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Editorial Note

Pakistan Heritage is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal, published annually. This volume included the papers on different aspects of archaeology and history of Pakistan and adjacent regions with subject matter ranging from the Prehistoric to the British Period.

We acknowledge the efforts of the members of the Board of Editorial Advisors, the contributors, the review and colleagues of the Department of Archaeology, Hazara University Mansehra. On the other hand, we are grateful to the worthy Vice Chancellor and management of Hazara University Mansehra for support and encouragement.

Editors

Mughal Monuments at Palosi Piran, Peshawar: Report on Its Recent Conservation and Restoration 2021-22

ABDUL WAHAB AND ZUBAIDA YOUSAF

Abstract

Peshawar has been a major center for trade and social activities. It has attracted each and every empire towards its beauty and favorable landscape. Those empires have left their marks on the region in different aspects. Most importantly are the building constructed by numerous emperors. These buildings are now part of the heritage of this region. Of these, one of the important is Palosi Piran Mosque. It was constructed during the reign of Emperor Shah Jehan (1628-58 CE), which is marked as the peak point of Mughal empire. This mosque is actually part of the Palosi Tomb Complex which also contain tomb of Shaikh Imam-ud-din and his wife. Since its construction in around 1650 CE, some four hundred years have been past. During this period, the mosque has been subject to various human vandalism and natural disasters. This has caused much damage to its building, painting and graffiti work done on its walls. No conservation/preservation work was done on this important heritage building. The mosque was in dire need of maintenance and conservation/restoration work to be carried out for its survival. The directorate of Archaeology and Museum Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, knowing the significance of the monument, took immediate measures for conservation and restoration to prevent further loss. The project was initiated in October 2021 and completed in February 2022. The key interventions included repair of domes, roof, walls and water outlets. The work was carried out systematically, respecting the traditional methods. Hence the significant historic monuments is prevented from further loss and has been restored to its original shape. The paper is based on the observation of the ongoing work and highlights the overall conservation and preservation measures taken during the project.

Keywords: Peshawar, Palosi Piran, Mughal Monuments, Mosque, Conservation, Restoration

Introduction

Sheikh Imam-ud-Din Tomb complex is situated in village Palosi Piran, District Peshawar. It is located on Regi Road and lies 4km North from main G.T Road Peshawar. The complex comprises of main tomb of Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, a small unknown tomb, and a mosque. This complex represents typical Mughal Period way of construction and architecture patterns. Furthermore, the complex is decorated with beautiful floral and geometric Fresco seco paintings. Recently, Directorate of Archaeology & Museums, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa started restoration and conservation work at the mosque to protect and safeguard it for the coming generations and to revive it in its original form.

Historical Background of Sheikh Imam-ud-din

Shaikh Imam al-Din Inayatullah, son of Sheikh Kabir (known as Pir Bala or Bala Pir), hailed from Khalil tribe of the Afghans. He was born on Wednesday, 1st Muharram 1020 AH (corresponding to 16 March 1611) in Budhni near Peshawar. His mother, Taj Bibi, was the daughter of Malik Darweza and belonged to a respected Khalil family (Afghani 1965: 573; Rahman 1981: 117; Shaheen 2015: 136).

Unfortunately, not much is known about Sheikh's early life. There is a lack of information regarding the educational institutions he attended or the teachers who influenced him. It is likely that he was raised in the pious environment of his own family, following the footsteps of his ancestors. Like some of his predecessors, he gained fame for his piety in and around Peshawar. According to Abd al-Halim Athar Afghani, Sheikh authored a book called Tarikh Afghani, which dealt with the lives of notable Afghan nobles who had made significant contributions to history, or whom the Sheikh deemed worthy of mention (Afghani 1965: 570-3).

