

Patronage as Power, Power in Appropriation: Constructing Jahangir's Mausoleum

Introduction: Shah Jahan and his Relationship with Architecture

The royal mind, which is illustrious like the sun, pays meticulous attention to the planning and construction of these lofty and imposing buildings, which, in accordance with the saying, “*Verily our relics tell of us,*” speak with mute eloquence of His Majesty’s God-given high aspiration and sublime fortune—and for ages to come will serve as memorials to his abiding love of constructiveness, ornamentation and beauty.¹

So wrote ‘Abd al-Hamid Lahauri, one of the chief historians of Shah Jahan’s reign, explicitly stating the link between the *pādshāh*, imperial architectural commissions, and notions of commemoration and legacy.

It is recognized that imperial architecture of the Mughal period was meant to be reflective of the royal patron; this was particularly true of Shah Jahan, whose commissions were seen as physical visualizations of his imperial ideology. Shah Jahan’s role as an architectural patron and his deep involvement with his building projects is well known, an interest first fostered while he was a prince. His commissions from the years prior to his imperial reign stand as testimony to the fact that his interest in architecture pre-dated his ascension to the Mughal throne. Just a few examples of his princely architectural commissions or works he oversaw include the Shalimar Gardens in Kashmir, the

Moti Bagh (originally called the Shahi Bagh) in Ahmedabad, a hunting resort near Burhanpur and the redesigning of buildings within the Agra Fort.² As was the architectural trend, these constructions by and large conformed to the prevailing style of architecture popularized by Shah Jahan’s father, Emperor Jahangir, in his reign.

Once Shah Jahan assumed the throne, however, there was a streamlining of architectural vocabulary and formalization of style, all of which has led scholars to refer to his reign as the “classical phase” of Mughal architecture. Ebba Koch in particular has noted that Shah Jahan, despite building off of the architectural forms in use during his father’s rule, stripped down the variety of architectural vocabulary and forms utilized in order to create a more uniform aesthetic in his imperial commissions.³ This uniformity was exemplified by the pervasive use of the following: the Shahjahani column, a multifaceted column with a *muqarnas* (stalactite vaulting) capital and cusped-arch base; the use of *qālib-kārī* (mould-work) vaults or coved ceilings; the use of naturalistic plant and floral motifs; the “cyprus-bodied” baluster column; the semicircular and polylobed arch; and the curved profile of a roof or cornice.⁴ In addition to this reduced vocabulary there were specific types of plans which were favoured, in particular those that were bi-symmetrical.⁵

There was also great emphasis placed on a hierarchical and symbolic order to the architectural forms and materials utilized in Shah Jahan’s imperial constructions. For example, white marble and *chūnā* (fine, highly polished white stucco) were most commonly used to clad imperial buildings;⁶ prior to this the systematic use of these materials to surface imperial commissions did not exist. In addition, architectural emphasis was given to areas within audience halls or palace chambers where Shah Jahan would sit for formal appearances; the baluster column, *bangala* profile and semicircular arch were, for a period of time, reserved for use in these spaces,⁷ features exemplified by the great *jharoka* throne constructed for the Diwan-i ‘Amm [Public

1 ‘Abd al-Hamid Lahauri, *Bādshāhnāma*, 1866–72, Vol. 1, p. 149, quoted in ‘Inayat Khan 1990, p. xxxvii.

2 Asher 1992, pp. 171–72.

3 Koch 1991, p. 93.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 95.

7 Ibid.

Audience Hall] in the Lal Qila of Shahjahanabad (figure 1). In addition to architectural forms and materials being standardized, the decorative repertoire too was adapted and streamlined for Shah Jahan's imperial commissions. Two key features of this were the use of naturalistic floral imagery predominating over other decorative motifs and the use of *pietra dura*.⁸

It thus became the case that there was a consistency to Shah Jahan's imperial architectural patronage. As has been discussed by Koch, this was accomplished through the hallmarks by which we judge his buildings: symmetry, perfection of design and form, and hierarchical placement of materials and design schemes.⁹ This consistency was aided by how involved he was as a patron. It is an accepted tenet that he was the ultimate architect of his building projects and very hands-on, altering plans as he deemed fit and having to give final approval before construction would begin.¹⁰ This heavy involvement in architecture and how important a medium it was for his own self-representation is clear in how many of his building projects were discussed in his court histories and in the detail in which they were described.¹¹

According to each of his court historians, one of the first commissions embarked upon by Shah Jahan on ascending the throne was the construction of the mausoleum of his father, Jahangir (figure 2).¹² This would have conformed to the pattern of patronage established by his immediate predecessors, whereby the new emperor constructed the tomb of his father on his

accession to the throne: i.e. Akbar built the tomb of his father, Humayun, after his accession while Jahangir in turn ordered the construction of Akbar's on his. Due to Shah Jahan's recognized involvement in the design and approval of his architectural patronage, it would therefore have been the case that he would have been integrally involved in the planning, style and execution of Jahangir's tomb, and that the monument was built to not only commemorate the newly deceased emperor but also as a standing memorial to Shah Jahan's own rule.

As I have argued elsewhere, however, Jahangir's mausoleum is clearly not a part of Shah Jahan's imperial oeuvre.¹³ Rather, architecturally, stylistically and decoratively it sits within the body of works which comprise the architectural patronage of Jahangir's widow, Nur Jahan Begum, and it is my contention that she is the true patron of Jahangir's mausoleum complex. This would only have been feasible, however, with the express permission of Shah Jahan, who later appropriated the responsibility for the final resting place of his father within his court histories as a symbol of ultimate authority and imperial power. There are several strands to this argument but only one of which will be presented in this chapter: the various anomalies and imperfections of construction and decoration at Jahangir's mausoleum. These would have been anathema to a patron like Shah Jahan, who valued perfection of execution as an integral component of his commissions.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. 93; Koch 2005, p. 138.

10 Begley and Desai 1989, p. 10; Koch 1991, p. 96; Koch 2006, p. 89.

11 Koch 2006, p. 84: "The important position of architecture is reflected in the accounts of the imperial projects by the court historians and in the eulogies composed by the court poets. Shah Jahan supervised his historians personally, so the detailed recording of buildings must have been due to his specific

order. While theory and symbolism were expressed in the buildings themselves, the texts provide information about dates, architectural terminology, forms, types and function, and clues to meaning."

