

The Decoration of the Mosque of ‘Alī Hajwiyrī Dātā Darbār in Lahore

by Samina Nasim

Lahore, an ancient and famous city of Punjab province, was the home of the sufi master Sa‘yid Alī bin Uthmān al- Hajwiyrī, today popularly known as Hadrat Dātā Ganj Bukhsh ‘Alī Hajwiyrī. He was born in 1009 CE at Ghaznī, Afghanistan, settled in Lahore in 1039 and died here in 1072.¹ He was well versed in all the religious, spiritual, moral and educational dimensions of Islam, such as *tafsir*, *hadith*, and *fiqah* (Muslim law). He is best known for his book *Kashf al-Mahjub*.²

The first mosque on the site was ordered built by the saint himself.³ It was built according to the residential mosque plan, that is, the construction was done with a simple flat roof instead of a dome.⁴ This style was adopted for the early mosques of the Arabs during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad^{SA}. A new mosque of Hadrat Dātā Ganj Bukhsh was built on the site of the original mosque in 1826.⁵ Domes were added to it in 1867 by Gulzar Sadhu Kashmiri.⁶ A watercolour painting by Ustad Miran Bakhsh (1877-1944) shows the shrine of the saint in the foreground and the *panch mukhi* mosque behind it, with its five white fluted or ribbed domes, five multifoil

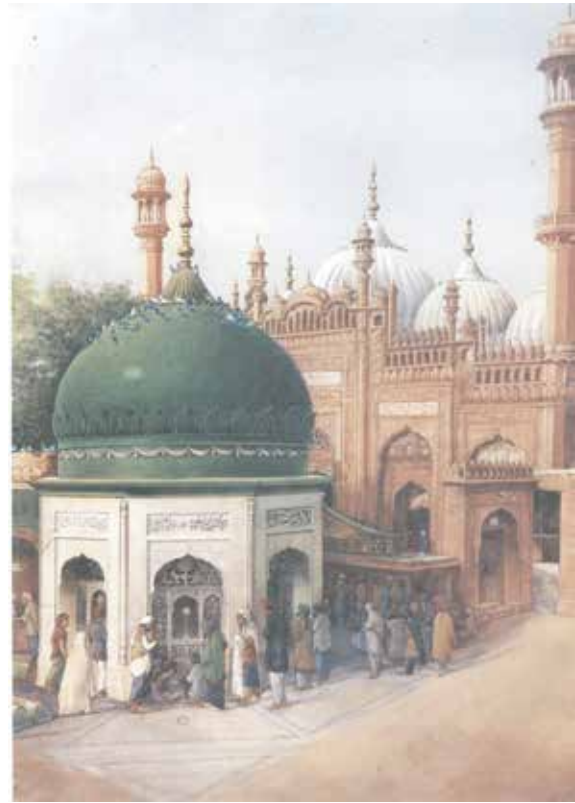


Plate 1. The former shrine and mosque of ‘Alī Hajwiyrī. Watercolour by Ustad Miran Bakhsh (1877-1944). Source: *Lahore Colours* (Lahore: Alhamra Books 1997), 11, with the permission of The Lahore Arts Council.

¹ <http://www.zyworld.com/slam33/lah5.htm> (accessed Dec. 27, 2007).

² <http://www.islamicbookstore.com/b5204.html> (accessed Feb. 2, 2011).

³ Gafer Shehzad, “Dātā Darbār Complex,” in Urdu (Lahore: Adrak Publication, 2004), 18, 25.

⁴ Ibid., 26, 30.

⁵ Nazir Ahmed Chaudhry, *A Short History of Lahore and Some of its Monuments* (Lahore: Sang-e- Meel Publications, 2000), 52.

⁶ Shehzad, 30.



Plate 2. Exterior of the new mosque and the courtyard with tall minarets

arches on the facade with the center one larger and higher than the others, and two minarets (plate 1).

This type of *panch mukhi* mosque façade was first built in South Asia during the Sayyid and Lodi periods and became popular in the Mughal period for religious architecture. In Lahore Mariyam Zamani Mosque built in 1613, Wazir Khan Mosque built in 1632, Mian Mir Mosque built during the Shahjahan period, all have five domes. These three mosques of the Mughal period, however, were built without ribbed domes.⁷ The Mahabat Khan Mosque in Peshawar, built in the Shahjahan period, does have ribbed domes. The minarets of the nineteenth century, as shown in the watercolour, most closely resemble the minarets of the Wazir Khan Mosque built in 1632. Thus the nineteenth century Dātā Darbār Mosque was an amalgam of Mughal features.

Constructional development of the Dātā Darbār Mosque Complex continued until the late twentieth century, at which time the old mosque was totally demolished. The whole complex was reconstructed by the Auqaf Department of Lahore based on a design by Naqvi and Sadiqi Company, Islamabad, submitted in February 1980. Construction began on 2 July 1981 and was completed on 28 November 1989 (plate 2).⁸

The rebuilt ‘Alī Hajwiyri Mosque is only twenty-two years old, and while

⁷ Ihsan H. Nadiem, *Built Heritage of Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publication, 2002) picture reference, 146.

⁸ Shehzad, 30, 50, 53, 55.

many scholars have offered comments on the life history of Hadrat Dātā Ganj Bukhsh ‘Alī Hajwiyārī, little information about the new shrine and mosque has been published. One study, in Urdu, by Gafer Shahzad gives a life history of Hadrat Dātā Ganj Bukhsh ‘Alī Hajwiyārī and describes various stages of the mosque construction. Basic information on the shrine mosque and its decorative techniques are also briefly mentioned in *The Crafts of Lahore*, edited by S. R. Dar.⁹ Neither author has discussed in detail the architectural and surface decoration of the mosque or studied the design patterns.