Shaikh Imam-ud-din died on Wednesday 23 Muharram 1060 AH (26 January 1650). He was buried near Palosi where consequently a lesser village grew up is known as Palosi Piran. The construction of tomb over his grave was started two years after his death in 1063 AH (A.D. 1652-53) by the *Sheikh's* disciples known as *Shaikh Abd al-Razzaq, Shaikh Abd al-Haq* and another Shaikh whose name has unfortunately been rubbed out of the commemorative plaque (Rahman 1981: 117-8; Shakir 2012: 12). Some recent works by Zarawar Khan and Maria Shaheen, however, gives the rubbed-out name in the plaque i.e. Sheikh Abdul Wahid. They further confirmed the fourth name, Shaikh Muhammad Fazil in between Shkiakh Abd al Haq and Abdul Wahid. Their works are based on the authentic sources of history like *Pata Khazana* (The Hidden Treasure) by Habibi and "*Tarikh-e-Khan Jahani wa Makhzane Afghani*" by Harvi respectively (Zia & Khan 2014: 39-40; Shaheen 2015: 136-8, Habibi 1997: 174). The construction was done under the supervision of Haji Iskandar (Khadim) and Ustad Fateh Muhammad (Lahori). The mausoleum was completed on Tuesday 20 Shaaban 1069 AH (13 May 1659) (Dani 1969: 188-9; Shaheen 2015: 136-8).

It is built from burnt bricks, known as *vaziri* bricks. Both, interior and exterior, are elegantly coated with glazed plaster (*pucca qalai* work). The building is erected on a raised platform square in plan. The square tomb chamber is crowned by octagonal drum, which is then surmounted by a squat dome. The tomb chamber is internally square in plan crowned by arch squinches and further above by a zone of transition over which the domical structure is resting. This tomb chamber is elegantly enriched by means of painting showing both floral and geometrical designs (Shakir 2012: 36-7).

To the south-west of the main tomb lies a mosque. It has two parts that is the courtyard and prayer chamber. The façade of the prayer chamber is composed of three arches (Dani 1969: 190; Rahman 1981: 43; Khan, 1991: 101). The central one is being larger, which is flanked by two similar arches on its sides and smaller in size. The central bay is accommodating the *Mihrab* in pulpit. The domical ceiling is resting on arch squinch. The side bay is provided by low domical ceiling. The mosque is coated with a thick layer of glazed plaster. The prayer chamber is decorated with floral and geometrical designs. Apart from the paintings, the entire plaster surface is covered by scrabbling and graffiti work in which the informational inscription in Arabic, Persian, Pashto and Urdu are inscribed with Nastaliq style (Dani 1969: 190).

Surface Observation

Cracks

The exteriors of the domes and floor of the mosque have suffered damage due to extreme heat of the sun, storm, earth quick and heavy rains. This has caused much damage and cracks were developed in different parts of the monuments (Pl. 1). The rainy water would flow through these cracks and seep into the roof of prayer chamber. The internal of the mosque is richly decorated with fresco seco paintings in different colors. The paintings were being faded by the rainy water. Hence, not only the art was demolishing but

there was a serious threat to the main architecture of the mosque. We could have lost one of our built heritage and a magnificent evidence of the Mughul era.

Wild Growth and Irrigation Land

The building was surrounded by wild growth i.e. shrubs and trees (Pl. 2). The wild grass was causing surface deterioration. Apart from this, there is irrigation land on the western side of the mosque. This, when irrigated, was making dampness and thus causing weakness of the building, particularly the foundations.

Drains/Down Pipes

The rain water outlets, which were almost worn out, became ineffective in properly channeling water after rainfall. As a result, water could not flow through the outlets as intended, leading to potential water accumulation around the building. Compounding this issue, the presence of surrounding shrubs exacerbated the problem by causing water to gather and pool at the base of building. This accumulation of water created a condition known as seepage, where water gradually infiltrates through the foundation of walls, potentially causing damage and structural issues.

Conservation & Preservation

The conservation and preservation efforts at Palosi Piran monuments were initiated in 1992-3. During this project conservation work was carried out on the main tomb of Shiekh Imam ud Din. Additionally, essential repairs were conducted on the mosque, specifically addressing the deteriorated areas such as the steps and other significant sections. However, the domes and floor of the mosque remained untouched in their original form.

