

The Kalhora Queen and Religious Architecture: The Mosques of Mai Jaman As Trend-Setters in Late Eighteenth-Century Sindh

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Abstract

The Kalhora royal women occupied a prestigious and influential position in the Kalhora dynasty. Some women, namely Mai Jaman, Mai Gulan, Bibi Shehar Bano and Bibi Jani Begum acquired renown in the field of art and architecture. This paper deals with the mosques which are believed to have been commissioned by Mai Jaman, a wife of Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhoro (1719-1753). As well, the role of Kalhora royal women in architecture in general and the fact that the mosques of Mai Jaman served as prototypes to later Kalhora- period mosques in particular have been highlighted in this paper. There are six mosques which were built by Mai Jaman, with all of them located in different villages in the Sanghar district of Sindh, Pakistan. Unfortunately, most of these mosques are now crumbling, brick-by-brick.

Introduction

Hospitality and generosity are the hallmarks of Sindhi society. There are many Sindhi women who were famous for their generosity. Mai Jaman, the wife of Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhoro; Mai Khairi, the mother of Mir Fateh Ali Khan Talpur, the founder of the Talpur Dynasty; Mai Chaghi, the mother of Izzat Khan, an adviser to Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro and the wife of Malik Pahar Khan Burfat, the cultural hero from the Burfat tribe--all of these ladies won the hearts of the poor by engaging themselves in welfare work.

Mai Jaman was the most prominent one among the group. She belonged to the Junejo tribe. Mai Jaman got married to Mian Noor Muhammad (Baloch 2000:40) and she bore him two illustrious sons namely, Mian Abdul Nabi and Mian Ghulam Nabi, both of whom ruled Sindh. Rakhyal Khan was the brother of Mian Jaman who later who, later, enjoyed a very prestigious position during the reigns of Mian Abdul Nabi and

Ghulam Nabi. Mian Faqir Muhammad Khan, a nephew of Rahkyaal, after whom *Faqir Jo Par* in Hyderabad is named, also played an important role in the Kalhora Dynasty. Other members of the Juneja tribe also played significant roles during the reign of Mian Sarfaraz Khan Kalhoro (Beg 1982:146). Mian Ghulam Nabi also married from the Juneja tribe. His brothers-in-law Mithal Khan (after whom Tando Mitha Khan is named) and Pir Muhammad were very close to him (Baloch 2000:40).

Many other Kalhora women held important positions in the Kalhora court. Mai Gulan, who was also a wife of Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhoro (1719-1753), was an influential lady. Mian Noor Muhammad constructed a *mahal* (palace) for his beloved wife, Mai Gulan, which is located in Tando Ghulam Hussain (Memon 1994:37). The wives of Mian Ghulam Shah (who reigned from 1757-1772) also contributed to the architectural design of mosques. One of his wives, Sindhi Rani, who was the daughter of Wasuji, a cousin of Rao of Kutch, was also a powerful lady (Memon 1994:22). His second wife, Mai Bahu Begum, who was popularly known as Mai Saiheb Daluat, built some mosques and excavated wells for the poor. She was a daughter of Nawab Nisar Khan Gujar and sister of Nawab Allah Dad Khan who was the chief advisor of Mian Sarfaraz Khan Kalhoro (Memon 1994:22). Mai Shehar Bano, a sister of Mian Ghulam Shah and the daughter of Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhoro and Mai Gulan, was also believed to have built a mosque and Madrasah which is located in Pucca Qila in Hyderabad (ibid:34). Mai Sonbai, popularly known as Bibi Jani Begum, the wife of Mian Sarfaraz Kalhoro, was also a very influential lady who was believed to have supervised the tomb of her husband (ibid:56).

Mai Jaman was a God-fearing, pious and generous lady who undertook a number of public- welfare works. Her generosity and righteousness were reflected in her efforts related to social work. She helped excavate many wells for the poor and also constructed inns and mosques. There are six mosques which she was believed to have erected. All of these mosques carry the name of Mai Jaman and are located in various talukas of Sanghar district. There are two mosques in Chuteyarun and one in Tando Mitha Khan in the Sanghar taluka; one mosque at Sui Kandhar in Tando Adam taluka; one in Bhopi

Beelo (a forest) in the Khipro taluka and one in Tilah Shah in the Jam Nawaz Ali taluka. Sadly, each of these mosques now stands neglected.

