

The Golden Age of Mughal Art: Shāh Jahān Period

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Abstract

Mughals adapted an ever-growing and self-renewing conception in art and architecture. Shāh Jahān's (d. 1076/1666) period includes an important era when architectural activities of Mughals were intense and the classical age of art and architecture was experienced. Mughal architecture underwent a tremendous change and developed into a structural renaissance. The subject of the research includes the change and improvement parameters of the art of Shāh Jahān period. Mughal art, which began to flourish with effective and solid foundations during the reign of Akbar Shah (d. 1014/1605), began to experience its golden age with aesthetic and elegant accents during the Shah Jahan period. In this regard, there is a perceivable and instant transition from the effective and strong early Mughal style of Akbar Shāh to Shāh Jahān's aesthetic and elegant late period of Mughal style. The main material of red sandstone in Akbar Shāh's constructions left its place to white marble, and the decorations created by inlay technique with precious and semi-precious gemstones on marble became the seal of Shāh Jahān period. Monumentalism in buildings, huge domes, multi-foil arches, double columns (Shāh Jahān column), symmetry and proportion became the characteristic architectural features of Shāh Jahān period. Change and development in art were exhibited in a distinctive way under the interaction of Turkish culture with local and surrounding cultures. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to reveal the difference between the art of Shāh Jahān and that of the other Mughal period. For this research, literature review was conducted using primary sources and current releases, the works of the period were viewed by on-site field study, and it was tried to deduce about the art style of the period through these studies. In this study, the question why Shāh Jahān period is called "golden age" in Mughal art is tried to be answered through the general characteristics of Shāh Jahān period architecture, innovations observed in many fields of the art and improvements that stroke the period.

Keywords

History of Art, Mughal Architecture, Shāh Jahān, Art, Aesthetics.

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Bâbürlü Sanatının Altın Çağı: Şah Cihan Dönemi

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Öz

Bâbürlüler sanat ve mimaride sürekli gelişen ve kendini yenileyen bir anlayışı benimsemişlerdir. Şah Cihan (öl. 1076/1666) dönemi, Bâbürlülerin mimari faaliyetlerinin yoğun olduğu, sanat ve mimarinin klasik çağının yaşandığı önemli bir devri içermektedir. Bâbürlü mimarisi, Şah Cihan'ın hükümdarlığında muazzam bir değişim göstererek yapısal rönesans kimliği kazanmıştır. Araştırmanın konusunu Şah Cihan dönemi sanatının değişim ve gelişim parametreleri oluşturmaktadır. Ekber Şah (öl. 1014/1605), döneminde etkili ve sağlam temellerle filizlenmeye başlayan Bâbürlü sanatı Şah Cihan döneminde estetik ve zarif vurgularla altın çağını yaşamaya başlamıştır. Bu bağlamda Ekber Şah'ın etkili ve sağlam erken Bâbürlü tarzından, Şah Cihan'ın estetik ve zarif geç dönem Bâbürlü tarzına hissedilir oranda ve ani bir geçiş olmuştur. Ekber Şah'ın yapılarındaki ana malzeme kırmızı kumtaşı yerini beyaz mermer bırakmış, mermer üzerinde kıymetli ve yarı kıymetli taşların kakma tekniği ile oluşturulmuş süslemeleri Şah Cihan döneminin bir damgası olarak tarihe geçmiştir. Yapılarda anıtsallık, devasa kubbeler, çok dilimli kemerler, çifte sütunlar (Şah Cihan sütunu), simetri ve orantı Şah Cihan döneminin karakteristik mimari özellikleri haline gelmiştir. Sanattaki değişim ve gelişim, Türk kültürü ile yerli ve çevre kültürlerin etkileşimi altında kendine özgü bir biçimde sergilenmiştir. Dolayısıyla Şah Cihan dönemi sanatının diğer Bâbürlü dönemi sanatı ile olan farkını ortaya koymak araştırmanın amacını teşkil etmektedir. Bu araştırma için birincil kaynaklar ile güncel yayınlara başvurularak literatür taraması yapılmış, yerinde saha çalışması ile bu dönemin eserleri incelenmiş ve bunlar üzerinden dönemin sanat üslubuyla ilgili çıkarımlar yapılmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu çalışmada Şah Cihan döneminin Bâbürlü sanatında neden “altın çağ” olarak ifade edilebileceğine dair soruya Şah Cihan dönemi mimarisinin genel özellikleri, sanatın birçok alanında gözlemlenen yenilikler ve döneme damga vuran gelişmeler üzerinden cevap verilmeye çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Sanat Tarihi, Bâbürlü Mimarisi, Şah Cihan, Sanat, Estetik.