The mosque is in a shamble as no rehabilitation work has been done since long. The walls, interior and exterior of the mosque are crumbling, and other building elements are decaying. The Mughal-era fresco seco motifs and Islamic calligraphy were being spoiled.

The present project is aimed to work on the neglected part of the mosque. The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa realized the great loss and took immediate measures to prevent it.

Various historical monuments including mosques, stupas, temples and churches were selected for rehabilitation work with a vision to restore the heritage and make sure its survival for coming generation. It was also aimed to boost the cultural and religious tourism of the region. The officials concerned conducted site visits as required and provided information for the implementation of the project.

The present project was started in October 2021 and completed in February 2022. Many conservation and restoration works were carried out including removal of grass, shrubs and plants; embankment was provided to foundation in order to give strength to the actual building to avoid the drain line near; restoration of domes, floor and finials; *pucca qalai* on walls and improvement of rainwater outlets.

Conservation Measures

Step-I Removal of Shrubs and Tree

The conservation work started with the removal of grass and trees near the building of the mosque. The shrubs that were positioned too close to the building's foundation were removed and the trees were cut down. This will allow for better water flow and prevent water from pooling at the base.

Step-II Foundation Digging

First, measures were taken to protect and strengthen the foundation. All external sides of the prayer chamber were dug up to 3 feet (Pl. 3). The area on northern and southern sides was equal in length, each measuring 25 feet. The digging of western side was carried out in three portions, *Mehrab* in the center and added by two sides. The center, that is back side of *Mehrab*, measures 17 feet while the other two sides measure 50 feet (25 feet each side). Hence the western side measures 67 feet. Therefore, a total of 117 feet area was excavated. The excavated portion was re-filled with concert. First a bed of 4 inches was laid to make the virgin level solid (Pl. 4). After this, the excavated area was filled up to 6 inches in width (Pl. 5).

The purpose of this was to strengthen and protect the foundation. On the western side, there is irrigation land. When the crop was irrigated, the dampness reached to the bottom of the structure and it could cause weakness of the base. Beside this, there is a small water channel on south side that runs part time, but the dampness was, no doubt, causing damage to the foundation. Apart from this, the gullies were also worn out and the rainy water were drained through the walls. At the bottom of the wall, the shrubs were grown and it would not allow the water to flow through and the water would reach to the base. Now the bed of concert will not allow the water to go through and reach to base.

Step-III Removing of Loose Material from Domes

One of the architectural elements of mosques is dome. Dome is normally built on the western side over the main prayer hall. These domes are mostly three in number and are often found in low squat shape. This tradition was found during the Mughal era as well and one such type is witnessed at Pelosi Piran tomb complex.

The domes of the mosque were in a more precarious condition than the other parts of the mosque (Pl. 6). There are three domes over the prayer hall of Palosi Piran's mosque. The central one being larger than the other two, one each at north and south side. At most of the places cracks were developed and were propagating inside, creating a serious threat to the structural elements.

Overload material pressure was reduced by removing the entire loose material from the surface of the domes (Pl. 7). It was not possible to apply more material over the previous one, this would overload the dome.

The domes were consisting courses of bricks with a heavy pilaster. The bricks were bonded through thick and thin layers of lime mortar between them. The mortar consisted of lime, tiny brick pieces and various additives to enhance different properties of the mortar. The space between the courses of bricks was 1 to 2 inches (Pl. 8).

Step-IV Using Similar Material

After removal of the existing loose material, fresh material was applied over the domes. The fresh plaster is comprised of limestone, marble powder, super marble powder, *surkhi*, jewt/*sund*, and acrylic. The first slip, given to the domes, was that of *surkhi*. This slip was supposed to fill the gap between the courses of bricks. It was followed by another slip which contains grass (straw for reducing cracks). Above this another slip of *surkhi* was applied which would make the surface a bit smooth. After this a layer of limestone was applied to make the surface smoother. At the end *pucca qalai* was applied that make the dome shiny (Pl. 9).