12 For these sources see: Brand 1993 (for Lahauri); Qazvini MS.; Kalim MS.; Thompson 1911-12 (for Kanbu).

13 This topic was the subject of my PhD thesis and will be the subject of an upcoming monograph. See Chida-Razvi 2012.



1
Shah Jahan's jharoka throne,
Diwan-i 'Amm, Lal Qila,
Shahjahanabad, c. 1639–48.
Marble and semiprecious stones.

2
West facade of Jahangir's
mausoleum, Shahdara, Lahore,
1628–38. Brick, red sandstone and
marble.



Through this discussion the importance of architecture as self-representation for not only Shah Jahan but also Nur Jahan will become evident, as she too intended her architectural projects to be perpetual reminders of her own importance and legacy. She was the first royal Mughal woman to commission architecture on a vast scale, patronizing a wide variety of structures including gardens, tombs, caravanserais and mosques. The gardens ascribed to her include several in Agra, such as the Ram Bagh/Bagh-i Nur Afshan, as well as in Lahore, like the Dilkusha Bagh and Bagh-i Dilamiz, and another at Achabal which she is said to have planned as well as commissioned. She constructed the magnificent mausoleum of her parents in Agra, which was completed the year after Jahangir's death, and also subsequently her own tomb in Lahore. Of the serais she built, the most famous is the Serai Nur Mahal near Jalandhar, while a good example of the mosques she commissioned is the Patthar Masjid in Srinagar, also known as the Shahi or Nau Masjid.¹⁴

Jahangir's Mausoleum and the Textual Sources on Its Construction

Jahangir's mausoleum was built within a garden owned by Nur Jahan in the area of Shahdara, just north of the Walled City of Lahore on the northern bank of the River Ravi between 1628 and 1638, at a cost of 10 lakhs of rupees. It is a large square tomb surrounded by a pillared arcade with four *manārs* rising from its corners. The manars are faced with multicoloured marble while the facade of the body of the tomb is surfaced with red sandstone inlaid with white marble. The interior decoration of the monument is comprised of *kāshī-kārī* mosaic tile dados, fresco painting in the series of chambers and passageways off the external arcade (figure 3), and marble panelling in the central tomb chamber (figure 4). The marble sarcophagus of Jahangir is exquisitely decorated with pietra dura floral imagery and calligraphic inscriptions (figure 5), and is without doubt the finest feature of the entire funerary complex. The complex itself is comprised of two entities—the tomb garden, which was built as an enclosed, square *chār-bāgh* subdivided into 16 parts, and the so-called Akbari Serai immediately adjacent to its west, which served as a forecourt to the funerary enclosure. The north, east and south boundary walls of the tomb garden are freestanding while the fourth, the western wall, is shared

with the Akbari Serai. To gain access to the mausoleum visitors first have to enter the serai through either its northern or southern gateway in order to reach the entrance gate to the funerary garden.

It is in contemporary historical documentation from Shah Jahan's reign, in the form of four of his court histories, that we are told he is the patron of Jahangir's mausoleum. These are the *Bādshāhnāma* of 'Abd al-Hamid Lahauri, Muhammad Amin Qazvini's *Bādshāhnāma*, Abu Talib Kalim's *Pādshāhnāma* and the *'Amal-i Ṣāliḥ* of Muhammad Salih Kanbu. Each of these authors wrote a short passage on Jahangir's mausoleum in their respective works which ascribed responsibility for the tomb's construction to Shah Jahan. While each gives a varied degree of information on Jahangir's death, the construction of his mausoleum and the materials used, all are in agreement that the construction of the tomb cost 10 lakh rupees, took 10 years to build, and that both a sarcophagus and cenotaph were placed there, the latter on the roof of the tomb.¹⁵ In each of these there is nothing written about the complex, only some brief, general details about the mausoleum. This is in contrast to other architectural projects of Shah Jahan's discussed therein, where, comparatively, a much greater amount of detail was given about descriptions of architecture and built complexes. Interestingly, the most detailed information given on any aspect of Jahangir's mausoleum within these histories is the quality and perfection of the marble sarcophagus and cenotaph and their pietra dura decoration, a point which will be returned to later. One final note on these excerpts is that because of the brevity of their descriptions and the lack of any other mention of this tomb throughout the remainder of these chronicles it is possible to assume that Shah Jahan had little to do with the production of this mausoleum. As Catherine Asher writes, these factors appear to indicate that "Shah Jahan had little personal involvement in its planning and execution, unlike many of his other architectural projects".¹⁶

14 For further information see, for example, Asher 1992, pp. 127–33.

15 For the relevant passages from each of these sources, see Chida-Razvi 2012, pp. 254–57.

16 Asher 1992, p. 172.



3
Example of fresco painting and
kashi-kari dado in the western
passage of Jahangir's mausoleum.



4
The central tomb chamber of
Jahangir's mausoleum. Marble.



5
Detail of the sarcophagus in
Jahangir's mausoleum. Marble
and semiprecious stones.

While the histories of Lahauri, Kalim, Qazvini and Kanbu are the only Shah Jahani sources which provide contemporary documentation about the production of Jahangir's mausoleum, it must be remembered that the details given within them were skewed towards Shah Jahan's own wishes. As official court histories, the writings of Lahauri, Kalim and Qazvini had to have been ultimately approved by Shah Jahan himself and so only historical information showing the emperor in a positive light is found within them. They were, after all, each written to glorify Shah Jahan, his reign and his deeds. As for Kanbu's work, although not an official historian, he aspired to win the favour of the padshah and so he too only wrote what Shah Jahan would have approved of. It should therefore be remembered that while the information given in these four sources is conveyed as truth by their respective authors, there is an inherent bias within them.

Despite the textual evidence claiming Shah Jahan's patronage, stylistically, architecturally and decoratively Jahangir's mausoleum does not conform to his imperial works. When examined alongside these other constructions, the idea that Shah Jahan built Jahangir's tomb "as a grand testament to his own sovereignty"¹⁷ is especially incongruous, particularly because there are instances of imperfections and cost-cutting

evident at the site. While Shah Jahan's patronage would not have permitted these kinds of flaws in the construction of his father's mausoleum, Nur Jahan's patronage not only explains, but justifies their occurrence.

