

## The Tomb of Hamshira of Jam Fateh Khan at Makli Hill, Thatta, Sindh: History and Architecture

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### Abstract

*The tomb of hamshira (sister) of Jam Fateh Khan was constructed at the Makli Hill necropolis in AD 1465. Her name is shrouded in mystery, however, historical and epigraphic sources mention one hamshira of Jam Fateh Khan, who remained the ruler of Sindh from AD 1413 to 1428. This tomb marks the earliest construction of three-tiered building at the site. The historical and architectural significance of the monuments supported by epigraphic evidence, which is discussed at length here.*

### Architectural description

The tomb of *hamshira-e* (sister of) Jam Fateh Khan is located to the northeast of that of Malik Rajpal at Makli Hill necropolis in Thatta, Sindh. This three-tiered mausoleum is square in plan, measuring 9.05x9.05m. At a later stage, a rectangular chamber, measuring 9.05x3.96m, was added on its eastern side. (Figs. 1, 2).

The foundation and platform of the tomb are constructed in stone, whereas the rest of the structure is built from burnt bricks set in lime mortar (Fig. 3). Both internally and externally, this edifice is thickly coated with lime, a common feature of the Samma period monuments.

This tomb has three pointed-arch entrances, one each on the north, south and eastern side (Fig. 3). Enclosed in rectangular frames, these archways are identical in style, however, the southern one is relatively larger in size. Under each archway is placed a rectangular door, having slightly sloping jambs and a lintel above. A doorsill of the archway has at its centre a half moon design, which is carved in the shape of a sunflower. The lintel, jambs and the doorsill are made of the locally available

yellow *Jangshahi* stone. The tympanum of the entrance is enclosed in a rectangular frame.

Stylistically the façade of the tomb on all sides is almost identical, the entrance is flanked on either side by three pilasters in brick masonry. The simple parapet is exquisitely plastered. The first tier of the building is square, the second one (drum) is octagonal, while the third one is circular surmounted by a hemispherical dome, mostly collapsed now. This style appeared at the Makli Hill for the first time.

Internally the tomb chamber is provided with a pointed-arch *mehrab* (niche), enclosed by a rectangular frame. Above the cornice level are laid arched squinches, those on the four corners are alcoves whereas at the four cardinal sides are in the form of arched-openings. The eight squinches, four on the corners and four on the cardinal sides, are converted into sixteen to mark the phase of transition from the second or octagonal tier to the third or circular tier, which acts as a rim for the dome. The dome is mostly collapsed, but its partially intact north-eastern part reveals that it was wrought in corbelling

method. The area above the squinch level is treated with chevron pattern executed in naked brick, which is one of the characteristic features of the tomb.

### Epigraphic record

Previously, some scholars have incorrectly recorded the Arabic inscription, carved inside the tomb chamber, as four verses from the Holy Quran, as well as the date of its construction (Qani 1994: 728; Shafi 1974: 16; Dani 1982: 54; Bukhari and Khattak 2001: 1-76 and Durrani 2010: 68-72). We have presented here the correct text and its translation. The inscription is bilingual, Arabic and Persian, showing three different types of subject matter. It is carved in *thulth* style on a rectangular piece of stone and fixed in the masonry to the right of the *mehrab* (Fig. 6). The Arabic inscription is comprised of two parts. In the first part we can see Quranic Verse no. 79, *Surah-e- Bani Israel* (Al-Quran: Chapter 17, Verse 79). In the second part genealogy of the deceased person is given, while, the third part is written in Persian, which shows the date of construction of the tomb. This inscriptions has been recorded by different scholars, however, one way or the other, they made errors in reading, such as, MAS Qani. The latter mentions only two verses of the Holy Quran, genealogy of the demised person and the date in which the tomb was constructed that is the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal, on Thursday AH 870 /1465 AD (Qani 1994: 728). Whereas M Shafi in his contribution focused on the date of construction (AH 878) and the genealogy of the deceased person (Shafi 1974: 16). While Dani, Bukhari and Khattak have recorded both the sacred and historic inscriptions however, instead of the single verse in the inscription,

they recorded few verses from the Holy Quran (Dani 1982: 54; Bukhari and Khattak 2001: 1-76). Similarly, they gave AH 878 as the date of construction, besides recording the genealogy of the deceased person with few mistakes.

