

EXPRESSION OF PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE SAINT: DECORATIVE VOCABULARY ON THE TOMB OF AHMAD KABIR

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ABSTRACT

The recently discovered tomb of Ahmad Kabir¹, situated east of village Chhata Pohar and west of village Jhandirwa near Dunyapur, Lodhran district (Figure 1) in Pakistan is unique in history of architecture in Pakistan (Hassan, Mahmood et. al. 2002, 15-18). The discovery of the tomb further strengthens the ideas of strong eastern Persian (mainly Islamic) and South Asian (inspired from Hindu and Buddhist tradition) relationship and their culmination into a new vocabulary of architecture emerged in the early thirteenth century. This paper analyses these design elements for the first time in detail with reference to tomb architecture in Pakistan. In particular the Hindu religious design tradition and its assimilation in Muslim tomb has been rarely discussed adequately in any scholarship and therefore became focus of this paper. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part placed the tomb in its architectural context prevailing in the respective time. The second part discussed the Central Asian and Arab influence which was brought to the region during Ghaznavid and Ghorid period. The local Hindu and Buddhist art influences on the tomb are discussed in the third part. The architectural features of the tomb in relation to the other monuments of the region have been discussed in the last part. The paper finally concludes with importance of the tomb in the history of architecture in Pakistan and impact of meeting of eastern and western cultures and resultant new form in architecture.

Key Words: Ghurid period architecture, architecture of Punjab, cultural impact on architecture, tomb architecture, early Islam in India.



The tomb of Ahmad Kabir is located in a small graveyard surrounded by fields. Nothing much is known about the life history of the saint from original or modern sources, nor is any epigraphic evidence of the saint found on the monument.² It is believed that he was a respected personality of his time and therefore, a magnificent tomb was built after his death. An inscription on the south façade (Figure 12 and Table 1) provides information on the date of construction of the monument and will be discussed slightly later. The tomb of Ahmad Kabir is one of the oldest surviving monuments of Pakistan built during Ghurid Period. Although monument suffered from the ravages of the time but due to constant repair the original walls still survives but roof comprised of dome were rebuilt. Comprehensive documentation of the

1 Attention to this tomb was first drawn in a short article by Hassan, Mahmood et. al. in Museum Journal 2002, 15-18 National Museum Karachi. Since then no significant research has been carried out on the subject.

2 According to local tradition the saint belonged to Hashmi clan. The family tree of Hashmi clan meets up with their ancestor (549 – 619), who was the head of the clan. He was married to Fatima bint Asad and was an uncle of Prophet (PBUH).

tomb began in March 2008. Measure drawing and extensive photography was undertaken in four field trips. Comparative studies on the decorative design vocabulary were carried out at libraries of Dumbarton Oaks and Massachusetts Institute of Technology between July and September 2008 and subsequently conclusions were formulated and opinions were sought from experts to confirm the authenticity of the ideas presented in the paper.

Ghurid Empire (Ghafur M.A 1960, Tadgell, Christopher 1994, Badaoni, A.Q 1970, Beveridge H. 1986) was spread over eastern Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and western India. The existing studies are mostly focused on Ghaznavid period architecture with reference to north western Pakistan (Khan, Muhammad Nazir 1985, Hamid, Muhammad 1921), Afghanistan (Schlumberger D 1952, Bombachi, Allession 1966, Wilson R.P 1985) such as Lashkari Bazaar and Palace of Masud II etc. or focused their attention on Delhi Sultanate monuments beginning from Qutub Minar and Quwat-ul-Islam mosque at Delhi. (Meister, Michael W. 1972, Joshi 1972, Brown, Percy 1942) The Ghurid period architecture mostly remained unattended. Until now only Ghurid period monuments of Afghanistan remained feature of attention (Cohn-Wiener, Ernet 1959, Chirvani, Melikian 1968, Wilson R. P 1980). The discovery of Ghurid period monuments in Pakistan only recently generated some interest in the study of interaction of local Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic traditions and consequent emergence of new architectural forms in the subcontinent.

The buildings produced in Punjab and upper Sind during Ghurid period and prior used local materials in the construction of buildings. In the plains of Punjab, upper Sind and Baluchistan brick was the principal building and finishing material. However, in the hilly areas of Northwest Frontier Province stone was used in the construction of buildings. Patan Minara, a Hindu temple in Rahim Yar Khan, and Muhammad bin Qasim Mosque at Aror, rebuilt in the 10th century, were completely executed in fair face brickwork (Khan, A.N 1987-88). The brick construction has a long tradition in the region. The Indus valley sites of Harappa and Mohenjodaro (3000-1500 BC) show the complete use of brickwork in the construction. Similarly the pre-Islamic tombs in Khuzdar and Chagai District were also built in brickwork. The technique of dome construction came to this region from Khurasan and Helmund regions of Persia during the Zoroastrian period (Ashkan, Maryam and Ahmad, Yahya 2009, Farooq, A Aziz 1988, Ali, Taj 1991, Edward, Holy 1991). These monuments were mostly plain from outside except Zoroastrian tombs which were decorated with terracotta plaque tiles decorated with variety

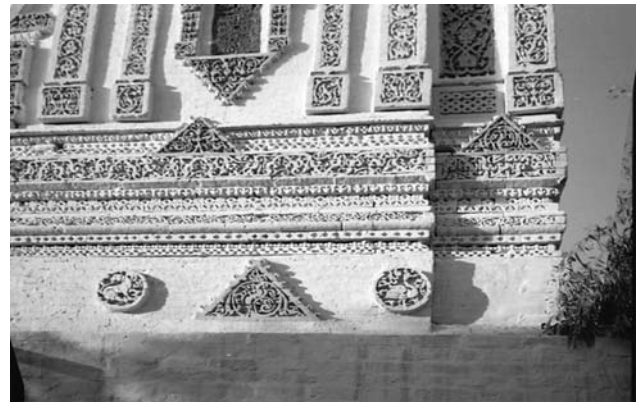


Figure-2: Tomb of Ahmad Kabir showing the lower part of the tomb just above plinth.

of themes. However, the themes of decorative designs of Ghurid period monuments were completely different from earlier examples (Husain Talib 1987, Khan A.N 1987-88). The use of glazed tiles in Multan region started around 1150 AD with the construction of tomb of Shah Yusuf Gardez.