Anomalies and Imperfections in the Construction of Jahangir's Mausoleum

It is impossible to address the issue of the imperfections in the building and decoration at Jahangir's mausoleum without discussing the cost of construction, as the two are linked. As unequivocally stated within Shah Jahan's court histories, the expenditure on Jahangir's mausoleum was 10 lakhs. To put this in context, it is necessary to briefly give examples of pertinent comparative expenditure; these include not only architectural but also decorative expenses. It is known that Jahangir spent 7 lakhs on his new structures at the Lahore Fort,¹⁸ and another 20 lakhs on the Tripolia bazaar mosque and the bazaar attached to it, also in Lahore.¹⁹ The tank and pavilion at Sheikhpura were built by him at a cost of one and a half lakhs,²⁰ while on his father's mausoleum at Sikandra he spent 15 lakhs.²¹ Nur Jahan's brother, Asaf Khan, built a grand *havili* in Lahore at a cost of 20 lakhs, twice as much as that spent on the entire mausoleum of Jahangir. On her parents' tomb, a much smaller structure and funerary complex than that of Jahangir, Nur Jahan is supposed to have spent 35 lakhs,²² three and a half times as much! On a non-imperial scale, it is documented that during Shah Jahan's reign a tomb was constructed for Abu'l-Hasan Khan, a noble in Lahore, at a cost of 10 lakhs,²³ the same amount that was spent on Jahangir's imperial tomb.

Regarding expenditures by Shah Jahan, in Lahore he spent 6 lakhs on the construction of the buildings associated with the Shalimar Bagh and an additional sum of substantially more

17 Findly 1993, p. 240.

18 Latif 1892, p. 48.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

20 Jahangir 1999, p. 350.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

22 Azhar 1975, p. 117.

23 Latif 1892, p. 152.

than 9 lakhs on his new palace structures at the Lahore Fort.²⁴ Extravagant accoutrements for the palace pavilions were also commissioned by Shah Jahan during his reign, for example, thrones. For the audience hall in Lahore he commissioned an enamelled throne which by itself cost 5 lakhs.²⁵ Another new throne was ordered to be constructed for Shah Jahan's palace at Agra, the Peacock Throne. This elaborate, bejewelled seat was valued at 100 lakhs, ten times as much as the cost of Jahangir's mausoleum, and took almost as long to create—seven years.²⁶ Comparing like-for-like with Shah Jahan's tomb construction, the Taj Mahal was initially priced at 40 lakhs but in reality ended up costing 50.²⁷ In addition to this, the gold screen which was originally created to surround the cenotaphs in the central tomb chamber cost 6 lakhs.²⁸

Compared with these other commissions for which the cost of production is known, 10 lakhs being spent on Jahangir's mausoleum was a relatively small amount in terms of architectural expenditure by the Mughal elite, especially for an imperial funerary monument. Why would this have been the case? Shah Jahan, of course, had the entirety of the imperial treasury at his disposal, but what of Nur Jahan? During Jahangir's lifetime she became an incredibly independently wealthy woman, holding a number of *jāgīrs* through which her personal wealth increased; just one of these brought her an annual income of 2 million rupees, or 20 lakhs.²⁹ She also was granted her father's estate on his death in 1622, taking control of all his many substantial assets;³⁰ this would have afforded her a tremendous amount of money as he had been one of the most important grandees of the Mughal court. Furthermore, she engaged in trade and received vast amounts of income from customs duties;³¹ for example, at Bayana, a primary site of indigo production, Nur Jahan owned several large fields which contributed to her personal fortune.³² In addition to this, she owned her own ships which engaged in international trade as well as the transport of pilgrims.³³ Thus when Nur Jahan was constructing her parents' tomb and her other architectural commissions as Jahangir's queen, she had a huge personal fortune to draw upon in addition to whatever was granted to her from the royal treasury.

After Jahangir's death, however, Nur Jahan's financial situation would have drastically changed. Not only would her access to the royal treasury have ceased, but it is likely that

most of her commercial endeavours would have as well. What happened to the personal fortune she amassed while queen is unknown; the only certainty regarding her personal finances after Shah Jahan's accession is that he provided her with an annual pension of 2 lakhs. It is apparently implied in Shah Jahani sources that Nur Jahan had to give up many of her privileges while she was confined to Lahore but nothing is expressly stated about denying the former empress her legal right to the income from her estates.³⁴

Anomalies and Imperfections in the Architecture of Jahangir's Mausoleum

The cost of Jahangir's mausoleum being comparatively low, even without any further income the 10-lakh expenditure would have been possible for Nur Jahan to pay out of her 2-lakh per annum allowance. Furthermore, the restrained cost of Jahangir's mausoleum accounts for many of the anomalies apparent in the structure's construction and decoration, each of which speaks against Shah Jahan's patronage of the site.

One of the most curious elements of construction at this mausoleum is that the tomb chamber was entered from the west,

24 'Inayat Khan 1990, p. 463. The minimum sum spent on the Lahore Fort constructions is derived from the known cost of the Naulakha Pavilion, which itself was 9 lakhs. I have thus far been unable to find construction costs for the remainder of the structures built by Shah Jahan at the Lahore Fort, which include a new Diwan-i Khass, the Shah Burj, the Ghusul Khana and the Khwabgah, but the total would therefore be much higher than 9 lakhs.

25 *Ibid.*

26 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 200.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

29 Tirmizi 1979, p. 12.

30 Jahangir 1999, p. 376.

31 Tirmizi 1979, p. 12.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

33 Asher and Talbot 2006, p. 160.

34 I am grateful to Saqib Baburi for this information from Shah Jahan's court histories.

a singular instance, as the rest of the imperial Mughal tombs, and Mughal funerary structures in general, were entered from the south. As the western entrance gate was the only one into Jahangir's tomb garden it might seem intuitive that the entrance to the mausoleum should be from this same side so that a straight axis was created between the two. However, west is the direction of *qibla* in South Asia and it is striking that by building the entrance to Jahangir's tomb chamber from this direction the resultant orientation meant that the visitor's back faced *qibla* as they entered what had come to be considered a quasi-sacred space. As it had already been established as early as Akbar's reign that imperial Mughal mausoleums had connotations of being religious sites, with visits to them being treated like *ziyarat*, or pilgrimage,³⁵ this entrance orientation at Jahangir's tomb would have been considered unorthodox. This was in spite of the fact that the *ulama* did not consider tombs as religious spaces and did not approve of this practice.

