

MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURAL REMAINS NEAR KABĪRWĀLĀ, Khānewāl DISTRICT

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Kabīrwālā, a tehsil headquarters in Khānewāl district of the Panjāb Province, is known to the art historians and students of Muslim architecture since the discovery of the tomb of Khālid Walīd'.

About 40 km from Multān and 2 km North West of the tomb of Khālid Walīd near the small village of Khattīchaur is a huge low mound, called Sarāi by the local people.

Today, the Sarāi stands in the shape of a vast low mound in the middle of cultivated fields (Pl. 1). The mound is almost rectangular in plan and the whole surface is covered with broken bricks, potsherds and bones. Records show that coins have also been noticed after rain fall. The surrounding fields are studded with small low mounds with broken bricks and potsherds, showing the remnants of a huge settlement which extended far and wide in circumference. From the existing remains it can be concluded that the Sarāi consists of three main parts (Fig. 1).

- A. Residential area.
- B. Bāzār.
- C. The attached mosque.

From the surface indication it can be inferred that the residential quarter of the Sarāi was constructed of mud and it is not possible to make an exact idea of its lay out. Some potsherds were collected from the surface which can be classified into the following main categories. (Pl. 2).

- i. Storage jars.
- ii. Pans
- iii. Lids.
- iv. Basis.
- v. Body sherds.

All these sherds are of a well levigated clay, mixed with sand. The majority are plain and some of them, especially pans, show parallel black bands on the outer and the inner surfaces. In some cases they show carved or incised decoration.

To the west of the main residential area and east of the mosque was a broad street with rows of shops on both sides, the brick foundations of which are still discernible. This street with shops on both sides is believed to be the bāzār by the local population. This bāzār extends westwards and passes by the southern side of the mosque.

The mosque (Pl. 3, Fig. 1) occupies the western part of the Sarāi and is named Sarāi *masjid* after the site, however some people call it 'Shāhī masjid' which possibly refers to its

association with a ruling power. The mosque is almost rectangular in outline and consists of two parts i.e. courtyard and sanctuary.

The later is rectangular in plan and measures 19x8 m externally. On the *qibla* side, there is a tall rectangular projection marking the position of the *miḥrāb* on the inner side. The prayer hall is divided into three square compartments and therefore the facade is also composed of three broad arched openings. The central arched opening is larger than the side ones and is the main entrance to the prayer hall. The central square chamber is 6x5 m internally while the side chambers measure 6x4.20 m internally. Each compartment of the sanctuary has a *miḥrāb* in the *qibla* wall and measures about 2.4 m high, 1.60 m broad, and .30 m in depth. Internally each square chamber of the prayer hall is converted into an octagon by means of corner squinches to make a circular base for the dome. The sanctuary was lime plastered traces of which are still present on the soffits of the arched openings. Narrow steps in the thickness of the northern wall give access to the roof of the mosque, from where the *muazzin* gave call to the believers. The mosque is devoid of architectural decoration except some decorative niches on the facade and stepped lozenge patterns on the back of the *miḥrāb* on the outer side. The prayer hall is mud plastered which is certainly of recent time.

Both archaeological evidence as well as historical literature do not inform us about this Sarāi and the attached mosque. However, *Multān Gazetteer*² records that this Sarāi, called 'Khalik Wali' (sic) was built by Shāh Jahān, which was one of the stages between Multān and Lahore. Multān was a great commercial centre and traders from Irān, Afghānistān, Central Asia and all parts of India came to buy indigenous commodities and dispose off their goods. During the medieval period Sarāis were built at regular intervals along the main trade routes and effective measures were taken to guarantee safe journey for traders and travellers. These Sarāis were great centres of cultural, social and commercial importance, where traders, and travellers used to exchange goods and ideas. They were intended not only for the use of ordinary trade caravans but also served as halting stations for the travellers and were even used by imperial rulers. Most probably they also served the purpose of post stations.