Step-V Removal of Upper Surface from Floor

The first layer of the floor consisted of stucco and *surkhi*. Above this, broken bricks, likely remnants from the construction of the domes were placed (Pl. 10). These broken bricks are of the two types; one is yellowish and the other is reddish, bind with stucco, *surkhi* and earth. Above this was a final slip of stucco, *surkhi* and a small quantity of earth (Pl. 11). The eastern side of the northern dome was roughly made. It was made of broken bricks and irregular shape stones. Earth was also frequently used in this portion (Pl. 12). It was either done with carelessness or made by some unskilled mason. It is also probable that this portion was damaged earlier and was restored by local people having no knowledge of original floor or had no sources, or both.

The floor was in a damaged condition and needed conservation on immediate bases. The top loose material of the floor was removed. This was replaced with the similar material. Above this burnt bricks (*chauka*) is paved and the gap between the bricks, in the shape of small lines, was filled with *surkhi* (Pl. 13). In addition, the water outlets were repaired to channelize the rainy water in a flow.

Step-VI The Outer Walls

The outer walls, about three feet in height, were also deteriorated due to weathering. These walls were also conserved with the similar material. Lime mortar plaster was given to outer face of the walls and *Pucca qalai* was applied over them (Pl. 14).

Discussion and Conclusion

Palosi Piran monument complex is dated back to the reign of Shah Jehan; the peak time period of Mughal Era. Of these, the mosque is the earliest of its nature in Peshawar. The important features of the mosque include the painting which still exists in its original form and the graffiti work inscribed in Persian, Arabic, Urdu and Pashto languages.

The mosque was subjected to hazardous weathering. The continues weathering has caused major damage in the form of cracks. The cracks developed in different portions of the prayer chamber (for detail see above). Precautionary measures needed to be taken on immediate basis. The Director Archaeology and Museum Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, during his regular visits to Museums and Archaeological Monuments, noticed the deteriorating condition of many of them. The Provincial Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, made immediate decision to conserve and restore them to preserve the national heritage for future generations. The competent authority

constituted various teams to thoroughly observe the sites and gather information. The teams carried out regular visits to their respective sites for project implementation.

The team constituted for the Palosi Piran monuments consisted of archaeological engineers/conservators, Archaeologist, architects and skilled masons and laborers. The author was assigned the role of archaeological expert to oversee the overall progress of the project and ensure adherence to archaeological ethics and aesthetics.

The work was carried out systematically with great care. It involved different tasks that were executed in various steps and stages. This work would not only conserve the existing damage to the monument but also help prevent further damage in the future. It will help promote cultural and religious tourism; ultimately increasing the national level of income.