If Jahangir's tomb had been planned according to the prevailing conventions of royal tomb construction, it too should have been entered from the south. Such non-conformity of planning and the singular nature of this entrance direction do not fit with Shah Jahani principles of architecture. Nor, it must be added, does it follow an orthodox way of thinking, an important point in light of the fact that Islamic orthodoxy was seen to increase during Shah Jahan's reign.³⁶

Why would such an orientation to the tomb have been created? The only explanation which presents itself for this construction enigma is that the entrance was kept on the western side of the mausoleum because the entrance gate was to the west of the tomb, leading one to infer that it was the pre-existing nature of the garden which resulted in this orientation. This implies a desire for a single axis in the tomb garden and complex, an assumption that can be challenged on the grounds that at Humayun's tomb, the first monumental Mughal mausoleum, the tomb chamber was only accessible from the south despite the fact that the public entrance gate was to the west of the building. Furthermore, two axes of entrance existed at Humayun's tomb garden as the royal entrance gate was built to the south of the monument. On a sub-imperial level, the same was true of the tomb of I'timad al-Daula (figure 6), the tomb constructed by Nur Jahan for her parents in Agra, in which the

entrance to the tomb chamber was from the south despite the entrance gates to the complex being from the east and west. At Jahangir's mausoleum the orientation is complicated even more by the fact that passages leading to the central tomb chamber were built on all four sides of the structure, yet it was only the western one which actually provided access.

That such an unorthodox axial alignment was maintained at Jahangir's mausoleum indicates that it was a purposeful decision by the patron. This unique orientation does not conform to Shah Jahan's orthodoxy or architectural principles but, rather, it indicates Nur Jahan's desire to give extra distinction to the site on a restricted budget. By making visitors to the mausoleum enter the tomb and tomb chamber from the west, they must face east towards the deceased emperor. East is also, of course, the direction of the rising sun. With this orientation a link is thus made between the sun and Jahangir, who took "Nuruddin" (*nūr al-dīn*—Light of the Religion) as his honorific title. This symbolic relationship between the emperor and the sun was made explicit in the histories of the Mughal kings, and we know that Jahangir used light symbolism and sun imagery frequently to highlight his divinely ordained kingship.³⁷

From an anomaly in construction we now turn to imperfections at the site, the first to be discussed being the entrance gate to the tomb garden. In relevant examples of royal Mughal funerary gateways, each face was decorated using

35 See, for example, Koch 1993/2001, in which the visits of Humayun's successors to his tombs taking on the trappings and ceremonial activities of *ziyarat* is discussed. The spiritual quality of the deceased emperors is also evident from the writings of Jahangir, who states in his memoirs that he went to visit the "blessed tomb" of his father, where he sought "assistance from his spirit" and was granted a "good omen ... from the blessed assistance of His Majesty". See Jahangir 1999, pp. 50, 98–99.

36 Asher 1992, p. 170. "Under Shah Jahan Islamic orthodoxy increased ... Islam took on an importance as never before in Mughal India, although it is difficult to say whether Shah Jahan himself was more orthodox than his predecessors."

37 See, for example: Abu'l Fazl 1897, Vols. 1–2, pp. 27–28, 33; Asher 1992, p. 133; Koch 1993/2001, p. 174.



Clockwise from top left

- 6**
East facade of the tomb of I'timad al-Daula, Agra, 1622–28. Brick, marble and other stones.
- 7**
Eastern elevation of the entrance gate to Jahangir's tomb garden. Brick and plaster.
- 8**
Western elevation of the entrance gate to Jahangir's tomb garden. Brick, red sandstone and marble.
- 9**
Parapet of the entrance gate to Jahangir's tomb garden. Brick and red sandstone.
- 10**
The overlap of the sandstone veneer with the platform water channel, western side of the entrance gate to Jahangir's tomb garden. Brick and red sandstone.



the same materials and in the same manner. This is evident at the entrance gates to the imperial tomb gardens of Humayun and Akbar, Nur Jahan's tomb garden for her parents, and the gateway built by Shah Jahan at the Taj Mahal complex. As Jahangir's tomb garden was created from a pre-existing pleasure garden, the gateway originally was located at the site and it is likely that both of its faces were originally plastered and painted. When Nur Jahan's garden was transformed into an imperial funerary garden to house Jahangir's tomb, however, it became necessary to make the entrance gate more grandiose and to distinguish this facade from the other buildings of the adjacent serai.³⁸ The eastern gateway facade, the side facing the mausoleum, was plastered and painted in floral motifs (figure 7), while a sandstone facade with white marble and stone inlay was placed on the western elevation, facing the serai (figure 8). An indication that the sandstone face of the west elevation is a later addition to the original construction of the gateway is its position on the platform, which is the first imperfection of the site to be discussed: a corner of the sandstone veneer overlaps the water channel built into the edge of the platform on which the gateway was constructed (figure 10). Without the sandstone slabs covering it, the entrance gate's west facade would not overlap the water channel and would allow for visitors walking from the eastern serai cells to directly access the portal of the gate with ease.³⁹ The idea that Shah Jahan as the patron would have permitted something like this not only to occur, but then not to have it fixed, goes against everything we know of him as a patron.

The addition of a sandstone veneer to the original gateway also explains another imperfection related to this structure, the inclusion of a parapet on the west facade of the gateway but not on the east. The placement of the parapet is strange, in that it wraps around the west facade by only a metre or so, and does not continue the full circumference of the gateway (figure 9). Not only does it give the impression that this part of the structure was incomplete when this was not the case, but it makes the western elevation of the gateway taller than that of the eastern. The gateway itself was therefore not aesthetically symmetrical after its refit and redecoration. The two faces were decorated differently, with different materials, and their heights differed as well. Let it not be forgotten that symmetry was one of the

hallmarks of Shah Jahani architecture. This gateway thus does not conform to one of his key principles of construction.