The mosques that belong to the Kalhora period are located in every district of Sindh, however, those built by Mian Illyas Muhammad Kalhoro and Shahal Muhammad Kalhoro no longer exist. The mosques of Mian Nasir Muhammad and his disciples dot almost every village of Dadu district. Some of the mosques which are believed to have been built during the Kalhora period include the mosque of Garhi built by Mian Nasir Muhammad Kalhoro, the three-domed mosque close to Mian Yar Muhammad's tomb and Jami Mosque at Khudabad, both built by him (Bokhari 2006), the mosque of Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhoro at the necropolis of Mian Noor Muhammad (Shah 2002), the mosque of Ghulam Shah near Pucca Fort (Beg 1980), the mosque of Khanpur, the mosque of Samita (Bokhari 2006) and the mosque of Mian Mango near Gaji Khuhawar (Kalhoro 2010).

The Chuteyarun Mosque

This mosque is located about 4 km. south of Chuteyarun village on Jogian Wari Bhit (Fig.1). This mosque is built on a raised platform and has three arched entrances leading to the main chamber hall which is divided into a nave and aisles that are roofed with domes. The southern and northern domes of the mosque have collapsed. The central dome still exists and rests on the elevated octagonal drum (Fig.2). This elevated drum received special attention in 'later' Kalhora architecture. By later architecture, I mean style of architecture that appeared during and after Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhoro's reign. However, it gained more currency during the reign of Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro. Tomb-and-mosque architecture during the reigns of Mian Ghulam Shah (1757-1772), Mian Ghulam Nabi (1776-1777) and Abdul Nabi (1777-1783) has their own unique features that reflect their aesthetics. During their reigns, special treatment was meted out to domes and elevated drums. Before this, one does not find such innovation in the earlier Kalhora architecture which began with the rule of Mian Nasir Muhammad Kalhoro in 1680. All of the later-built mosques during this period adopted a similar technique of having an elevated dome; this is more evident in the mosque of Mian Abdul Nabi near the tomb of Mian Ghulam Nabi in Hyderabad.

The Chuteyarun Mosque used to have a spacious courtyard, which is now completely covered with sand. Formerly, the façade of the Chuteyarun Mosque was decorated with glazed tiles. One of the distinctive features of the mosque is the rich embellishments found on both exterior and interior walls. The northern wall of the structure is still covered with glazed tiles. On entering the Prayer Hall, one finds many fallen, glazed tiles strewn here.

The Mosque of Abdul Nabi Kalhoro

This mosque is located east of Mian Ghulam Nabi 's mausoleum in Hyderabad (Fig.3). It is believed to have been built by Abdul Nabi Kalhoro (Memon 1994). It has three arched entrances that open into a Prayer Hall. The Prayer Hall is divided into a nave and two aisles which are spanned with domes that are decorated with finials and which rest on octagonal drums. The central drum is higher than its fellows; the same technique of a 'high' drum was adopted from the Chuteyarun Mosque. Comparatively, this is more elevated than those of the contemporary mosques. One of the distinctive features of the central dome is that it is erected on a two-tiered drum. This is the special feature of Mian Abdul Nabi's mosque. This technique of a two-tiered drum can also be seen in some of the mosques located in Larkana and Hyderabad districts. One of the notable mosques in Dhonra Hingora near Tando Fazal also has a two-tiered drum. The lower drum of this mosque is square as compared to that of the Mian Abdul Nabi mosque. Both drums of Mian Abdul Nabi's mosque are octagonal. The lower drum is simple and undecorated and the upper drum, on which the dome rests, has openings. The rim of the upper drum is decorated with parapet merlons.

It was once elegantly decorated with glazed tiles and geometric patterns, but now it has all been white-washed. Moreover, some additions and alterations have also been made to the original mosque (Memon 1994:48; Bokhari 2006:103).

The Shah Talib Mosque

Another mosque with a similar style is located in the Tarai village in Badin (Fig. 4). This mosque was also built in the same period. It has three arched entrances that lead to the

main sanctuary which is roofed with three domes. The central dome rests on a two-tiered drum which is similar to those seen in the mosques of Chuteyarun and Dhonra Hingora. There were four kiosks on each corner, of which only two have survived.

The interior of the mosque is decorated with stucco. The distinctive feature of the Tarai Mosque is the arched openings on the western wall. There are five openings, two just above the *mihrab*; one below the central dome and one each below the subsidiary domes. The façade of the mosque resembles the Chuteyarun Mosque which has recently been renovated.

The Baily Wari Mosque

Another mosque of the same period is located 2 km. south of Tando Muhammad Khan in the forest, hence called “Baily Wari Mosque”. It has three arched entrances opening into a Prayer Hall which is divided into a nave and two aisles, each roofed with a dome raised on an elevated octagonal drum; this mosque also adopted the same technique of dome construction. However, the flanking domes gain height with elevated drums that are decorated with ceramics (though most of the ceramic pieces have come off). This mosque appears to have been built during Mian Ghulam Shah’s time.

