

Received : 02 February 2024, Accepted: 05 March 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33282/rr.vx9i2.18>

Art and Architecture of Islamic Period Tomb at Choti Hindira, Kot Chutta, District Dera Ghazi Khan

Zaheen Saba^{1*}, Muhammad Riaz Khan²

- 1. Lecturer Asian Studies, The University of Layyah, Layyah, Pakistan**
- 2. Lecturer, The University of Layyah, Layyah, Pakistan**

Corresponding Author: zaheensaba1991@gmail.com

Abstract

Due to its geographical location, the province of Punjab has played a significant role throughout history, boasting numerous archaeological sites and historical monuments spanning various ruling dynasties. Among these, the most splendid monuments belong to the Muslim period, encompassing both secular and religious structures. Unfortunately, many of these Muslim-period monuments, particularly those situated in the border areas of the province, are in an advanced state of decay due to neglect by the relevant governmental departments and instances of vandalism. Among these neglected monuments are some forgotten tombs located in Dera Ghazi Khan, collectively known as Choti Hindira. The Islamic architecture of the Subcontinent evolved under the influence of various cultures, including Persian, Byzantine, Roman, and ultimately Central Asian architecture. This research focuses on studying the art and architecture of the unidentified tombs within Choti Hindira graveyard. The primary objective is to thoroughly document these structures, ascertain the period of the tombs through analysis of their architectural style, construction materials, associated history, and comparative studies. Photography and precise measurements, along with an examination of the art and architecture, are integral components of this research. The study has determined that the ruined massive wall of Choti Hindira dates back to the early Muslim architecture of the 12th century, while the two tombs adorned with glazed tiles are from the early 18th century C.E.

Keywords: Punjab, Art and Culture, south Punjab, Dear Ghazi Khan

Introduction

The Graveyard of Choti Hindira is situated near the town of Kot Chutta in Dera Ghazi Khan District. The name Choti Hindira is derived from the Siraiki Language which means “Tomb or mausoleum”. And the graveyard was given this name due to mausoleums constructed over the graves. Kot Chutta is a tehsil and administrative subdivision of Dera Ghazi Khan district in the Punjab province. Kot Chutta situated at Famous Indus Highway leading to Sindh and Balochistan. It was founded by Chutta Khan Gurmani, a tribesman of Gurmani Baloch tribe. He found this town at the same time when Haji Khan Mirrani settled in Dera Ghazi Khan. According to some local traditions the foundation of Choti Hindira was laid in the 11th century C.E, in the period of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna and afterward the ancestor of Balochs Sardar Jaffar Khan Laghari constructed a fort for safeguarding his territory. However, other oral traditions assert that the foundation of fort was laid during Mughal Period. Architecture and art

of two mausoleums which are comparatively good in condition indicates these mausoleums were constructed during later Mughals period in early 18th century.

The graveyard was meant for Sardars, nobles and other renowned personalities of the area from 12th to 19th century C.E. In the British period the fort was occupied by the Royal Indian Army to control the area and to subdue the rebellious local Baloch tribes and militant groups. The main focus was to control hilly and plane areas and to maintain the British rules. The Choti Hindira was constructed by expert masons of that time; the building remained in the good condition till 19th century but due to flood in the Indus river the buildings received sever damages.

According to the old oral traditions and legends one of the generals of the army of the first Muslim conqueror Muhammad Bin Qasim has also buried here. Even the date trees planted by Muhammad Bin Qasim are still there. and other than that, the ancestors of the local tribes like Changwani, Laghari, Merani, Chandia, Gabool, Barmani, Ramdani and Khoso are buried there. At present the graveyard has been abandoned and one is the owner of Choti Hindira. Toms contain glazed tiles decorated with specimens of Persian poetry, which was the official language of the Subcontinent during the Mughal period and remained in vogue till the British Period. Hindira graveyard was spread over an area of about two square kilometers however it is shrinking day by day due to encroachment by local Laghari tribe. The Government and Laghari family did not pay any attention to preserve these age-old mausoleums and to maintain this historic graveyard. The graveyard is lying unattended and on the mercy of human vandalism and natural deteriorating agents like floods and saltpeter which is rapidly eroding these historic structures.