The decorative vocabulary developed in fair face brick monuments constructed in the region in the twelfth century continued for the next three hundred years until the arrival of the Mughals in 1526. The contemporary examples of such monuments are the tombs of Khaliq Walid, Saddam Shahid and Muhammad bin Harun. The decorative vocabulary on the tomb of Ahmad Kabir is unique and different from other examples mentioned earlier (Figure 2). This paper discusses the architecture and decorative vocabulary on Muslim saint derived from Muslim and Hindu sources to pay tribute to the saint.

Lodhran district in which this monument is located came under the rule of Shihab ud Din bin Sam, popularly known as Muhammad Ghori, who after marching from Ghazni through Gomal Pass, conquered Multan along with neighboring territories of the region. By this time the dominating religion of the area was Hinduism and had its own specific design tradition. During Ghurid rule Multan region was ruled by Ali bin Karmakh from 571 AH -582 AH, whereupon he was promoted to a position of pre-eminence in Lahore. Ali bin Karmakh did several architectural projects including the construction of tomb of Khaliq Walid. Thus, Ghurid dynasty is considered to be a turning point in the architectural, cultural and political history of the subcontinent. The tombs belonging to this period and identified in the region indicated the cultural exchange between the two regions of Khurasan and Punjab and assimilation of ideas and themes culminating in to a new

From the exterior the square plan having two feet wide and four inches deep offsets at each corner. The incorporation of offsets by reducing the thickness of the walls was a general design tradition found in Hindu Shahiya temples of Salt Range (Rehman, Abdul, 1990 Meister, Michael 1999) as well Pattan Minara near Rahim Yar Khan (Vat, Mahdu Sarup 1927). Similar theme was followed also in tomb of Saddam Shahid, a contemporary tomb located in Muzaffargarh district. The opening on all four sides of the tomb crowned with trefoil arches is a common feature in the funerary architecture of Indus valley. Except the east side opening all other openings is blocked with recent terracotta grills. The niche



of the west side opening is used as mihrab. Similar openings are found in the temples of Salt range, in particular one temple at Mari and Kafir Kot south.

In terms of structural form, the square plan is transformed into a circular form by means of squinch arches. The squinch arches have corbelled pendentives to strengthen the zone of transition. The existing examples of the tombs in the region indicate that transformation from pendentives to squinch arches were gradual. This transformation was in two steps. In the first step corbelled arch was employed followed by true squinch arch which was later frequently used in Ghaznavid, Khilji and Tughluq, Syed and Lodi period tombs and mosques of subcontinent (Prasad, Pushapa, 1984). The earliest example (early 11th century) of true arch in Punjab is found in Giri Mosque in Margalla Hill (Rehman Abdul 1991). However it is frequently found in Ghurid and later period monuments but similar feature is also found in the tomb of Saddam Shahid.

II

The monument was built in fair face brickwork with ornamentation carried out in cut and dressed brickwork. It has recently been lime washed by local villagers but rich surface decorations still represents the glory of building arts and craft tradition of early sultanate period. It is the earliest tomb in Pakistan where such as extensive calligraphy is found on a monument. It is also a classical example of culmination of Hindu and Islamic architectural design traditions and thus decorative vocabulary is unique to pay tribute to the saint. In this tomb the verses from Holy Quran (Islamic tradition) and animal figures (Hindu tradition) coexist and executed in cut and dressed brickwork. This uniqueness of coexistence of animal figures and verses from Holy Quran is evident from several reasons. The tomb seems to have been built jointly by Hindu craftsman or Muslim craftsman who recently got converted from Hinduism and a Muslim craftsman trained in Khurasan or other central Asian regions. It is also plausible that Arabic inscriptions may have been executed by a craftsman from Khurasan. The assumption is based on the fact that high standard of Naskh and Kufic calligraphy found on the monument was the work of very experienced craftsman who was very well acquainted with the Arabic language and the art of writing. The animal figures and other motives found in the region must have been the work of local artists. Since these saints were revered by the people of all faiths, therefore the level and nature of craftsmanship found in these monuments reflect the joint efforts of the people of all faiths (Allen, Margret Prosser 1991, Flood, Finnbar Bary 2009).

The tomb rests on a plinth eight feet four inches high from the ground surface. This was done partly to protect it from the devastation of river floods and partly due to the existing tradition of building construction. Traditionally all important buildings such as temples and tombs of important saints lying in flood prone areas are always rested on high plinth. At the same time Buddhist and Gandhara period monuments of the region, such as stupa's always had high plinth. Similarly the Hindu Shahiya temples of Salt Range and temple (Miester, Michael 1999) at Patan Minara (Talbot W.S 1903) also rest on high plinth (*jagati*). The high plinth also indicates the sacredness of the tomb as well as creates monumental effect to the building. The high plinth can also be seen in many other tombs of the Ghurid Period such as tomb of Khaliq Walid, tomb of Saddam Shahid and later period Sawi Mosque (Khan, Ahmad Nabi 1983). According to local people the plinth was embellished with cut and dressed brick work like tomb of Saddam Shahid but in the recent repairs the entire face were covered with plane modern brickwork which can be restored.

From the point of view of decorative treatment of façade, the tomb may be vertically divided into four parts. The first part comprised of high plinth. According to local inhabitants, the plinth was decorated with cut and dressed brickwork but recently in recent renovation it was clad with fair face brickwork. Similarly the north eastern corner was also repaired few years ago. The second part is most ornate in great density (Figure 5). It begins with triangular motives alternating with circular medallions bearing animal motives. These motives begin seven inches above the plinth and one foot five inches high. Each face had four medallions, two on the either side of the openings separated by triangular motif. Just above these motives run horizontal bands to a height of three feet three inches. The profile of these bands