Also, a hallmark of Shah Jahan's patronage was the hierarchical use of materials, a trait in which this entrance gate falls short. The fact that the sandstone and marble veneer was used on the western face meant that the more expensive side of the gate, and therefore the more important one, faced away from the mausoleum. This is quite remarkable, for as Koch has highlighted, it tended to be the case that the inner elevations of mausoleum gateways were the more elaborate as they were the side facing the tombs,⁴⁰ a convention subscribed to by Shah Jahan. As part of his building ideals the importance placed on the hierarchy of materials and the resulting symbolism meant that marble, as the most important material, would have been reserved for the more important sections of a structure. In the case of this gateway, this means that if only one side of the gate was to be decorated with white marble, Shah Jahani principles of construction would have utilized it on the eastern face of the gate, the side facing the tomb.

However, again considering the relatively low expenditure on the site and the attempts to give distinction to certain areas,

38 The resurfacing and reuse of pre-existing structures was not an unheard of concept but at the imperial level there was no precedent for this, Jahangir's tomb garden being the only such example of a pleasure garden being converted into an imperial burial site while utilizing the pre-existing boundaries and structures.

39 While true that the Akbari Serai and the gateway were restored and repaired by the British in the early 20th century, this placement of the water channel—running under the sandstone veneer—does not appear to have been a result of their interventions. Not only is there nothing in the ASI reports dealing with the work done on the area of the serai platform and water channel to indicate its current placement is a result of their work, but if any alterations to the course of the channel had been perpetrated by the ASI there is no reason for it to have been purposefully placed so that it ran under the facade of the gateway. Rather, it can be inferred that during the repairs to the platform that were undertaken, they kept the water channel in its original position.

40 Koch 2006, p. 115.

Nur Jahan's patronage allows for an understanding of this aspect of the decoration. It was deemed more important not only to distinguish the entrance facade of the gateway into the tomb garden from the other buildings within the serai, but also to mark the importance of the space it led to—an imperial funerary garden. The idea of distinction being given to an entrance facade of a gateway rather than the inner face was an element seen in some earlier examples of Nur Jahan's and Jahangir's architecture. At her serai in Jalandhar, for example, the entrance facade was elaborately carved on its entire surface while the inner face was much simpler and did not include that particular type of decoration.

The final imperfection of the architecture of the funerary complex to be discussed here relates to the subsidiary pavilions of the tomb garden. The pavilions located in the centre of the northern and southern boundary walls are similar in form and dimensions, but not identical. Each was built as a single-storey "U" shaped building on top of a platform, within which was a rectangular pool placed in front of the pavilions. The northern pavilion is slightly larger than its southern counterpart, which appears as the more refined of the two. Both exteriors were plastered and decorated with panelling but their facades are different. The northern pavilion had three openings into it, the southern one had five, three in the recessed entrance and one on each of the two projecting arms. The southern pavilion was built with elegant accents in the shape of its doorframes and arches which are absent at the northern pavilion, where the doorframes were shaped as sharp rectangles. As is evident from the central arch of the south pavilion's facade, the arch profile is more fluid and aesthetic than those used on the north pavilion.

That the pavilions are different again immediately raises questions about the idea that Shah Jahan was responsible for the construction of this tomb complex, as one of the hallmarks of his imperial architectural commissions was bilateral symmetry. As exemplified by the Taj Mahal complex, this notion of symmetry was the driving force behind Shah Jahan's architecture and if he were responsible for Jahangir's tomb garden and complex, these two pavilions would undoubtedly have been constructed (or reconstructed if they were pre-existing) as identical mirror images. This is especially true as there was a six-year overlap in the construction of Jahangir's mausoleum complex and that

of the Taj Mahal, which stands as the epitome of Shah Jahan's architectural principles and decorative aesthetic. Yet, these two monuments and their respective complexes could not be more different. What is clear, then, is that the anomalies and imperfections of the architecture in Jahangir's tomb complex do not fit with the type of architectural patron that Shah Jahan was. If he were the force behind the construction of this tomb complex, mishaps like the gateway parapet and the sandstone facade overlapping a water channel could not have occurred. Shah Jahan, who was such a hands-on patron, or one of his subordinates overseeing the construction, would not have condoned such a glaring fault as two corresponding pavilions being different sizes, styles and forms. In the same vein, the hierarchical importance of materials, which is reflected in all of Shah Jahan's architectural commissions once he was emperor, would not have been disregarded. Something would have been done to change these features as Shah Jahan's commissions, as reflections of himself and his reign, had to be perfect.

Inconsistencies and Unique Decorative Features of Jahangir's Mausoleum

The same perfection was true also of the decoration employed on Shah Jahan's imperial architecture, an aesthetic which was dominated by white marble, pietra dura, naturalistic floral representations and the use of epigraphy (figure 11). Suffice it to say, the decorative aesthetic of Jahangir's mausoleum and its component parts do not fall in line with the classical Shah Jahani one. Rather, like the architecture, the decoration is more clearly aligned with Jahangiri-era architectural decoration, particularly that patronized by both Jahangir and Nur Jahan. As such, there are several decorative elements seen at the site which are unique in comparison to the other imperial Mughal mausoleums.

The first of these is that there is a profuse use of animal imagery in the painted decoration employed at Jahangir's tomb. These mainly take the form of animal-headed handles on jars or ewers but also include stand-alone imagery and animal heads as part of furnishing designs. In the external chambers of the mausoleum, duck and bird heads were used with some frequency, and they are also placed in the frescos of the interior entrance passages to the tomb chamber. This is not the case for the more remarkable depictions of elephant heads (figure 12), which only



11
Jharoka area, Diwan-i 'Amm, Agra Fort, Agra, c. 1628–37. Brick, marble and semiprecious stones.

12
Elephant head decoration, fresco in the main western external chambers of Jahangir's mausoleum.

13
Example of dragon head depictions, fresco in the western entrance passage of Jahangir's mausoleum.

appear in the two largest external chambers, on the western side of the monument. In fact, it is in these western chambers that the artists made the most overt use of animal figures at the tomb, where duck heads, bird heads and elephant heads were used in abundance. Other instances of animal imagery at Jahangir's mausoleum include depictions of fish in some of the chambers, representations which could possibly be of human figures, and dragon heads in the entrance passages (figure 13). This last motif was used to embellish not only the handles of some of the painted vessels in these passages but also some of the stands of the vases, where these heads were depicted on a larger scale.