Statement of the problem

The topic of research is “Art and Architecture of Islamic Period Tomb at Choti Hindra” explore and scientifically studies about the Art and Architecture due to keen interest in cultural heritage of the area. Since this area is cultural and scientifically not studied and documented and there is no any single contribution of literature is explored so the researcher indented and especially focus on to exploring about Art and Architecture beyond the cultural material in the proper context and the object will be displayed in the proper order.

Objectives of the Research

The objective is to highlight the archaeological significance of the monument, to provide a detailed account from archaeological point of view and to document the site which is not documented before. This research will also throw light on renovation and conservation issue.

Hypothesis

During review of literature it was found that no details about the site are available. According to the available literature and survey conducted by researcher it seems that these monuments were constructed during late Mughal era.

Literature Review

History of Dear Ghazi Khan

Dera Ghazi Khan, historically rooted in the 15th century with the emergence of Rind Baluchi, was founded towards the end of that century by Ghazi Khan, son of Haji Khan, a Baluchi chieftain who broke away from the Langah dynasty. Originally part of Derajat, it later fell under British control after the Sikh War in 1849, eventually being divided into two districts. Geographically, it sprawls over 11,922 square kilometers, bounded by hills in the west and the Indus River in the east. Its population, primarily Saraiki-speaking, has seen steady growth, reaching 1,64,300 by 1998. The region's climate is characterized by hot summers and brief winters, while its flora and fauna thrive despite challenging conditions. Rich in minerals like uranium and lime, and blessed with the vital Indus River, Dera Ghazi Khan has a rich history, witnessed the rise and fall of dynasties, and hosts several historical sites like the Tomb of Hazrat Sakhi Sarwar and Fort Munro, signifying its cultural and historical significance. Despite challenges, modern developments like Taunsa Barrage and railway connections have transformed it into a vital administrative division, embodying both its past and present narrative.

