Plate 1. Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan at Lahore.

The Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan at Lahore: A Reconstruction of Its Original Decoration

by Masooma Abbas

Few people, even residents of Lahore, are aware that a mid-seventeenth century Mughal Tomb exists at Mughalpura, Lahore. Unfortunately, this structure, the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, built in1656-1657, has received slight attention in terms of its preservation and is now bereft of almost all its exterior and interior ornamentation (plate 1). The objective of this paper is to restore theoretically this once spectacular structure, as it would have been at the time of its completion.

History records Ali Mardan Khan an important place at both the Safavid and Mughal courts. His father Ganj Ali Khan held the positions of commander of the armed forces and governor of Kirman, Sistan and Qandahar during Shah Abbas I rule (1588-1629). The Shah gave him the nickname of *bābā* (father).[1] When Ganj Ali Khan died in 1624, Ali Mardan Khan received his charge and was given the title *bābā-yi-thāni* (second father) by Shah Abbas I. However, when Shah Abbas I died and Shah Safi ascended the throne, Ali Mardan, who was the governor of Qandahar at that time, faced threats of execution from the new emperor. Seeing that the situation was not in his favor, Ali Mardan believed his survival was in joining the Mughals; and he surrendered the fortress of Qandahar, which he then commanded, to Shahjahan in 1638. The grateful Mughal ruler gave him the highest post, of 7000 horse, and the title of *amīr al-umarā*. In that same year he was appointed governor of Kashmir; later Punjab also came under his administrative domain. Until his death on 16 April, 1657 he held the post of governor of Kabul too.[2]

Ali Mardan was a civil engineer, an architect, a commander of Shahjahan's forces and an able administrator as well. As a Safavid engineer and architect, he built the cistern in the Ganj Ali Khan Complex at Kirman, restored the Old Fort at Qandahar, and constructed Qandahar's Bagh-i Nazar and its new Fort at Mount Laka. He also constructed a new market at Kabul and built bridges there.[3] At the Mughal court, he is famous for the construction of the Grand Canal (*Shah Nahar*) of Shalimar Garden and for the reactivation of Firoz Shah Tughlaq's old canal in Lahore, and the covered market (*Bazaar-i Musaqqaf*) at Peshawar. According to Lahore lore, the tomb in which Ali Mardan Khan's son Ibrahīm Khan buried him at Lahore was one Ali Mardan built for his mother.[4]

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1 Mehrnoush Soroush, "Ali Mardan Khan" *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 2010, under "Articles," www.iranica.com/articles/ali-mardan-khan (accessed November 23, 2010).

2 Ibid.; Syad Muhammad Latif, *Lahore: Its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2005), 153.

3 Soroush, "Ali Mardan Khan."

4 Ibid.; Latif, *Lahore*, 2005, 153; Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of Its History and Development (1526-1858),* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1991), 124; R. Nath, *History of Mughal Architecture* IV, pt. 1 (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications), 332.

Today, the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan is within the premises of Pakistan Railway Workshop, as it has been since British rule, and is approachable only through a long narrow alleyway covered by iron-bars. During British rule, the iron bars were installed over the passage to avoid theft of the iron that was scattered about the railway premises.[5] The tomb is only open on Thursdays, when people from the vicinity come to pay homage to the deceased (who, in their view, is believed to be a pious man). Due to its secluded position, the monument, although mentioned by a few scholars, has received very limited aesthetic appreciation.

The Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan is among the prominent examples of the mausoleums of the nobles at Lahore. The octagonal tomb belongs to the mature phase of Mughal architecture. It competes with the royal tomb of Jahangir and his brother-in-law Asif Khan at Shahdara. With its broad range of decorative techniques and designs it is an important component of the study of Mughal funerary architecture at the end of the first half of the seventeenth century.

Funerary architecture enjoyed a considerable status in the Mughal Period. The Mughal emperors favored sepulchers of both octagon and square plan. The plan of Ali Mardan Khan's tomb is octagonal and not novel but had its origin at the Dome of the Rock built in 691 CE and in the earliest octagonal Abbasid tomb—Qubbat al-Sulaibiya at Samarra of mid-ninth century.[6] Unlike the tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, the two earliest tombs included a passageway for circumambulation of the central structure. Afterwards, the octagonal plan had several variants. One was the storied form, like the Tomb of Öljeitu of 1304 at Sultaniya, and its contemporary, the Tomb of Shah Rukn-i Alam of 1320 at Multan. Among the earliest examples of this plan at the imperial capital, Delhi, under Sultanate rule, was the Tomb of Khan-i Jahan Tilangani of 1368. This tomb became a prototype for the future octagonal Sultanate tombs of the Sayyid and Lodhi dynasties, and found its climax in the Tomb of Sher Shah Suri, at Sasaram. Earlier Mughal octagonal tombs situated at Delhi include the Sabz Burj and Nila Gumbad, both dating from the first half of the sixteenth century; like the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, they have arched openings, and a crowning dome on a drum but no rotating verandah.[7] On the other hand, Delhi's so-called octagonal tombs of the Humayun Period are, in fact, square in plan with chamfered corners.

The Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan has similarities with several Mughal tombs of the later sixteenth/early seventeenth century. The Tomb of Shah Quli Khan of 1574-75 at Narnaul, the Mausoleum of Mumin Hussaini of 1612-13 at Nakodar; the Tomb of Shamsher Khan of 1589-90 at Batala and the octagonal tombs at

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5 According to Akmal Sahib, the site attendant, interview by the author at the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, September 2, 2010.