The use of elephant heads is the most unique animal feature at Jahangir's mausoleum and their appearance is again something which can be linked to Nur Jahan's desire to give distinction to the site. The Mughal emperors considered the elephant to be an exceptionally important symbol of royalty and kingship,⁴¹ so as a royal animal, their inclusion within the design scheme of Jahangir's mausoleum would have served to strengthen and heighten the visual concept of kingship associated with the tomb. In addition, the location of these elephant heads is

extremely significant in that they were only depicted in the largest external chambers of the mausoleum, the three-bayed rooms on the western facade, as noted above. This placement thus meant that they were only placed within the chambers that were on the entrance facade to the monument. This is indicative of an inherent importance associated with their placement which I would argue was directly related to Nur Jahan exploring unique methods to give an imperial distinction to her husband's sepulchral monument. Had these elephant images been placed elsewhere, their symbolic power in representing Jahangir's sovereignty would have been diminished.⁴² The use of elephants within this funerary space is further seen to be significant when it is realized what importance Jahangir himself placed upon the elephant as a royal and dynastic symbol, a theme which has been previously discussed by Koch.⁴³ This is evident through

41 Koch 2007, pp. 185–87.

42 Their location on the tomb's entrance resembles the placement of elephant sculptures on the Hathi Pols of Mughal forts.

43 Koch 2007, p. 169.



his commissioning of four life-sized carved elephant sculptures which, when combined with the inscriptions placed upon them which highlighted the padshah as the patron, heightened the royal link between the animal and the Mughal emperor.⁴⁴

The use of such overt animal imagery in a funerary monument is one of the most potent features relating the structure to Nur Jahan's patronage and arguing against it being that of Shah Jahan. This is because these types of designs were employed at both Jahangir's mausoleum and the tomb of I'timad al-Daula, the first example of such pictorial elements being used on a Mughal funerary monument. Nur Jahan disregarded the dogmatic position that funerary monuments were considered religious spaces and as such should not include figural imagery as part of their decoration, an idea that appeared to be condoned by Jahangir as he had earlier incorporated human and animal figures



in the subsidiary structures at his father's mausoleum complex in Sikandra.⁴⁵ In addition, he is supposed to have included representations of human figures to decorate the interior of Akbar's tomb chamber, although these have not survived.⁴⁶

At I'timad al-Daula's tomb the first instances of this type of decoration encountered at the site are on the facade where the appearance of duck heads indicates a certain level of confidence in the choice of their inclusion as decoration (figure 14). Not only are they found inlaid at eye level on the facade and intrados, but they are also placed on the turrets and the roof pavilion. The motif used at these locations is always one of duck heads appearing on the handles of vases or ewers, just as at Jahangir's mausoleum. On the interior of I'timad al-Daula's tomb, in which the walls are heavily decorated with fresco painting, the same medium used at Jahangir's, there are also several instances of animal imagery

44 Ibid.: images of two of these sculptures appear on p. 168.

45 These were described by Smith in his 1909 extended report on Sikandra for the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), in which he also provided plates which showed these details. See Smith

1909, Plates LIV, LXII, LXIII, for example, for images of humans, elephants and birds carved onto the elevations of the western and eastern gateways.

46 Manucci 1907, Vol. 1, p. 141; Asher 1992, p. 108.



including clouds taking the forms of birds, feline heads and even a winged face. In addition, on the interior face of the tomb garden's western pavilion—the side facing the mausoleum—are painted depictions of a winged figure, human figures and chinoiserie vases and bowls decorated with lions and a deer.

The decorative motifs of I'timad al-Daula's tomb have been described as belonging to the age of Jahangir, special attention being called to the extensive use of wine vases, jars, cups and dishes, as well as the portrayal of Chinese clouds and animal motifs (figure 15).⁴⁷ As such strong similarities can be seen not only in the use of these designs at Jahangir's tomb, but in the use of the same medium on the mausoleum's interior, this

would formally place the decoration of Jahangir's tomb in the established decorative mode associated with his reign rather than that of Shah Jahan.

Animal imagery was a common decorative feature in Jahangir's imperial architectural commissions seen, for example, at the Kala Burj (figure 16) and picture wall at the Lahore Fort.⁴⁸ This was also the case for structures patronized by Nur Jahan. She had a predilection for using animal figures as decoration in her architectural commissions, something which Shah Jahan certainly viewed with reserve and rarely employed. In addition to the tomb of her parents, the pavilions she constructed at the Ram Bagh in Agra were decorated on their interiors with winged beings, putti and birds (figure 17),⁴⁹ while the surface of the gateway into Serai Nur Mahal was heavily decorated with animal imagery. There, carved elephants composed the brackets of the jharokas on the gateway's facade, and the recessed niches of the facade were carved in relief with imagery similar to that of the Lahore Fort kashi-kari picture wall, including elephant fights and flying winged figures (figure 18).⁵⁰ Such imagery only stresses the relationship between Nur Jahan's architectural patronage and Jahangir's tomb.

Shah Jahan's architecture, on the other hand, did not make great use of animal imagery as a decorative device, and certainly not within mausoleums. There is really only one example of Shah Jahan incorporating animal images into his architecture, when he had pietra dura panels depicting birds and a separate one of Orpheus playing his lute placed into the wall behind his throne in his new Diwan-i 'Amm at the Lal Qila in Shahjahanabad.⁵¹

Among the most noteworthy inconsistencies of Jahangir's mausoleum is the lack of inscriptions at the tomb complex, referring here to inscriptions on the structures and not what

47 Nath 1973, p. 102.

48 For further information on the Kala Burj see Koch 1983/2001, and on the tiled picture wall see Vogel 1920, pp. 27–49.

49 See Koch 1986, pp. 51–65.

50 Parihar 2015, pp. 53–66; for further information on the kashi-kari picture wall see Vogel 1920, pp. 27–38.

51 See Koch 1988/2001, in particular pp. 81–104 for the imagery of the panels.



15
Interior vestibule wall of the tomb of I'timad al-Daula. Brick, marble and fresco painting.

16
Simurghs, birds and putti, fresco on the central dome of the Kala Burj, Lahore Fort, Lahore, early 17th century.

14 (opposite)
Duck head decoration, facade of the tomb of I'timad al-Daula. Marble and other stones.