Merchants, traders and travellers, all needed places for rest and also protection from robbery and weather both in the cities as well as in the inhospitable areas of a certain region. This necessity led to the construction of caravan Sarāis along the major trade routes as well as in the cities, where a trader was safe at night, basic facilities of food and fodder for him and his animals were provided and also offered shopping facilities of daily necessities and for the onward journey.³ Ibn Baṭṭūta who travelled on the main road connecting Egypt with Palestine and Syria stayed not in colleges or convents as was custom in north Africa, but in caravan Sarāis. At each of these stations between Cairo and Gaza there is a hostelry which they call a Khān, where the travellers alight with their beasts, and outside each Khān is a public watering place and a shop at which they may buy what they require for themselves and their beasts.⁴ This statement clearly marks the main features and functions of the classic Islāmic caravan Sarāi. Almost every caravan Sarāi is either square or rectangular in outline with a massive surrounding wall and a single entrance wide enough to permit large or heavy laden beasts such as camels to enter. The central courtyard is always open to sky and along the inner side of the enclosure wall are built a number of rooms to accommodate merchants and their servants, their animals and their merchandise. Some of the caravan Sarāi were provided with mosques and bath establishments (Ḥammām). From the earliest period fodder for the animals and the stables were separate from the lodgings for the travellers and traders. Later and larger caravan Sarāis had special rooms or suites in the entrance block for important guests, and a resident staff of caretakers was permanently housed in the small rooms in the portal block.⁵

In Pakistan many caravan Sarāis still stand on the medieval trade routes in varying state of preservation.⁶ Some of them are in a good state of preservation, others are in ruin and reveal only their ground plan, many more have been either completely removed from the earth surface and some of them have retained their antiquity in the shape of modern towns. Natural calamities and human neglect have accelerated their destruction. Modern communication system, large scale market facilities and the expansion of towns and cities have put an end to trade and travel architecture.

TOMB OF SAYYID SHĀH ḤUSAIN

Just a few yards to the north of Khālīd Walīd tomb and in the midst of trees is a small memorial structure (Pl. 4) believed to be the last resting place of Sayyid Shāh Ḥusain. The tomb is square in plan externally and each side measures approximately seven metres. The arched entrance to the tomb chamber is provided on the south side which is about 2.50 m in height and 1.45 m in width, the wooden door of the tomb is modern. The square chamber is surmounted by a high and prominent octagonal drum which supports the hemispherical dome.

Internally the tomb chamber is octagonal in shape (Fig. 2) from the ground level and the centre of the tomb chamber is occupied by the mud plastered grave of the buried person. Each octagonal side is 1.70 m in breadth. A rectangular panel about 1.70 m in height and .05 m in depth in each octagonal side encloses an arched niche (1.5 x 0.05 m). Courses of corbelled bricks at the top corners of the octagon and at a height of about 2.20 m from the existing ground level convert the octagonal chamber into a circular base for the reception of the dome. Internally the phase of transition is represented by a circular drum and its naked brick monotony is only relieved by a series of arched niches and square panels worked out in the brick masonry. Above these decorative structures rests the circular base of the dome. Externally it is a naked brick structure with out any significant architectural decoration. The only decorative patterns to be seen are stepped lozenge patterns and ornamental niches worked out in the building material itself on the outer side of the octagonal drum. The top of the octagonal drum is marked by a row of false merlons indicating the base of the dome. Internally the tomb chamber has mud coating. The corbelled brick courses and the decorative niches on the inner circular drum are the only decorative treatment of the interior.

No inscriptional and historical evidence is available to assign a precise date to this monument. The plan and style of construction certainly suggest a medieval date. But it should be also kept in mind that this style, nowadays generally referred to as Multan style, was so overwhelmingly popular that it continued to be used even much later than the medieval period of our history.