6 Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 254; K.A.C. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958), 288.

7 Koch, *Mughal Architecture,* 36-37; G. H. R. Tillotson, *Mughal India* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 48. According to both these authors, this style has an Iranian derivation, especially from the late- and post-Timurid Period, as seen at the memorial of Momo Sharifan of 1500 at Ghazni and the Abu Nasr Pasha Mosque at Balkh.

Bahlolpur, all have octagonal plans.

Catherine B. Asher compares the Sher Mandal at Delhi and the Hatha Mahal at Fatehpur Sikri with Persian pavilions, which in her view have similarity, and this style was favored in the second quarter of seventeenth century.[8] While Iranian pavilions are the direct inspiration for Mughal octagonal tombs, an octagonal plan crowned with a dome and a prominent drum and having no rotating verandah or chamfered corners is witnessed at Ottoman Tombs, for example, at the Yeşil Türbe of 1424 at Bursa. Within the architectural boundaries of the Mughal world, octagonal tombs were built on raised octagonal platforms and surrounded by gardens (*chāhār bagh*). At Lahore, the Tomb of Asif Khan built in 1641 at Shahdara, has both an octagonal podium and its original *chāhār bagh*.

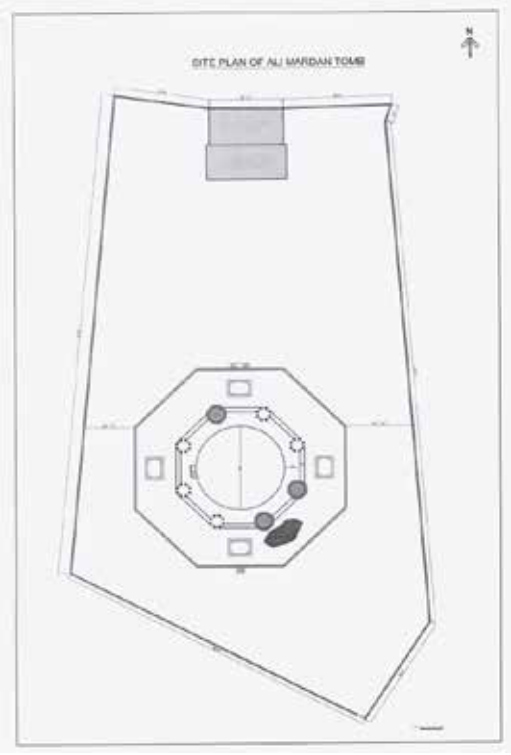

Figure 1. Site plan of Ali Mardan Khan's Tomb at Lahore. Source: By the permission of Mr. Salim-ul-Haq, Director, Department of Archaeology, Lahore, Government of the Punjab.

The Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan was undoubtedly surrounded by a larger garden during the time of Shahjahan; it was part of the extensive gardens along the way to Shalimar Gardens of that time.[9] The present wall enclosing the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan is a later addition and the location of the tomb within its larger garden cannot be calculated.

One original gate to the *chāhār bagh* remains, on the north of the tomb facing the Railway Workshop building (plate 2). An iron grill has permanently closed the gate since the British Period.[10] During Sikh rule (1799-1849), this gateway building served as the residence of Gurdit Singh, Colonel of a Sikh battalion known as the Misārnwāli.[11] The rectangular gate, known as a *chintgarh*, is double-storied with a large three-centered central arch flanked by two smaller arches of the same shape, one above the other (plates 2 and 3).[12] The central arch has an arched opening above the main entrance archway whereas the flanking arches on both levels have rectangular openings. The central arched opening and the upper storey flanking

8 Catherine B. Asher, *The New Cambridge History of India: Architecture of Mughal India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 83-84.

9 Saifur Rahman Dar, *Crafts of Lahore* (Lahore: Punjab Small Industries Corporation, 2010), 56.

10 According to Akmal Sahib, the site attendant, interviewed by the author at the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, September 2, 2010.

11 Latif, *Lahore*, 153.

12 J. P. Vogel, *Tile-Mosaics of the Lahore Fort* (Karachi: Pakistan Publications, 1920), 58.

Plate 2. Gateway to the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, facing north.

Plate 3. Rear façade of the gateway to the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, facing south.

arches have "patterned stucco vaults generating lozenge-shaped *muqarnas*."[13] This is a typical nesting of arches as found in other Mughal gateways of the mid-seventeenth century at Lahore.

The façade of the gateway is similar in its architectural elements and surface decoration to the gateway to the Tomb of Asif Khan at Shahdara near Lahore built in 1645 (plate 4),[14] the Gulabi Bagh gateway of 1655 and Chauburji at Lahore of 1646.[15] Identical alcoves on both sides of the interior gateway are on raised platforms, and are deprived of almost all decoration; they are similar to, but smaller than, ones on the entrance gateway of the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore of 1673 that also have stucco *muqarnas* with traces of ornamentation. The roof of the gateway is approachable on the east and the west by staircases that are now in a damaged state.