The architectural design and the variety of decorative techniques found at Dātā Darbār have had a great influence on the decoration of modern religious architecture of Lahore. The mosque is not designed in one style only but is a fusion of different techniques and influences. Most notable, it shows a new development of constructive design for the sanctuary that breaks from the traditional use of the dome. The Pakistani architects thus break with traditional vernacular architecture as used in the nineteenth-century mosques (plate 2).

The Dātā Darbār complex is located in a congested residential area of the city of Lahore. To the north and south of it are Zaildar Road and Darbār Road; on the west is Bilal Ganj Road; and on the east, Dātā Darbār extends up to the main road called Lower Mall Road (figure 1).

The rectangular mosque complex is a double-storied construction. It is designed according to the principles of an open plan based on two distinct parts, a prayer hall and open court area surrounded with porticos. An open plan is the primary Islamic plan for mosques. The mosque of Ibn Tulūn, Cairo begun in 876 CE and completed in 879 CE, and the Great Mosque of Cordoba first built in 784-786 CE, are admirable examples of such a plan.¹⁰ As climates of Pakistan and the Arab countries are similar, most Pakistani mosques, too, usually have vast open courtyards in their plans, as does the Dātā Darbār Mosque. In order to sustain the normal rituals of prayer, a memorial mosque was usually built close to the tomb or mausoleum of a saint.

The ground floor of the complex (figure 2) consists of an *itqaf* hall for the followers who say prayers day and night in the last ten days of the Islamic month of Ramadan, a *sama* hall for the performers who sing the songs of appreciation of God with the help of musicians, an exhibition hall, *langer khana* or kitchen for the poor, *musafir khana* or rooms for pilgrims coming from out of the city or country, administration offices and ablution areas.

The first floor of Dātā Darbār (figure 1) has three imposing composed courtyards leading to the mosque arranged in a symmetrical line. From east to west, the first courtyard is a garden (*chahārbāgh*) influenced by Mughal architecture; the second courtyard features the tomb of Hadrat Dātā Ganj Bukhsh

⁹ Saifur Rehman Dar, *Crafts of Lahore* (Lahore: Punjab Small Industries, 2010), 232-238.

¹⁰ http://archnet.org/library/dictionary/entry.jsp?entry_id=DIA0150 (accessed Feb 5, 2008) <http://www.islamicity.com/Culture/MOSQUES/Europe/TMp105b.htm> (accessed Feb 5, 2008). J.G. Davies, *Temples Churches and Mosque* (England: Basil Blackwell Oxford, 1982), 121.

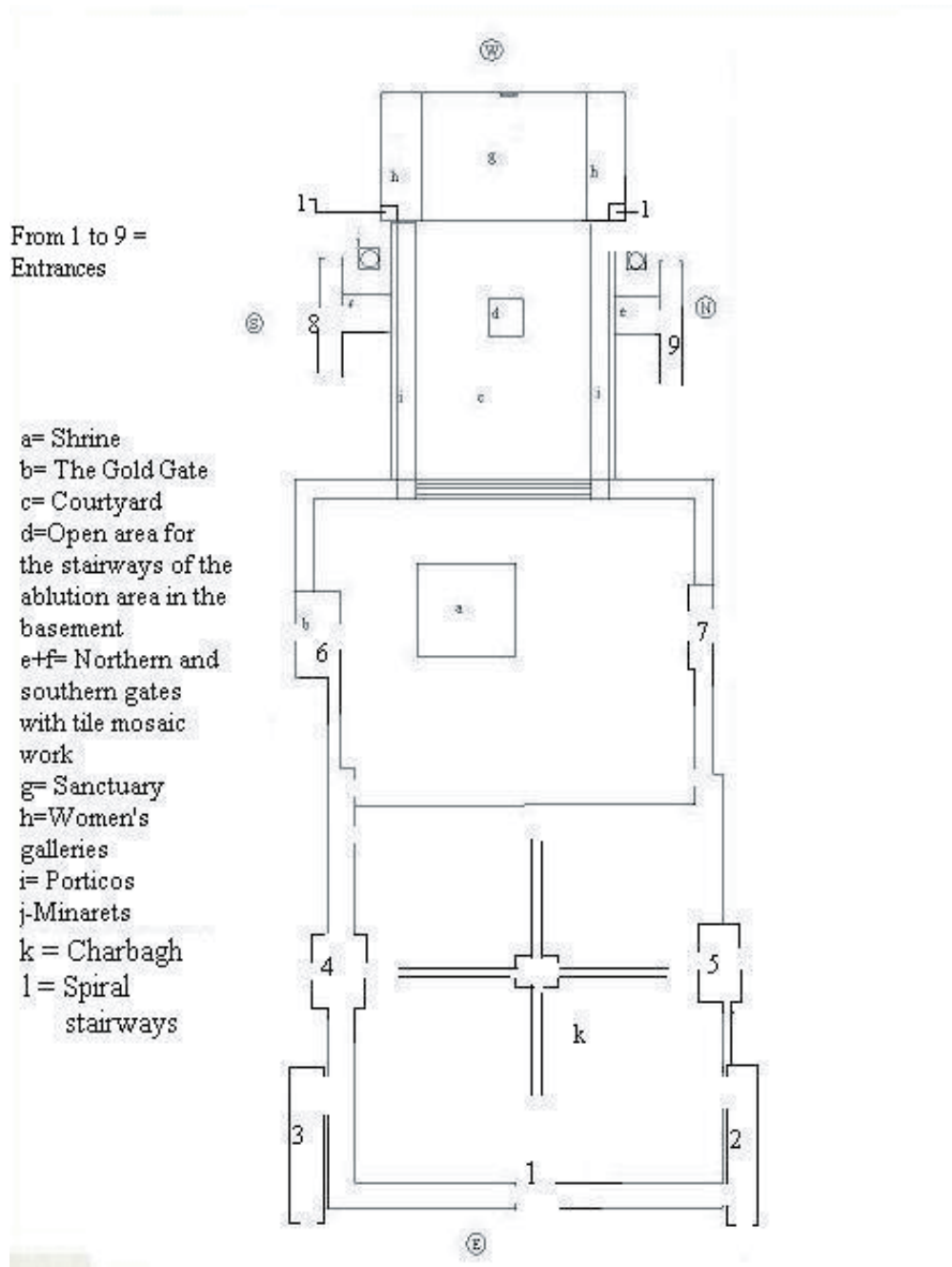


Figure 1. Plan of the first floor of the Dātā Darbār Mosque Complex showing the nine entrances.

and is paved with white marble slabs made in Pakistan; and the third open court area is the courtyard of the new mosque. The courtyards are surrounded by vaulted porticos. Two minarets are on either side of the sanctuary of the mosque on the west side.

