

## LITTLE KNOWN MONUMENTS IN BALUCHISTAN (PAKISTAN)

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Baluchistan forms the southwestern part of Pakistan. It is bounded by the Arabian sea in the south, Afghanistan and N.W.F.P. in the north, Iran in the west and Punjab and Sind in the east.

Baluchistan is comprised of regions having peculiar geological and geographical conditions and in these areas of diverse geographical setting evolved and developed several cultures which show close affinities not only with the cultural traditions of the Indus plain but also with its neighbouring regions of Iran and Afghanistan.

The province of Baluchistan has a rich archaeological heritage covering almost all the phases of cultural and artistic development. The pre-Islamic archaeology of this region is under extensive investigation since the colonial period, and recent archaeological excavations conducted by the French Archaeological Mission at Mehr Garh near Sibbi, have added new chapters to the cultural history of the province. All recent archaeological expeditions conducted by national and foreign teams have concentrated mainly on the Bronze Age Archaeology and have paid little attention to the Muslim monuments scattered all over the province.

As far as the medieval Muslim architecture of Baluchistan is concerned, we have very scant informations, although it was the region which came into close contact with Islam from an early date. British officers engaged in political or commercial missions in the province since early decades of the last century have referred to vast graveyards at Bhawany and Hindian, monumental tombs at Kharan, Sarawan, Jhalawan, Makran and many other places. Besides tombs, numerous mud forts usually called 'Mughul Kalats' and Gabar Bands (Zoroastrian Dams) are mentioned throughout Baluchistan.

Domed Mausoleums are reported from each corner of the province and as many as fifty-seven domed structures are reported only from Kharan and its vicinity.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, seven domed mausoleums are recorded to have existed at and near Nauroz Abad in Sarawan region. They are double storey structures and constructed of burn bricks. They are decorated with brick tiles having animal (horse and camel) representations in low relief.<sup>2</sup> We are informed that domed mausoleums also existed at Punjgur and Kolwa in Makran region, these are identical to their counterparts at Kharan.<sup>3</sup> In Panjgur valley other places of archaeological interest include Kuhna Kalat (ancient forts), tomb of Malik Asa and others. The former buildings are constructed of large burnt bricks while the tombs are constructed of glazed bricks with rough human and animal representations.<sup>4</sup> Two domed buildings of stone are reported near Gowadar, although much ruined they still reflect signs of good workmanship and decorative treatment. One bears an inscription having 873 H./1468 A.D. as its date of completion and the name of its builder, Nakhuda Bangi Ismail, who is believed to be a Kalamati Chief. Three other ruined tombs are situated in its vicinity and are considered to be older than those still standing.<sup>5</sup> In Jhalawan region ancient domed mausoleums at Rodeni village near Gidar and in the Khidrani country near Khozdar are worth mentioning. The last one is 24 x 21-1/2 feet in dimension and

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approximately 10 feet high. It is a brick structure with an entrance on the east side and niches on the remaining sides for symmetry. Internally the square chamber is converted into an octagon by means of squinches which support the dome now collapsed.<sup>6</sup> Several cupolas are recorded near Padag and Zarala in Chaghi region, the one near Padag is attributed to Bibi Kapok. These are brick structures and are probably of Muhammadan origin.<sup>7</sup> Stein has mentioned Bibi Ziarat in Baluchistan. He says, "..... built with burnt bricks, decorated with panels of carved brick showing geometric relief, patterns over a sunken ground; it is a typical specimen of the style of decoration to be found on Muhammadan sepulchral structures in Kharan and Makran apparently dated from late medieval period."<sup>8</sup>

Dr. A.N. Khan believes that the earliest extant Muslim monument is the tomb of Muhammad bin Harun at Bela. Muhammad bin Harun was one of the Arab governors of Makran. He took part in the Arab invasion of Sind with the celebrated Arab General Muhammad bin Qasim. Reaching Bela he died and was buried there.

