

Two Rare Monuments in District Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract:

The monuments under discussion are unique and rare examples of their kind in the province in general and in Hazara region in particular. Of these the first one located at Naukot generally known as the death place of Shah Hamdan may be assigned to the Sultanate period on the basis of its designs and architectural features. While the second one i.e. the tomb of Sultan Mahmud Khurd (the last Turk Ruler of Pakhli) at Guli Bagh, is of the Mughal period having unique architectural style and representing the sole example of its kind in the province.

Key Words: Naukot, Guli Bagh, Mansehra

Location:

Both the monuments are located at two different places in Mansehra district (Fig. 1), the first one is the memorial constructed to commemorate the death place of Shah Hamadan at Naukot village and the second is the tomb of Sultan Mahmud Khurd the last Turk ruler of Pakhli at Guli Bagh near Baffa town.

1. Memorial at the death place of Shah Hamadan: In the 14th century AD Sayyid Ali Hamadani (Dani 1996: 60) came to Kashmir and died there (Hamdani 1985: 185). On the way back to Central Asia, the people carrying his dead body stayed for a while at Naukot, Mansehra, in AD 1384. His dead body was finally buried in Kulyab (Negmatov 1992: 5-8). A memorial was constructed at Naukot village on the left bank of river Siran 18 km north of Mansehra city, to mark this event. The only construction in the area belongs to the Sultanate period having unique architectural style with no comparative examples/specimen recorded from this region.

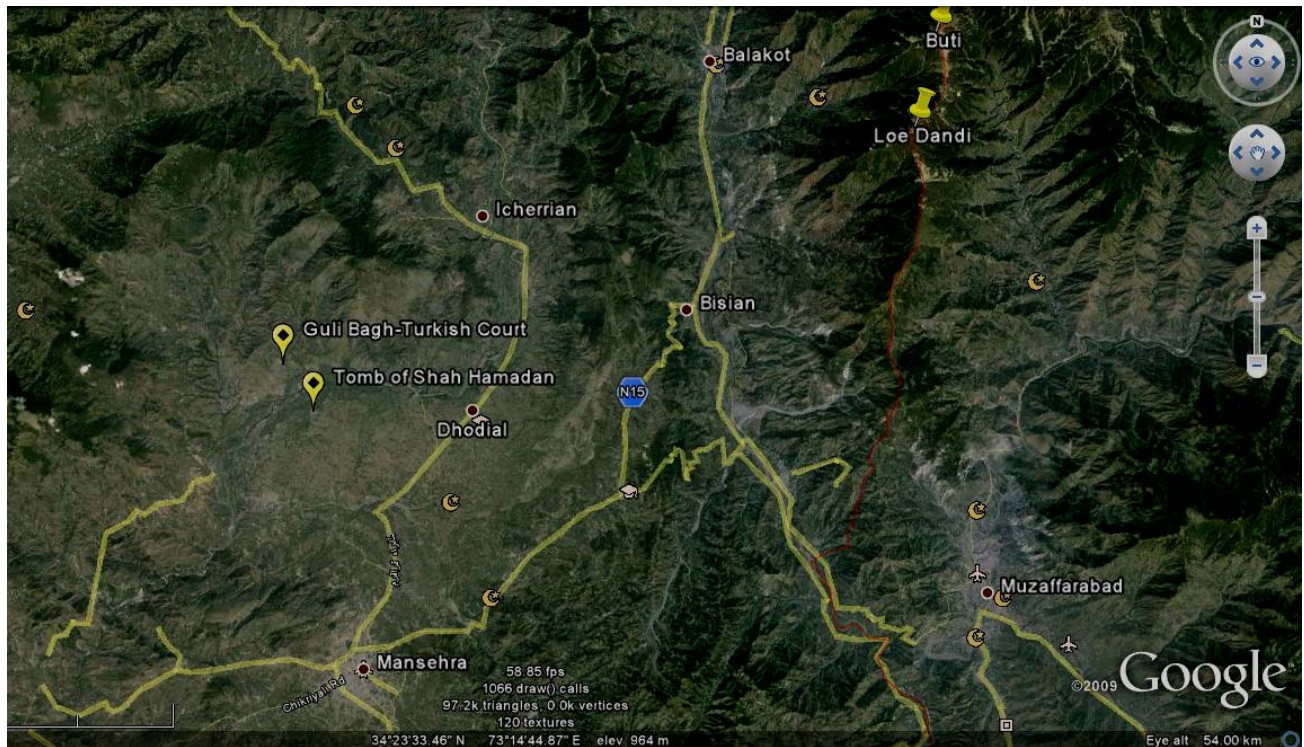


Figure 1. Mansehra: Map showing Gali Bagh and Naukot Monuments

Building: It is a fortified (Fig 2 & 3) square enclosure, 14.94 x 14.94 m. Each corner of the enclosure is marked by an engaged semi circular cylindrical turrets or bastions tapering upwards. These corner turrets are a characteristic feature of the early Muslim mausoleums. The roots of the same may be traced to the pre-Muslim buildings as reported from the Malakand Agency in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Rahman 1979: pls. IXb & XIII) and Salt-Range monuments in the Punjab (Stein 1937: 50). Two of them stand to a height of 4.94 m. Only the northern wall of the enclosure is intact, the eastern and southern walls have been rebuilt using old bricks; the western wall recently rebuilt is a concrete structure. The square plan of this monument is too much similar to the Lal Mahra Shaif tombs at D.I.Khan and some early mausoleums in Central Asia like the tomb of Samanids at Bukhara (913 – 43 AD) and the tomb of Arsalan Jazib at Sanghasht (1028 AD) (Ali 1993: 133)