In the light of the above discussion, the subject matter of this bilingual inscription can be distinguished into three parts. The first part shows only one verse (no. 79) of *Surah Bani Israel* or *Al-Asraa* (no. 17) that reads as:

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدُ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ  
مَقَامًا مَّخْمُودًا ۝

*Translation:*

*And offer Tahajjud (night-prayer) in some portion of the night, this is specially for you in addition. It is near that your Lord may make you stand at a place where all should praise you.*

Similarly, in the second part the genealogy of the deceased person is written in Arabic script as:

هذا المقام بنى بأمر تاج الدين ابن ميار تاج الدين  
لهمشيره ميار فتح خان بن سلطان نظام الدين شاه  
اخلد الله ملك وسلطانه بتاريخ سبعين وثمان مائه  
درماه ربيع الاول بروز پنجشنبه

*Translation*

*This place [tomb] was built by the order of Taj ud Din son of Mian Taj ud Din for the sister of Mian Fateh Khan son of Sultan Nizam-ud-Din Shah, may Allah last his rule and kingdom forever in 870 [AH] in the month of Rabi ul-Awwal on Thursday [corresponding to October 1465 [CE]].*

Whereas, in the third part of the inscription the day on which the construction of this building

was completed is given in the Persian language as:

درماه ربیع الاول بروز پنجشنبه

*Translation:*

*Dated to the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal  
on Thursday*

### Comparison and Conclusion

It needs to be pointed out that there is controversy among the historians regarding the accession dates of the different rulers of the Samma Dynasty. In this context, it is recorded that Jam Fateh Khan s/o Sadruddin Jam Sikander Shah I ruled from AD 1412 to 1428. Three days before his death, Jam Fateh Khan handed over the government affairs to his brother Jam Tughlaq (Lari 1997: 9; Durrani 2010: 68).

The history of Samma Jam is creating confusion in Samma lineage. The present work focuses on the genealogy of Jam Fateh Khan, which is mistakenly interpreted by some scholars as follows.

Jam Fateh Khan was a son of Sadruddin Jam Sikander-I who became the ruler of the Samma dynasty in AD 1413 and ruled till AD 1428. However, Lakho mentioned in the list of "kings of Sindh" that Jam Sikander-II (Jam Unar-III) became the ruler in AD 1427, while his father Fateh Khan had ascended the throne in AD 1399 and ruled till AD 1427. Similarly, Hodiwala suggests that Jam Fateh Khan ascended the throne in AD 1398 and remained the master of Sindh till AD 1414. He further proclaims that his son Sikander Shah II (Jam Unar III) became the ruler in AD 1442 and ruled till AD 1444. The accession date of Jam Sikander II (Jam Unar III) and that of his father (Jam Fateh Khan), therefore, is a

debateable issue. The present researchers have made an effort to reach to a possible conclusion, which suggests that Malik Rajpal was the son of Malik Unar (Jam Unar III) better known as Jam Sikander Shah-II s/o Fateh Khan alias Malik Rahu II s/o Sikander Shah I alias Raidhan s/o Malik Rahu I s/o Feroz-ud Din Shah Jam Unar I. (Lakho 2006: 189, 5, 9; Durrani et al 2011: 3-4).

When Jam Fateh Khan ruled over the Sindh valley? In this regard Qani, Lakho and others, on the basis of authentic sources, proclaimed that he ruled from AD 1413 to 1428 (Lakho 2006: 189; Durrani et al 2011: 5). The name of the buried person in the tomb is shrouded in mystery, however, the inscription has recorded the deceased person as *hamshira-e* Fateh Khan, meaning the sister of Fateh Khan. This is all we know about so far.

The other worthwhile issue is when this mausoleum was erected. The inscription clearly mentions the date of construction of the tomb, which is the third month of the Moslem calendar, *Rabi-ul-Awwal* AH 870 Thursday, corresponding to October 1465.

Concerning the style of construction of the tomb, it may be added that at Makli Hill this tomb is the first of its kind. Externally, it appears three tiered building: the first storey (tomb chamber) is square in plan, the second (drum) is octagonal, while the third (top) storey is circular consisted of the dome and its base.

In Pakistan, the earliest octagonal drum as a second tier can be observed at Lal Mahra Sharif in Dera Ismail Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa dated to the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD (Qazi 2010: 53). Taj Ali has recorded this very first example in tomb no. IV at Lal Mahra Sharif, which is mentioned by

Shaikh Khurshid Hassan as the first of its kind in the whole of Seraiki region of Pakistan (Ali 1988: 36-37; Hassan 2001: 169). The tombs at Lal Mahra Sharif received impacts from Central Asia, where the tomb of Arsalan Jadheb at Sangbast in Afghanistan dated AD 1028 denotes the earliest specimen of three tiered style (Hutt and Harrow 1997: 26, pl. 14). Subsequently, this style influenced the Multan School of Architecture, where the tomb of Rukn-e-Alam (AD 1325-35) is a good example (Khan 1983: 172). This style was also adopted in the tomb of Baha-ul-Haleem (AD 1370) (Khan 1980: 63; Hassan 2001:

177). From here this style was then transported to Sindh, here its earliest specimen can be observed at Makli Hill in the tomb of *hamshira-e* Fateh Khan. This style became a landmark in the subsequent examples in the tomb of Qus-as-Sultani (AD 1513) and in an unknown tomb dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD located to the southeast of Sultan Ibrahim Khan's tomb at Makli Hill.