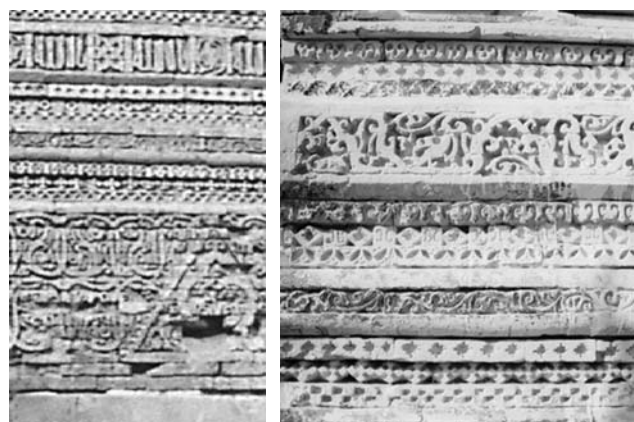


Figure-5: Detail of decorative friezes just above plinth: Tomb of Ahmad Kabir

has close similarity with the Hindu Shahiya temple which shows the continuity of local tradition of architecture. The lower most bands consist of square and diamond pattern which are also found in temple at Kalar in Attock district. Similarly vine scrolls are also found in close proximity with Hindu temples of western India. One of the close examples may be Rajarani temple at Bhubanesvar built around eleventh or twelfth century A. D. Such patterns were also found in later Muslim monuments in Gujarat and Ajmer. The third part comprised of openings in the middle of façade flanked by Gavaksa niches on either side of the openings. All the frames on three sides of gavaksa niches are inscribed in Kufic script with *Al-Mulk-o Lilah* (Figure 6). On top of these frames lies a series of merlons. The entire decorative part is again framed on three sides with a border having floral design. The vertical panels on the either ends are either inscribed with verses from Quran or simply treated with floral decoration. The top most part, comprising parapet, was executed in brick masonry having some floral decorations which is visible in the southern façade. Finally a hemispherical dome resting on circular drum covers the structure. Vertically each façade is terminated with an elaborate epigraphic band.

The elevations are almost identical on all four sides except some little variations in decorative scheme (Figure 8). These medallions bearing animal motives are different on different sides (Figure 7). Similarly, the gavaksa niche on the eastern end of south side bears some inscriptions. The corners walls of the tomb have offsets which makes the façade aesthetically pleasing. These offsets are inscribed with calligraphy but the eastern end of north façade, northern end of east façade and northern end of western façade are blank without any calligraphy. The decorations on medallions and inscription on each façade vary from one façade to another. On the north façade, just above the plinth, lie four medallions. The decorations on them are mostly damaged except second from east end and bear figure of swan. The decorative friezes are similar on all four sides. The gavaksa niches on either side of the opening bear the inscription of Sura *Ikhlas* (chapter 112). The northwestern corner vertical panel inscribed with 2nd verse of opening chapter of Quran, while the northeastern corner was rebuilt in plain brick masonry. On the east side the main entrance lies in the middle of eastern façade. Only two medallions survive on the north eastern side, the other two on south eastern side are missing. The two surviving animal motives on the medallions are swans. The gavaksa niches on both sides bears Sura *Kauthar* (Chapter 108). The vertical panel on the south eastern corner is inscribed with last portion of verse 20 from sura *Shura* (42). The southern façade is very fascinating and full of information. All the four medallions

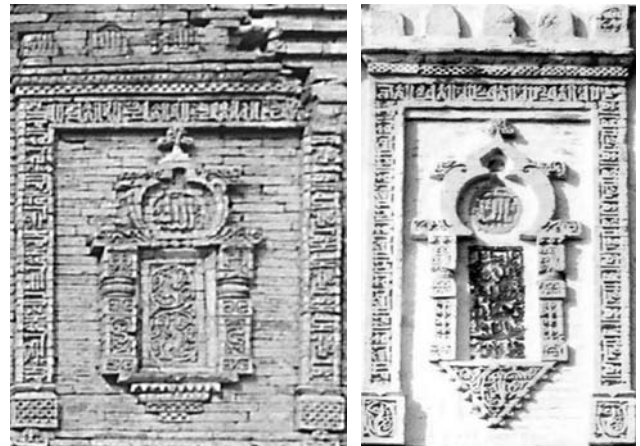


Figure-6: Comparison of Garuda niches between tomb of Ahmad Kabir (Right) and tomb of Saddam Shahid (Left). The nich of Saddam Shahid is more squarish while on the tomb of Ahmad Kabir is more elongated.



Figure-7: Circular medallion having animal figures (camel on the right and bull on the left) and triangular motif in the middle.

are intact. Beginning from east side and ending towards west the figures depicted on the medallions are in the following sequence. (i) swan (ii) lion (iii) horse and, (iv) boar. The most fascinating aspect of this façade is the inscriptions in the gavaksa niches. The niche on the southeastern side bears inscription in sharda script whereas inscription on the south western side is executed in Arabic script and gives the date of construction of the monument which is described slightly later. The vertical panels on the either ends bears floral decoration. Finally the western façade have similar decorative scheme as given in the case of eastern façade. The gavaksa niches contain *sura Kauthar* on both sides. The animal figures on circular medallions from north end towards south are in the following order (i) elephant (ii) lion (iii) horse and (iv) boar. The vertical panels at the corners contain verse from *sura rehman* on the north western end inscribed from top toward bottom. Second verse of opening chapter in the south western end is inscribed from bottom towards top.

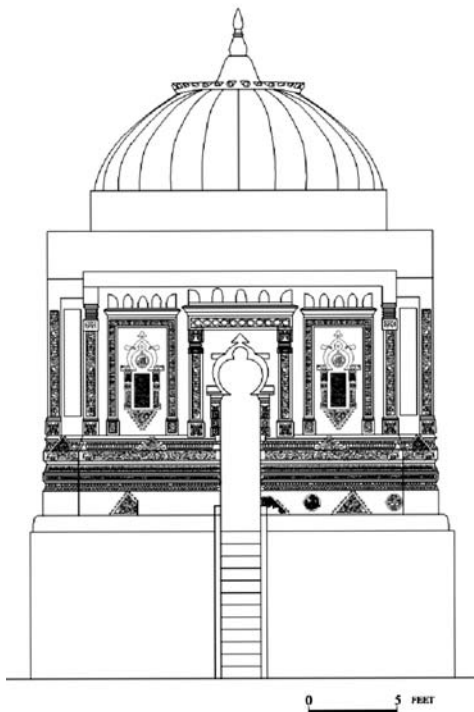


Figure-8: East elevation of Tomb of Ahmad Kabir.