Figure 2. Mansehra (Naukot): Death Place of Shah Hamdan, Memorial: General View



Figure 3. Mansehra (Naukot): Death Place of Shah Hamdan, Memorial: View of the eastern side

Approach to the enclosure is provided with a rectangular opening in the western corner of northern side. The two towers at either end of the eastern wall have domed chambers. From the enclosed area, an entrance, 1.85 x 1.05 m wide, is provided to each

tower chamber. The other two towers are solid and project into the interior. They are devoid of any architectural decoration (Fig 4) except the corner turrets, which shows some decoration in brick masonry. The extant height of the northwestern tower gives us a clear picture of its decorative details. Each tower is divided into various horizontal bands. The pattern is rotated and each band is separated from the other by a vertically laid course of bricks. The lower band is constructed in plain masonry, while the upper two bands depict some recessed cross designs worked out in the masonry. Similar arrangements of decoration are also executed on the other tower. These decorative motifs (Khan 1987-88: 323) on the bastion are extended to all the four walls. There is clear evidence that the upper band might have been running all round the enclosure wall probably making the parapet of the wall. The centre of the enclosed area has the cenotaph commemorating his death at Naukot in 1384 A.D. The building material used in the construction (Fig. 5) is large size burnt brick 0.23 x 0.23 x 0.05 m and 0.03x 0.21 x 0.05 m.



Figure 4. Mansehra (Naukot): Death Place of Shah Hamdan, Memorial: View of the eastern side

A commemorative tablet installed in 1993 says that Shah Hamadan died in 786 A.H/ 1384 AD and that the present structure was raised by the local people in 1983. A detailed

analysis and study of the architectural remains show that the original construction of the memorial is datable to the 15th century AD.



Figure 5. Mansehra (Naukot): Death Place of Shah Hamdan, Memorial: showing corner turret and the recent reconstructed fortification wall.

2. Sultan Mahmud Khurd, the last Turk Ruler of Pakhli, Tomb Building at Guli Bagh (Mansehra): The tomb is located at Guli Bagh village in Fort Feroza about 23 km from Mansehra city between river Siran and Koh Tanglai. The tomb was built by the last Turk ruler of Pakhli (Sultan Mahmud Khurd) in his life time, who succeeded his father the Sultan Shadman Khan during the reign of Shahjahan (Pani 2001: 286). The fort was very similar to the other Mughal forts with a total covered area 5.5 x 3 miles (Rehman 1989: 246) It was protected by mountains on the north, while the east and west sides are strongly protected by a huge defensive ditch and inside fortification wall. The traces are still visible on both the sides

Tomb: The building stands upon a raised platform, square in plan, 9.07 x 9.07 m, with 1.37 m thick walls. The square chamber (Fig. 6) with a height 4.88 m is surmounted by a low squat dome.



Figure 6. Mansehra (Naukot): Death Place of Shah Hamdan, Memorial: Southeastern corner turret showing brickwork.

Externally each side of the square chamber is relieved by three rows (Fig. 7) of rectangular panels. The lowest row contains three such panels on each side of the entrance, which itself is relieved by a pointed sunk arch. The topmost row is similar to the lowest register.

The centre of each side is pierced by a 1.83 x 0.91 m rectangular entrance, which is topped by a stone lintel. The dressed stone blocks of a very huge size are used at regular points from bottom to top at the corners of the building.