Atıf Bilgisi

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Introduction

The Mughals embraced a constantly evolving and self-renewing approach to art and architecture. The emphasis placed on the establishment and settlement of the state during in Bābur Shāh's (d. 937/1530) reign, and the relatively short duration of the period compared to later periods, does not allow an assessment of the characteristics of the architectural structures of this period. However, the observations and interpretations in Bābur Shāh's memoirs reflect his interest in nature, society, politics, economics, and art. His court likely included many artists and painters,¹ but Ustād Behzat (d. 942/1535-1536) and Shāh Muzaffar (d. ?) stand out among the artists mentioned in Bābur Shāh's memoirs.² Following political turmoil and succession struggles during Humāyūn Shāh's (d. 963/1556) reign, the revitalized state also focused on art and architecture. When Humāyūn Shāh returned from exile to India, he brought several masters and artists from Iran with him. Iranian master painters Mīr Sayyid 'Alī (d. 980/1572) of Tabriz and 'Abd al-Şamad (Shamad) (d. 1001-1002/1593) of Şirāz were among the important artists Humāyūn Shāh brought to India after his exile.³ Consequently, Iranian influence is evident in the architectural style of this period. However, it appears that the improvement of architectural works during Humāyūn Shāh's reign, due to the political situation, did not reach a sufficient level. His successor, Akbar Shāh, was a significant patron of the arts, ensuring an intensive blending of local culture with traditional Turkish and Persian art, and pioneering the production of significant works in both architecture and painting. Furthermore, during Akbar Shāh's reign, European contact with the palace facilitated the introduction of European painting into the Mughal court. Masters and artists across the empire were assigned to the illustrative studio within the palace naqqash's workshop and worked diligently to illustrate numerous manuscripts. In his Akbar-nāma, Akbar Shāh's court historian, Abū'l-Faḍl 'Allāmī (d. 1011-1602), mentions the presence of nearly 150 artists working in the palace workshop under the supervision of Mīr Sayyid 'Alī and 'Abd al-Şamad (Shamad).⁴ Mughal architecture started its advance dramatically during Akbar Shāh's reign⁵ Having completed its political formation, the state began to make its presence to be felt in this field by incorporating its distinctive artistic characteristics into its architecture. Numerous mausoleums, mosques, fortresses and palaces were constructed during this period. A unique artistic approach emerged as a result of the combination of Turkestan architectural style and Indo-Iranian influences. While white marble was rare in the buildings of this period, red sandstone was the predominant material. Decorations included carving, inlay, gilding, or decorative paintings on ceilings. Important architectural structures such as the Tomb of Akbar at Sikandra and the Tomb of I'timād al-Dawla were constructed during the reign of Jahāngīr Shāh (d. 1037/1627). The widespread use of white marble during the reign of Jahāngīr Shāh, and the replacement of red sandstone structures of Akbar Shāh's era with structures dominated by white marble are symbolic in their reflection of the transitional period in Mughal architectural philoso-

1 Lubor Hajek, *Indian Miniatures of the Moghul School* (London: A Spring Art Book, 1960), 21.

2 Bābur, *Bābur-nāma*, trans. Reşit Rahmeti Arat (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1970), 267.

3 Hajek, *Indian Miniatures*, 17.

4 Amina Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters: Indian Miniatures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), 61.

5 John Michael Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures* (Hong Kong: Interling Books, 2007), 44.

phy. A rapid transition is observed between the architectural style of Akbar Shāh and Shāh Jahān. Mughal architecture underwent a tremendous transformation during Shāh Jahān's reign, acquiring a renaissance character. Therefore, Shāh Jahān's era is considered the golden age of Mughal architecture and art. Shāh Jahān's radical thinking and architectural talent combined with his architectural knowledge and resulted in the construction of numerous palaces, forts, mosques, and mausoleums. Shāh Jahān's use of white marble material effectively transformed this period into an era of marble constructions. Furthermore, in architectural decoration, the technique of inlaying precious and semiprecious stones onto a white marble surface replaced the low-relief technique. This decorative technique became one of the characteristics of Shāh Jahān's period and left its mark on both his period and history.