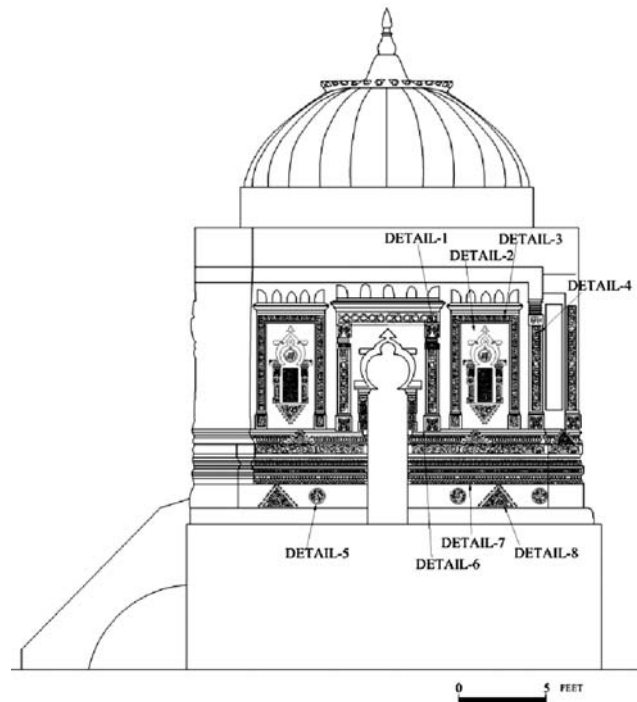


Figure-8a: North elevation of Tomb of Ahmad Kabir.

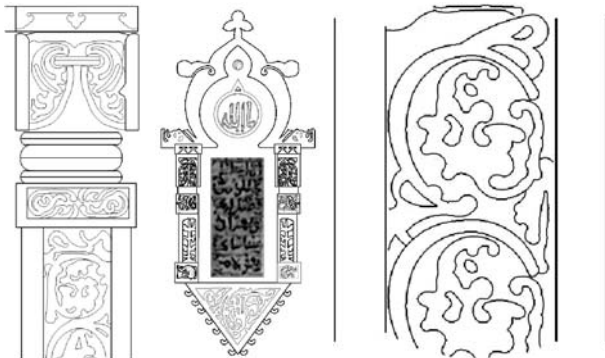


Figure-8b: Details of Tomb of Ahmad Kabir.

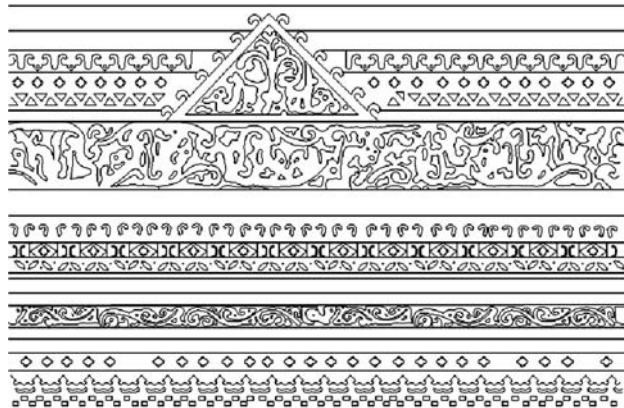
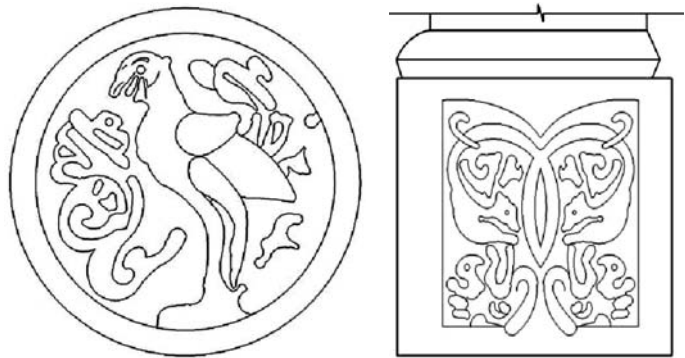


Figure-8c: Details of Tomb of Ahmad Kabir.



As mentioned earlier, the monument is the result of culmination of Islamic and Hindu tradition and vocabulary of design were chosen from two faiths to pay tribute to the saint by constructing such a magnificent monument. The Islamic tradition is in the form of inscriptions taken from Holy Quran whereas the animal figures were taken from Hindu sources. Both of these decorative elements are described separately in the following paragraphs.

The extreme right hand side offset panels on northern, eastern and western façade are inscribed in high relief with second verse from Holy Quran which states: In the name of Allah the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. The verse is inscribed from bottom to top like the tomb of Saddam Shahid. The rest of the façade is horizontally divided into three parts. There is a trefoil arch opening in the middle of each façade flanked by trefoil gavaksa niches. Opening and niches on each side are framed by high relief border. These niches are inscribed with verses from Holy Quran in cut and dressed brickwork. On the east façade the left hand side niche is inscribed with *sura Ikhlas* (chapter Purity of Faith) while the right hand side niche has *Sura Al-Kauthar*. The two sura's (chapters) are, for the first time, inscribed on any monument in Pakistan. Both the niches in the south side are inscribed with *Sura Ikhlas* (Figure 9).

The *sura* focuses on the theme of the unity of Allah and it is such that there is no reality or no true and permanent existence except His. Moreover, every other being acquires

whatever power it possessed from the effective power of Allah which rules over this world. "*He begot none, nor was He begotten,*" means that reality of Allah is deep rooted, permanent and everlasting. No changeable circumstances ever affect it. Its quality is absolute perfection at all times. The quality of "One" includes the renouncement of a father and a son. Finally "*there is none comparable to Him*" means that no one resembles Him in anything or is equivalent to Him in any respect, either in the reality of being, or in the fact that He is the only effective power, or in any of His qualities or attributes. The message of Quran is universal and valid for all times to come.