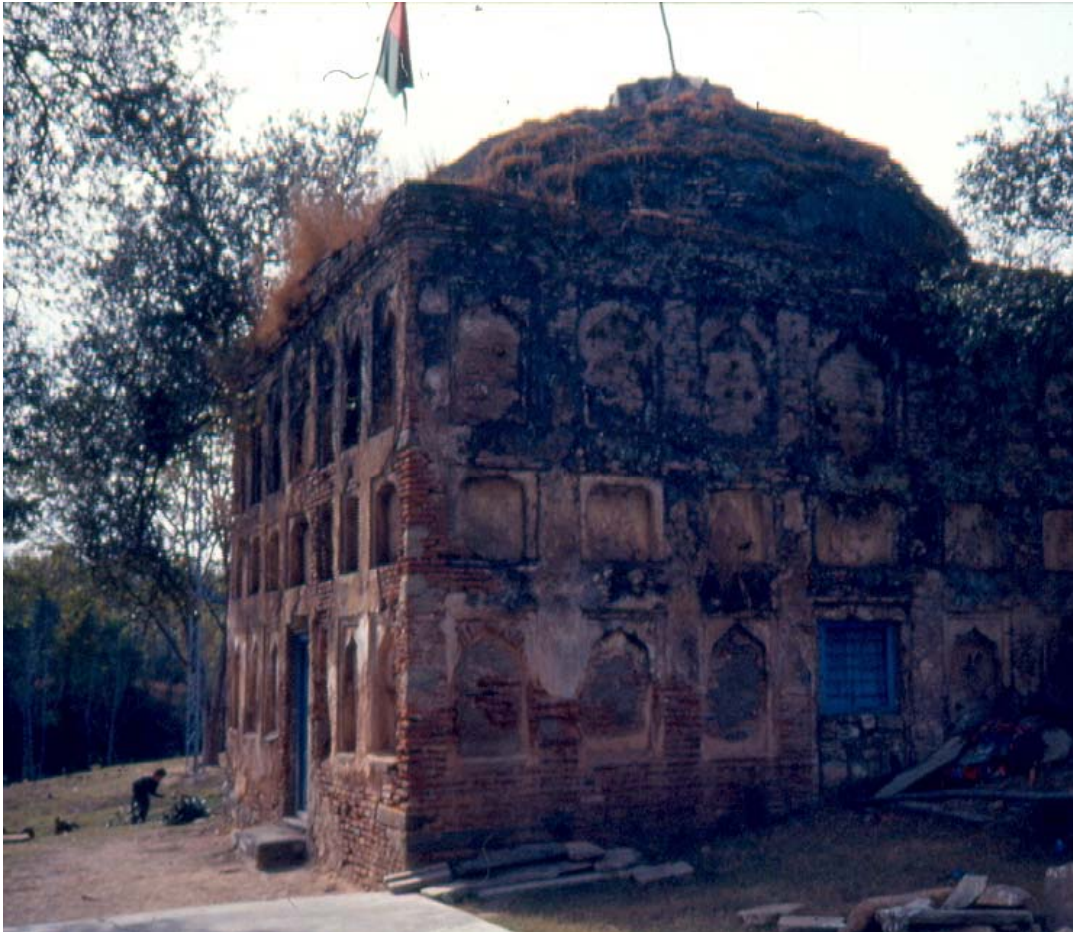


Figure 7. Mansehra (Guli Bagh): Tomb of Sultan Mahmud Khurd: showing southwestern corner details and general view

Internally the building is octagonal from the floor level and each octagonal side is relieved by a tall pointed arch. The octagon is converted into sixteen-sided structure by means of arched squinches, to provide a circular base for the domical ceiling. The building, externally and internally was coated with 0.05 m thick plaster traces of the same can be seen at different points. The building material shows two different size bricks 0.25 x 0.15 x 0.04 m, 0.33 x 0.23 x 0.04 m and stones. The floor is now paved with modern cement plaster, but originally it was paved with large size bricks (*Chawka*) with a white marble cenotaph in the centre marking the grave. The cenotaph was stolen by some antiquity robbers but recovered by the Police and handed over to Hazara University. It is on display in the Garden Campus, Mansehra University Museum (Shakir 2012: 41).



Figure 8. Mansehra (Guli Bagh): Tomb of Sultan Mahmud Khurd: showing details of tomb chamber western wall exterior

The building under discussion is a rare monument and the sole example of Muslim tomb architecture in the area. As per detailed analysis tomb was built by the Sultan during his lifetime and therefore may be dated some where in the 17th Century AD. The material as lime mortar used binding detergent and for plaster the traces are visible at different places, but the bricks are used of the unique size than the normal *waziri* bricks. While the tomb has low squat dome and has a very close resemblance in the architectural style and features with Bara Khan ka Gumbat at Delhi (Kotla Mubarak Put) (Brown 1942: 28: pl. CIV, fig. 2; Jairazbhoy 2000: 67, pl. 122).

Conclusion: As per the above discussion, the building material, architectural style decorative designs of the Shah Hamadan death place enclosure construction is very much comparable to the early medieval buildings style in Pakistan and it is suggested that is the rare, unique and earliest monument in the Hazara region of the 14th Century AD. While the tomb of Sultan Mahmud Khurd at Guli Bagh is the construction of the thin sliced bricks of the Mughal era with a square plan (Bunce 2004: fig. 2 (c)) on a high platform strengthened with stone slabs at corners. The is said to have been built by Sultan Mahmud Khurd in his life time during the reign of Mughal King Shahjahan and therefore can be placed in 17th Century AD. The architectural style and feature are unique and having very rare examples

in the subcontinent as mentioned above with a tomb at Delhi. Both the monuments are as per the above description, discussion and analysis of the style, architectural and decorative features may be dated to 14th Century (Medieval Period) and 17th Century (Mughal Period) respectively.

State of Preservation: Now both the buildings are in a very bad state of preservation, cracks have been developed at different points especially after the earthquake disaster of 8th October 2005. They need immediate attention of the government and other donor agencies.

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