

Tomb of BIBI PARI

Statement of Mughal Burial Architecture

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Abstract

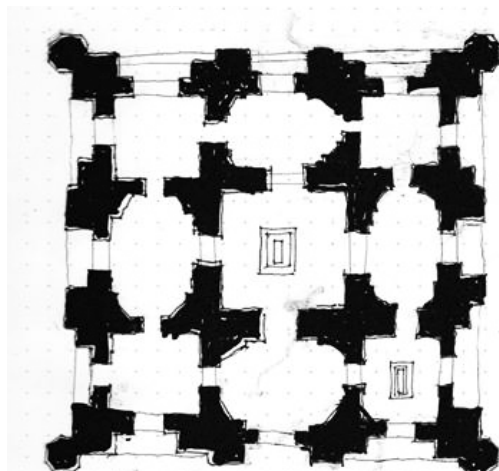
The tomb of Bibi Pari, located within the Lalbagh Fort in Dhaka, stands as a prime example of Mughal tomb architecture in Muslim Bengal. Constructed by Shaista Khan, the Mughal Subahdar of Bengal, in memory of his daughter Iran Dukht Rahmat Banu (Bibi Pari), the mausoleum reflects the fusion of Mughal grandeur with local architectural nuances. This paper examines the architectural and historical significance of the tomb, which adheres to the Mughal tradition of memorial structures while showcasing unique features of Bengal's regional craftsmanship. The tomb's central burial hall is meticulously planned, surrounded by eight ancillary chambers that reflect the Mughal attention to symmetry and spatial order. The interior boasts finely crafted marble inlays, grooved panel work, and intricate floral terrazzo tiles, characteristic of Mughal luxury. The polygonal corbelled ceilings and a copper dome at the apex, once gilded, further emphasize the tomb's spiritual and artistic dimensions. The façade's use of four-centred arches and recessed niches highlights the Shaista Khan period's architectural evolution. The tomb's stylistic resemblance to the famed Itmat Ud Doula mausoleum in Agra underscores its significance within the larger context of Mughal tomb architecture, though regional variations in materials and scale are evident. This research highlights how the tomb of Bibi Pari integrates the aesthetics of imperial Mughal architecture with local Bengal interpretations, embodying the evolution of mausoleum construction in Muslim Bengal during the Mughal era. Through an analysis of its design, this paper situates the tomb within the broader tradition of Mughal funerary architecture, underscoring its role as a spiritual and historical landmark in Bengal's architectural heritage.

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Sultanate era. However, the stylistic appearance of both the sultanate and Mughal are different. Bibi Pari was the beloved daughter of Shaista Khan who was the Mughal Subhadar of Bengal during 1665 CE. The official name of BIBI Pari was Iran Dukht Rahmat Banu was found in the Katra Waqf office of the Government of Bangladesh.¹ Lady Iran Banu/ Bibi Pari was married to Prince Muhammad Azam, son of Empire Aurangzeb. Prince Azam started the construction of Lalbagh fort in 1678 CE under the 2nd phase of the monarchy of Shaista Khan (1679-88CE). Bibi Pari showed her intelligence in the politics of Bengal and dedicated herself to socio-political tranquillity. 1684 CE, the untimely demise of Bibi Pari was so shocking to the father and consequences discontinued the construction of the Lalbagh fort to be disheartening and unrestrained. Bibi Pari was buried inside the incomplete fort, further, Shaista Khan built a magnificent tomb structure on the mortal remains of his daughter. The sign of agony of a father is still witnessed in the middle of the fort and became the splendid architecture in the hinterland.

2. Planning Organization

The planning organization of the central burial hall is well focused by surrounding sequential rooms. Eight different rooms both are square and rectangular, perhaps depicted as the ambulatory or for seating of the devotee. The edged room also allows bright light into the cabin, engaging to control light in the main hall. The planning organisation is designed to be formatted with axial coordination. Inner and exterior walls and recessed with decorated niches, alcoves and sequences. Daylight is regulated by the Stone Lactic Jail to maintain serenity.