The above facts lead us to conclude that Central Asian trends generally caused the origin and development of three tiered style of tomb architecture in the Indo Pak sub-Continent.

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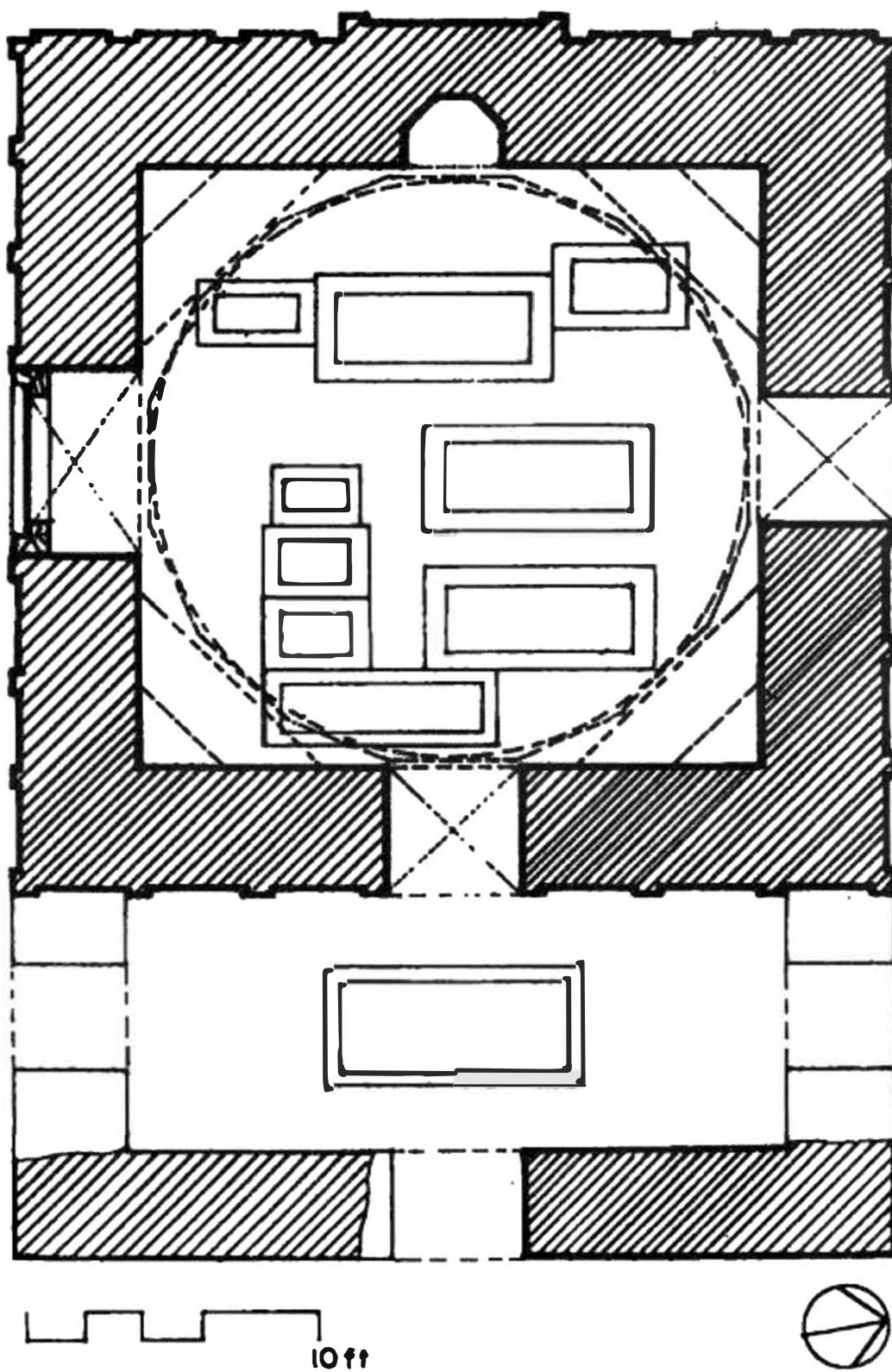


