

Tomb Buildings in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa datable approximately to the Time of the Mughal Emperor Jalal ad-Din Akbar

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After the death of Humāyūn his elder son, Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Akbar (1556 – 1605 CE) ascended the Mughal throne and established his capital at Agra. Akbar mostly used red sandstone in the construction of forts and palaces. His trabeate mode of construction shows restrained ornamentation (Sharma, 1964, 307). Most of his time was spent in consolidating his power so that he could merely initiate the construction of a fort at Agra and at some other places. But even these projects could not create an atmosphere congenial for architectural activities. The tombs approximately attributed to the reign of Akbar in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (Shakir, 2012, 83) were built by nobles, governors or ancestors of the deceased on their own. These include the tombs of Sayyid Hanāna at Chiṛā, Sakhi Şāhib and Shaikh Qutb ad-Dīn (Rahman, 1984, 107). It is unfortunate that no inscriptional record has survived in these buildings leaving as at the merely of a less trustworthy stylistic analysis. These are discussed below:

1. Tomb of Sayyid Hanāna at Chiṛā

Chiṛā village is located at the south west of the more famous remains of Lāl Māhṛa, Sharif a few kilometres away. In the vicinity of the village, 2 km to the south in the fields are the remains of four tombs of which only one is extant. Even in this case the dome is missing. It is said to be the tomb of a certain Sayyid Hanāna, whose history has gone unrecorded. Of the other three only foundations exist.

The tomb of the Sayyid Hanāna is rectangular in plan measuring 7.40 x 6.20 m. The walls of the chamber are slightly tapering. The difference in thickness has turned the rectangle into a square. Four entrances are provided, each measuring 2.60 x 0.75 m within a rectangular frame placed under a pointed arch. Each side of the chamber, measuring 4.80 m, has a rectangular frame topped with a dental frieze (Pl. Ia) and a tall sunk pointed arch of 4.30 x 2.70 x 0.35 m in size. The corners of the chamber are spanned by several courses of bricks in horizontal and oblique form as corner pendentives to support the phase of transition (Pl. Ib) which shows corner squinches and intermediate arches. The intermediate arch of each side has a rectangular opening for receiving fresh air and natural light. The phase of transition partly and the dome completely are missing. The floor was originally paved with bricks as suggested by several extant patches. The tomb building is in a very bad state of preservation. Due to lack of attention on the part of the concerned government agencies the rest of the three tombs in this group of four are completely lost. The tomb may be dated in the Mughal period not earlier than the reign of Akbar due to building material and style of architecture.

2. Sakhi Şāhib Tomb

The tomb building is located to the west of Chiṛā village at a distance of 2 km.

It is square in plan measuring 6x6 m. Only the eastern sidewall of the square chamber still exists up to 2.20 m in height; the rest of

the building has totally collapsed. The present eastern wall externally shows (Pl. IIa) a central entrance under a missing pointed arch, 2.00 x 0.90 m, flanked by four sunk pointed arches (Pl. IIb) of low height 1.50 x 0.75 m.

Material used in the construction is 0.34 x 0.25 x 0.17 m brick; cut bricks were used as a decorative element and are now lying on the ground. As per analysis of the materials and of architectural features the tomb building may be dated between 15th – 16th centuries CE. The tomb building is in a very bad state of preservation and mostly destroyed.

3. Shaikh Qutb ad – Dīn's Tomb at Dilazāk

The tomb building is situated on Dilazāk road about 2 km from Peshawar city in Gumbat Kili (meaning village of dome).