No traces of causeways or pathways, or any fountains of the garden are visible on the surface today. The Tomb is built on an octagonal platform with flights of stairs on the north and south to approach the platform (figure 2). On the plinth level, on each of the four cardinal directions, there is a water tank (figure 3). There is limited space on the sides of the tanks that parallel the tomb structure and edge of the platform. As compared to the huge structure, the plinth area is relatively small and congested. The dried tanks have lost their plastered coating and no evidence for a fountain can be detected. The floor of the platform was paved with kiln-burnt bricks but only a few of these peep out from among the bushes now growing there.

Each side of the octagonal tomb has a four-centered arch opening (figure 4) divided into two sections; the lower section has a pointed archway, with radiating voussoirs, for entrance, and the upper one has an arched opening. The *muqarnas* of the arch has fragmentary fresco paintings while the area below them has lost its core. A shallow parapet (43 feet, 1 inch above plinth level) is devoid of any decorative element, unlike the embattled parapets of Sultanate octagonal tombs. At its lower exterior construction, the structure is slightly battered.

On each corner of the octagon rising above the parapet are small octagonal kiosks or *chattris* (of which only three survive) consisting of an octagonal base, pillar supports, arched openings, a projecting *chajja* (eaves) on brackets above and a high rising cupola (figure 5 and plate 5). The cupola of the kiosk is constructed by means of the trabeate system, with corbelled bricks in concentric circle (plate 6). They are

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13 According to Koch (*Mughal Architecture,* 70), the pseudo-structural network system generating lozenge-shaped *muqarnas* is a typical feature of the Jahangir Period and was inspired by Safavid architecture, which derived from the Timurid arch-netting of the phase of transition.

14 R. Nath, "The Transitional Phase of Colour and Design, Jehāngīr, 1605-1627 A.D." in *History of Mughal Architecture:* (Lahore: Nadeem Book House, 1994), 229, says that there are subsidiary gateways at Asif Khan's Tomb on the north and the west but now no traces for a passage or entrance remains on this northern gateway and for this reason it is considered as a garden pavilion. The western side has a three-arched single-storied pavilion identical to the damaged pavilion on the east, rather than being a subsidiary gateway.

15 See Masooma Abbas, "*Islimi*: Its Development In Muslim Architecture and Book Illumination" (PhD diss., Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, 2008), plate 328, for Chauburji gateway; Ihsan H. Nadiem, *Lahore: A Glorious Heritage* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publication, 2006), 153, for Gulabi Bagh gateway.

Plate 4. Gateway to the Tomb of Asif Khan at Shahdara, built in 1645.

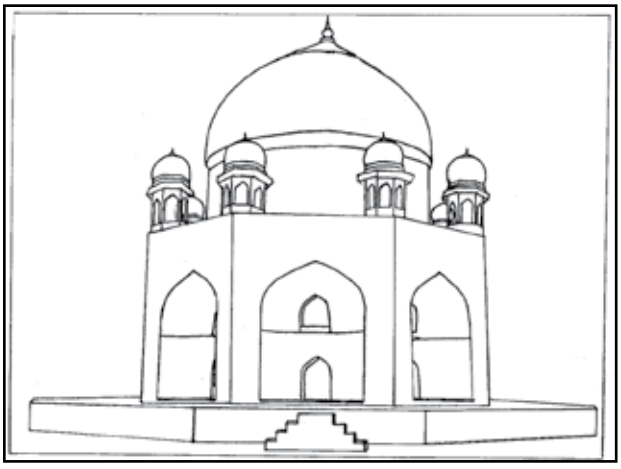

Figure 2. Front elevation of Ali Mardan Khan's Tomb. Drawing by the author.

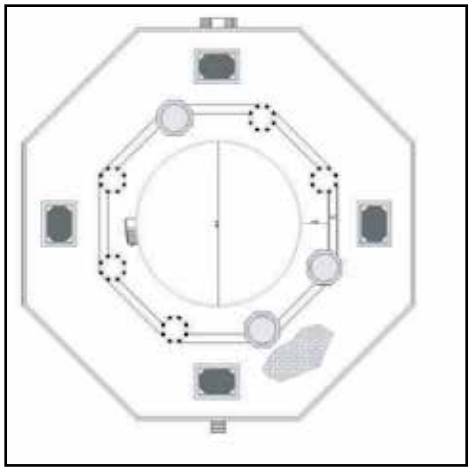

Figure 3. Ground floor of Ali Mardan Khan's Tomb. Source: by the permission of Mr. Salim-ul-Haq, Director, Department of Archaeology, Lahore, Government of the Punjab.

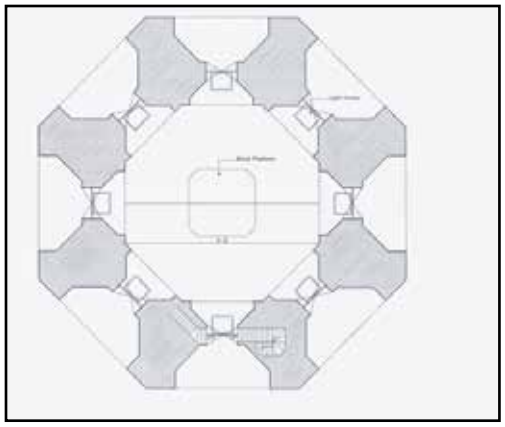

Figure 4. Ground floor of Ali Mardan's Tomb. Source: By the permission of Mr. Salim-ul-Haq, Director, Department of Archaeology, Lahore, Government of the Punjab.