There are nine gates of the walled complex, as shown on figure 1, nos. 1-9.

- a = Sama hall
- b = Gents ablution area
- c = Seminar hall
- d = Library
- e = Madrassa
- f = Offices
- g = Kitchen for
poors (gents)
- h = Kitchen for
poors (ladies)
- i = Shrine
- j = Gold gate
- k = *Itqaf* hall
- l = Ablution area
- m = *Musafir Khana*
(stay for out
siders come
from out of the
city)
- n = Minarets
- o = Ramps

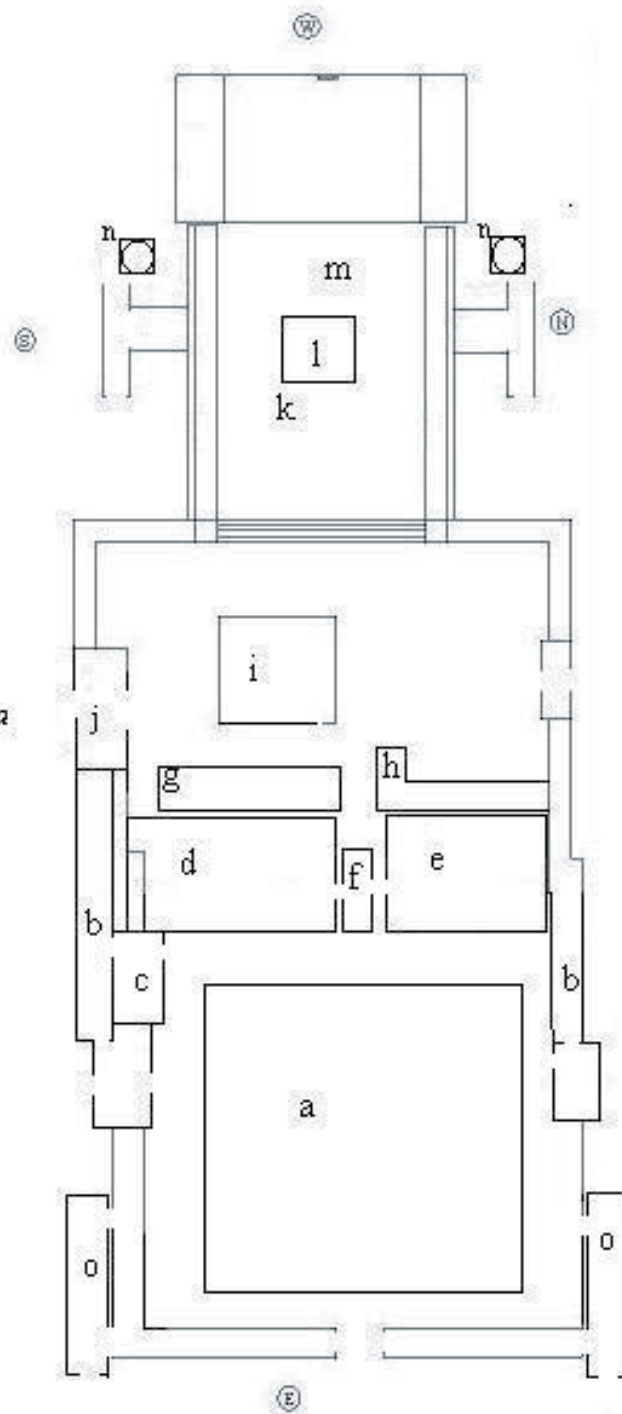


Figure 2. Ground floor of the Dātā Darbār Mosque Complex.



Plate 3. Design of the Golden Gate, a detail.

All are open for the public, but three of them are the most commonly used by visitors: the Golden Gate, on the South, that leads directly to the tomb of the saint (No. 6), the northern gate (No. 9) and another southern gate (No. 8), the latter two giving access to the courtyard immediately in front of the mosque; they are notable for their embellished walls of composite tile work. These three entrances are also the most imposing and attractive among all the gates.

The Golden Gate, dedicated by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1974, is set in a glass frame and faces the tomb (figure 2, item j). A flight of twelve white marble steps leads up to the door. The elaborate entrance was designed by B. A. Qureshi, Nayyer Ali Dada, Khan Waliullah Khan, and Chaudhary Muhammad Ashraf, with drawings done by Alaid Engineering Consultants of Lahore. The gate was made in Isfahan, Iran by Iranian artisans.¹¹ The door itself consists of two rectangular sheets of gold and silver decorated with embossed geometric designs and floral motifs, painted in pink, green and golden enamel against cerulean blue (plate 3). The organization is a traditional one of a field with medallion and pendants surrounded

by a border of cartouches of Islamic calligraphy in cursive form. This combination of designs was first seen in the Timurid period and is found, for example, on a binding of a copy of the *Masnavi* of Jalal al-Din Rumi copied in 1483 at Herat.¹² The Isfahan artisan was most probably looking at the tiled decorative spandrels of the façade of the Sheikh Lutfallah Mosque built in 1603-1619, and the spandrels and the vaults of the *iwan* of the Shah Mosque, also built in the seventeenth century in his native Isfahan for design inspiration.¹³