This brick structure is square in shape and the square chamber is directly surmounted by a dome (Fig. 1). Externally each side of the square chamber is divided into two parts. The upper half has a rich terracotta decoration and the lower portion is parcelled out into three rectangular panels having a recent plaster covering (Fig. 2). Internally the square tomb chamber is converted into an octagon by means of stepped pendentives which begin from a low level.<sup>9</sup>

All these commemorative structures are almost square in outline and built of bricks (Fig. 3). Most of them are only single storey structures covered by a dome and some are however double storey high. In the latter case a flight of steps leads to the upper storey with an entrance on the east side. The lower storey is provided with an entrance at ground level, leading either to a single large chamber containing several graves, or to separate chambers containing one or more graves. In Gumbad-i-Malik Shaho at Naurozabad, the lower storey has four vaults, two on each side of the entrance. The walls are about two to three feet in thickness. Internally each square chamber is converted into an octagon by means of corner squinches, which spring a few inches above the floor level and their height varies between eight to ten feet.<sup>10</sup> The most remarkable feature of these mausoleums is their external and internal decoration (Figs. 4-5). Worked bricks, terracotta plugs and plaques are used for decorative purposes. Brick tiles are engraved with various decorative patterns. They are two feet square and arranged in two or more rows on the external surfaces of the walls below the parapet. Some of the tombs are also decorated with engraved brick tiles internally. The subject matter of representation is comprised of armed human figures riding on camels and horses, peacocks with snakes in their bill, hunting scenes, hand impressions, foot prints, geometrical and floral designs.<sup>11</sup> The tiles are rough and crude in workmanship but depict an originality. The large scale use of brick tiles all over the tombs hints to the presence of a tile making industry. Their use on almost all the tombs suggests that they were prepared on a large scale to meet the demand of the community.<sup>12</sup> Beside brick tiles, terracotta plugs of various shapes and sizes were also used. They are arranged in such a way to form various decorative freezes such as chain pattern, wavy lines etc.

Local traditions are silent about the origin and makers of these tombs which were built at different times by different builders. Centuries might have passed in the process of their erection and development. Sykes has attributed similar tombs at Salk, in Persian Makran, to the Saffarid Maliks, who ruled over Seistan from about the 9th to 13th centuries. Therefore the tombs in Baluchistan could be assigned a date at any time from the 9th-10th century up to the 15th-16th century.<sup>13</sup>

From the foregoing description it can be concluded that the majority of the tombs erected in Baluchistan are square in shape and have a rich terracotta decoration. It had been suggested that the decorative style used in these tombs is inspired by the terracotta art of the Buddhist stupas in Sindh.<sup>14</sup> But it should be pointed out here that the pre-Islamic local artistic traditions, then prevailing in Baluchistan and in the neighbouring regions should also be taken into consideration; this might have greatly contributed in the evolution of architectural decoration of the Muslim monuments in Baluchistan. The second stage in the development of the architectural decoration which emerged in Baluchistan is represented by Lal Mahra Sharif tombs in the Gomal Valley, a region which geographically forms the northern part of Baluchistan. The tombs at Lal Mahra Sharif are reveted with the same kind of terracotta plugs and brick tiles except that here they are blue glazed. It has been suggested elsewhere that immediate predecessors of the glazed tiles used at Lal Mahra Sharif should be searched in Baluchistan<sup>15</sup> and the recent discoveries fully support this assumption.

Besides these historical monuments numerous inscriptions are reported from various places in the province. These include Arabic, Persian and Armenian inscriptions. Armenian inscriptions are reported in the Ush Narai (camel's pass) near Sibbi. These are engraved on stones by Armenians who were established in Baluchistan in the beginning of the seventeenth century. These are dated 1050 and 1067 of the Armenian era (17 century). History informs us that Shah Tahmasp and Shah Abbas (1584–1629), the Safavid rulers of Persia invaded Georgia and Armenia respectively and a large number of Armenians were transported into several parts of Persia including Makran.<sup>16</sup> Arabic inscriptions in Kufic characters are reported from Jalwar pass and Garru Kallag in Kharan region.<sup>17</sup> These inscriptions engraved on rock surfaces are fragmentary and show the association of certain Arabs with the region in the 11th/12th century A.D. Similar Arabic inscriptions are recorded in Jalwan region.<sup>18</sup> A stone inscription in Kufic characters was found at Khuzdar and another inscription engraved on stone was discovered at Kumbi in Baghwana valley. The inscription found at Khuzdar is dated to 4th/5th century of the Hijra and the one recovered from Kumbi was later in date. This was a very rough script and probably represents the transition from Kufic to Naskh. A tomb stone bearing a Persian inscription has been discovered in a graveyard near Sami in Makran.<sup>19</sup> It mentions the name of Sheikh Mir Zahri Hussain. According to local tradition this person was one of the Buledi rulers who ruled in Kech during the 17th century.