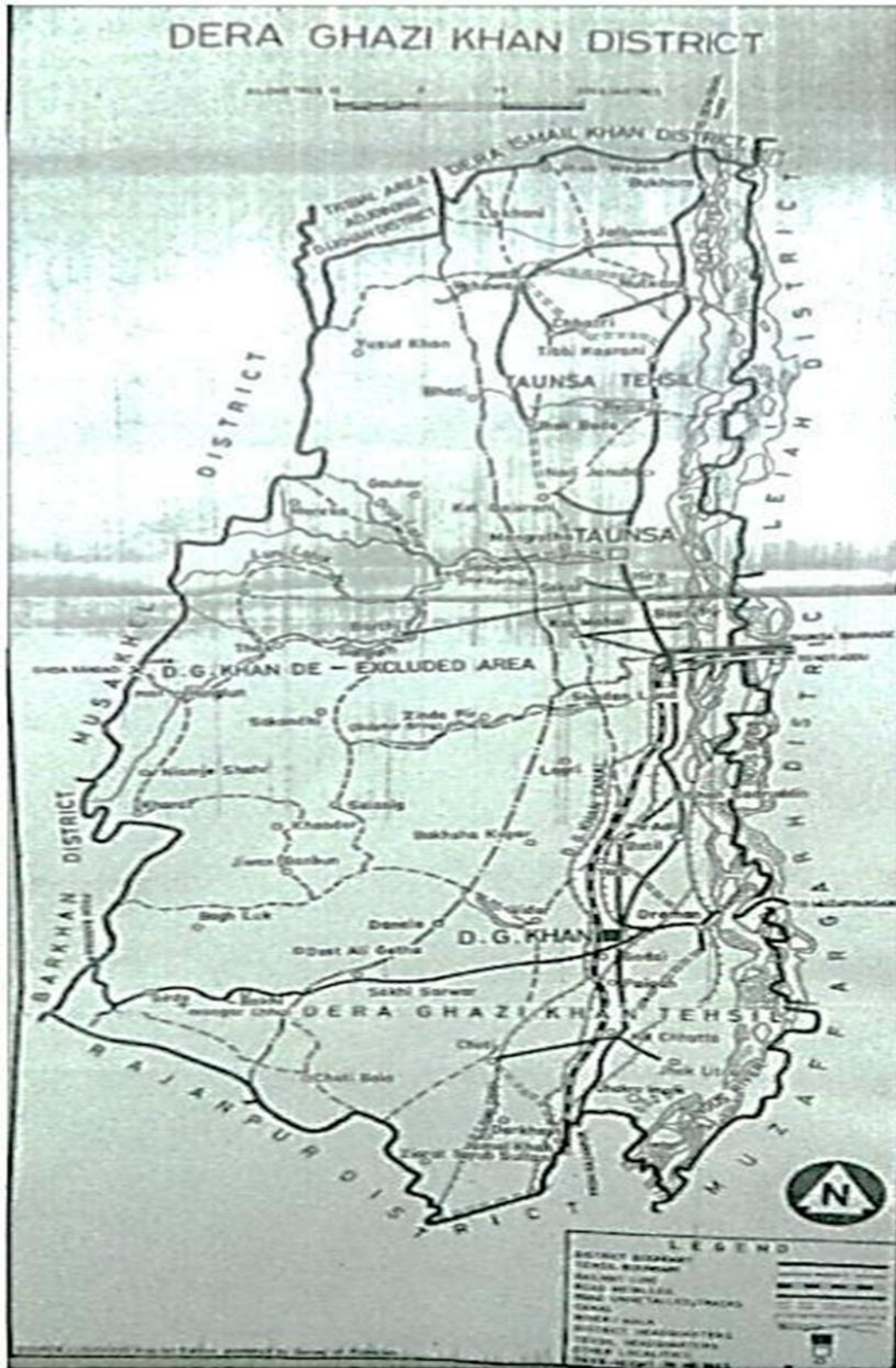


Figure 1 Map of district Dera ghazi khan Source: (Census report of Dera ghazi khan 1998)

Naked Brick Tombs History in Pakistan

The disposal of human remains varies across different religions and cultures, with practices including water burial, cremation, earth burial, and mummification. Muslims, Jews, and Christians commonly practice earth burial, influenced by the story of Abel and Cain in the Quran. Islamic architecture, rooted in religious principles, encompasses mosques, tombs, and Idgahs. In Pakistan, various tomb architectures exist, including naked brick structures adorned with terracotta plaques or cut brick decorations. Examples like the tomb of Sheikh Sadan Shahid near Muzaffargarh showcase intricate designs and historical significance, blending influences from Hindu and Buddhist architectures. Other notable tombs, such as those of Muhammad B. Harun Bela, Baha U'D-Din Zakriya in Multan, and Abdul Wahab in Da'ira Din Panah, exhibit unique features and elaborate ornamentation, reflecting a fusion of regional styles and religious motifs. The mausoleum of Rukn-i-Alam in Multan stands as a masterpiece of early Islamic architecture, characterized by its towering height, octagonal design, and intricate brickwork. Throughout these diverse examples, Islamic architecture in Pakistan serves as a tangible expression of faith, cultural heritage, and artistic innovation.