From the concept of unity of God, stems a perfect path of life based on the explanation of human existence and whatever outlooks, bases and traits it stimulated. Such a path is based on the worship of God alone, whose is the only real and permanent being, and whose will is the only effective power in the world. It is the path that makes its followers turn towards God alone and seek refuge in Him in times of need and fear, happiness and discomfort, luxury and hardship.

Sura (Chapter) *Al-Kauthar* (Abundance) is chapter no.108 of Al-Quran. It concerns solely Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), cheering him up and assuring him of happier prospects in his struggle. In it God threatens the enemies of the Prophet with destruction while directing the Prophet on the path of thanksgiving.

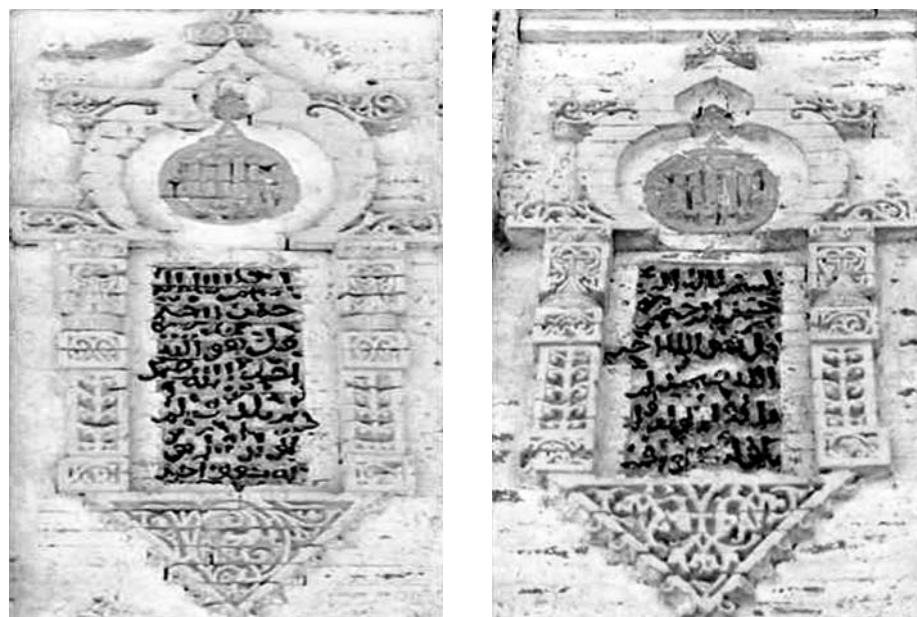


Figure-9: Two different gavaksa niches with Quranic inscriptions of *Sura Ikhlas*.

The *sura* refers to some non-believers from Quraish who viewed the Prophet and his mission with no small degree of antagonism. They used to say about the Prophet that he was a man with no posterity, referring to the early death of his son. This will end his mission. This *sura* was therefore, revealed, comforting the Prophet and assuring him of the abiding and profuse goodness which God had chosen for him and of the deprivation and loss awaiting his persecutors.

The selection of the *sura* for the tomb is very relevant and appropriate in the context of early thirteen century when Islam was being introduced in the subcontinent. The belief in Allah and his messenger is the most essential prerequisite in the faith of Islam and these *sura*'s convey the message to the people to look towards God and His prophet in all matters. The life and death is in the hand of Allah and this world is a temporary abode of man. Therefore they follow the path chosen for them. These Quranic verses on the building reminded the visitors that these saints followed the same paths which are equally applicable for others for all time to come. The acceptance of Allah as supreme and belief in prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as His messenger is the prerequisite of the Islamic faith. This decorative scheme is repeated on the east and west side.

The inscription on the vertical panel in the south eastern corner of east façade is from chapter *shura* verse 20 which states that “but he will have no share in (in the blessings of) the life to come” (Figure 10). The complete verse states that “To whom who desires to harvest in the life to come, We shall grant an increase in his harvest; whereas to him who desires [but] a harvest in this world, We [may] give something thereof- but he will have no share in [the blessing of] the

life to come (Daryabadi, Maulana Abdul Majid 1991). Again the believers are asked if they want reward in this world or the next world; if they desire reward in the next world they will have to do good deeds.

The vertical inscription on the north western corner panel of the western façade is partially legible. It tells us that “all that lives on earth or in the heaven is bound to pass away” (Daryabadi, Maulana Abdul Majid 1991). (Figure 11). This verse of chapter *Rehman* is commonly found on the graves across the Muslim world. It reminds believers that nothing is permanent and every one will have to return to God. The most fascinating inscription lies on the south western niche on the south façade (Figure 12). It gives two valuable information. Firstly, the tomb was built during the reign of Shihab al Din the month of of Rabi ul Aakhir in the year 600 AH. This date coincide with the reign of Shihab al Din Ghori.

Three styles of calligraphy have been used in the monument. The verses of Holy Quran in gavaksa niches and side panels have been inscribed with in naskh while bands framing the gavaksa niches on three sides are inscribed with *al mulk o lilah*”, are executed in floriated Kufic script. The corner offset vertical panels are inscribed in *tuluth*. The variety of scripts used in the monument makes it a fine specimen of architecture. Such bands framing the openings, niches or simply dividing the bare facades into horizontal or vertical divisions is frequently met in Khurasan and Central Asian regions. The most significant example is Madrassa Shah-i- Mashad near Herat. The Madrassa is dated by a foundation inscription to 571AH /1175-1176 AD.



Figure-10: Vertical inscription on the northwestern corner of west façade in thuluth script.

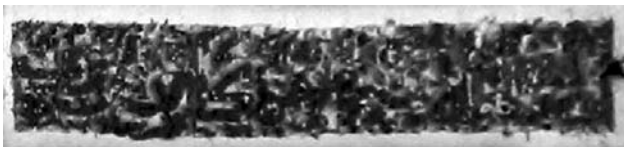


Figure-11: Vertical inscription on the south eastern corner of east façade in thuluth script.