A new technique was further introduced to provide a base to the drums in all of the mosques built during the rules of Mian Ghulam Nabi and Mian Abdul Nabi. This is lacking in the mosques built by Mai Jaman, as the mosques that belong to Mai Jaman predate all of those built by her sons and soldiers.

The Mosques at Dhonra Hingora

The technique of an elevated or ‘high-neck’ drum was later used in many mosques. Some of the mosques at Dhonra Hingora were also built during Mian Abdul Nabi’s time; there are two such mosques. However, interestingly, one finds an elevated octagonal drum of equal height in both of the mosques. The town was at its zenith during the Kalhora period. It was attacked and destroyed by Madad Khan Pathan. Madad Khan Pathan was called for help by Mian Abdul Nabi to crush the rebellious Talpurs who stood against him. In the following years, civil wars ensued between the Kalhoras and

the Talpurs. Eventually, he asked Madad Khan Pathan for help. He came to Sindh and, subsequently, destroyed many famous cities, including Dhonra Hingora (Beg 1999).

Mosque No. 1 at Dhonra Hingra

This mosque is located on a link road of the village and is approached by a monumental gate. This gate is crowned with a dome which opens to north and rests on an elevated drum. Normally, the gate opens to the east but this is a rather 'new' innovation that was introduced in this mosque by the Kalhora masons.

It is pierced by three arched entrances (Fig.5). The main sanctuary of the mosque has a nave and two aisles which are covered with domes. The central dome is larger than the other two.

The squinches are decorated with a honey-comb pattern, with two openings on the northern and southern walls. A staircase on the northern wall leads to the roof.

Painting and stucco are two forms of decoration that have been used in the mosque. Paintings are mainly found on the domed ceilings. Amulet patterns decorate the interior rim of the domed ceiling. Stucco decoration is mainly found in the zone of transition.

The mosque's courtyard lies in a very deplorable condition. The boundary wall exists on three sides. The southern wall has collapsed, however the northern and eastern walls still stand, though in bad condition. The interior of the boundary walls are divided into two sections, lower and upper. The lower section of the wall has openings and the upper has sunken panels. This is a special feature of the Kalhora mosque in Sindh. Four openings have also been noted in the western wall just above the *mihrab*. Two of the openings are just below the central dome and each open under the two other domes. The local people believe that the two openings just above the *mihrab* are used for sighting the moon. The moon of the 29th is seen through the right –side opening and the moon of the 30th from the left-side opening. These openings appear in almost every Kalhora mosque.

As mentioned above, this mosque is greatly influenced by the Chuteyarun Mosque of Mai Jaman, with the dome treatment following the same style as seen in this

mosque. Otherwise, stylistically, this is very similar to the mosque of Mai Jaman that is located at Chuteyarun.

Mosque No. 2 at Dhonra Hingora

This mosque is located within a walking distance, south of Mosque No.1. It stands on a high platform (Fig.6) and is perforated with three cusped arches that open into a prayer chamber, comprising of a nave and two aisles. The nave and separate aisles are separately spanned with a dome.

This mosque was also influenced by the Chuteyarun mosque of Mai Jaman. Like Mosque No. I, this mosque also followed the same style of dome-and-drum construction. However, the drums of the three domes are almost of equal size. This was another innovation that was introduced by the Kalhora masons. This appears to have been built a little later as compared to Mosque No. 1.

The Jami Mosque At Agham Kot

A similar mosque with sunken panels is located at Agham Kot in Badin District. There are six mosques in Agham Kot which were built in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Two mosques were built in the Kalhora Period. The Jami Mosque is also believed to have been built during the Kalhora Period, mostly probably during the reign of Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhora.

Today, this mosque stands in very poor state of preservation. It had three domes which have now collapsed. However, the cupola crowning the main gate of the mosque still exists (Fig. 7). This mosque also followed the same style of three domes with a gate and cupola, which was prevalent in the style that was adopted by the Kalhora builders.

This mosque is built in a rectangular plan and it stands on a platform. The platform was built by nodules of burnt bricks and the base of walls has coarse stone blocks (Laghari and Veesar 2000-2001:80). Today, the southern, western (and part of) the northern wall survive. The interior of the mosque has sunken panels similar to those seen in the

mosques at Dhonra Hingora. The mosque was painted inside, the traces of which can still be seen on the surviving walls. The boundary walls also survive, though in a derelict condition.

