dove-like birds at the bottom.

Each portrait is flanked by a flowering bush. A winged face hovers above each portrait, as if protecting it. The winged motif, seated on a swirling cloud, is repeated as a symmetrical mirrored image, with a convex oval mirror (most of which are no longer there) at the centre. Each



Figure 23. North East chamber, western wall.



Figure 24. Portrait of a lady holding rose.



Figure 25. Side profile of seated figure holding embellished headscarf (*dupatta*).

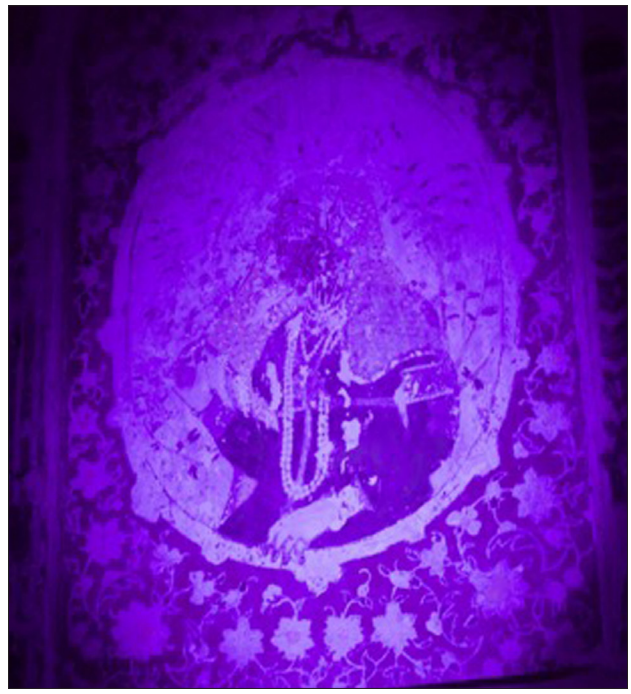


Figure 26. UV exposure shows fluorescence indicating possible presence of organic matter.

winged creature is painted with a variation in facial profile, within each diamond of the star shaped ribbing that joins the dome to the square design of the chamber, thereby becoming smaller as it ascends toward the descending *parees* above (Fig.27). Convex mirrors arranged in the shape of flowers, are held together with gold gilding on stucco. The wings of the creatures, painted in an intriguing mixture of black, brown, red and green, are reminiscent of similar winged creatures in the Kala Burj, although the one in the Secretariat Tomb indicate a differently evolved painterly style.

Four *parees*, robed in yellow flowing skirts, descend to the 4 corners of the chamber. One holds a lute (its strings are still visible) with a fancy pegbox still remaining. Another holds grapes as she flies down, the third holds a lotus flower in one hand, and a conch in the other. The fourth holds a bowl of fruit. Two of the *parees* are painted in three- fourth profile while two are painted presenting full face toward the viewer. Like the portraits of the women in the oval panels below them, the *parees* sport prominent eyebrows and display the same facial features as the women in the oval compositions. One fairy seems to have had a fish- scale or polka dot patterned robe. The blue caps or crowns they wear show evidence of floral patterns, but these are discernible only in photographs. The symbols of flower and fruit held by the women and descending *parees* are repeated in the Sheesh Mahal paintings at the Lahore Fort.

The *parees*, descending in a web of snaking floral arabesques of knotted blue twigs and vines, are flanked by an odd painterly device. A dark green ribbing is painted over the layer of *paree*- painting, perhaps to add another element to the busy interior? The arches are bordered by bands of convex mirrors outlined in gold leafing (Fig. 27), transforming the entire chamber into a four petalled lotus.