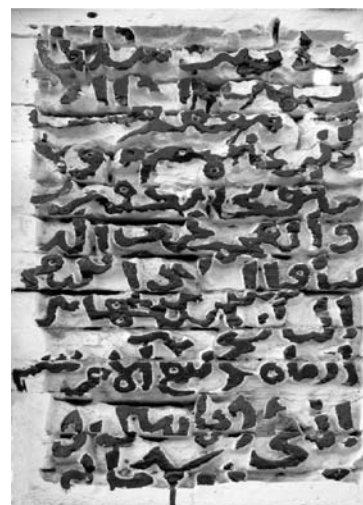


Figure-12: Inscription in the gavaksa niche on south west corner of south façade in western kufic.

L -1 The Amir . . . the Sultan	الأمير السلطان L. 1
L -2 the great. . al-Malik	المعظم . . . الملك L. 2
L -3 (May Allah) forgive all of them (all the believers)	غفر عنهم الأجمعين L. 3
L -4 This took place during the reign of the ' Amir al-'Arab	وكان ذلك بدور أمير العرب L. 4
L -5 wa 'l-'Ajm 'Akram al-Du-	والعجم أكرم الد L. 5
L - 6 -nya wa 'l-Din Ashhar	نيا والدين أشهر L. 6
L -7 al-Bayan Shihab al Din	اليان شهاب الدين L. 7

Table-1: Detail of date of construction in the inscription in gavaksa niche on the southwestern end of western façade.

III

The uniqueness of the tomb lies in the first series of ornamentation just above the plinth (Figure 13). This level of ornamentation is symmetrical on either side of the opening. On both sides of the opening there are right angle triangles followed by medallion then an equilateral triangle and then medallion. The medallions bear animal motives. Although depiction of animal figures is rare in Muslim tombs but this tomb represents the culmination of Hindu and Islamic themes together in a monument. This is a unique example where complexity of decorative motifs shows the beginning of new tradition of Islamic architecture of Pakistan. The animals depicted on the monument have a strong connection with the Hindu mythology where certain animals and birds have strong religious significance. At the lowest level and just above the plinth level animals such as bull, goose, horse, lion, bear, camel, etc are depicted. The basic positioning of these motives shows the importance of both Hindu and Muslim faith. The master craftsmen showed the qualities and abilities of the saint through the birds and animals whose significance is given as follows:

Swan or Chakravaka., is a Hindu iconic device and refers

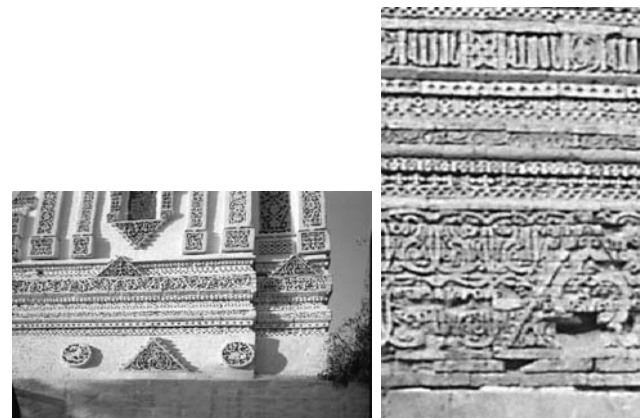


Figure-13: Detail of decorative friezes on the tomb of Ahmad Kabir (left) and tomb of Saddam Shahid (right)

to Brahmani Duck The bird represents fidelity, since they appear to mourn when separated from their mates (Figure 14). The demise of the saint and depiction of duck on the tomb is logical correlation since he is separated from others. The representation of ducks on the funerary monuments continued to exist till the early years of 16th century. A frieze of duck is also found on the tomb of Jam Nizam ud Din at Makli built in 1509 AD (Dani, Ahmad Hasan 1982).



Figure-14: Swan on South Facade.

In the contemporary examples, scroll of ducks is also depicted on the door frame of Bilesvara temple at Hanagal Fort built in the late 11th century. Vitthala Temple is considered as the most impressive and most ornate of all the temples at Hampi (Longhurst A.H 1995). The presiding deity of the temple is Lord Vitthala (form of Lord Vishnu). The foreground of the sanctum is made by the 'mahamandapam' (pillared hall), which is tremendously ornamented. The pedestal is engraved with friezes of the swan, the horse and the warrior. A long frieze of delicately carved hamsas can be seen in Hoysalesvara temple at Halebid (Rowland, Bengamin 1953). In contemporary examples a frieze of hamsas is also found in the interior of corbelled dome of Shahi Masjid Khatu.

Boar is third of the 10 incarnations (avatars) of the Hindu god Vishnu (Figure 15). According to the Hindu tradition when a demon named Hiranyāksha dragged the earth to the bottom of the sea, Vishnu took the form of a boar in order to rescue it. They fought for a thousand years. Then Varāha slew the demon and raised the earth out of the water with his tusks. The myth reflects an earlier creation legend of Prajāpati (Brahmā), who assumed the shape of a boar in order to lift the earth up out of the primeval waters. Boar is revered in Hinduism and therefore, depicted on the Vishnu temples. The western groups of temples in Khajuraho (built between 9th and 10th century AD) are famed for its exotic sculptures (Punja, Shobita 1991). Close to the south entrance, the Varaha temple dedicated to the god Vishnu has an intricately carved 10-tonne statue depicting him incarnated as a wild boar. Near the north gate is a similar pavilion containing amazing two-meter-long polished sandstone carved statue of the bull, Nandi (Javid and Javeed 2008).

The scholar Curt Maury (1969) traces the origin of the boar-cult in the “distant past, when its original focus may have been a female rather than a male divinity, as may be inferred from such images as that of the boar-headed Yogini in the



Figure-15: Boar on West Facade.

Chaunsath Yogini temple at Bheraghat [Madhya Pradesh, India].” The most monumental representation of the varaha avatar of Vishnu is in a cave at Udayagiri, near Bhopal, dating from the beginning of the fifth century (Kramrisch, Stella 1965). It may be interesting to note that the Mughal emperor Jahangir was so irritated on seeing a stone sculpture of Varaha Avatar of Vishnu in a temple at Pushkar (near Ajmer) that he ordered to smash it and throw into the tank.