Above and to the sides of the Golden Gate, there are lunettes containing mirror mosaic work: ten horizontal rows of eight pointed stars hold whirling rosettes of



Plate 4. Mosaic work on the side walls of the gate.

blue, red and yellow with mirror glass in the interstices (plate 4). Mirror mosaic work has been practiced in Lahore before the construction of the Dātā Darbār Mosque and is found at the Namia Mosque, Garhi Shaho, Lahore built in 1950; the Jami' Masjid on the Mall Road, Lahore, built in 1970; and the Karishan

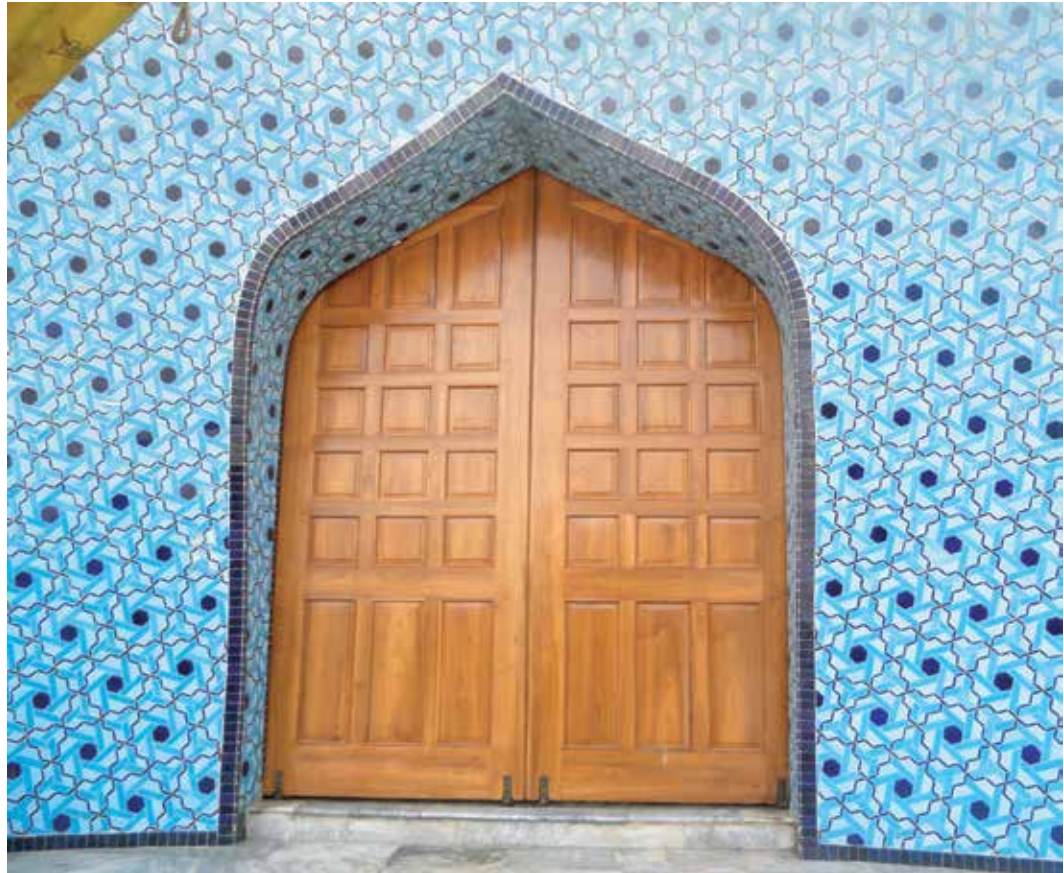
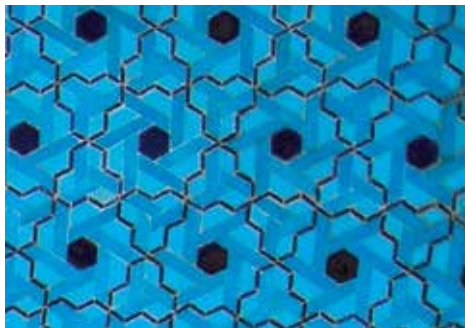


Plate 5. Entrance of the Northern tile mosaic gate of the Data Darbar.

Plate 6.
Straight lined
design of the
mosaic
work on the
southern gate
of the mosque
complex.



Nagar Mosque, Lahore, built in 1979. In these three modern mosques the mirror mosaic design is completely floral, but at Dātā Darbār Mosque geometric shapes diamonds, hexagons and octagons dominate.

The northern and southern doors into the courtyard of the Dātā Darbār are commonly used by the public seeking access to the mosque (plate 5). They are identical, and in the form of pseudo-four-centered arches outlines in a thin course of black tiles. The gate walls are covered with faience mosaic designs on several levels: black thin lines forming hexagonal star shapes around black hexagonal centers are overlaid with whirling cobalt blue “spokes” on a cerulean blue background (plate 6). The design was prepared by the project architects, Naqvi and Sadiqui, but the tiles were made in England because

¹¹ Shehzad,, 40.

¹² Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250-1800*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 66.

¹³ Markus Hattstein and Peter Delius, ed, *Islam: Art and Architecture* (Cambridge: Koneman Verlag GmbH Konigswinter, 2004), 450.

Pakistani ceramic factories were not capable of firing these small tiles at the required high temperature of 1100° Centigrade. The tiles were fixed on the wall by Pakistani artisans under the supervision of the project director.

The North and South gates to the courtyard of the mosque are entered by way of double staircases of nineteen marble stairs (plate 7; figure 1, nos. 8 and 9) At ground level, on both sides of the stairways, there are miniature minarets, their tops echoing the tops of the two minarets of the mosque. For the surface decoration of the marble walls of the staircase a dark grey marble rectilinear arch design was inlaid on a background of the light grey marble. These two entrances to the mosque courtyard are quite simple in contrast to the usual entrances to Mughal mosques, with their grand projecting gateways and varied surface decoration.