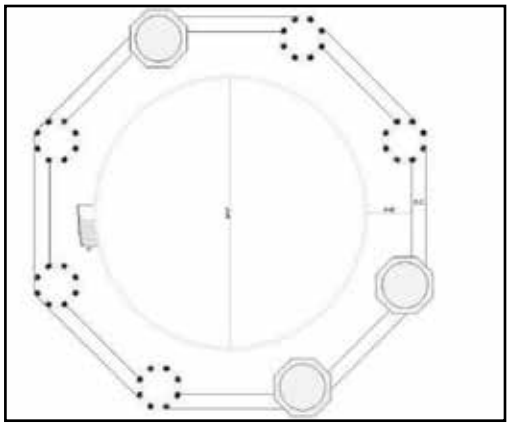

Figure 5. Roof plan of Ali Mardan Khan's Tomb. Source: By the permission of Mr. Salim-ul-Haq, Director, Department of Archaeology, Lahore, Government of the Punjab.

similar to the first Islamic shallow domes built at Quwwat al-Islam Mosque of 1220 at Delhi. These octagonal *chattris* have cut brick work on their bases and traces of fragmentary fresco painting on the plastered exterior that give evidence of a once attractive architectural decorative element. The fresco designs are stylized but simplified and belong to the decorative vocabulary prevailing at the end of the first half of seventeenth century. These *chattris* at each angle break the monotony of the huge drum; their shape is in harmony with the dome.

The kiosk or *chattri* is an element utilized in the Muslim architecture of India since the Sultanate Period. According to R. Nath, such kiosks were the outcome of experimentation at the Tomb of Telingani of 1368-1369 at Delhi, where they were found initially, not as small kiosks, but as cupolas. They were later found in abundance at Kalan Masjid (1370-1371) and Khirki Mosque (c. 1375), both at

Plate 5. Kiosk rising above each octagonal corner.

Plate 6. Interior of the cupola of the small kiosk.

Delhi, of Tughlaq style.[16] It seems more appropriate that the ones at the tomb of Ali Mardan Khan had direct inspiration from the kiosks of the tombs of Sayyids and Lodhis because these type of *chattris* are employed for most of their octagonal and square mausoleums at Delhi.[17] The structure of the kiosk resembles both the crowning structure of a minaret, the earliest seen on the minaret of Ibn-i Tulun Mosque of 878, at Cairo, and, closer to home, the pillared and domical pavilion of graves which were found in the vicinity of the Tomb of Telingani at Delhi. These kiosks provide a happy fusion of an indigenous element with an Iranian version of an octagonal tomb construction.

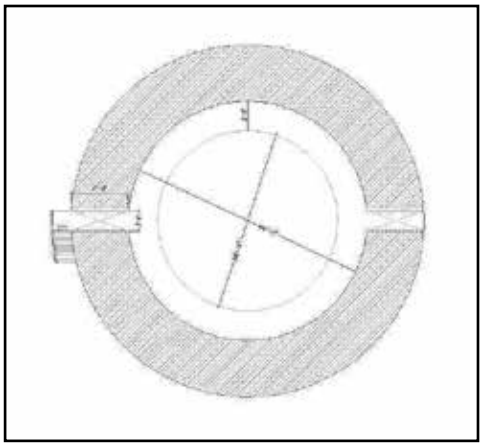

Figure 6. Plan of double dome of Ali Mardan Khan's Tomb. Source: By the permission of Mr. Salim-ul-Haq, Director, Department of Archaeology, Lahore, Government of the Punjab.

The exterior of the lofty drum has stairs leading to its openings on the east (figure 5), which is now closed, and the west, where the inner lower shell and the rising high outer shell of the double dome can be examined (figure 6). The diameter of the drum is 200 ft and the height of the drum and dome is 60 ft. The total height of the facade up to the parapet is almost equal to the height of the dome and drum if one includes a measurement for a missing finial.

The domical construction is massive, grand and disproportionate as compared to the structure below. The tomb would have been better proportioned if the height of the drum had been decreased by four to five feet. In shape, it is different from the almost contemporary dome and drum of the Tomb of Asif Khan at Shahdara.The dome and high drum of Ali Mardan's tomb are similar in proportion to those at the Tomb of Mulla Hasan Shirazi, belonging to Mongol Period at the beginning of fourteenth century, at Sultaniya, Iran.[18] Another element of the latter tomb similar to one at Ali Mardan's tomb is that the drum and dome are almost equal in height to the lower structure. While comparing this Iranian fourteenth-century structure with our seventeenth-century Mughal tomb it should be noted that the absence of *chattris* at the former makes the drum and dome stand isolated on the skyline and increases the feeling of height and elevation but the presence of kiosks at the latter provides a proportionate and aesthetic appearance.

A petal motif runs around the top of the drum giving the impression of blind arcades with stalactite segments in plaster stucco (plate 7). It imparts a feeling

16 R. Nath, *History of Sultanate Architecture* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1978), 85; Satish Grover, *The Architecture of India: Islamic (727-1707 A.D.)* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1981), 46.

17 Ibid. See plates LXXIX, LXXXVI, LXXXVIII, and XCI, for kiosks of Sayyid and Lodhi period.

18 Dominique Clevenot, *Ornament and Decoration in Islamic Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 59, plate 72; the difference of Mulla Hasan Shirazi's tomb is that it has no kiosks and has a square plan with chamfered corners.