The arched opening which opens into the centre of the tomb, too, has remains of paintwork. The area above the dado on the South Eastern side of the archway, measuring 0.78m, features silhouettes of flowering bushes, of which four panels survive. The fluted arch panels contain a dark red background, with flowering bushes and birds painted in gold at the corner of each arch. The gold pigment is still lustrous, and the



Figure 27. Example of gilded stucco and *ainakari* (mirrorwork).

features of the birds are very clearly outlined in black with a brush. A blue border is painted above the arches, of which the floral silhouettes are visible in white. The arch is recessed above the dado, and shows remains of a geometric border which has been outlined in red. The centre of the rectangular recession has another rectangular indent, again indicating a missing mirror. Any remains of painting on the northern wall are gone. Only a geometric outline of a *jaal* remains. The edge of both archways has a semi-circular outline, segmented in the way that colonial windows are designed. The geometric pattern continues up to the apex of the arch. The outlined patterns are unique in this building, functioning as outlines for an *ainakari* (mirror and stucco work) pattern. The entire archway, above lintel height, contains indents in the shape of petals- for the same kind of convex mirrors that have been used in the side chamber.

Material

The first layer of painting is *fresco buono*, using earthen/ mineral pigments: mixtures of red ochre/ haematite, yellow ochre (*multani mitti*), malachite, possibly celadonite, cinnabar, lapis lazuli (*laajverd*), indigo and vermilion. The colours are painted in flat bands; brush work is flattened to produce a smooth finish and engraved to produce patterns revealing the *qala'i* (slaked lime) which acts as the paint receiving layer. Some evidence of calcification is present in initial imaging. The pigment is fixed permanently in place (Fig 28) and contains no evidence of organic origins under UV exposure.

The second layer of painting is found directly painted on top of the original layer. It contains larger quantities of yellow, bright red, and blue, with some dark green pigment used in smaller areas. The yellow fluoresces brightly when exposed to UV light, indicating presence of organic matter. The yellow pigment may be Indian Yellow (Fonjaudran 2017: 237), used commonly in South Asian painting (on both wall and paper) from early times until it was banned in the early 20th century, or its alternative, *Peori* (these terms are used interchangeably by practitioners). The strokes of the brush are visible, the paint is applied in a translucent manner, with bubbles and spills in the red (cinnabar) paint. The surface has a sheen, as if varnished, lacquered or containing gum[11]. The red paint on the dome is cracking and peeling. Each motif is outlined in black paint.

The mirrors, convex glass lined with tin at the back, have in many places fallen off. They are all lined with gold gilding.

The magnified blue layer (Fig 28) is separate from the mortar layer, while the magnified ochre layer (Fig 29) has seeped into the paint receiving layer.

Northern Chambers

Ground and first floor

The interventional floor constructed by the Sikhs/ British has been removed by the WCLA to allow a full view of the original height of the ceiling. The northern ceiling of the Secretariat Tomb shows



Figure 28. Separate paint layer on lime layer (Sikh period sample



Figure 29. Ochre layer seeped into lime layer (Mughal period sample)

a spangle of magnificent geometric intaglio star vaulting painted on a stucco ceiling. (Fig. 30).

Originally, this iwan would have been open to the elements at the front. Note the disrupted pattern where the arch has been enclosed.

First Floor

The Northern first floor chamber is approached by a staircase through the chamber below. There are no paintings in this area, nor on the walls surrounding the staircase.

Northwestern Chamber

Ground Floor

The chamber in the north- west has very few traces of paintings- traces of a few red flowers are visible on the North West wall. The enclosed veranda at the end of the chamber shows remains of three panels in the corners on the wall facing South East. The panels flanking the arch opening are the same Cypress- bird pattern. A departure is made from the normal scheme in the corner panel. A bird in an arched alcove is depicted with its body bent along the crease of the stucco arch, an unusual motif. Unfortunately, the rest of the painting is lost.

First floor

The main chamber is devoid of painting traces. The enclosed veranda features an arched niche on the North East wall till lintel height, which contains traces of paint. The niche has a half-domed roof embellished with stucco geometry. The area above lintel displays an arched panel. On the opposite side, on the SW wall, an opening leading to an octagonal room (with no paintings) is present, with the same arched panel above the lintel.