The other Kalhora-period mosque lies northeast of the Jami Mosque and is built in a square plan. It stands on a podium, which has crumbled into pieces. Likewise, the whole structure is in ruins; only the arches of the mosque survive.

The Pattan Wari Mosque At Agham Kot

This mosque is also believed to have been built during the Kalhora period--as evident from the remains of the mosque, perhaps during the reign of Mian Ghulam Shah. It is built in a square plan and its main entrance is crowned with a cupola that is similar to the one found on the Jami Mosque of Agham Kot. The courtyard of the mosque has crumbled but, fortunately, the wall enclosures have survived.

Three arched entrances that open to the main sanctuary of the mosque are also extant. However, the sanctuary walls and domes have collapsed.

The verandah's walls are decorated with sunken panels. These panels resemble those of both the Jami Mosque of Agham Kot and the Jami Mosque of Khudabad. Actually, this mosque looks like a real prototype of the Khudabad Mosque. There are a few mosques of the Kalhora period which contain an ante-chamber or verandah.

The Miyon Jiando Mosque

The same feature of having an elevated drum was also used while building the three-domed mosque of Miyon Jiando in Matairi Town (Fig.8). The mosque is believed to have been built by Miyon Jiando who was an administrator of the Matiari during the rule of Mian Abdul Nabi Kalhoro. The mosque is located in Matiari Town and is situated east of Rukan Uddin's tomb.

It is built in a square plan with three archways which open into a sanctuary. The top recesses of the flanking arches are decorated with carved net-patterns. The sanctuary

is covered with three domes. Earlier, the interior of the mosque was decorated with glazed tiles, however, it has lost all of these. Pendentives transform the square aisles and the almost-square nave into octagons which support the circular rims of the domes. These circular rims have received special attention by the Kalhora masons. Almost every known mosque of this period has either paintings or stucco decoration on the rims of the interior domes. Likewise, the exterior rims of the domes are also decorated either with glazed tiles or paintings.

Interestingly, the same technique of a 'high neck' was adopted while building the domes. All three domes rest on octagonal drums of equal height. Like Mosque No.2 at Dhonra Hingora, the masons constructed drums of almost-equal size. This was an innovation which was introduced in other mosques that were constructed during Mian Abdul Nabi's time.

The Mosque in the Chuteyarun Bazaar

There are two mosques in Chuteyarun Village: one on Jogia Wari Bhit, 4 km. south of the village and the other in the main bazaar of the village. This mosque in the Chuteyarun Bazaar has been entirely rebuilt. It was also a prototype of the mosques located on 'Jogian Wari Bhit'. Formerly, it was decorated with paintings and glazed tiles--today, nothing original survives.

The Mosque in Tando Mitha Khan

About 5 km. away from Chuteyarun Village, there is another mosque of Mai Jaman near the village of Tando Mitha Khan which is locally called 'Siran Wari' (Fig. 9). This is the largest surviving mosque of Mai Jaman. The façade of the mosques is pierced by three archways that lead to the main Prayer Hall which is divided into a nave and aisles. Corresponding to the three entrances are three *mihrabs* in the west wall.

The rectangular nave was spanned with a vaulted roof which is not extant now. The two low domes erected on octagonal drum act as a 'roof' for the square aisles. The hemispherical and vaulted domes are supported on squinches, the arches of which spring from the walls. There are two niches in the west wall, one on either side of the *mihrab*;

two more on the north and south walls-- one on either side of the entrances. There is no inscription in the mosque. Though this mosque is stylistically different from all of the other mosques that were erected by Mai Jaman, the local people associate the construction of this mosque with her.

The Mosque in Sui Kandhar

About 10 km. north-west of Tando Adam Town is situated a dilapidated mosque of Mai Jaman in Sui Kandhar Village (Fig. 10). It is a three-domed-structure with the central dome flanked by two half-domes. The central dome is erected on a 'high neck' drum. This mosque is quite different from the one at Jogian Wari Bhit.

Three archways lead to the main chamber of the mosque. The boundary wall of the courtyard has now collapsed, however, the southern boundary wall has survived. The mosque's courtyard is now covered with recent graves and there are two, small, arched openings in the southern and northern walls of the mosque.

This mosque has a prominent façade which resembles 'early' Kalhora mosques particularly with one located near the tomb of Mian Yar Muhammad in Khudabad. On the contrary, its flanking squat domes are an innovation that was introduced in 'later' Kalhora architecture that was commissioned by both rulers as well as their generals and soldiers.