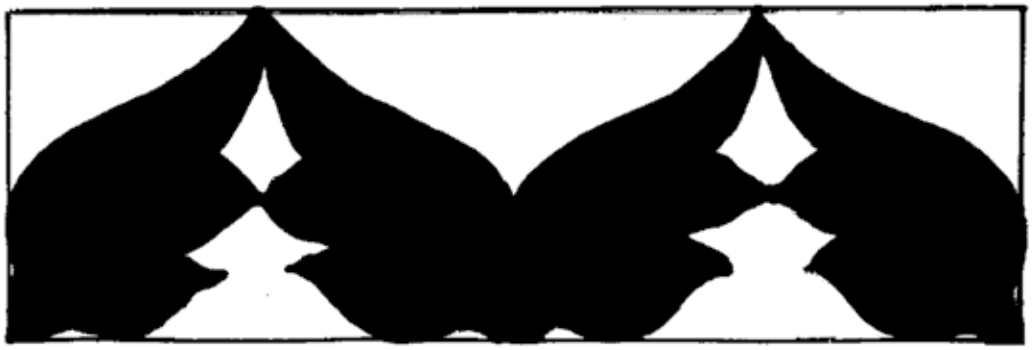

Figure 7. Split leaves joined face-to-face with minimal appearance of the vine. This design on the neck of the dome runs all-around in black marble inlay. Drawing by the author.

that a stylized lotus is holding up the dome. This is similar to the pronounced *mahapadma* motif at the neck and base of the dome of the Tombs of Golconda near Hyderabad, Deccan.[19] Above the drum are holes, most likely pigeonholes, at the base of the dome. They are now partially destroyed but some still accommodate birds.

The surface decoration of the dome and drum has been largely destroyed revealing its underlying fabric of kiln-burnt bricks and plastered surfaces. However, there are a few traces of the dome's original cover of white marble inlayed with

Plate 7. Decorative element at the top of the drum.

Plate 8. Fragmentary design on the neck of the dome.

19 Grover, *The Architecture of India*, 118.

Plate 9. Interior hall of the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan.

other stone (plate 8). The design around the lower edge of the dome is comprised of two superimposed vines with inverted split leaves (figure 7). The pronounced sharp edges of the split leaves were helpful in determining the exact design in the fragmentary remains. Impression of this same design on the overall surface of the dome shows that the entire dome was covered with patterns in inlay with only a minimum area above the drum unornamented. The slightly raised area around the apex of the dome suggests that it had an inverted *padmakosa*, an indigenous element present on almost every Mughal domical construction since the Sultanate Period.

Like the exterior, the interior

Plate 10. Underground chamber of Ali Mardan Tomb.

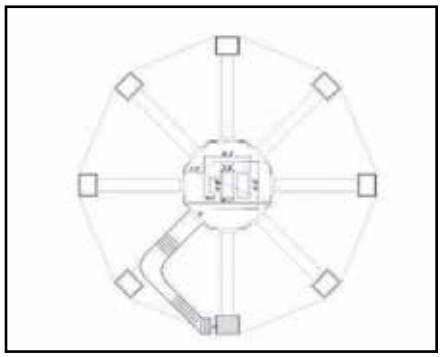

Figure 8. Plan of the basement of Ali Mardan's Tomb. Source: By the permission of Mr. Salim-ul-Haq, Director, Department of Archaeology, Lahore, Government of the Punjab.

of the tomb is also in a poor state. The main floor is entered from the archway on the south; the seven other archways have ducts opening from the underground burial chamber that block the entrances. An area in the centre of the octagonal hall show where the original raised platform with a cenotaph would have stood (plate 9).

Directly beneath the cenotaph area is the underground burial chamber (plate 10), approached by stairs near the southern entrance on the left. The underground burial chamber is in a better condition than the hall above. On a raised platform are three graves, the central and right one are of adult size, the one on the left for a child. The middle one has Ali Mardan Khan's name while the other two have no inscriptions (plate 10). The tombstone has verses in Persian

"امیرے صاحب دولت مشیرے صاحب حشمت

ثنا گـوے علی و مرد حق آگاہ مرداں خاں

سفر چوں کرد زیں دنیاے دوں سوے بقا آخر

ندا آمد بتاریخش کہ عالی جاہ مرداں خاں"

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"amīrē sāhib-i daulat, mushīrē sāhib-i hishmat
sanāgōy-i 'Alī u mard-i haqq-āgāh Mardān Khān
safar chun kard zīn dunyā-yi dūn sūy-i baqā ākhir
nidā āmad ba tārīkhash ki 'ālī-jāh Mardān Khān (= 1066)"

A commander of great good fortune, a counselor of magnificence,
A praiser of Ali, a man aware of God, Mardan Khan,
When he traveled from this nether world toward eternity
A cry came as the date, saying, He of exalted position, Mardan Khan.[20]

It is said that the other adult grave is of Ali Mardan Khan's mother.[21] The roof of this underground chamber has *muqarnas* created with plaster stucco and embellished with stylized and simplified floral patterns and acanthus leaves (plate 11).

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20 My thank to Wheeler M. Thackston for the transcription, transliteration, and translation of this tombstone and the reading of its *abjad* date.