REFERENCES

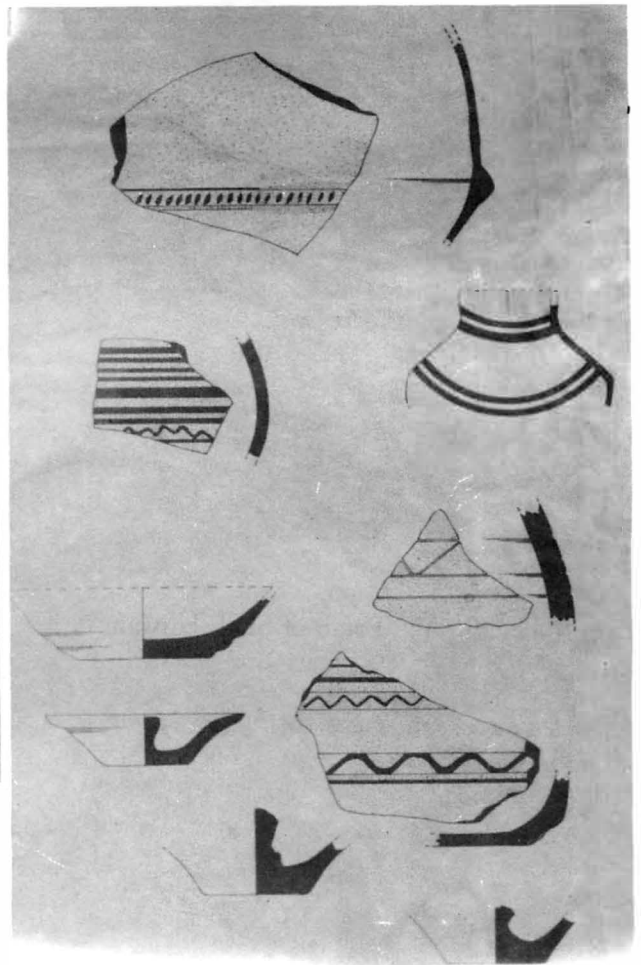
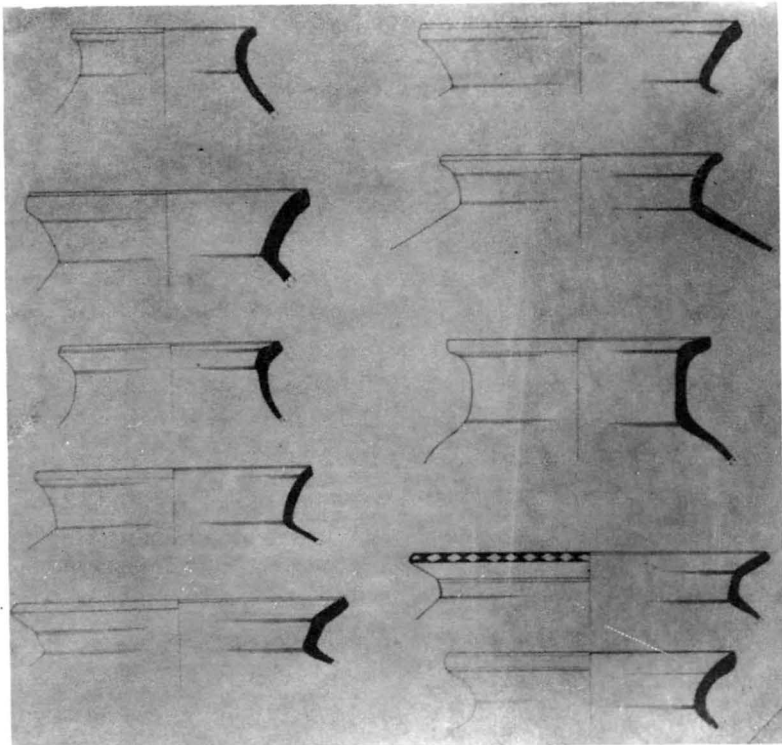
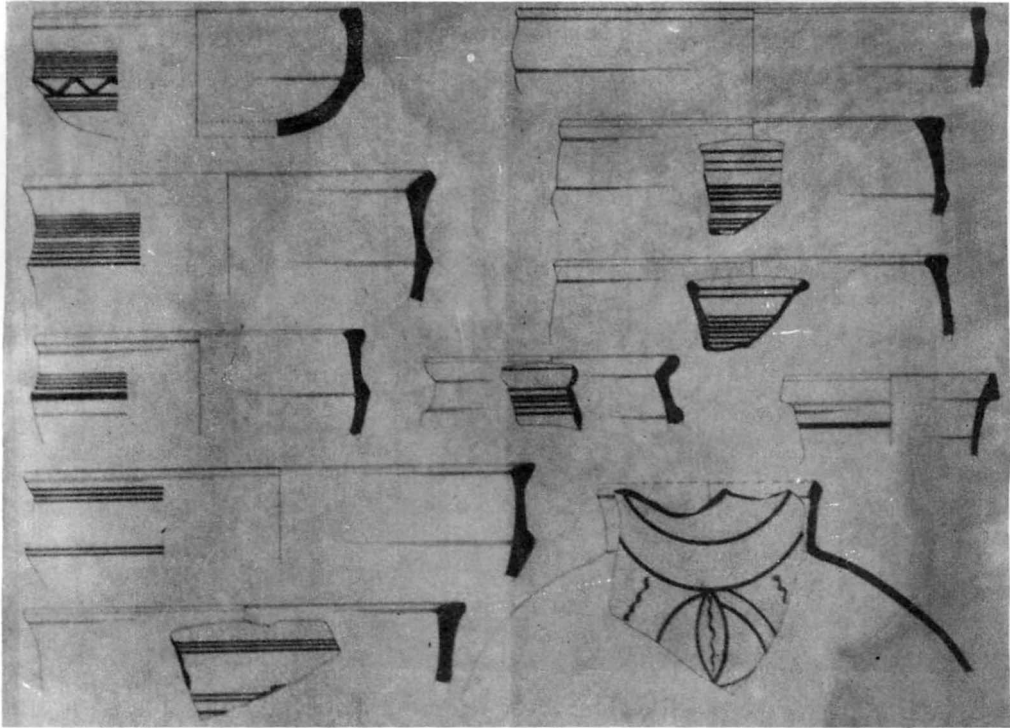
1. Khan. A.N. 1983. *Multān History and Architecture*, Islamabad, p. 183 and Frontis-piece and Plate II. Ibid, 1987. 'Naked Brick Architecture of the Early Islamic Period in Pakistan: An Analytical study'. In: *Pakistan Archaeology* 23, 1987-88 p. 307-11 However a still early reference occurs in *Multān Gazetteer* (Maclagen, E.D.) 1901-2, Lahore, p. 124. It reports that the present tomb of Khālīd Walīd is said to have been built in the 14th century and later on was repaired by emperor Shāh Jahān. The first assumption that the tomb was built in the 14th century can be straightaway rejected on the basis of the inscription which clearly states that this complex was constructed under the patronage of 'Alī bin Kārmakh, a governor of the Multān province under Ghoriid dynasty. As far as the second assumption