Western Chambers

Ground Floor

The western chamber is approached through a corridor that was previously covered with faux paneling which has been removed. The chamber is painted with brick imitation arches in rectangular compositions. The area above lintel height is painted with rosettes of malachite green, yellow ochre and red ochre. Hexagonal *girih* rosette patterns and arabesques fill the rectangles (Fig. 31). One can imagine, without the intervening flooring, these patterns would have connected to the domed and starred ceilings above, creating a galaxy for the viewer, reconnecting to the majesty of Creation through ideas of harmony, multiplicity, infinity and interconnectedness.

First Floor

The first-floor Western chamber does not contain any traces of painting. The enclosed veranda

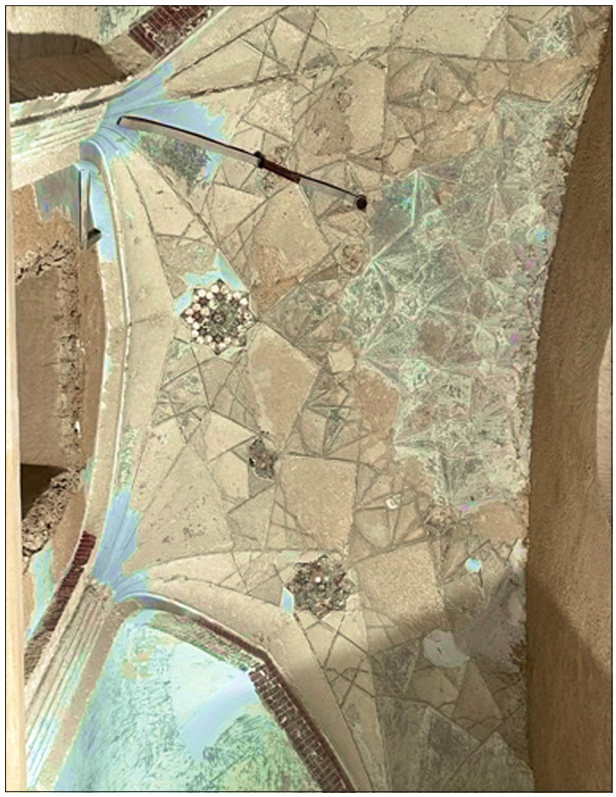


Figure 30. North ceiling, complex qalibkari/ ghalibkari stars.



Figure 31. Western chamber taazakari and girih patterns. It would seem that this is the original painterly scheme of the building's interior.



Figure 32. Original devolved Sitareyeh five- pointed star pattern.

however is replete with a starry ceiling (Figs. 32, 33), with some very unusual patterns, and arabesque medallions, from the Mughal period.

South-Western Chamber

Ground Floor

The main chamber in the South West has no traces of paintings. The enclosed veranda is a replica of the North Eastern entrance veranda. Substantial traces of geometric stars in the stucco ceiling, and the four fresco- intaglio panels are present in the same scheme and pattern as their counterparts across the building. So is the recessed arch under the painted panels, however there is very little surviving evidence of paint.

First Floor

No evidence of painting is found on the first floor of the Southwestern chamber. The chamber is flanked by octagonal rooms (guard posts), which also do not contain any paintings, only stucco geometric patterns.

Southern Chamber

Ground Floor

No evidence of painting is present in the southern chamber or its veranda. A staircase leads up to the first floor from the western wall.

First Floor

Lotus capital stucco pillars are present in the southern chamber, at the edges of the entrance archway of the verandah. The floor is raised 2 steps above the level of the main chamber. The veranda chamber shows disruption in patterns by the interventional wall constructed to enclose the area. The ceiling sports a profusion of geometric stucco arches and ribbed vaulting (Fig. 34), in some of which stars are still seen painted and incised through intaglio. The structural pattern is

similar to that of the first floor, eastern chamber. Red ochre, malachite green and black are the prevalent colours in this chamber's palette. A surviving door- length arch shows the remains of a comparatively large-scaled red ochre dodecagram pattern which too is disrupted by the window-wall, and remains of floral *taazakari* in a *girih* are partially visible on one wall (Fig.35).