Some Ghaznavid coins are also reported from Khuzdar in Jalwan region.<sup>20</sup> These silver coins are identified and were issued by Sultan Ibrahim (1059–99) and Sultan Bahram Shah (1115–52).

The foregoing account shows that Baluchistan has a rich archaeological heritage of the Muslim period. Unfortunately little attention has been given to the Muslim monuments erected soon after the Islamisation of the region. A thorough study based on photographic documentation, survey of the monuments is needed desparately and will greatly help the students of Muslim architecture in understanding the origin and development of Muslim buildings in Pakistan and particularly in Baluchistan.

#### **Abbreviation:**

BTA: *Baluchistan Through the Ages* (Selection from Government Records) Vol. I, Quetta rep. 1979.

BDG: *Baluchistan's District Gazetteer*, Quetta rep. 1986.

## References

1. BTA I, p. 523, BDG (Kharan), p. 45.
2. Ibid 147.
3. BDG (Makran), p. 59, BTA I, 595.
4. Ibid p. 307.
5. Ibid p. 285.
6. BDG (Jhalawan), p. 61–62, BTA I, p. 429–30.
7. BTA I, p. 286.
8. Stein, A., *An Archaeological Tour to Gedrosia*, Delhi rep. 1982, p. 38, Fig. 5.
9. Khan, A.N. :
10. BDG (Kharan), p. 45–46, BTA I, p. 523–24.
11. Brohi, A.A., *History on Tombstones Sind and Baluchistan*, Jamshoro-Hyderabad, n.d. p. 85–88, BTAI, p. 524.
12. Brohi, A.A., op cit. p. 89.
13. Ibid, BTA I, p. 526.
14. Khan, A.N., Naked Brick Architecture of Early Islamic period of Pakistan: An Analytical study. In: *Pakistan Archaeology* No. 23, Karachi, p. 324.
15. Ali, T., *Anonymous Tombs in the Gomal Valley and the Beginning of Tomb architecture in Pakistan*, Peshawar, 1988 p. 45.
16. BTA I, p. 192.
17. Ibid p. 527–28, BDG (Kharan), p. 49–50, Brohi, A.a. op cit. p. 90–91.
18. BTA I, p. 427, BDG (Jhalawan), p. 59.
19. BTA I, p. 595, BDG (Makran), p. 59.
20. BTA I, p. 430, BDG (Jhalawan), p. 62.

APPENDIX-A  
LIST OF TOMBS IN KHARAN REGION

Locality	Number of Gumbads	Remarks
Washuk ... ..	5	One of the gumbads is known as Bibi-e-Gumbad, but is attributed by local authorities to Malik Bahram Shah; another is known as Chandiani-gumbad.
Mashal or Dehgar ...	9	These are in Gwachig; the best known being the Malik Nausherwani gumbad. Another is known as Gumbad-i-Shahri.
	2	These are in Regi.
Hurmagai ... ..	4	Known as Nurudin-i-Gumbad.
	5	Known as Shahi Otmani Gumbad.
	1	Known as Talonki Gumbad.
Jalwar ... ..	2	Near Mangehi Chah.
	1	In the Jalwar Pass.
Gwash ... ..	3	One of these is at Hetak, another at Sawaren and the third near Malik Shahi Chah but all are in ruins.
Kallag ... ..	10	Near Eri-Kallag.
	1	Situated at Padun Kallag and known by the name of Gumbad-i-Ganji-Malik.
Shimsban and Salam Bek ...	1	Known as Gumbad-i-Hala.
	2	Known as Kalaghani-Kalat-e-Kabristan-e-Gumbad.
	1	Known as Gumbad-i-Tuho.
	1	Known as Gumbad-i-Shahi Shadi.
	2	Known as Gumbad-i-Bibi Basso.
	1	Known as Gumbad-i-Saiad Amir.
Sarawan ... ..	2	Known as Gumbad-i-Malik Shaho and situated near Naurozabad.
	2	Have no particular name.
	2	Near Rek-i-Farangi and called Gumbad-i-Imam Hasan and Husain.
Total:	<u>57</u>	

## APPENDIX-B

## ARABIC AND PERSIAN INSCRIPTIONS

## A. ARABIC:

I. *Transcription:*

اللهم اغفر للحسن بن امير سهل بن عمر بن عبد العزيز الحسن بن الحسين  
و حرر في يوم الاحد لاحد وعشر بقين من شهر المحرم اكرام - حرره بخطه -

Translation:

O God! Forgive al Hasan ibn Amir Sahl ibn Umar ibn Abdul Aziz Al Hasan ibn al Husain.