17
Frescos, interior of the northern pavilion, Ram Bagh, Agra, 1621.

18
Carvings on the exterior facade of the Serai Nur Mahal, Jalandhar, 1620–21. Red sandstone.

is found on the sarcophagus. This is out of the ordinary as the inclusion of inscriptions and epigraphy at royal mausoleum sites had become common practice during Jahangir's reign, particularly the inclusion of Qur'anic inscriptions. We see this employed at the tombs of Prince Khusrau and Sultana Nisar Begum in Allahabad,⁵² Akbar's tomb in Sikandra and the tomb of I'timad al-Daula in Agra. Within the main vestibule of Akbar's tomb, for example, Qur'anic verses are used exclusively as the epigraphy within this space.⁵³ This is also the case for the inscription panels which adorn the exterior of I'timad al-Daula's tomb—all are from the Qur'an.⁵⁴

In addition to the lack of inscriptions on Jahangir's tomb itself, the fact that they were also absent from the entrance gate is unusual; the only exception to this was "Allāh" inlaid onto the western facade twice. At the imperial level, there was a precedent for the use of extensive epigraphy on these structures from Akbar's tomb gateway, where inscriptions extol Jahangir as the ruler and the patron, compare the tomb garden to Paradise,⁵⁵ and eulogize and lavishly praise Akbar. Additionally, isolated lines from the Qur'an were included.⁵⁶

By the time Jahangir's tomb complex was constructed inscriptions had therefore become part of the accepted mode for inclusion at funerary sites for members of the royal family, as well as on the entrance gates into these spaces to explicitly tie together Qur'anic notions of Paradise with the tomb garden. This reoccurs at the Taj Mahal, where the very visible calligraphic inscriptions on the gateway are Qur'anic verses to this effect. On the south face of the entrance gate to the Taj Mahal is the *Sūrat al-Fajr*, inviting the believer into Paradise, and on the north face are verses pertaining to the end of time.⁵⁷ The extensive and symbolic use of inscriptions on the Taj Mahal itself (figure 19) is also in stark contrast to the complete lack of epigraphy seen at Jahangir's mausoleum.⁵⁸



52 Desai 1961, pp. 64–68.

53 Nath 1994, pp. 381–82.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 419.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 371.

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 372, 378.

57 Begley and Desai 1989, pp. 195–97; Koch 2006, p. 128.

58 In addition to the Qur'anic inscriptions employed at the Taj Mahal, Shah Jahan utilized inscriptions on other architectural commissions of his as well. In these he was extolled as the ruler, his titles were given, as well as the date of the inscription. For example, one is on the Hathi Pol at the Lahore Fort, referencing Shah Jahan's construction there of the Shah Burj and that it was done in the fourth year of his accession, corresponding to 1631. At the Agra Fort is an inscription on the Diwan-i Khass again extolling Shah Jahan, his erection of the palace, and the date of 1636–37. There are also assorted inscriptions included on the various pavilions of the Lal Qila in Shahjahanabad.



Shah Jahan sought to continuously improve upon and surpass what had come before him, and so a complete lack of inscriptions at the site, which would have clearly been warranted based upon precedent if nothing else, is further evidence that Shah Jahan was not the patron of Jahangir's mausoleum. Instead, if we return to Nur Jahan's patronage and the idea of a restricted budget, we can understand why inscriptions were not utilized on the tomb's monuments as this aspect of decoration would have added to the cost.

Comparative Architecture of Nur Jahan and Shah Jahan

As has already been noted, Nur Jahan's building experience was impressive. She considered her architectural commissions to be her legacy, an idea corroborated by Francisco Pelsaert, a

Dutch visitor to the Mughal empire during Jahangir's reign. He wrote the following of her intention in commissioning the many structures and projects that she did:

Meanwhile she erects very expensive buildings in all directions, sarais, or halting places for travellers and merchants, and pleasure-gardens and palaces such as no one has ever made before—intending thereby to establish an enduring reputation.⁵⁹

Most relevant for this discussion on comparative architecture are the tombs Nur Jahan constructed for her parents and herself. As has been seen, Jahangir's tomb is distinctive and due to the lack

⁵⁹ Pelsaert 1925, p. 50. This notion of permanence through architecture is also discussed in Findly 1993, p. 228.



19
Example of calligraphic inscriptions on the facade of the Taj Mahal, Agra, 1632–36. Marble.

20
South face of the Taj Mahal. Brick, marble and semiprecious stones.

of contemporary sources on the actual construction of the tomb it is imperative to see how the sepulchral styles patronized by both Nur Jahan and Shah Jahan differed, thereby allowing for a stylistic determination of who is the more likely candidate for creating the building and the decorative programme at Jahangir's mausoleum.

Stylistically, the platform tombs of Nur Jahan and I'timad al-Daula share much in common with Jahangir's mausoleum, specifically in their shape, design scheme and the motifs chosen for representation. I'timad al-Daula's tomb, the first of these three to be built, is a small, compact, two-storey structure. From its four corners rise round turrets, the bases of which are octagonal. They form a part of the ground storey of the structure, a concept repeated at Jahangir's tomb where the octagonal bases of the minarets were built as part of the mausoleum's body. Also similar between these two edifices is that on each roof terrace a small *chabūtra* was built in the centre of the space which served

as a base for the cenotaphs placed at each site while the true graves were located below in the central tomb chambers, covered by their respective sarcophagi. In its architecture Jahangir's mausoleum can be seen as an expanded version of I'timad al-Daula's tomb, elongated on both its horizontal and vertical axes.