South Eastern Chamber

Ground floor and first floor

Although there is no evidence of painting in the South Eastern chamber or its veranda on the ground floor, a clear ceiling of stucco stars, and arched panels on the walls above lintel height, and on the dome, are visible. The first floor features *qalibkari* stucco ribbing across the ceiling, but no paint. The enclosed veranda contains an arched niche on the South Western wall, on the same lines as the North Western chamber. The paint and patterns are clearly visible, and the condition of the paintings is fair. A door leads to the octagonal guard room toward the north, which has two "chimney" flutes. Cypress- bird schemed panels are painted above the lintel on both sides, although the panels are not wholly visible. A recessed arch painted with earthen reds, green and white forming geometric patterns incised with *nehernay ka kaam*, remains under the painted panels.

Main Dome, Central Arches and Vestibules:

No evidence of paintings remains on the dome, on the arches on the ground floor's central chamber or the area surrounding it. The hallways are also devoid of any evidence of embellishment

Conclusions

The Mausoleum at the Punjab Civil Secretariat presents both a fascinating enigma and a singular study in material and stylistic analysis of wall



Figure 33. Example of a devolved Sitareyeh with dovetailed *qalibkari* rhombus *jaal* which forms another *girih* pattern.



Figure 35. Remains of another rosette pattern with *neharnay ka kaam* (sgrafitto)

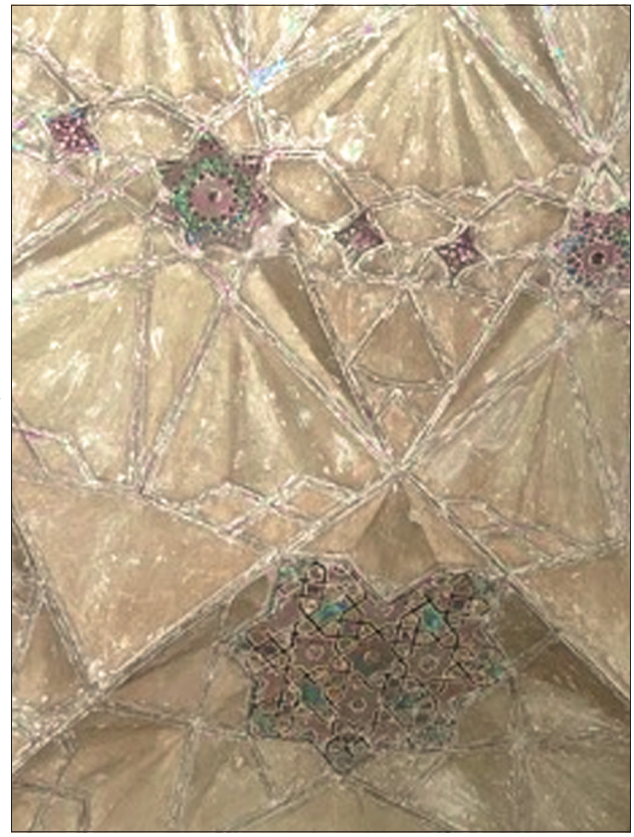


Figure 34. Devolved Sitarayeh star patterns

painting during the early Mughal and Sikh eras. Its findings provide incredible insight into the variety of material and aesthetics that were at play from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Its significance lies in the state of preservation of strata, which have defied intervention and degradation for over 400 years.

The first painted layer (original layer), painted on lime *qala'i,* with its earthen palette and refined sgrafitto, belongs decidedly to the early Mughal period. Red ochre, yellow ochre and malachite are clearly identified through observational analysis. UV exposure has not yielded any fluorescence. Infra-Red imagery has found no underpainting under this layer. Invasive probes will further identify pigment mixtures, with possibilities such as cinnabar, cadmium sulphide and red ochre occurring simultaneously for shades of red (Singh and Sharma 2021: 48), celadonite and malachite for green pigment, and use of organic binders such as gum Arabic, egg or its likes, found commonly in South Asian wall paintings. The question of true fresco, secco and lustro is being examined at length and conclusions drawn concerning early Mughal processes of wall painting in Lahore.