It stands upon a 12 x 12 m raised platform (Pl. III). It is a solid brick structure showing traces of lime plaster and is built in three stages to a height of 14.30 m. Externally the lower portion is octagonal, the second is sixteen sided drum, which is superimposed by a low hemispherical dome. The sides of the octagonal chamber are not equal, the larger ones measuring 6.90 m each, face the four cardinal points and alternate with smaller sides measuring 3.40 m each. Four entrances are provided to the grave chamber, one in each of the large sides. The façade of each entrance is divided into three vertical zones. The middle one is 3.45 m wide and contains a high recessed arch within a rectangular frame topped by a stylized *gul-e nau* design. Each of the flanking zones, 1.70 m on the left and 1.75 m on the right is relieved by a vertical row of five panels showing multi-cusps, trefoil design and flat arches. In the centre of the middle zone an entrance of 2.22 x 1.18 m is topped by a 1.35 m high arched opening. The smaller sides of

the grave chamber are divided into two zones, each consisting of a rectangular frame work which contains an alcove and is topped by stylized *gul-e nau* design as mentioned above. The same arrangement is repeated on all the sides. This octagonal chamber is topped by a battlemented parapet of acanthus leaf design running on all the eight sides, but most of it is missing and only a small portion still exists. The exterior of the second stage in each side of the sixteen sided drum is relieved by an arched panel. The apex of the low hemispherical dome shows inverted lotus flower of lime mortar with a missing pinnacle of which only a hole remains there. Approach to the second stage is provided by a staircase in the thickness of the western side wall.

Internally the tomb chamber makes a square, 6.82 x 6.82 m, with four vertical walls each relieved by a tall arched panel, 4.62 m in height, topped by a horizontal moulding in the form of cornice at a distance of 5.20 m from the floor level. The phase of transition is constructed by means of squinch and intermediate arches. The floor is unpaved and centred by the Shaikh's grave, now bereft of stones. The interior of the tomb building seems to have originally been decorated with painted designs in green, yellow and dark red colours above the dado level now extant only above the cornice moulding. The cornice is decorated in the form of a running scroll of two intersecting strings which have a bell shaped motif alternating with a broad leaf suspended at each intersection. The tympanum of the arches in the phase of transition is divided into different zones by lines and each sub division has a floral pattern like poppy, lily and others along with intricate geometrical designs. The soffit of the dome is decorated by eight conjoined garland patterns, which separately descend from the top to its springing point.

The tomb building of Shaikh Qutb ad-Dīn is a protected monument under the Antiquity Act 1975. Conservation work needs to be carried out in time to protect the building from further decay. The painted decorations in the square chamber are covered with recent white wash, but the rest of the building is mostly preserved. The tomb under discussion may be dated to the 16th century CE in the reign of Akbar, due to analysis of the building material, painted decoration and unique architectural style.

Discussion

The first one (Sayyid Hanāna tomb) is rectangular in plan and the second one (Sakhi Ṣāhib tomb) is square (Pl. IIa) with four entrances, one on each side (Bunce, 2004, fig. 2 (c)). The third one (Shaikh Qutb ad-Dīn tomb) is of octagonal plan (Pl. III). This type may be found with one, three, four, seven or eight entrances to the central area and was used from 14th through the 16th centuries CE (Bunce, 2004, fig. 4a). The idea must have probably been first employed in the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem (Creswell, 1958, 19: fig. 2) from where it spread to other part of the Muslim world. In Pakistan the earliest one is the anonymous tomb at Mithri, District Sibi in Balochistān datable to the 11th – 12th century CE (Hassan, 2001, fig. 9). It then reached Multān in the Punjāb as represented by the tombs of Baḥā ad-Dīn Zakariyā and Shāh Rukn-i-Ālam which are octagonal in plan (Wheeler, 1992, 67, fig. 13; Khan, 1990, 94, fig. 34; 1983, 20-28). The latter is the most magnificent example of this type in Pakistan. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the mural painting make its first appearance in a building of this kind (i. e. Shaikh Qutb ad-Dīn tomb).

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Pl. I - D.I. Khān (Chīṛa) Sayyid Ḥanāna Tomb



A. Showing interior pointed arch in the southern sidewall



B. Interior showing corner details for supporting the dome

Pl. II - D.I. Khān: Sakhi Şāhib Tomb



A. General view of the structure



B. Eastern wall showing details of sunk Arches



Pl. III - Peshāwar (Dilazāk): a general view of Shaikh Qutb ad- Dīn Tomb