Plate 7. Stairway leads to the southern tile mosaic gate of the mosque.

Glazing has been practiced since ancient times. In Egyptian civilization glazes were well known before 4777 BCE, for glazing the surface of pottery.¹⁴ The interior of the step pyramid at Sakkarah, near Cairo, dating from 4155 BCE was glazed.¹⁵ Brilliant examples of glazed tiling have been discovered from Assyria, Babylonia and Persia. The Assyrians introduced polychrome glazed brickwork, which was later on popularized by the Neo-Babylonians.¹⁶ The tower of Babel at Babylon was constructed by Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605-562 BCE) and decorated with enameled bricks.¹⁷ The palace of Sargon II (r. 722-702 BCE) at Khorsabad was characterized by the decoration of coloured glazed bricks.¹⁸ In Persian architecture, glazed brick panel was used during the period of Shalaneser III (r. 859-824 BCE).¹⁹

The Romans introduced different kinds of mosaic work for architectural decoration, and *opus figlium* (tile mosaic) was one of them.²⁰ The technique was adopted by Muslims. They introduced a variety of techniques and different format in tile making, including composite tile work.²¹

¹⁴ R. Nath, *Color and Decoration in Mughal Architecture in India and Pakistan* (Jaipur: The Historical Research Documentation Program, 1989), 9.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Banister Fletcher, *The History of Architecture*, 17th ed. (London: The Athlone Press University of London, 1963), 70.

¹⁷ R. Nath, *Color and Decoration in Mughal Architecture in India and Pakistan*, 10.

¹⁸ Fletcher, *History of Architecture*, 17th ed. 73.

¹⁹ Fletcher, *History of Architecture*, 19th ed. (London: Butterworths, 1987), 74.

In Muslim history, The Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem (691 CE) is the first example of tile mosaic work. In the Abbasid period Muslims preferred to embellish the surface of their religious buildings with *opus figlium* in which encaustic tiles or terracotta pieces were arranged in geometrical designs with other hard substance. They continued to use this technique through the ages.

Turkey and Iran produced brilliant examples of grandiose mosques with glazed tiles and tiles mosaic decoration. The style was first adopted in Anatolia in the early thirteenth century and in Central Asia in the fourteenth century.²² The technique was used in interiors, especially to *mihrab* areas and for interiors of domes and vaults. Tile mosaic compositions were generally geometrical but can include floral motifs; Islamic calligraphic inscriptions were also designed in mosaic tiles. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Islamic countries were famous all over the world due to their tile mosaic work.

In South Asia, mosaic tiles and painted tiles were adopted by Muslims for the outside surfaces of major buildings. Historic mosques, such as Dai Anga Mosque, Lahore, built in 1635 and Wazir Khan Mosque Lahore, built in 1673 are ideal examples of tile mosaic work decoration of the Mughal period. These seventeenth century Lahori buildings became the models for the glazed ceramic tiles and the composite tile mosaic work at the Defence Mosque, Lahore, built in 1988 and the Shaukat Khanam Mosque, Lahore, built in 1994.

The new mosque of 'Alī Hajwiyri is constructed on the eastern side of the Dātā Darbār complex. The mosque area, including both the open courtyard and sanctuary, are four steps higher than the tomb area. The mosque courtyard is almost rectangular and paved with white marble slabs and can accommodate large numbers of worshippers. Porticos in the form of an open sequence of groin vaults are built on the south and north sides of the courtyard (plates 8 and 9). Groin



Plate 8. Vaulted porticos with miniature minaret

²⁰ R.Nath, *Color and Decoration in Mughal Architecture in India and Pakistan*, 50.

²¹ Andrew Petersen, *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture* (London: Routledge, 1996), 279.

²² Venetia Porter, *Islamic Tiles* (London: British Museum Publication, 1995), 17.

vaults are an old form of vaulting first used in ancient Roman architecture.²³

The courtyard has a square open area in the center that allows access to the ablution area in the basement below (figure 1). From the basement two stairways lead to the courtyard through this opening. Ablution tanks are a common feature of the mosques. In South Asia they are usually built in the center of the courtyard of the mosque. But at Dātā Darbār Mosque the ablution area is in the basement rather than in the centre



Plate 9. Interior of the porticos showing the groin vaults.

of the courtyard. The Faisal Mosque, Islamabad, built in 1988, also has ablution facilities in the basement, but the arrangement is not similar to the one used the 'Alī Hajwiyri Mosque, Lahore.

Flanking the mosque are two minarets each 191 feet high and twelve miniature minarets, all having similar tops. The two slender elongated minarets are the most dominant element of the exterior and are visible from a great distance (plate 10). They are free standing on the southern and northern sides of the sanctuary. The base for the minarets extends sixteen feet below ground level. Each minaret has a square base, round shaft and pencil point top. The bases are decorated with cerulean and cobalt blue tile mosaic work similar to the mosaic work on the southern and northern gateways (plate 6). The shaft is white with a blue balcony and the pencil-point top is made of stainless steel and covered with gold leaf. The colour scheme used for the minarets is similar to and in harmony with the colours used in the sanctuary.

Without a minaret a mosque's construction is considered incomplete. The use of minarets began in the early years of Islam, but none was constructed during the period of the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and the four orthodox caliphs.²⁴ Minarets became a part of the mosque in a purely architectural way when they were added in the Mosque of Amr at Fustat in Cairo. In 673 CE the first purpose-built minarets were constructed in Islam.²⁵

²³ Richard G. Tansey, and Fred S Keleiner, *Art Through the Ages*, 10th ed, (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publisher, 1996), 202.

²⁴ Renata Holod and Hasan-ud-din Khan, *The Mosque and the Modern World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 5.