The second painted layer is more complex. The fluorescing of yellow pigment may indicate Indian Yellow, for which chemical tests are underway. The texture of the red pigment (containing large amounts of cinnabar), slightly cracking at the dado, and peeling and cracking in the North Eastern dome, its shine and viscosity, are of great interest. Testing for the blue in the second layer points towards lapis lazuli pigment. The blue used as a general wash during the British period (layer 3) is yet to be investigated.

Stylistically, Mughal period paintings adhere to general Persianate schemes for funerary structures. These spectacular examples represent the finest of Mughal wall paintings executed through engravings. The technique of *neharnay ka kaam* for making this kind of imagery is unique, and therefore of extremely high significance. Burnishing the painted surface, and the slightly fragile quality of the burnished surface are points to consider when advocating the type of wall painting technique.

The second layer, present only in the North Eastern and Eastern chambers, with some stucco paint work on pillars in some other first floor chambers, displays work in varying styles and quality. There is no *neharnay ka kaam*. All is either painted or gilded. The brushwork in some areas, for example the dado with the red background, painted with floral and fruit bushes, butterflies and birds is beautifully refined, bearing a Mughal lineage. The floral borders surrounding this dado are cruder, painted with a thick stroke which is often uneven. The blue porcelainware is finely and precisely painted, featuring architectural details (reminiscent of those on Jehangir's mausoleum walls), as are the birds, fruit and vases that surround it. The portraits of the women are Pahari in style, and very refined in brushwork and paint application, as are the *parees*. The imagery on this layer is outlined in black, a tell-tale post-Mughal device.

The Secretariat Mausoleum has emerged as an important yet previously overlooked monument in Lahore's art history, distinguished by its architectural character and rich decorative embellishment. Although the colonial layers of paint were installed to block out the rich patterned images on its walls, they have unintentionally provided protection, preserving the documented history underneath. This paper is only an introduction to the wealth of knowledge the mausoleum can provide. As scientifically driven analytical skills in heritage material analysis develop in Pakistan, it is hoped that more knowledge about the mausoleum's intriguingly fascinating past will reveal itself, enriching Lahore's Mughal and post- Mughal history while also becoming a model for scientific inquiry for local wall painting conservation. In the words of the eminent architectural historian Ebba Koch "the most outstanding and ingeniously planned octagonal building, not only of Jahangir's period but -next to Humayun's tomb- in the whole history of Mughal architecture, is the mausoleum of 'Anarkali at Lahore'. (Koch 1991: 81). At the time of Prof. Koch's publication, the paintings on the walls had not yet been uncovered.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to my supervisors at PGIAR

Colombo Dr. Arjuna Thantilage and Prof. Emeritus Dr. Jagath Weerasinghe, the Walled City of Lahore Authority for their unwavering support and cooperation, the Collective Research on Mughal Lahore (CROM Lahore), Wall Painting Conservator Wendy Rose, Usman Sami (ICOMOS Pakistan), Zeb Un Nisa Chughtai, Dr. Farasat and the IRCBM at COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus and the Commonwealth Heritage Forum. I would also like to thank my family for bearing with my constant mental absence, and my friends and students for always being ready for an adventure.

Notes

1. Chemical analysis is still underway.
2. The painted Yakatoot fragments, however, give some hope that evidence may have survived despite all odds (Khan 2016: plate 10)
3. Dr. Ebba Koch (2015), Ilay Cooper (1993), Dr. Kanwal Khalid (2010) and Dr. Anjum Rehmani (2016) have published articles.
4. Scanning Electron Microscopy combined with Energy-Dispersive X-ray Spectroscopy
5. X-ray Diffraction
6. Attenuated Total Reflectance Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy
7. Pyrolysis-Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry
8. Qala'i is the final layer of lime plaster, made of refined and matured slaked lime (sometimes includes fine marble dust), prepared in this case to receive paint pigment.
9. No information on who or when this work was done is currently available; however, the style and quality of painting is clearly not historical.
10. In particular the Naimatnama manuscript from 16th century Golconda.
11. In Rajasthan, another plant- based gum, Guggal, is used. The variation shows that a variety of binders have been used for wall painting in the region..

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