Figure 2 the Tomb of Shaykh Sadan Shahid

Source: Ghaurid Architecture in the Indus valley: The Tomb of Shaykh Sadan Shahid

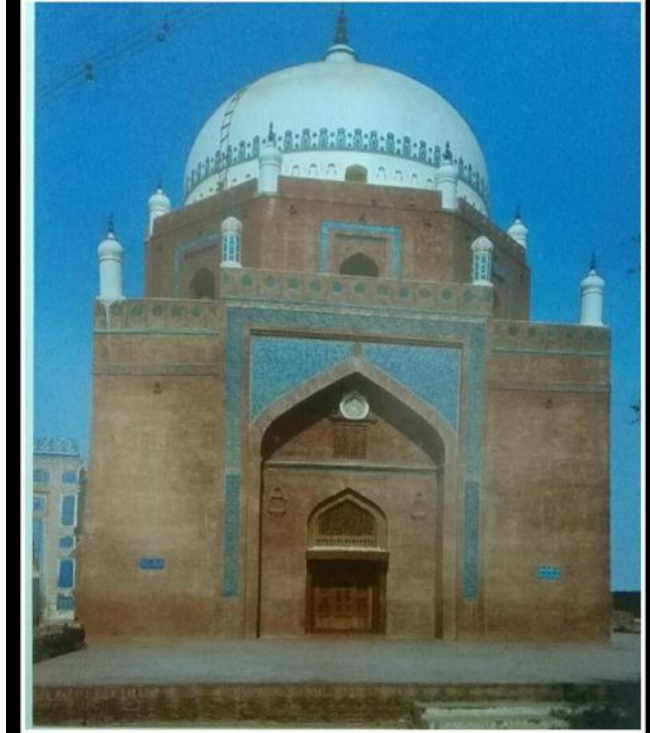


Figure 3 Tomb of Baha -ud-Din Zakriya. General view (after restoration)
Source: Islamic architecture of Pakistan- an Analytical Exposition by Ahmad Nabi Khan

ARCHITECTURE OF CHOTI HINDIRA

Choti Hindira, derived from the Saraiki word for "graveyard," is located in Kot Chutta district, Dera Ghazi Khan. Divided by a road, the site spans approximately 25 acres and features two buildings. One building contains graves believed to be of historical figures like Jamal Khan Laghari, while the other holds the graves of Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Khan Laghari. Constructed with burnt bricks and adorned with glazed tile work, the tombs showcase intricate architectural details both inside and out. The exteriors feature elaborate facades with Persian inscriptions and decorative panels, while the interiors boast octagonal plans and ornate ceilings. The site also includes a damaged three-story building, possibly used for storing old copies of the Quran. Throughout the structures, Persian calligraphy adorns the walls, honoring the deceased buried within. Despite the damage and disrepair, Choti Hindira stands as a testament to the region's cultural and architectural heritage.



Figure 4 General view of third building of Choti Hindira

ART OF CHOTI HINDIRA

The first building of Choti Hindira is intricately adorned with various types of artwork, including exterior and interior decorations. The exterior is divided into sections such as Dado, Façade, Turrets, and Parapet. The Façade features elaborate floral designs, Quranic inscriptions, and intricate patterns on rectangular frames and arches. Pilasters are adorned with arabesque glazed tiles, while the parapet boasts decorative merlons. The interior showcases a wooden ceiling with rosette decorations, along with Persian inscriptions and ornate designs on the walls surrounding the single grave within. Similarly, the second building displays exterior decorations, including glazed tile designs on rectangular frames and arches, though the interior is simpler with a tiled ceiling and basic decorations surrounding the two graves. The third building, mostly damaged, features remnants of glazed tile decorations on the lower portion's stretched diamond bands, recessive squinches, and blind arches with intricate designs. The upper portions, including the dome, lack clear ornamentation due to the extent of the damage.



Figure 5 Persian poetry on the façade Choti Hindira tomb

Conclusion

The style of naked brick architecture adorned with glazed tiles first appeared during the time of Shaikh Baha-ud-Din Zakariya and Rukhn-ud-Din Rukhn-i-Alam, and subsequently influenced funerary memorial architecture in Pakistan. The distinctive features of this style became refined over time, particularly with the introduction of Mughal architecture.