²⁵ K.A.C. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958), 14.

Historically a mosque may be given one, two, four or six minarets. In the ‘Alī Hajwiyri Mosque the use of two minarets and twelve miniature minarets is new for mosque construction of the twentieth century. The shape of the minarets was influenced by Turkish style. A square tapered base, round tall shaft and pointed top is typical of Turkish minarets. Hagia Sophia²⁶ in Istanbul, originally constructed as a church between 532 and 537 CE, was converted into a mosque in 1453 CE and four minarets were added to it.²⁷ The square base, round shaft and pointed top of the Hagia Sophia minarets are the direct models of the top and shaft of the minarets of ‘Alī Hajwiyri Mosque. In Pakistan the minarets of the Tuba Mosque, Karachi, built in 1969; the Masjid al-Shuhda, Lahore, built in 1970; and the Lal Masjid,

Islamabad, built in 1989, all have pointed tops with round shafts and square bases. On the other hand, the minarets of Faisal Mosque, Islamabad, built in 1988, have pointed tops with square shafts and square tapered bases.

The sanctuary of the mosque is rectangular in plan, and the front or eastern wall is a giant design in three-centered arch form (plate 11). The lower part of the exterior of the southern and northern sides of the sanctuary is embellished with glazed ceramic tiles in a variety of blue colours with lozenge designs. The upper part has a row of eighteen lancet arches; they are sharply pointed and two-centered with radii greater than the span in constructive form (plate 12). The exterior western wall is simple, without any decoration in constructive form on the surface.

The lower east wall of the sanctuary has a series of glass doors set in black aluminum frames (plate 13). The frames are fitted into three large arches with the



Plate 10. Minaret and miniature minarets of Jami' ‘Alī-Hajwairi (Dātā Darbār) Mosque Complex, Lahore.

²⁶ http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Hagia_Sophia.html (accessed Jan 19, 2008).

²⁷ <http://www.bartleby.com/65/ha/HagiaSop.html> (accessed Jan 19, 2008).



Plate 11. Sanctuary of the Dātā Darbār Mosque in arch form.

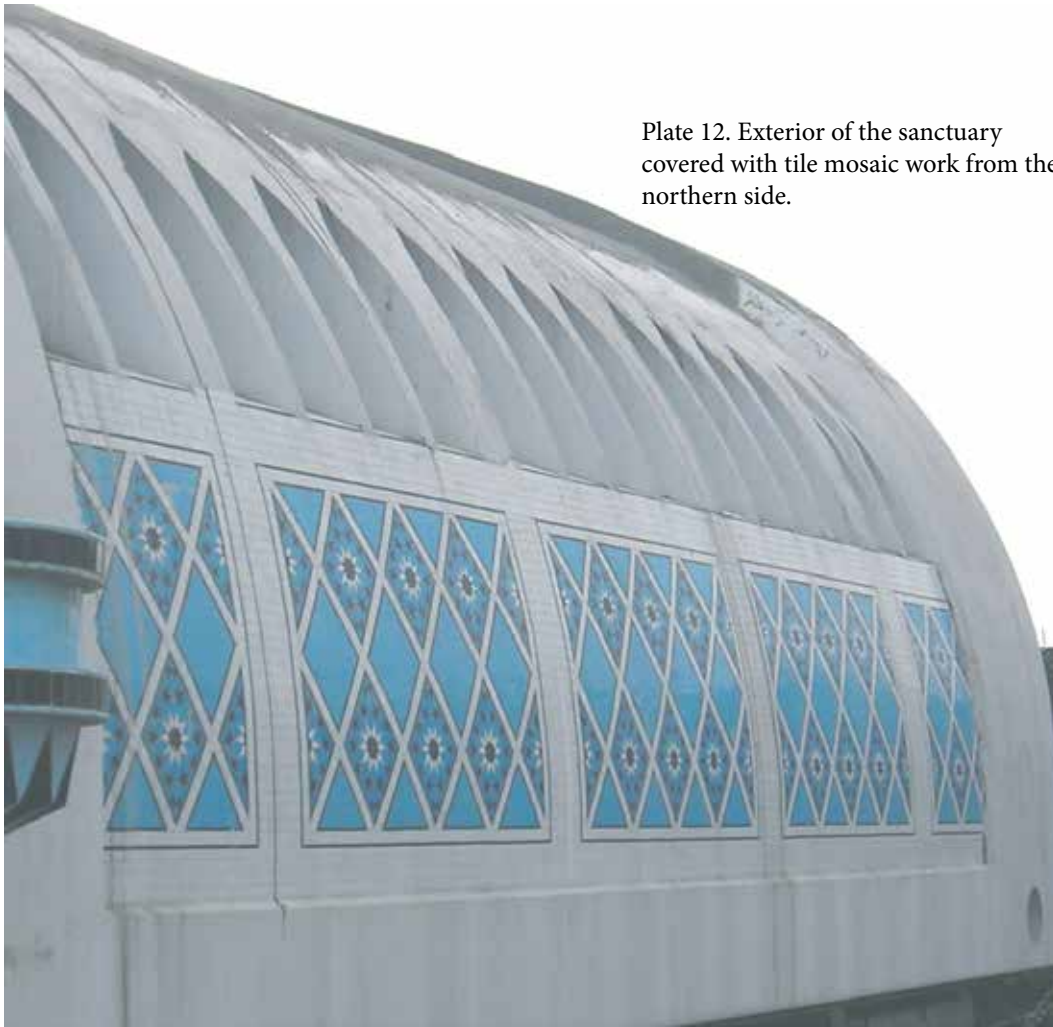


Plate 12. Exterior of the sanctuary covered with tile mosaic work from the northern side.



Plate 13. Entrance of the sanctuary embellished with colored glass.