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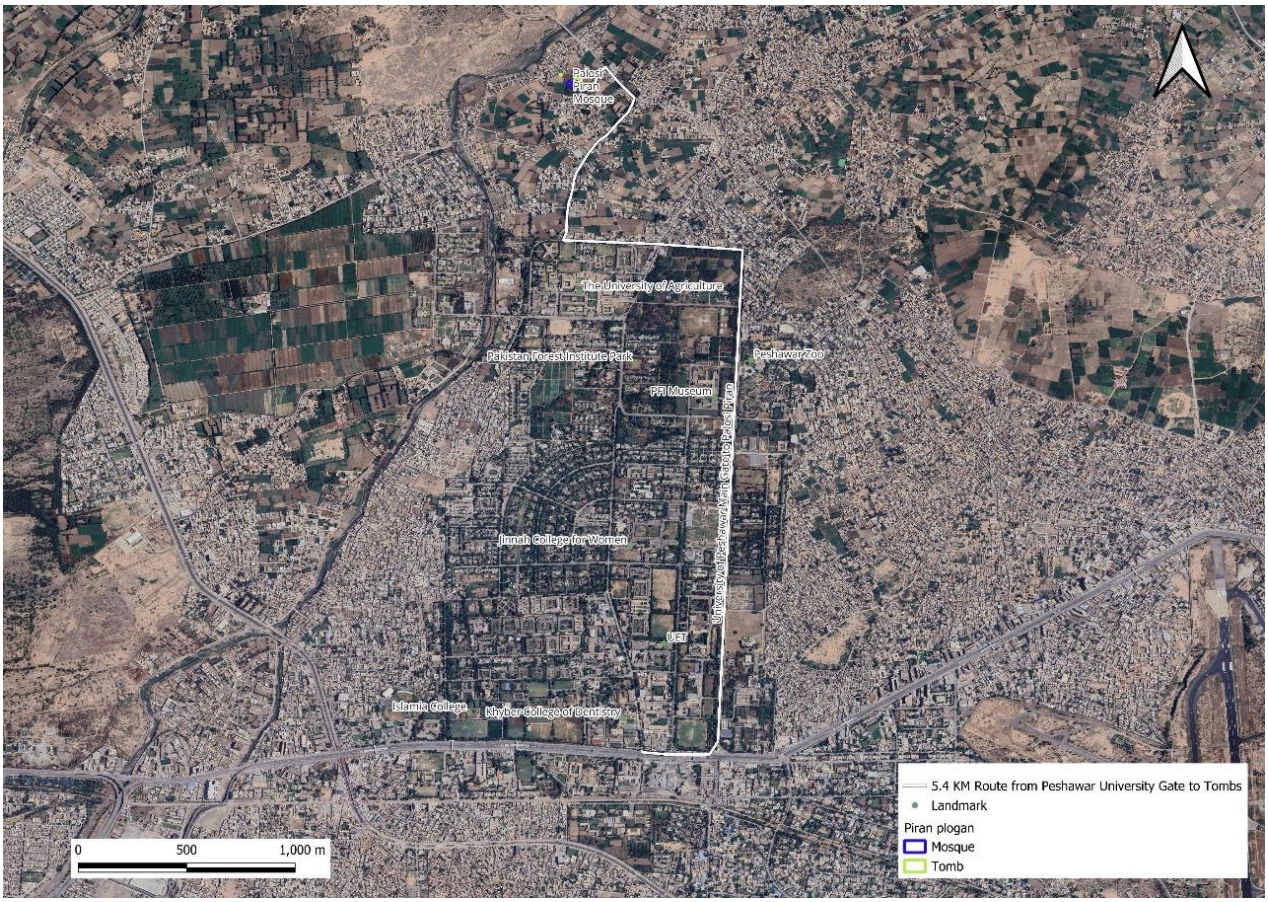
Maps and Plates



Map 1. Map of Palosi Piran Tomb Complex

Plate. 01: Visible Cracks

Plate 02. Wild Growth Before Conservation

Plate 03. Exposed Platform After Excavation

Plate 04. Bed of Concrete

Plate 05. Platform After Concrete Filling

Plate 06. Domes Before Conservation

Plate 07. Removal of Loose Material from Dome

Plate 08. Gap Between Burnt-bricks Course

Plate 09. Dome After Conservation

Plate 10. After Removal of Surface Material from the Floor

Plate 11. Floor Before Conservation

Plate 12. Use of some Irregular Stone

Plate 13. Floor After Conservation

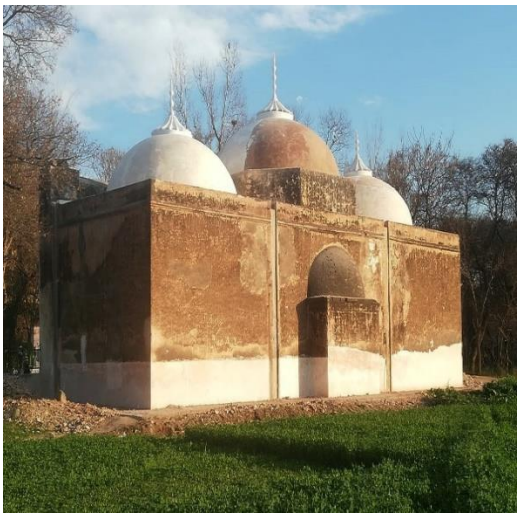


Plate 14. The Outer Side of Walls