As previously mentioned, "Hindira" is a local term referring to a graveyard, hence "Choti Hindira" translates to "small graveyard." This Hindira likely belonged to rulers or nobles of the time, as it was common for nobility to erect memorial buildings around family graveyards as a display of wealth and status.

These buildings are only documented in archaeological reports published in Pakistan Archaeology, whereas earlier local writers and historians have neglected them. The ancient city was largely destroyed by floods in 1842 and 1856, leading to the loss of many structures. While the exact date of construction is unknown, the neglect of these historical sites risks creating a gap in the visual history of the area. Therefore, it is imperative for researchers to document the site before it disappears completely, ensuring that these buildings are preserved in documentation for future generations.

From the research conducted, it is evident that these funerary memorial buildings were erected around the graves of nobles or prominent figures. Unfortunately, neither traditions nor historical or literary sources provide enough material to identify the individuals buried here, making it difficult to determine the exact period of construction. However, based on the refined architectural features and the size of bricks, it is speculated that these buildings were constructed in the late 15th or early 16th century. The discovery of different-sized bricks in the third

building, dating back to the British colonial period, suggests that these structures were renovated during that era. Mahmood-ul-Hassan also supported the researcher's assertion that these buildings were initially erected in the 15th to 16th centuries and later renovated during the British colonial period.

References

- Alfieri, B. M. (2000). *Islamic Architecture of Indian Subcontinent*. London:
- Altun, Ara. (1990). *An Outline of Turkish Architecture in the Middle Ages. Essay, Critique, and History Series; 6*. Istanbul. Arberry, A. (2001). *The Islamic Art of Persia*. New Delhi: Good Word Books.
- Asher, Catherine B. (1992). *Architecture of Mughal India. The New Cambridge History of India*. Cambridge and New York.
- Ashfaque, S. M. (1969). "The Grand Mosque of Banbhore," in *Pakistan Archaeology*, vol. 6, pp. 182-219.
- Atasoy, Nurhan, Afif Bahnassi, and Michael Rogers. (1990) *The Art of Islam. UNESCO Collection of Representative Works, Art Album Series*. Paris.
- Baer, E. (1998). *Islamic Ornament*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Baloch, N.A. (1983). *Fathnamah-i Sind*. Islamabad.
- Barry, Michael (1996) *Design and Color in Islamic Architecture: Eight Centuries of The Tile Maker's Art*. The Vendom Press, New York.
- Begley, W. E., and Z. A. Desai. (1989) *Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb*.
- Blair, S. S. (1998). *Islamic Inscriptions*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bloom, J. and Blair, S. (1994). *The Art and Architecture of Islam: 1250-1800*. New
- Bloom, Jonathan. (1989). *Minaret, Symbol of Islam. Oxford Studies in Islamic Art, 7*. Oxford and New York.
- Bosworth, C. E. (1980). *The Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Handbook*. rev. ed. Edinburgh, .961.
- Brend, B. (1991). *Islamic Art*, London: British Museum Press.
- Brend, Barbara. (1991). *Islamic Art*. London and Cambridge, Mass.
- Brown, P. (1983). *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu)*. Bombay: D.B Taraporevala sons and co. pvt.Ltd. Cambridge, Mass., and Seattle.