21 According to Akmal Sahib, the site attendant, interview by the author at the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan September 2, 2010.

Plate 11: Ceiling of the underground burial Chamber.

Plate 12. View of the inner surface of the dome and arches of the burial hall.

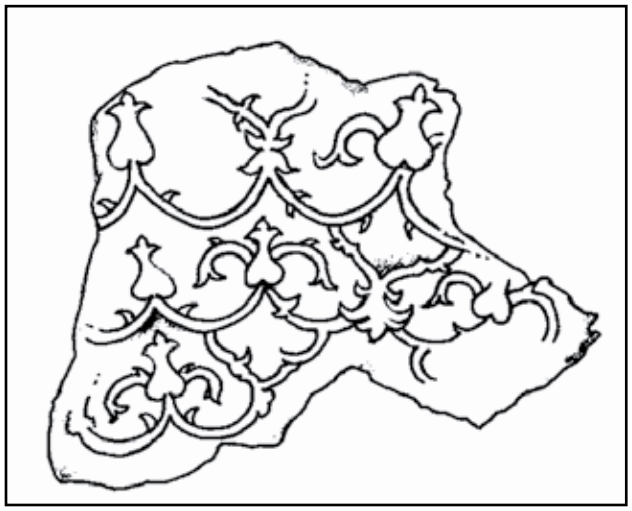

Figure 9. The remaining decoration of the interior dome. Schematized paired acanthus facing each other attached to thick vines with split ends. Drawing by the author.

Seven arch-shaped ducts lighting the burial area lead to rectangular openings above placed in front of every doorway, except the south one (figure 8 and plate 10). However, this is an unusual and awkward arrangement not found in other Mughal monuments at Lahore.

The main burial hall has lost surface plaster from its walls and also its flooring (plates 9 and 12). From the inside, each side of the octagon has two arch niches, one above the other. The lower ones contain the entrance ways while the upper ones have small arched windows within recessed arches that illuminate the interior. The octagonal shape of the construction offers an easy phase of transition from walls to dome with pendentives (plate 12).

The only remains of decoration in the interior are two patches of incised plaster stucco on the dome (plate 13 and figure 9). The design on this stucco is similar to the remnants of stuccowork on the inner surface of the dome of Asif Khan Tomb, where the design can be more easily examined. Both show a European influenced lattice pattern comprised of acanthus leaves, either facing each other or in a clustered form, and

Plate 13. Remains of incised stucco work on the inner surface of the dome.

broad vine motifs. According to Percy Brown, this design is inspired by Italian or Sicilian textile.[22] This same motif was employed for ornamentation at the Badshahi Mosque at Lahore. This is the only stuccowork that survives at the Ali Mardan tomb. Fires frequently set to clear the bushes growing on the premises in modern times have damaged the ceiling.

Almost all the mediums utilized for the ornamentation of seventeenth century Mughal monuments are present at the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan: faience mosaic, fresco paintings, inlay work and stucco. The missing cenotaph probably was made of marble in inlay or carving. The significance of this tomb lies in the fact that it amalgamates indigenous Indian, Iranian, and European decorative elements. It affirms that by the end of the first half of seventeenth century the Mughal style of decoration was an outcome of a synthesis of various styles, all present at this tomb.

At Ali Mardan Khan's Tomb there is a uniformity in the ornamental style throughout the structure, a uniformity not found in some other Mughal monuments of the second quarter of the seventeenth century at Lahore, such as the Wazir Khan Mosque. At the Mosque tile mosaic has designs inclining towards

22 Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period*, 4th ed., (Bombay: Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1956), 107.

Iranian inspired *islimi-khata'i* but most of the fresco paintings have a dominant Mughal decorative vocabulary, as influenced by European decorative patterns.[23]

Mughal ornamental vocabulary was adopted from Safavid artistic traditions of the first half of sixteenth century. It incorporated both Timurid and Safavid *islimi-khata'i*.[24] *Islimi* enjoyed a prominent status in Mughal art of the second half of sixteenth century and first quarter of seventeenth century. From the beginning of Mughal art ornament received indigenous naturalistic influence as well. Naturalistic Indian trees were depicted with fruits and foliage especially in the Akbar Period.[25] These were subordinated to other subjects in the second half of sixteenth century, but gradually in the first quarter of seventeenth century, due to Jahangir's interest in naturalism, this secondary theme emerged as a separate part of Mughal decorative repertoire. In the Shahjahan period, during the second quarter of the seventeenth century, single plant motifs rapidly attained a prominent status and were utilized in every decorative situation.

Ali Mardan Khan's Tomb portrays not only *islimi-khata'i* and single plant motif but also the newly developed Mughal decorative style; dominantly inspired by European patterns such as naturalistic floral motifs, lyre-shape designs, acanthus motifs, and discontinuous cartouches.[26] The Mughal decorative style is, in fact, a mixture of all three influences: Iranian, indigenous Indian, and European, and

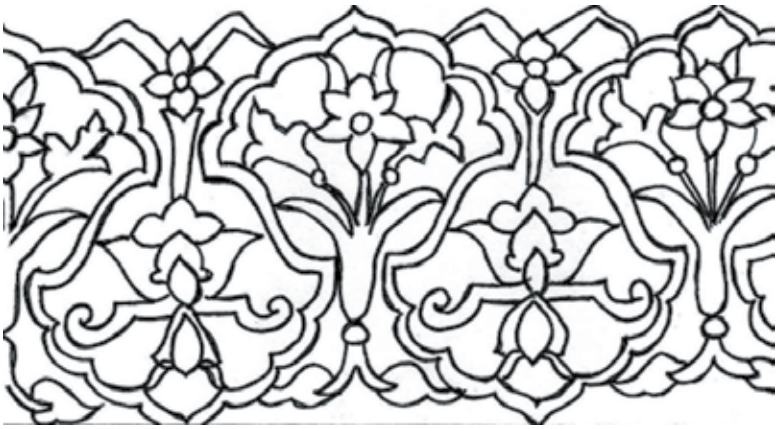

Figure 10. Cloud collar motif filled with acanthus on a lyre-shaped pedestal and vases with flowers. Drawing by the author.