Plate 14. Detail of the stain glass on the spandrel of the sanctuary.

central arch bigger and higher than those on the sides. They have a pseudo-four-centered or Tudor-shape arch. The arches are subdivided vertically with thick golden metallic frames according to the arch shape; the verticals frames are further divided horizontally making several “squares.” Horizontally, a frieze divided the arches into two parts. The lower part of this elaborate doorway has sixteen rectangles of glass and the upper part has spandrels dividing the three arch shapes. Intersecting bar-tracery similar to this was applied for the fenestration of the Church of St Laurence, Northfield, Birmingham (ca. 1300).²⁸

The most attractive part of the entrance is the coloured stained-glass work on the spandrels (plates 13 and 14). It is comprised of geometrical designs in orange, red, white, yellow, cobalt and cerulean blue colours; the glass was manufactured in England. The designs are visible from both exterior and

²⁸ James Stevens Curl, *Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 786.



Plate 15. Western wall of the sanctuary.

interior of the sanctuary.

Stain glass, of course, is usually related with Gothic architecture. Jean De Chelles' rose window in the North transept, Notre-Dame Church, Paris, built in 1240-1250, is an excellent example.²⁹ In Muslim architecture coloured glass windows were used for the decoration of the Suleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul built in 1550-1557, Mehmed Pasha Mosque in Istanbul built in 1570-1572 and the Sultan Ahmet Cami (Blue Mosque) in Istanbul built in 1610-1617. In Pakistan, interesting stain glass windows are found in the Chapel Window of Lawrence College, Ghorra Gali, Murree, built in 1927³⁰ and Bhong Mosque near Sadiqabad, in Southern Punjab, built in 1980-82.³¹ The 'Ali Hajwiyri Mosque is the first religious building of Lahore in which stain glass decoration is used.

The 'Ali Hajwiyri sanctuary is constructed without any vertical support. Ottoman mosques, too, were constructed without any interior supports but their construction rests on piers attached with the Women's Galleries. In Pakistan, the sanctuary of the Faisal Mosque in Islamabad is constructed without vertical supports too.

The floor of the sanctuary is paved with light green marble slabs inlaid with white polygonal lines. Usually, for the comfort of the people, the floor is covered with red carpeting patterned with other arch-shaped designs. The ceiling of

²⁹ Tansey and Keleiner, 436.

³⁰ Dar, *Craft of Lahore*, 240

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sajjad Haider, *Tile Work in Pakistan* (Islamabad: National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage Islamabad, 1987), 67.

the sanctuary has a unique design of cantilevered beams and concrete structure for solidity that make an attractive design in curve lines.

In the Dātā Darbār Mosque, the *mihrab* in the center of the *qiblah* wall is designed as a tall concave lancet arch, its top covered with golden emulsion paint (plate 15). Linear designs in dark brown colour break the monotony of the white colour of the vertical wall panels. A simple three-stepped marble *mimbar* covered with a crimson carpet is placed inside the *mihrab* on the right (plate 16).

The western wall, on either side of the mihrab, is divided horizontally into two portions (plate 15). The lower portion is covered with fine teak wood panels with small blind arches; every third arch contains a rectangular panel of clear glass (plate 17). The upper part of the western wall has two large arches in pseudo-four-centered or Tudor-arch shape, decorated with tessellated glazed tiles of cerulean blue and white. Each arch is designed in seven concentric rows that create a perspective recession movement. *Sūra al-Ikhlās* is written seven times in white Kufic by the famous modern calligrapher Rashid Butt around the arches. It is western Kufic script, as used at Qairuwan, in Tunisia, in the early eleventh century.

In the Roman period mosaic work was based on the proper arrangement of small pieces (*tesserae*) of any hard substance. In this mosaic style, tiles were cut into small pieces, but in the Dātā Darbār Mosque the size of the *tesserae* is



Plate 17. The semi-circular blind arches and ventilations of clear glass on the lower part of the west wall of the sanctuary.



Plate 16. Mihrab in the sanctuary.

larger, about the size of pieces remaining on the famous picture wall of the Lahore Fort.³²

Kufic calligraphy is one of the most common and important ornamental

elements of Muslim art. It is an art of linear aesthetic expression with the proportions and shapes of letters following the principles of calculated, strict geometry. Arabic calligraphy is the major element in the decoration of Muslim religious monuments, and is called sacred because Quranic verses, *hadith*, attributes of Allah, names of the Prophet and of the four Orthodox Caliphs are commonly written to adorn the surface of religious buildings. Kufic has a static quality that obeys the logic of rectilinear and angular forms.

Kufic has a long history. It derived from *mashaq*, a pre-Islamic writing of the Arabs. *Mashaq* is similar to Kufic letters in the formation and proportion of words. Hugh Honour writes that Kufic is the first Islamic feature, originating at Kufa in Mesopotamia. It was developed mainly for Quranic inscriptions.³³ Aftab Ahmed believes that, “the Kufic script came into being when more letters were added to the existing scripts known as Nabataean, Assyrian, Aramaic, and Himyaric.” These scripts had twenty-two letters; later, when six letters were added, a new shape was given to the script. The script was known as the Kufic, because “the experimental work, the research and the addition to the older scripts were done in the city of Kufa.”³⁴

For architectural surface decoration of religious buildings with calligraphy a variety of materials – bricks, stone, marble, stucco, tiles, wood, metal, glass, ivory and painting – were selected throughout Islamic history. For example, the entrance of the Mosque of Cordoba built in 780 CE has a marble slab with Kufic inscription.³⁵ In the Great Mosque of Susa built in the ninth century Kufic calligraphy was used for inscriptions on stone.³⁶ In South Asia, standard Kufic calligraphy is carved on the stone façade of Quwwat al-Islam Mosque and on the Qutab Minar built in the thirteenth century.³⁷

Two galleries reserved for women in the mosque are approached by spiral stairways from the exterior. They are built on the upper part of the North and South walls of the sanctuary. Each arcade is composed of five equilateral arches (plate 18). Square piers that extend up to the ceiling of the sanctuary support the two women’s galleries. The central part of every pier in the women’s gallery section is covered with wooden panels bearing intricate carving of vines and flowers in relief (plate 19). A balcony railing made of blackish-golden iron rods twisted into repeating vine patterns is set between the piers that face the interior of the mosque at the women’s section level (plate 20). Below it, on all the walls of the sanctuary, there is a wooden frieze set twelve feet up from the floor embellished with Kufic-like calligraphy and pendant symmetric knots based on knotted Kufic script (plate 21). The letters of the script and the knotted designs are made of metal painted a dull gold and fixed separately to the wood.