The interior of the mosque was decorated with glazed tiles, but most of the tiles have come off. People have placed most of these tiles on the graves of their relatives in the nearby graveyard. One can find hundreds of tiles spread all over the necropolis.

The Mai Jaman Mosque at Bopi Beelo

This was also a three-domed mosque, but all three domes of the mosque have now collapsed as has the western wall of the mosque. Only two archways are extant (Fig.11). One of the distinctive features of this mosque is a mural painting. Apart from glazed tiles, the traces of the mural painting can still be seen on the interior walls of the mosque. A staircase which arises from the thickness of the eastern wall has also been provided.

Conclusion

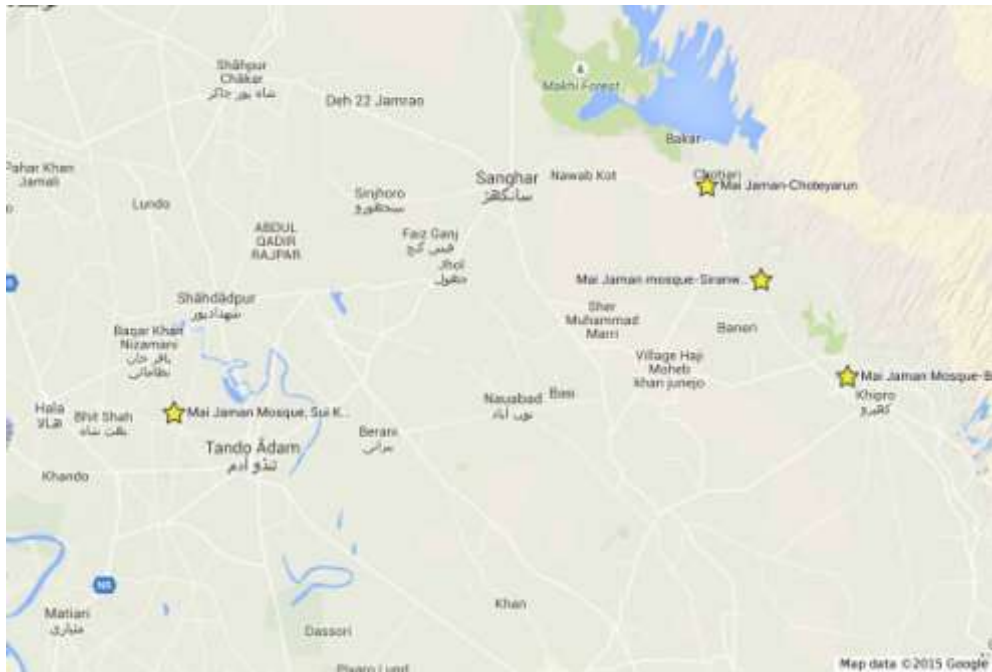
Like their male counterparts, the Kalhora royal women also contributed to architecture. Although it was not on a large scale, their contribution to the architecture design of mosques is discernible in the districts of Sanghar, Tando Allahyar, Hyderabad, Dadu and Larkana. The mosques erected by Mai Jaman had their own distinctive features.

If one looks at the architecture of all of the mosques that were commissioned by Mai Jaman, one can argue that these were greatly influenced by the Jami Mosque of Khudabad in Dadu. In one way or another, the mosques of Mai Jaman borrowed many elements from the earlier architecture of the Kalhoras. Similarly, later-period mosques that were erected during the reigns of Mian Ghulam Shah, Mian Sarfaraz Khan and Mian Abdul Nabi also copied many architectural features from the mosques that were built by Mai Jaman.

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Figures



Map show the distribution of mosques in Sanghar district (starred)



Fig. 1. Mai Jaman Mosque at Jogian Wari Bhit, Chuteyarun



Fig. 2. Dome of Mai Jaman mosque at Jogian Wari Bhit erected on an elevated drum



Fig. 3. Mian Abdul Nabi Mosque in Hyderabad



Fig. 4. Shah Talib Mosque at Tarai village



Fig. 5. Mosque No. 1 at Dhonra Hingora



Fig. 6. Mosque No. 2 at Dhonra Hingora



Fig. 7. Dilapidated monumental gate of the Jami mosque at Agham Kot



Fig. 8. Mosque of Miyon Jiando in Matiari Town



Fig. 9 Mai Jaman Mosque in Tando Mitha Khan



Fig. 10. Mai Jaman Mosque at Sui Kandhar village



Fig. 11. Mai Jaman Mosque at Bopi Belo