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23 *Islimi* has etymologically a Persian background. This word is derived from the Arabic word *islami* that means in the Islamic manner and *khata'i* (in the Chinese manner) is a branch of *islimi* comprised of flower, bud and leaf motif on vine executed with the same *islimi* principles. These words appear in sixteenth century Safavid treatises on painting, see W.M. Thackston, trans., *A Century of Princes: Sources on Timurid History and Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1989), 381; under "*Muqarnas*/ ArchNet/Digital Library," http://archnet.org/library/documents/one-document.jsp?document_id=11281 (accessed October 4 2010); John Richardson, *Dictionary Persian, Arabic and English* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1929), 92; Sadiqi Beg Afshar, *Qanun al-Suwwar,* lines 76-79, in Yves Porter, *Painters, Paintings and Books: An Essay on Indo-Persian Technical Literature*, *12-19th Centuries*, trans. S. Butani (New Delhi: Manohar Publivcations, 1994), Annex 2, 109; Qadi Ahmed Qomi, *Golestan-e-Honar o Tazkere-ye Khoshnevisan va Naqqashan,* trans. V. Minorsky as *Calligraphers and Painters*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1959), 178.

24 Abbas, "*Islimi*", 110-111.

25 Clevenot, *Ornament and Decoration in Islamic Architecture*, 140, plate 196.

26 Barbara Brend, *Islamic Art* (London: British Museum Press, 1991), 212.

Plate 14. Faience mosaic panel from the façade of the gateway of Ali Mardan Khan's Tomb.

by close observation of the remnants of ornamentation at the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan, every motif can be singled out here.

The decoration of the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan shows this hybrid Mughal Decorative style in its mature phase. The soffits of the arches of the façade of the gateway and its interior and the eight arched openings of the Tomb structure have fresco paintings now in a vulnerable condition. The fresco paintings of the gateway have especially faded due to the atmospheric effects and smoke but the mosaic work is still in an examinable condition, those even though they too are gradually falling apart. Faience mosaic is today only found at the entrance gate whereas the only remaining visible exterior decoration at the tomb is the fresco painting on the *muqarnas* segments of the four-centered arches. The mosaic work of the façade of the gateway facing the north is in a better state as compared to the one facing south; otherwise, the patterns are the same except for some variety in background colors (plate 2).

A faience mosaic border of cloud collar motifs frames the gateway on three sides (figure 10). Cloud collar is a Chinese motif popular among the Mughal artists. This motif is reciprocal (first upright then upside-down) and filled with naturalistic single plant motifs, acanthus leaves and lyre shapes. The area between and around the central arch and the flanking arches are all covered with faience mosaic panels,

Plate 15. Faience mosaic panels with varied composition on the façade of the gateway.

Plate 16. *Islimi-khata'i* on the spandrels of the central arch of the gateway

Plate 17. Faience mosaic from the lower side arches of the south façade of the gateway of Ali Mardan Khan's tomb.

cartouches and borders. Square and rectangular panels enclose vases in arches with floral motifs again placed on lyre-shaped pedestals (plates 14 and 15).

The vase was another popular Timurid theme, although vases have been depicted in Islamic art since the Umayyad Period, notably at the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem. During the Timurid Period, the vases were rendered flatly and filled with vine and split leaf motif (similar ones are still used as an ornament for surface decoration today). Almost all important Mughal monuments of the seventeenth century at Lahore have vases with springing naturalistic foliage, flowers, and blossoms called *guldasta* composition.[27] Indigenous or Iranian inspired floral motifs were depicted, but gradually floral and leaf motif of European origin attained primary position. The mosaic panels at the gateway to the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan are similar in design and layout to ones at Chauburji monument in Lahore but have more Europeanized decorative motifs.[28]

One of the Ali Mardan panels shows a vase placed in an arch that has an angular profile with vine and acanthus leaves in its spandrels (plate 14). The vase has paired split leaf filling and is placed on a pedestal between smaller floral bunches. The curved parenthesis-shape pedestal is a European motif of the sixteenth century.[29] Other panels of ornamentation, relatively smaller or horizontally oriented, show various other vase themes and single plant motifs. Stylized acanthus leaf motif is again dominant and utilized for contours of the cartouches, as a leaf for floral bunches and, in some instances, replaces the split leaf motif (plate 15). The spandrels of the central arch on both sides of the gateway have the same design except that the north or front side has a white background

27 R. Nath, *History of Mughal Architecture*, 638.

28 Chauburji gateway has vase theme panels in faience mosaic on both sides of the double storied flanking arches of the central arch.