Nur Jahan's tomb, on the other hand, has an external profile identical in form to Jahangir's but was built to a quarter of the size and without the minarets of Jahangir's tomb (figure 21). Both are square structures with arcaded facades, projecting entrance arches and octagonal bastions at their corners, and both have a *chabutra* built at the centre of their roofs. The tomb stands as a shadow of its original self, with an interior bereft of almost all of its original decoration and an exterior that was completely pilfered. From the few remains of interior paintings which survive it is evident that the interior decoration was like that used at Jahangir's tomb in the large niches painted on the





21
East facade of the tomb of Nur Jahan, Shahdara, Lahore, c. 1628–45. Brick.

22
Surviving frescos, interior of the tomb of Nur Jahan.



walls “filled” with floral sprays or vases full of flowers (figure 22). In addition, some of the decorative accents are the same, like the delicately wrought stands for some of the vases. This latter trait is something which ties the decoration to both Jahangir’s and I’timad al-Daula’s tombs.

It is evident that many similarities exist between the construction and decoration of these two tombs built by Nur Jahan and that of Jahangir’s mausoleum, and that the likenesses are not the result of mere circumstance. I’timad al-Daula’s tomb was completed the year after Jahangir’s death, and it is possible that Nur Jahan’s tomb was built simultaneously or just after that of her husband’s; all that is known is that her tomb was complete by the time of her death in 1645. What is relevant is that at the time of Jahangir’s death Nur Jahan already had direct experience with tomb construction and therefore had an established idea of what she considered appropriate for the burial structure of an immediate family member.

What Shah Jahan considered a fitting burial monument to a loved one is the tomb which has become synonymous with Mughal architecture, the Taj Mahal (figure 20). The mausoleum was started after Jahangir’s but a portion of its construction was simultaneous, overlapping from 1632 to 1638. As Shah Jahan had a very particular relationship with architecture, creating structures which became immediately identifiable with his reign, the style and aesthetic of his commissions tended to be similar. As this was the case, if he had been the force behind Jahangir’s tomb, it would be expected that some similarities would exist between the Taj Mahal and it. However, when one looks at the Taj Mahal it is immediately clear that it is in a different class than Jahangir’s tomb, both architecturally and decoratively. Although a few parallels can be seen, the architecture of these two sites share very little, the Taj Mahal having much more in common with Humayun’s tomb.

Aesthetically, the Taj Mahal is dominated by white marble, and there is a complete lack of painted decoration. The decorative elements of this mausoleum are composed of inscriptions, relief carvings and pietra dura. The decoration of the sarcophagus unit at Jahangir’s tomb is the only example of pietra dura found at his tomb complex today, and here is where we finally see Shah Jahan’s hand at play in Jahangir’s mausoleum; for this was undoubtedly his contribution to his father’s mausoleum,

along with the original cenotaph. The quality of the inlay on the sarcophagus rivals the finest produced under the Mughals, as does the naturalistic way in which the flowers were depicted. The sides of the sarcophagus were inlaid with the 99 names and attributes of Allah while Jahangir’s name and the date of his death were inlaid at the foot, all in black marble. Religious verses were inlaid into the head of the sarcophagus and on the top were Qur’anic verses; these are the only passages from the Qur’an employed at the tomb, and in fact the only epigraphy of any kind visible today. It would have taken the finest court artists to create such a piece, and these individuals were at work in Agra creating Mumtaz Mahal’s sarcophagus when the time came for these accoutrements to be created for Jahangir’s mausoleum.⁶⁰ The fact that the sarcophagus and cenotaph feature so prominently in the descriptions of Jahangir’s tomb given in the primary Shah Jahani sources discussed earlier is further indication that these funerary accoutrements were due to Shah Jahan’s direct patronage, in contrast to the rest of the mausoleum and associated complex, the details of which are so scant within these texts.

Conclusion

The programme of the Vienna workshop where this chapter first came into being includes a telling phrase. Referencing art-historical studies, it states that “Shah Jahan’s rule has emerged as a highly dynamic phase where an increasing centralisation in the administration goes hand in hand with a formalisation of court ceremonial, architecture and the arts which, highly aestheticised, show themselves as a persuasive statement of his ideal and universal kingship. Shah Jahan becomes visible as the *great perfectionist and systematiser* of the Mughal Empire [italics mine].” As indicated in the introduction by means of Lahauri’s quotation, Shah Jahan saw his architectural commissions as a means of perpetuating his legacy. Since he considered his built structures as visual statements of the perfection of his rule and as perpetual physical reminders of himself and his reign, would he really have built such an unassuming mausoleum for Jahangir? A tomb which not only did not conform to the established conventions of Shah Jahani architecture, but also

60 Koch 2006, p. 170.

one which clearly exhibited anomalies and imperfections in both its construction and decoration?

It is evident that the mausoleum of Jahangir does not fall into the characteristic oeuvre of Shah Jahani architecture, being instead of a type much more in line with the architecture and decoration associated with Jahangir's reign and specifically with the architecture of Nur Jahan. With an annual stipend of 2 lakhs per year given to her from the royal treasury, and the remainder of her own personal fortune to possibly draw on, Nur Jahan would have been capable of paying for Jahangir's tomb. Choosing a garden in Lahore she already owned, transforming it into a funerary garden, and adapting the pre-existing structures would also have suited her limited resources. The fact that Nur Jahan was drawing on her own purse to finance the construction of Jahangir's mausoleum resulted in the many unique features of the site as it was necessary to experiment with the question of how to make the tomb "imperial" without having the imperial treasury to pay the costs. As a result, the architecture of the structure is simple but striking, and the decoration is innovative and more profuse and vibrant than at the other imperial tombs.

The importance of architectural patronage as a means of perpetuating one's legacy was something recognized and acted upon by both Nur Jahan and Shah Jahan. Nur Jahan had a very strong, impressive history as an architectural patron and regarded buildings as the best medium by which to propagate her legacy. Once an incredibly powerful figure at the Mughal court, after Jahangir's death she made a final attempt at securing her legacy with the construction of the Royal Burial Complex of Shahdara, only to have this project usurped by Shah Jahan. This in itself shows the potent symbolic importance that architecture

had to the Mughal rulers and elite. Despite the site not conforming to Shah Jahan's principles of architecture, despite its having imperfections and oddities in its creation, Shah Jahan would still rather have claimed the credit for the site. In this instance perhaps it was not so much to glorify himself, but to deny the attempt by Nur Jahan to add to her architectural legacy by taking away the prestige of having her name associated with the production of Jahangir's imperial mausoleum.

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