is concerned, the present condition of this structure does not suggest that it was ever repaired.

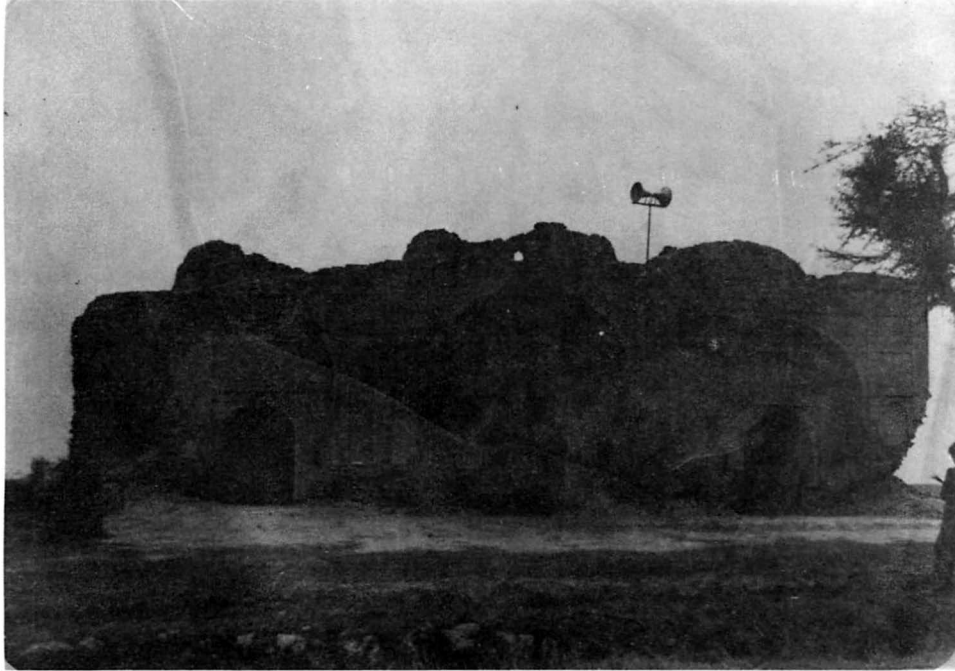
2. *Multān Gazetteer* op. cit. p. 124.
3. Michell, G. (ed), 1978. *Architecture of the Islamic world*, London, p. 97. A broad street with rows of shops, the brick foundations of which were still visible during our visit to the site might have served the same purpose.
4. *Ibid* p. 101.
5. *Ibid*.
6. Rodgers, 1974. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangari* (Eng. trans.), Lahore, Vol. 1, pp. 98–102. Emperor Jahāngīr on his way to Kābul has given complete itinerary of his halting stations. Only among the halting station between Rāwalpindī and Peshāwar he has mentioned Sarāi Kharbūza, Sarāi Kālā Pānī, Sarāi Bāra and Sarāi Daulat Abad.



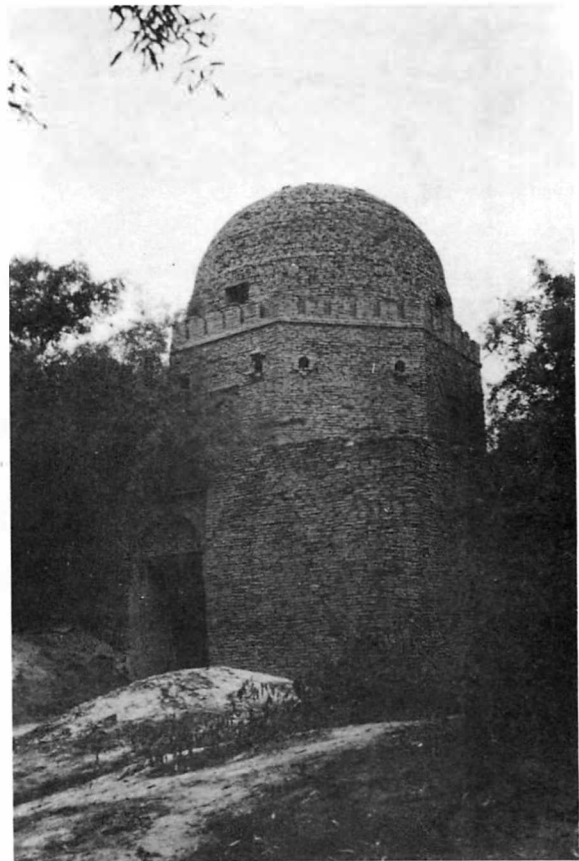
Pl. I. The Serai site.



Pl. II. Pottery from Serai site.



Pl. III. The Mosque — Serai site.



Pl. IV. Tomb of Shah Hussain.