Fig. 1. Tomb of the sister of Jam Fateh Khan: ground plan (Lari 1997: Fig. 62)

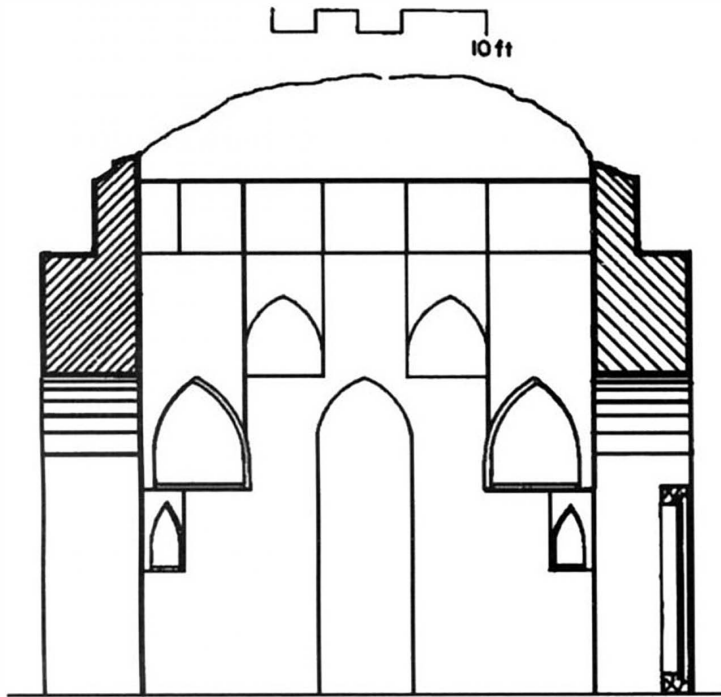


Fig 2. Section of the sister of Jam Fateh Khan Tomb (Lari 1997: Fig. 63)



Fig. 4. Tomb of the sister of Jam Fateh Khan: stairs leading to the roof



Fig. 3. Tomb of the sister of Jam Fateh Khan: a general view





Fig. 5. Tomb of the sister of Jam Fateh Khan: Arabic inscription in *thulth* character on the outer lintel of the eastern entrance

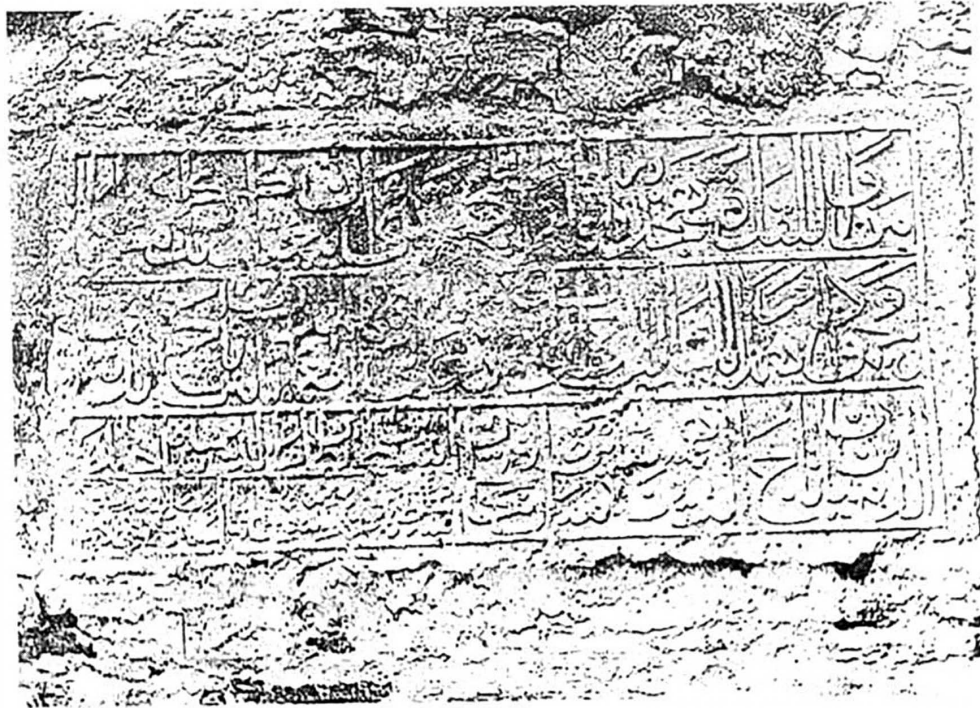


Fig. 6. Bilingual inscription inside the tomb chamber of the sister of Jam Fateh Khan (Lari 1997: Fig. 62)