29 Brend, *Islamic Art*, 212.

Figure 11. Lotus with an inner pomegranate on a lyre-shaped pedestal, from the spandrel of the central arch of the gateway. Drawing by the author.

whereas the façade facing south has a yellow one. The central motif on the spandrel shows *islimi* comprised of blue paired split leaves joined back-to-back with orange flaps on the scrolling vine (plate 16). The *islimi* pattern is superimposed on a *khata'i* design of lotuses and serrated leaves on a more delicate vine. The central lotus is of special interest as it is placed on a lyre-shaped pedestal (figure 11). This lotus contains an inner pomegranate; the design was inspired by a Safavid lotus found at Isfahan, at the Mosque of Sheikh Lutfullah built between 1602-1618 and the Mosque of the Imam (1611-1629) that were also in faience mosaic.

On the south side of the gateway, decoration on one of the lower arches remains (plate 17). The vines of this spandrel have split ends with jagged contours that grow like creepers towards the corners of the spandrel. A similar vine contour was also seen on the archway of Chauburji gateway at Lahore, also in faience mosaic.[30] This style seems to be an inspiration from contemporary designs of Mughal carpets.[31] The two vines are joined at the upper point and are connected at their waists by a straight line, another European motif of the sixteenth century.[32] The line serves as a pedestal for a small vase.

Plate 18. Remains of fresco painting on the arched recesses of Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan.

30 This design is found on the spandrel of the central archway of Chauburji gateway.

31 See Daniel Walker, *Flowers Underfoot: Indian Carpets of the Mughal Era* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), figures 39-40.

32 See Owen Jones, *Grammar of Ornament* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 2001), plate 8.

Plate 19. *Muqarnas* segment from the arched recess of the octagonal Tomb with sunflower as its centre of interest.

The fresco painting on the gateway is very similar to that on the arched recesses of the octagonal tomb, and, even though both are in poor condition, the decorative vocabulary can be examined in the *muqarnas* segments (plate 18). The color scheme used in the *muqarnas* units is rich with contrasts of bright tones and is executed with great finesse. Each segment shows precise minute details and has a different composition. Floral motifs such as lilies, tulips, chrysanthemum, carnation, hibiscus, peonies, daisies and roses; acanthus leaf motif on delicate vine and lyre-shaped pedestals are part of the ornamental repertoire. Some *muqarnas* segments show indigenous flowers and simplified stylized floral shape depicted with keen observation. In other segments, still life objects and feathery split leaf motif can be detected.

Plate 20. *Abr* (cloud) motif on the *muqarnas* segment of the four-centered arch.

One of the segments shows a scrolling vine with *loti* flower (a hybrid form of sunflower and lotus) at its centre with delicate vines shooting from it carrying lilies, hibiscus and peonies with leaves (plate 19). A similar composition is also seen on

the spandrels of the central arch of the façade of the Badshahi Mosque of 1673, at Lahore. Other larger *muqarnas* segments have the same layout but with different combinations of flowers. This design follows typical Iranian *khata'i* layout—with floral and leaf motifs placed at different points on the vine—but the vine in the Mughal Decorative Style is intermittent whereas Iranian *khata'i* has a continuous scrolling vine.

Other painted *muqarnas* segments at the tomb of Ali Mardan Khan have lyre-shapes composed of acanthus leaves that serve as a pedestal from which flowers like lilies and tulips, leaves and blossoms spring. Some of the smaller *muqarnas* segments hold only a rose in the centre, attached to paired discontinuous vine ending in flowers. Dishes with fruits, a local motif, are also placed on paired acanthus leaves with vine.

One unusual layout on a *muqarnas* segment shows candles placed on acanthus leaves and acanthus vines shoot from a pomegranate that, in turn, has a floral base. This composition is again similar to European ornamental designs and is a type of decorative later found at the Badshahi Mosque.

A final painted motif on the *muqarnas* segment of the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan is a convoluted *abr* (cloud) motif (plate 20). The cloud motif is of Chinese origin and entered in the Islamic decorative vocabulary in the thirteenth century with the advent of the Mongols. It was a major decorative motif of Islamic ornament during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Mughal cloud motif of the second half of sixteenth and first quarter of the seventeenth century was generally similar to the cloud motif found in Safavid book illumination of the first half of sixteenth century. However, the *abr* found in the *muqarnas* segment at Ali Mardan Khan's Tomb is similar to Safavid ones at Isfahan and has the same ribbon-like configuration as seen on the entrance façade of the Mosque of the Imam of 1611-29, at Isfahan in *haft rangi*. On the other hand, the cloud band found at the Wazir Khan Mosque of 1634 at Lahore is similar to the cloud bands in Safavid book illumination of the first half of the sixteenth century under Shah Tahmasp. However, at Lahore, the cloud motif is not superimposed on vine and split leaf design but has naturalistic flowers with vine and leaves.

After the Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan Mughal mausoleums with such qualities are not found at Lahore. Even after witnessing unsympathetic treatment by the Sikhs and the British this tomb is a complete example of Mughal Decorative style. Unfortunately, this monument, which displays all the varied ornamental styles of Mughal art is in a state of almost terminal decline.

* All photographs are by the author. My great thanks to Mr. Salim-ul-Haq, Director, Department of Archaeology Lahore for providing excellent plans of Ali Mardan Khan's Tomb.