Written on Sunday when eleven days were remaining of the sacred month of Muharram. And he wrote it in his own hand, in the year 406 (H.).

II. *Transcription:*

بنا هابي موسى ركع بن محمد المسعودي سنة احدى وخمسين  
وثلت مائة انتهى -

Translation:

(Built by) Abu Musa Ruka/ibn Muhammad Al-Masudi in the year 351 (H.).

III. *Transcription:*

وكبر عمر اصان دنكو سبع عشر سه مائة -

Translation:

Umar Asan, Danku, repeated the takbir for seventeen years (and) died.

IV. *Trancription:*

ابى سهل ابوالقاسم (خ) عمرواحمد بن عمر ابن سهل كتبه بخطه -

Translation:

Abi Sahl Abul Kasim Amr (and?) Ahmad ibn Amr ibn Sahl. He wrote it with his own hand.

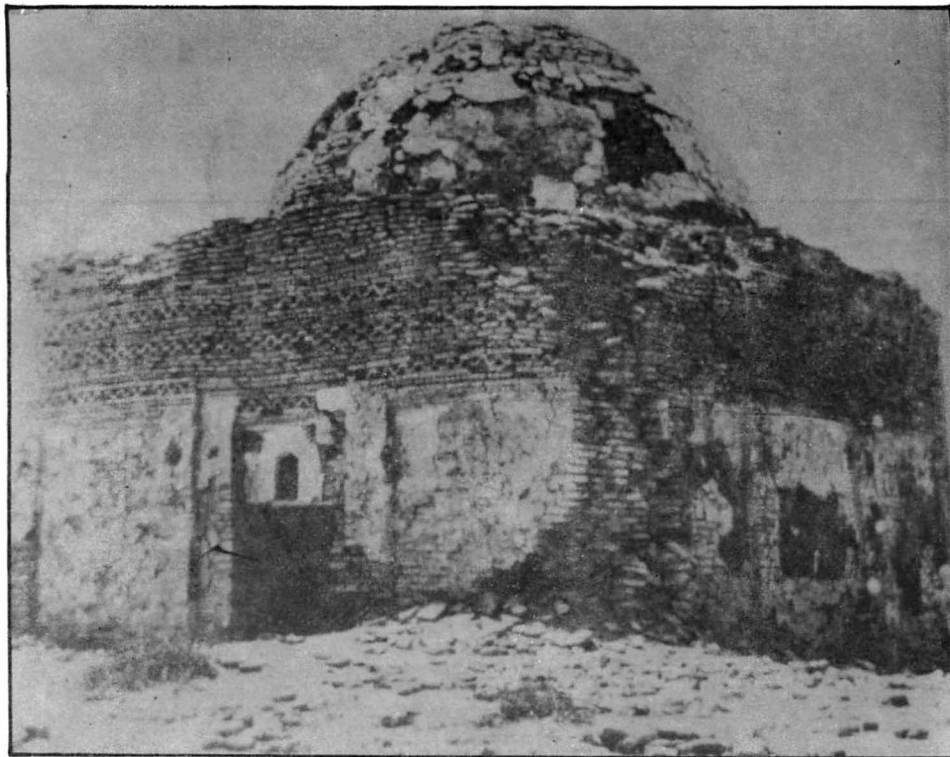
## B. PERSIAN:

Translation:

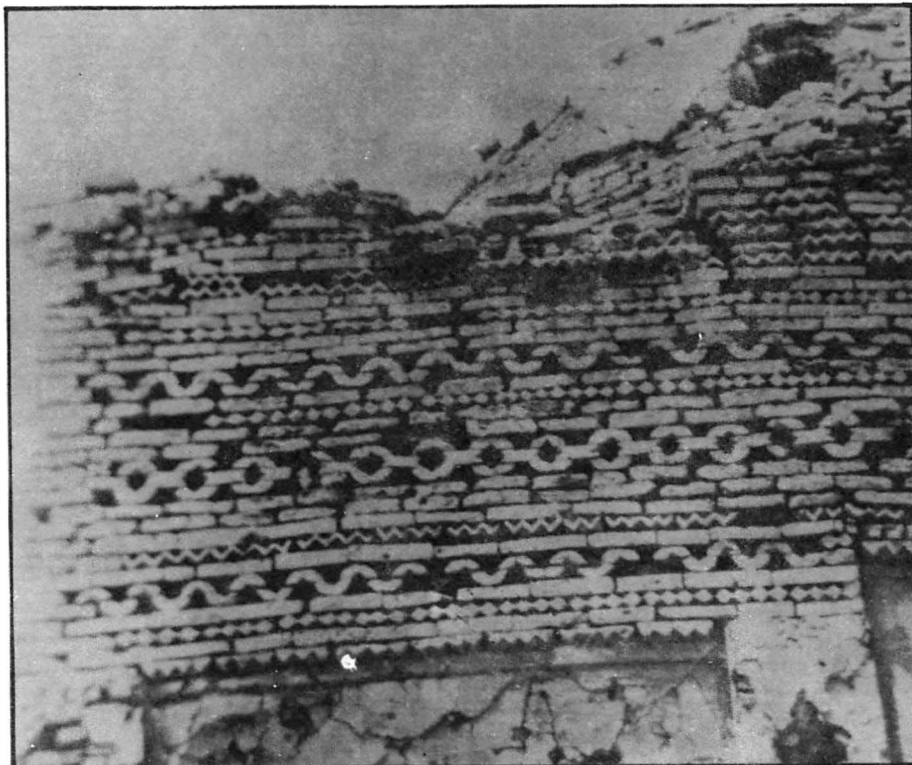
"In the name of God the compassionate and merciful. Know, that at this time the king of Kech is Shah Mir Zehri Hussain [engraved by Ali (not legible). Know that I am a mulla of the people of Islam].

"Know, and remember (not legible) that this threshold (astana) has existed for many years before out time, so many that we cannot count them (not legible).

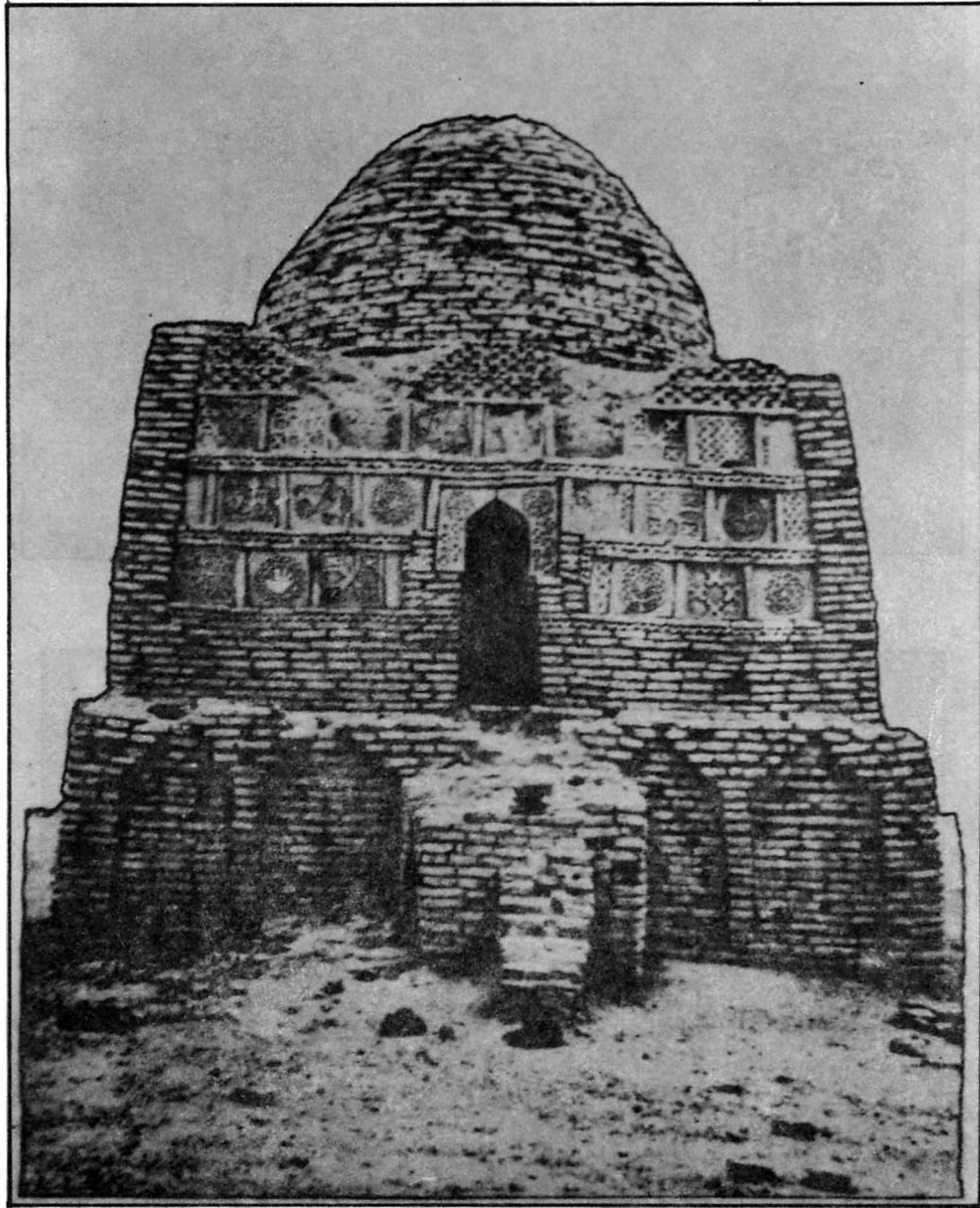
"Ye, that succeed us, set not your heart on the world and slacken not in your efforts in the worship of God and adopting the faith of Mehdi. Know, that we were 24 persons (who are buried here)."