Horse is an important animal in the Indian history. It was known to the first inhabitants of Rana Gundai I phase in Baluchistan and Anau in Turkestan (c.3500-300BC). The most notable mythological conceptions concerning the horse is its association with sun whose daily passage across the sky is believed to be accomplished in the chariot drawn by four fast flying horses (Figure 16). The horse seen to disappear every evening with sunset and to reappear the following morning with sun rise, became a symbol of death, of resurrection and even of fertility. The association of the horse with the sun and water cosmology and fertility is well reflected in the Indian legends. In Rg Veda the horse to be sacrificed is referred to as great friend being made ready for the banquet of gods. The depiction of horse is also found in



Figure-16: Horse on the North Facade.



Figure-17: Lion of the South Facade.

Hindu temples. One of the beautiful examples is found at Darasuram at Tamil Nadu (12th Century AD) where motif of the wheel and horse was introduced to make the mandapa a ratha, Chola (Sivaramamurti, C 1974). The representations of horse in Indian art are too numerous to be counted. However, the use of horse motif reached its apogee in the Horse Court at Srirangam, near Trichinopoly, which has a colonnade of furiously fighting horses, each rearing up to a height of nearly nine feet.

Lion is another animal in Hindu mythology which is considered as a vehicle of Durga Mahisasuramardini (Figure 17). It played a very prominent part in the conflict between Devi and the Demon and symbolizes the destructive fury of the goddess. Lion is a symbol of power and considered as guardian and therefore placed at the entrances of important buildings. The Hoysaleswara temple at Halebid is one of the finest temples in India in which Ramayana and Mahabharata epics are shown more effectively than in any other temple (Settar, S 2003). Besides general life themes rows of animals such as lions and elephants are shown (where no two animals are identical). In this context the lion is depicted on the tomb of Sheikh Ahmad Kabir. Some Mughal specimens of carved lions are also known, for example on the gateway of Sarai Nurmahal (E. Punjab) and the Jahangiri Mahal, Lahore Fort (Parihar, Subash, 1991). But their representation is always clumsy, as if the carver had never seen a real lion. Lion continues to remain a dominant motif in Indian architecture even to this day, particularly in popular architecture. There is hardly any temple built even today without a pair of sculptured lions at its gate. In contemporary Ghurid period architecture lions are found on the thresholds of the royal chambers of churasi Khamba Mosque, Kaman and Qutub mosque, Delhi.



Figure-18: Camel on SE Facade.

Camel or Ushtra, a Buddhist /Hindu iconic device, a vehicle or object upon which image of the deity sits (Figure 18). The term Ushtra refers to a camel which is ridden frequently by calm or peaceful deities. It is often associated with the deity Hemanta-rajni and others. In Hindu tradition the camel is sacred to the deity Skukra or Sukra (Allen, Margaret Prosser 1991).

The above examples of depiction of animals derived from Hindu mythology (Stutley, Margret.1985. Bunce, Fredrick W. 1997)³⁶ shows the importance of the saint by the local Hindu community. The mythological relationship of animals with Hindu religion clearly shows the sacredness, humbleness and piety of the saint and represents another way of expression of paying tribute to the saint.

An inscription in Sharda script on the southeastern side of southern facade provides some detail of donations given for the construction of tomb (Figure 19). The Sharda or Sharada

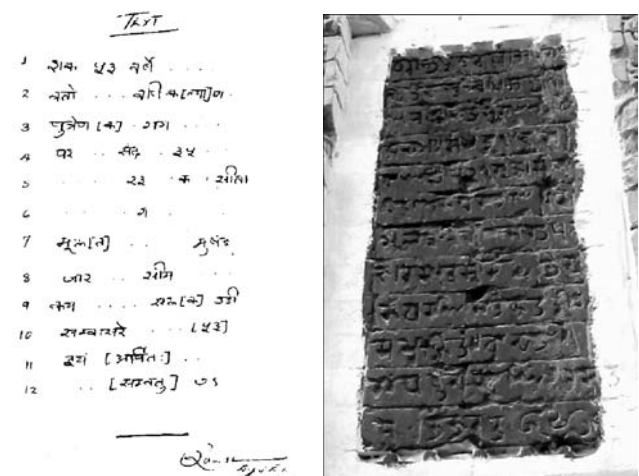


Figure-19: Sharda inscription on the tomb of Ahmad Kabir.

alphabet found mostly in north western parts of Pakistan and developed from the script during the second half of the 8th century AD. The earliest known inscription in the Sharda alphabet dates from 774 AD and was discovered in a village called Hund, capital of the Hindu Shahi dynasty, located on the Indus River in the North Frontier Province of Pakistan. The inscription contains 12 lines. It is dated in Sake (regional reckoning) 53. The inscription seems to record some donation (the details of which are not legible). It mentions in line 2 and 3 *Kalyana putrena* and Sita in line 5. Numeral figures of 35 and 23 are written in line 4 and 5 (probably indicating the amount of donation made). This is the only monument of Islamic period where Shards script has been used.

The tomb can be accessed only from the east side where a long flight of steps lead to the tomb chamber. In the local tradition the face of dead bodies always face *qibla* (direction of Kaba) and therefore, the tombs always have entrance either from south or east side. In Indian tradition the entrance of a Hindu temple is preferred to be on east side but there are several examples where entrances are located on west or south side. In the Ghurid period the general preference was east side where as in later sultanate period monuments such as tomb of Baha ud Din Zakariya and tomb of Rukn-i-Alam (Hillenbrand, Robert 1974), the entrance was kept on south side. There is not any strict rule for the south side entrance but according to the local popular tradition the visitor must enter from the side facing the feet of the saint (south side) and then going anticlockwise through east, north and west side finally pray on west side in the mihrab and then exit from south side.