The first Islamic architectural surface to be decorated with bands of Qur’anic

³³ Hugh Honour, and John Fleming, *A World History of Art*. 7th ed. (London: Laurence King, 2005), 351.

³⁴ Ahmed Aftab, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Rawalpindi: Rajput Printers, 1984), 173.

³⁵ Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, 232.

³⁶ Creswell, 267-73.

³⁷ Aftab, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 115; R. Nath, *The History of Sultanate Architecture*, 10.



Plate 18. The arcade with equilateral arches and square base piers supports the Women's Gallery on the northern side.



Plate 19. Wood work on the piers of the sanctuary.

inscriptions was at the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem built in 685-690. It was placed above the arcades around the inner ambulatory.³⁸ The Medina Mosque built in 705-709, that became the model for later Islamic mosques, also had interior bands of calligraphy.³⁹ Narrow wooden friezes at the mosque of Ibn Tulūn, built in 876-879, were decorated with Kufic calligraphy and mosques during the Fatmid period had similar decoration.⁴⁰ Thus the use of bands of Qur'anic passages at Dātā Darbār Mosque comes from a long tradition.

Returning to the Women's Galleries, the upper parts of every filled in arch are embellished with painted composite tiles (plate 22), as are the walls on the eastern and western ends of the galleries (plate 23). The large arabesques murals are in sea green, white, blue, ochre, orange and red and dominate the area. The design is based on traditional Islamic motive having *islīmi* characteristics. *Islīmi* is a style of continuous decoration based on split leaf and vine motifs that can be used to decorate large areas.⁴¹ It originated in the ninth century under the Abbasids, and is first seen at Samarra in stucco work.⁴² The design as applied to the Women's Galleries at the Dātā Darbār Mosque is composed with elongated split leaves in small and large size that sometimes bear other smaller leaves of the same shape in a different colour. The leaves are attached to curling vines. There are also kidney-shaped leaves resembling the Kashmiri *boteh* (paisley) that are overlap by a stylized floral shape (plate 24). There is a second layer of design on the Dātā Darbār tiles, of thinner vines bearing rosette-type flowers. It entered the Islamic world from China with the Mongols in the thirteenth. The synthesis of the two designs took place in Iran in the fifteenth century (Timurid period). The mixture of motifs painted on the ceramic tiles of the Women's Galleries at Dātā Darbār has no real precedent in earlier developments of *islīmi* decoration, although the various elements of the design are well known. As early as 1251 the portal of the Karatay Madrasa in Konya shows similar large arabesque leaf ends curling around stems.⁴³ In India the decorative piers of the Ala'i Darwaza, Delhi, built in 1311, have such split leaves.⁴⁴ In Persia the stucco mihrab bearing the name of the Mongol ruler Oljaitu of 1314 in the Masjid-i Jami Mosque, Isfahan has this type of arabesque pattern, as does the tomb of Amir Husayn of 1376.⁴⁵ The combination of *islīmi* with Chinese-type designs (*hatayi*) is found on the squinch area of Sheikh Lutfallah Mosque Isfahan of 1603-1619 and on the walls of the Shah Mosque, Isfahan, of 1611.⁴⁶ One may suggest that the arresting patterns on the tiles in the Women's Galleries is the work of a modern designer, familiar with typical Islamic designs but who did not respect their traditional proportions and combinations.

The Mosque of `Ali Hajwīyri in Lahore called Dātā Darbār is an eclectic

³⁸ Hattstein and Delius, ed, *Islam: Art and Architecture*, 64.

³⁹ Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 91.

⁴⁰ Hattstein and Delius, 147.

⁴¹ Masooma Abbas, "Islīmi: Its Decoration in Muslim Art and Architecture", unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, page 1.

⁴² Hattstein and Delius, 107.

⁴³ Hattstein and Delius, 373.

⁴⁴ Clevonot, *Ornamentation and Decoration in Islamic Architecture*, 215.

⁴⁵ Henri Stierlin, *Islam Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 64.

⁴⁶ Stierlin, 143.



Plate 20. Perforated rod iron lattice work in the sanctuary.



Plate 21. Kūfic calligraphy and geometrical designs on the wooden frieze in the sanctuary.



Plate 22. Painted tile work on the walls of the Women's Gallery of Dātā Darbār Mosque.

building and clearly shows influences of Roman, Byzantine, Gothic, early Islamic, Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal art in its decorative elements in constructive form or on its surfaces. On the other hand, the double-storied plan, the underground offices and service areas, the square base and pencil point tip of the minarets and the construction of the sanctuary without pillars have similarities with the influential, slightly earlier Faisal Mosque in Islamabad, and reflect modern architectural forms derived from Ottoman models. A variety of materials are used — marble, wood, glazed tiles, mirror, coloured and transparent glass, gold and iron — offering traditional Islamic forms in new materials.

The resulting stained glass, wood carvings, iron railings, faience mosaic, painted tiles and Kūfic calligraphy written in metal on a wooden frieze become at the same time both a traditional and a modern approach to mosque design.



Plate 23. Painted tile work on the archways and walls of the Women's Gallery of Dātā Darbār Mosque.



Plate 24. Kidney shaped leaf resembling the Kashmiri *boteh* (paisley).