- Clévenot, Dominique. (2000). *Splendors of Islam: architecture, decoration, and design*; photographs by Gérard Degeorge. New York: Vendome Press; Distributed in the USA and Canada by Rizzoli International Publications through St. Martin's Press.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. (1993). *Essays in Early Indian Architecture*, ed.
- Creswell, K. A. C. (1932). *Early Muslim Architecture*. Oxford.
- Creswell, K. A. C. (1989). *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*. Rev. and suppl. by James W. Allen. Aldershot.
- D.Hoag, J. (1979). *Islamic Architecture*. London: Academy Editions.
- Daneshvari, Abbas. (1986). *Medieval Tomb Towers of Iran: An Iconographical Study*. Islamic Art and Architecture, 2. Lexington, Ky.
- Dani, Ahmad Hasan. (1983). *Thatta: Islamic Architecture*. Architecture
- Davies, Philip. (1982). *The Penguin Guide to the Monuments of India, II: Islamic, Rajput, European*. London.
- Desai, Ziyau-Din A. (1970). *Indo-Islamic Architecture*. New Delhi.
- Desai, Ziyau-Din A. (1971). *Mosques of India*. New Delhi.
- Desai, Ziyau-Din A. (1982). "Indo-Islamic Art," in *Our Cultural Fabric: Indian Architecture Through the Ages*. New Delhi, pp. 38-51
- E, B. C. (1993). *The Encyclopedia of Islam*. New York: Leiden.
- Edwards, Holly F. C. (1990). *The Genesis of Islamic Architecture in the Indus Valley*, Dissertation. (New York: NYU.
- Elbouri, Tarek and Critchlow, Keith (1993). *Islamic Art and Architecture: The System of Geometric Design*. Grnet Publishing Limited, Reading, UK.
- Ettinghausen, Richard, and Oleg Grabar. (1987). "The Art and Architecture of Islam", 650-1250. *Pelican History of Art*. Harmondsworth, and New York.
- Fergusson, James (1910). *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, revised edition, II. London.
- Ferrier, R. W., ed. (1989). *The Arts of Persia*. New Haven.
- Fleming, A. (1973). Tombs for the Living. *Man, New Series, Vol.8 No 2*, 177-193.
- Flood, F. B. (2001). *Ghurid architecture in the indus valley: The tomb of Shaykh Sadan Shahid*. Freer Gallery of Art.
- Forder, A. (1902). The Tomb of The Ancients. *The Biblical World, vol. 20, No. 5*, 350-360.
- Forder, A. (1902). The Tombs of The Ancients. *The Biblical World, vol. 20, No. 5*, 350-360.
- Frankfort, H. (1954). *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*. Penguin Books Ltd.

- Hasan, S. K. (2001). Pakistan: its Seraiki Style of Tomb Architecture. *East and West*, vol. 51, No1/2, 167-178.
- Hasan, S. K. (2001). *The Islamic Architectural Heritage Of Pakistan: Funerary*
- Hassan, S. K. (2001). *East and West*. IsIAO.
- Hassan, S. K. (2001). *Islamic Architecture Heritage of Pakistan*. Royal Book Company. Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Hillenbrand, R. (1994). *Islamic Architecture*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Khalid, R., Raza, M., Selem, K. M., Ghaderi, Z., & Raza, H. (2023). Natural disaster is a wakeup call before it becomes social disaster and tourophobia of eco-destinations. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 28(11), 1226–1240.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2023.2293789>
Laurence King Publishing.
- Memorial Architecture*. Karachi: Royal Book Company.
- Michael Meister, Oxford.
of Pakistan: Islamic Period; 3. Islamabad.
- Raza, M., Khalid, R., & Raza, H. (2023a). Hey brand, let me take a selfie to get you out of the crisis. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jhti-05-2023-0334>
- Raza, M., Khalid, R., & Raza, H. (2023b). Surviving and thriving through a crisis: a resiliency branding approach to transform airline industry. *Kybernetes*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/k-07-2022-1062>
- Raza, M., Khalique, M., Khalid, R., Jati Kasuma, Ali, W., & Selem, K. M. (2023). Achieving SMEs' excellence: scale development of Islamic entrepreneurship from business and spiritual perspectives. *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/jiabr-02-2023-0060>
- Shehata, A. E., Khan, M. A., Khalid, R., Raza, M., & Selem, K. M. (2023). Consequences of paradoxical leadership in the hotel setting: moderating role of work environment. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 1–24.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2023.2190318>