The Mughal style mausoleum plan

1. Nazimuddin Ahmed, *Discover the Monuments of Bangladesh*, UPL Limited, Dhaka, 1984, p. 171

3. Indoor Environs

Interior of the structure is maintained with precious marble and inlay patterns. The floor is decorated with glazing tiles. The main chamber is entirely covered with marble and grooved panel works. Other walls are floral terrazzo tiled up to with dado level. The compartmental spaces act as the ambulatory circulation. The south-east corner room contains Samsad Begum's burial, daughter of Bibi Pari. The stone plaque design is similar and harmonious with the entire ambiance. Each different compartment ceiling is corbeled upward with diminishing. That appears an unseen different dimension in the spatial value. The central hall is honoured with polygonal corbeling diminishing upward; created to comprehend the interpretation. The spiritual meaning of the interior spatial emblem is tranquil.

4. Façade-vocabulary

The frontal façade of the structure is voided by three numbers of four-centred arches. The four-centred arch was derived during the Shaista Khan period. A four-centred circle created arch has a single point and comparative is a low ridged edge. The delicate chiselling of recessed archways invites tourists to get in. The central arch is bigger with projected backdrop panels. All four sides retain the same stylistic elaboration. Gentle iwan² (usually vaulted, walled on three sides, with one end entirely open) was created to get in the structure on all sides. The frontal face is eventually gridded with thick Mughal rectangular panels.

5. Shaista Khan's Style-Mughal Architecture

The corner turrets are continuously elaborated followed by the facades. The tomb is schemed with a bottom-up process. Shaista Khan Dome ribs were introduced at the top of the kiosk, where the kiosk was blind.

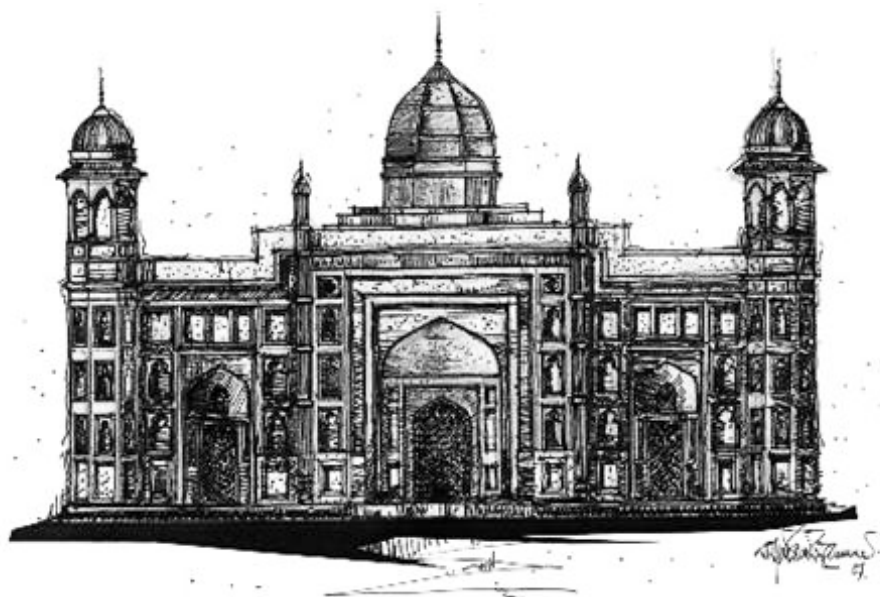
The dome was peculiar in the tomb structure. The drum had polygonal steps diminishing upward, on it, the tiny dome was positioned. The dome material is copper and previously it was a gold guild. However, the copper dome is a unique form of art that is rare to find in other Mughal meanings. Having said that, this tiny dome settled in the structure intelligently to make it proportionate. The skill of the craftsman and Shaista Khan's stylistic expression shows brilliance and thoughtfulness.³

6. Similarity in the Subcontinent

The Bibi Pari tomb is similar to the Itmat Ud Doula tomb structure (1625) Agra, India, although the construction and finish material are different. Even in the scale