IV

Like other contemporary tombs such as Saddam Shahid, the interior of the tomb of Ahmad Kabir is simple without any embellishment. Compared with its rich exterior, the interior is devoid of calligraphy or any other ornamentation. The squinch arches at four corners of walls convert the square plan into the circular base of the drum over which hemispherical dome rests. Each squinch arch is characterized at its base by a cone of dentil belling (Figure 20). This arrangement provides additional strength to the overhead dome. This system of construction draws its inspiration from the monuments of Khurasan and Central Asia (Hillenbrand, Robert 1992). The system of construction of dome developed gradually in the Indus Valley. The Zoroastrian tomb rested on pendentives. The next stage was squinch arches based on corbelling of bricks. This system is found in its contemporary tomb of Khaliq Walid in Kabir Wala district in Pakistan. The exterior details and decorative patterns are



Figure-20: Squinch arch in the interior the tomb.

executed in cut and dressed brickwork in an exquisite manner. The execution in cut and dress brickwork is so neat and perfect as it appears that work has been executed in plaster work. The vertical bands on the either side of gavaksa niches end with amalakas capitals over which the horizontal band rests. Amalakas is a most common feature of temples architecture and found in the Salt Range temples of Kafir Kot north and south, Mari and Kallar temples. The treatment of brick as a medium for decoration, the juxtaposition of intensely decorated elements and the play on light and shade through such alternation of architectonic elements, are all found in existing examples of Kallar in Attock district and Pattan Minara near Rahim Yar Khan.

Triangular motives form an important decorative element in early Ghurid period tombs (Figure 21). The independent



Figure-21: East façade of Tomb of Ahmad Kabir.

triangular motives below the horizontal frieze and as part of top frieze is a prominent visual feature of the tomb and used extensively for the first time in this monument. This motif has also been used in the tomb of Saddam Shahid where it forms a part of the horizontal friezes having vine scrolls. These motives became an important feature of sultanate period tombs constructed in fair face brickwork particularly in the tomb of Ala ud Din Mauj Darya at Pakpattan built in 1330AD (Chughtai M. Abdullah, 1968). This feature is found only in lower Punjab in Hindu temples as no such feature exist in the temples of Koh-e-Jud built between 7th and 10th century AD. A frieze of triangular motif in much smaller size is found in the temple of Pattan Minara in Rahim Yar Khan.

Although decorative friezes existed in Hindu temples but the frames and borders came to subcontinent with the arrival of Muslims in the subcontinent. In particular such frames and borders are found on the monuments of eastern Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia. These borders and frames are inscribed with floral arabesque, geometric patterns or inscription or calligraphy taken from Holy Quran. These borders became very frequent in the early architecture of Khurasan. The most important monument in this regards are Madrassa Shah-e Mashad, and Ghurid mausolea at Chisht(Casimir, Michael J and Glatzer Bernt 1971). These features became important elements of Sultanate architecture of sub-continent. These frames used to define all kinds of openings, defining the edges of the buildings, mihrabs and niches. These frames and borders break the monotony of bare facades, define various and accentuate architectural elements, create rhythms and architectural interest within the buildings.

The gavaksa niches are crowned with trefoils which is common feature in all Hindu Shahiya temples of Salt Range. In particular the temples of Amb, Mari and Kafir Kot are crowned with trefoil arches. Generally in the Hindu religious tradition of the region an image of the deity is placed under the trefoil where as in the early sultanate period tomb the name of Allah is inscribed in its place. In particular the temple of Amb Sharif located near Quaid Abad and Kafir Kot north contained image of a deity in the trefoils. The word Allah is inscribed in the tomb of Ahmad Kabir and later in Daulat Khan Lodi's tomb in Divalpur. Considering this fact it is obvious that very basic concept of the two religions remained the same but mode of presentation has changed. It is deity of Krishna or Shiva which is supreme to Hindus but Allah is supreme to Muslims.

Both the tomb of Ahmad Kabir and Saddam Shahid are

contemporary and have similar design concept. The decoration on the tomb of Ahmad Kabir shows new beginning of the treatment of façade of a Muslim saint of Indian subcontinent. The tomb of Ala ud Din and Daulat Khan Lodi, built during Tughlaq and Lodi dynasty, are a result of the continuity of this tradition but in a simpler form. The decorative friezes of floral arabesques just above the plinth level (around 7-8 feet) are common in both the tombs. Vines motives found their origin in early Hindu temple sources.

CONCLUSION

The Indus Valley forms a not too constant dividing line between the Indian and Persian world (this include Iran and western Afghanistan). Partly it remained under the Ghaznavids and Ghurids rule and partly it was ruled by the local kings. However, when the Turkish tribes from south Russia swept across Persia and Anatolia, Pakistan was absorbed into the newly formed Turko-Persian cultural network in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The similarities of the climate and materials of construction of Pakistan and its western neighbors as well as their ethnological and frequent political associations, gave the dry steppe, and desert region of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan a common cultural identity (Mumtaz K.K, 1985). In the beginning of the thirteenth century Multan region became a part of the Ghurid Empire with capital at Ghor in Afghanistan. With this the main trade route to Delhi remained via Gomal Pass which resulted in Khorasani influence on architecture of Multan region. The Central Indus valley (Punjab and Sind) shared with Khorasan the enthusiasm for brick as primary medium of architectural expression. The influence came from Afghanistan, assimilated and absorbed in local Indus valley resulting into a new vocabulary of architectural design based upon both Hindu and Khurasani origin. The tomb of Ahmad Kabir is one of the finest examples of this interaction.

The tomb of Ahmad Kabir is one of the best examples where both Hindu and Islamic themes come together in the form design vocabulary to pay tribute to the saint. The tomb seems to have been one of the earliest, if not the earliest after Khaliq Walid in Kabir Wala District, found in the same region. The tomb of Khaliq Walid was built under the patronage of Ali Karmakh, governor of Multan during Ghurid period. It is a plane bare with highly stylistic decorative epigraphy in the soffit of the mihrab. This tomb seems to have been built by the Khorasani master craftsman. However the tomb of Ahmad Kabir presumably built by the both local Hindu and Muslim craftsmen. The tomb of Saddam seems to have been last of the series which shows the perfection of the art developed in the tombs mentioned earlier. There

is a lot of similarity and parallel exist between the two tombs mentioned above. The verses from holy Quran, different forms of calligraphy, both kufic and naskh and variety of borders and form of domed mausoleum all came from Eastern Iran and Afghanistan, while profile of friezes, wine scrolls and animal motives and gawaska niches came from local Indian tradition. The existence of animal figure shows the reverence of the Hindu tradition for a Muslim saint and this is the way of paying tribute by people of two different religions. Finally the tomb finds close analogies in the brick architecture of contemporary Herat, suggesting that they represent a collaborative endeavor between local artisans and those who migrated eastward in the wake of Ghurid conquest.

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