Pl. 1: Tomb of Muhammad bin Harun at Bela

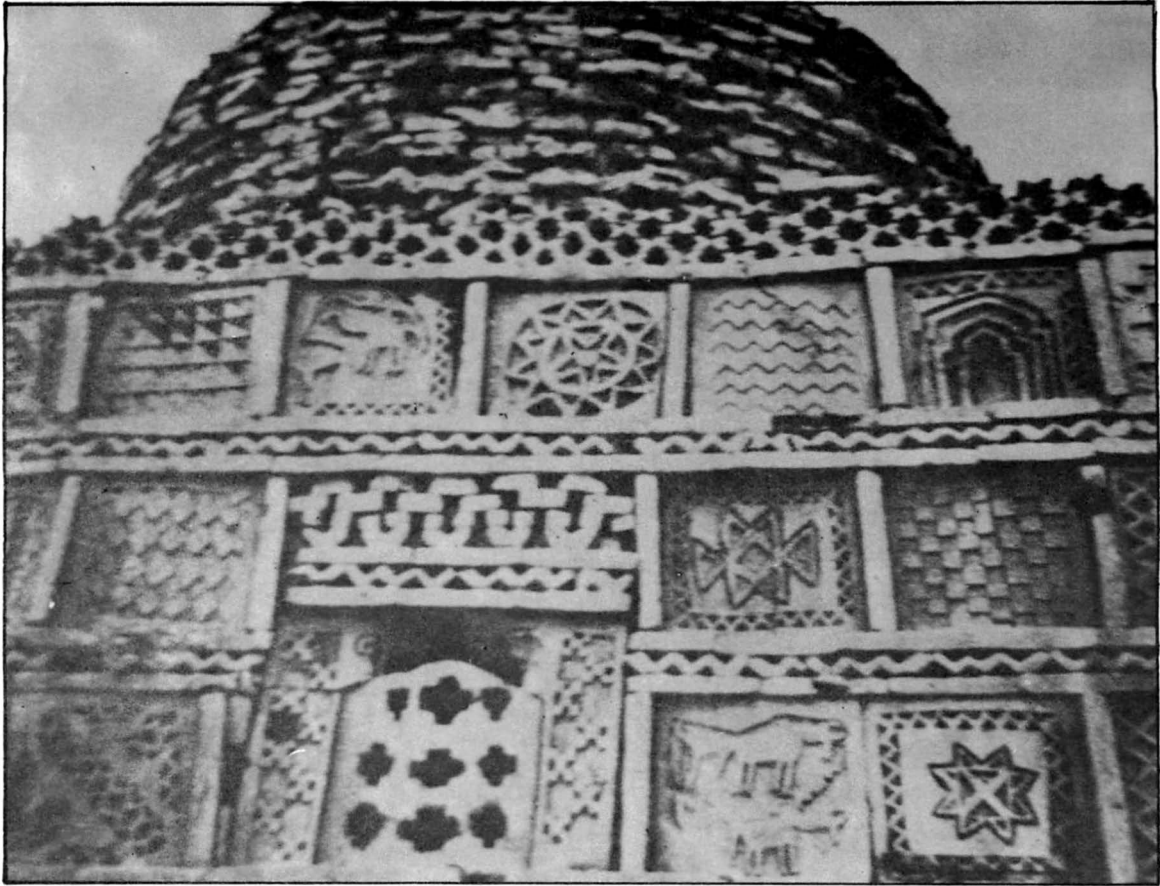


Pl. 2: Tomb of Muhammad bin Harun: Cut brick decoration

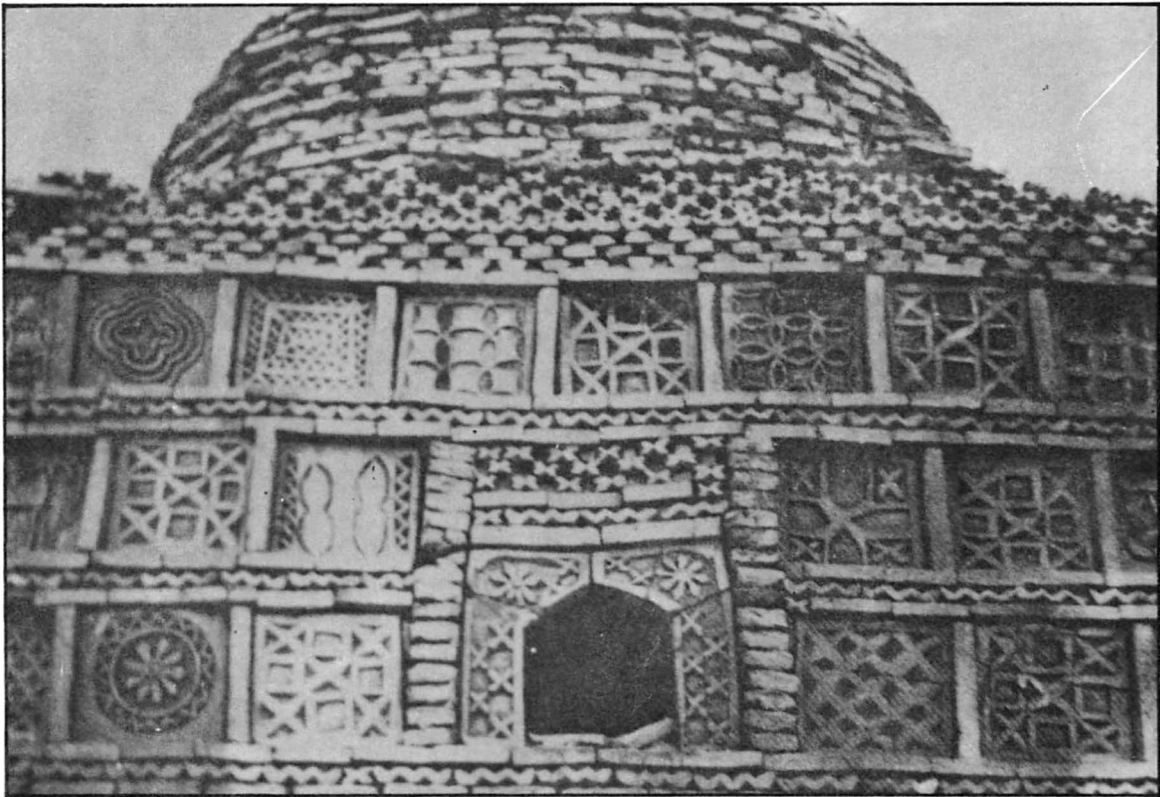


Pl. 3: A tomb in Kharan — General View





Pl. 4: A tomb in Kharan — Detail of tile decoration



Pl. 5: A tomb in Kharan — Detail of tile decoration