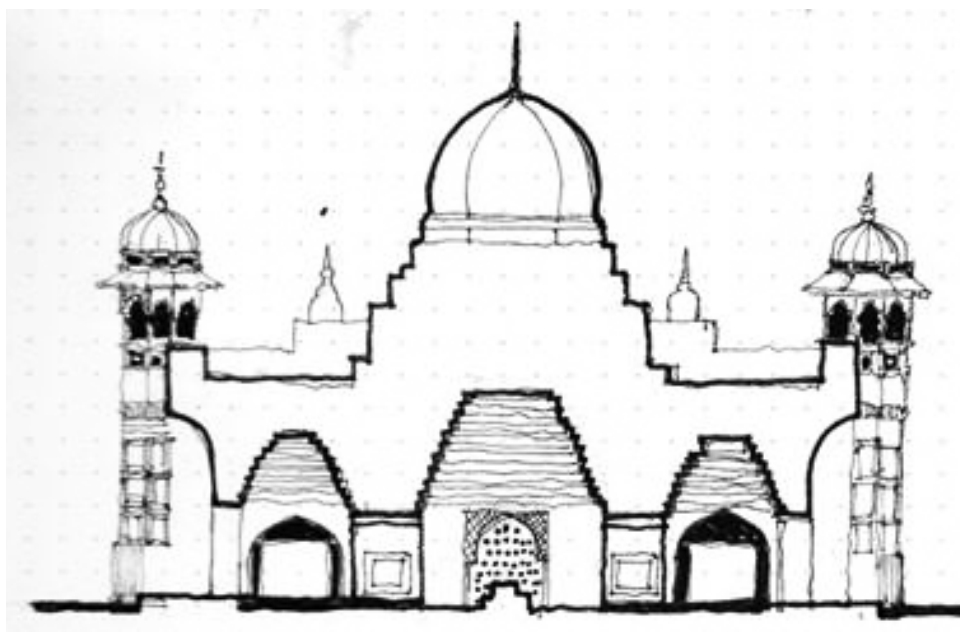
2. Catherine B Asher, 'Inventory of Key Monuments, Art and Archaeology Research Papers', *The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*, 1984, p. 71

3. Catherine Asher, 'Catherine B. Asher. Review of 'The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, Vol. 8' by Linda York Leach', *Caa.reviews*, 2002



Elevation showing the elegance of Mughal Burial Architecture

of the structure of Itmat Ud Doula tomb is an imperial Mughal structure, but the plan is almost the same. However, research is still missing to connect these two structures.



Section the tomb, elaborating the details of the interior

Conclusion

The tomb of Bibi Pari stands as a testament to the cultural and architectural synthesis that occurred during the Mughal period in Bengal. It is not merely a funerary monument but an architectural expression of love, loss, and political power. This research has explored the tomb's architectural elements, planning organization, and stylistic attributes, situating it within the broader tradition of Mughal tomb architecture, while highlighting the regional adaptations in Muslim Bengal.

The tomb's design demonstrates the Mughal fascination with symmetry, geometry, and spatial harmony, evidenced by the central burial hall and the surrounding ancillary chambers. The intricate interior craftsmanship, with its marble inlays, grooved panels, floral terrazzo tiles, and polygonal corbelled ceilings, represents the luxury and refinement typical of Mughal funerary structures. The copper dome, once gilded, along with the use of recessed arches and iwan-inspired façades, further illustrates the Mughal architectural vocabulary, adapted to the regional context of Bengal.

This analysis has also highlighted the stylistic parallels between Bibi Pari's tomb and the Itmat Ud Doula's tomb in Agra, demonstrating how Mughal architectural principles were both transmitted and transformed across regions. Despite these similarities, the use of local materials and the smaller scale of the Bibi Pari tomb suggest a distinct interpretation of Mughal funerary architecture, influenced by regional traditions in Bengal.

In conclusion, the tomb of Bibi Pari serves as an enduring symbol of Mughal influence in Bengal, showcasing the merging of imperial architectural traditions with local craftsmanship. It is not only a jewel of Bangladesh's architectural history but also an important example of how Mughal architectural forms were adapted to the socio-political and cultural landscape of Muslim Bengal. Future research could further explore the connection between similar tomb structures across the subcontinent, shedding light on the evolution of mausoleum architecture during the Mughal era.

A structure full of anguish expressing the pain of a father became a part of history. A structure is contained with spirituality.