In this study, the magnificence of the Shāh Jahān period art, which was previously evaluated mainly in terms of architecture, was dealt with in other areas as well as in architecture. Furthermore, the momentum gained during the Shāh Jahān period is presented through a holistic approach considering (1628-1658) not only in architecture but also in numerous other fields including the fine details in various fields of art, the sense of decoration, the patterns preferred in decoration and the materials and techniques used. The sources for the study consist of primary sources (chronicles, travelogues, miniatures) and current research (books, articles, theses and internet sources). Muhammad Emin Kazwini's (d. ?) work titled *Pādshāh-nāma* is one of the most important sources of the period. Kazwini is important because he was the first person to be assigned to write the history of the reign of Shāh Jahān. His work covers the period from Shāh Jahān's birth to the first ten years of his reign. There is a copy in the Library of the Royal Asiatic Society and three copies in the British Museum. Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥamīd-i Lāhawri's (d. 1064/1654) work, *Pādshāh-nāma*, is one of the primary sources on the Shāh Jahān period. Lāhawri wrote about the first twenty years of Shāh Jahān's reign. It consists of a preface dedicated to Shāh Jahān, a concise account of his ancestors, based on Timur, a brief history of Shāh Jahān before his accession and a detailed account of the first twenty years of his reign, each divided into two decades. 'Ināyat Khan (d. 1081-1082/1671), the author of the *Shāh-Jahān-nāma*, was another important court historian of the period, with his work covering the Shāh Jahān period. 'Ināyat Khan, whose real name was Muhammad Tahir (d. ?), was born seven years after Shāh Jahān's accession to the throne and was the son of Zafar Khan (d. ?), Jahāngīr Shāh's wazīr. His grandfather was Saif Khan (d. ?), one of the governors of Agra. 'Ināyat Khan, a close friend of Shāh Jahān, wrote about the first thirty years of Shāh Jahān's reign, the first twenty of which he wrote in a simple style consistent with the *Pādshāh-nāma*. The work, *Pādshāh-nāma* (also known as the *Shāh-Jahān-nāma*) by Lāhawri's student Muhammad Waris (d. 1090-1091/1680) covers the period from the twenty-first to the thirtieth year of Shāh Jahān's reign. The *Amal-i Salih*, by another prominent court historian of the period, Muhammad Salih Kambu (d. 1085/1675), is a significant work covering the period from Shāh Jahān's birth to his death. The work comprehensively covers the period, not only with its historical events but also with its socio-cultural aspects. Muhammad Sadik Khan's (d. ?) *Shāh-Jahān-nāma* also provides important information from Shāh Jahān's accession to the throne until his dethronement and the end of his life in Agra Fort. Tavernier (d. 1100-1101/1689), a prominent traveler of the period who spent a long time in the Mughal court,

provides important information about Shāh Jahān's reign (1630-1668), his administration and political, economic, cultural and social life in his work "Travels in India." R. Nath's *History of Mughal Architecture* provides detailed information on the chronological development and architectural characteristics of Mughal architecture. E. Koch has significant studies on Mughal architecture and has inspired the work of numerous researchers. His "Mughal Architecture" study, in particular, examines Mughal period works based on period sources and their current status. J. M. Rogers's "Mughal Miniatures" provides information on the architecture and painting of Mughal period, while Okada Amina's "Imperial Mughal Painters: Indian Miniatures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" provides important information on miniature and painting during Shāh Jahān's period. Finally, regarding Mughal gardens during Shāh Jahān period, E. Koch's "Mughal Palace Gardens from Bābur to Shāh Jahān (1526-1648)" is a significant study in the field. In light of all these studies, Mughal art during the Shāh Jahān period will be dealt with objectively with its various aspects through on-site observations, visual data obtained and the resulting assessments, thus the study will be ensured to provide significant contribution to the literature.

1. Architecture of the Shāh Jahān Period (1628-1658)

Shāh Jahān (Hurram) was born in Lahore on 20 Rabi' al-Awwal 1000 (January 5, 1592). His name was Hurram and he was the third son of Jahāngir Shāh. His mother was Princess Manmati of Rajput. Upon conquering Ahmednagar Fort in 1616, he was granted the title of "Shāh Jahān" by Jahāngir Shāh.⁶ Following Jahāngir Shāh's death, he prevailed over his brothers in the struggle for the throne and became the Mughal sultan on February 6, 1628, with the title of "Abū'l-Muzaffar Shāhab al-Din Muhammad Sahib-Kiran". Shāh Jahān reigned from 1628 to 1658, becoming the fifth ruler of the Mughal Empire. He died on January 22, 1666 and was buried in the Taj Maḥal next to his wife, Mumtāz Maḥal (d. 1040/1631).⁷

Shāh Jahān's rule was one of the most peaceful, prosperous and progressive periods of the Mughal era. Shāh Jahān's reign encompassed a significant period during which Mughal architectural activity was at its most intense, witnessing the classical age of art and architecture. The country's borders encompassed India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Multan, Bangladesh, and even a part of Iran. Numerous palaces, forts, mosques, and mausoleums were built in cities such as Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Allahabad, Kashmir, Kabul, Bari, Ambala, Gwalior, Faizabad, Ajmer and Srinagar. However, only the most important works of the period in Agra and Delhi have survived to this day. The architectural works of Shāh Jahān's period can be grouped primarily under four main headings: forts and palaces, mausoleums, mosques and gardens. In addition to the Taj Maḥal (1632-1643/1648) and the mausoleum of his father, Jahāngir Shāh, in Lahore (1628-1638), Shāh Jahān also focused his attention on fortress palaces and gardens. Fortress palaces were the focal point of Shāh Jahān's urban projects in Agra and Delhi, while the construction of mosques was largely in the later periods of his reign. However, as in Mughal architecture in general, madrassas never played a significant role as a building type on their own during this period.⁸

6 Azmi Özcan, "Şah Cihan", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2010), 38/251.

7 Özcan, "Şah Cihan", 38/251.

8 Ebba Koch, "The Wooden Audience Halls Of Shāh Jahān: Sources And Reconstruction", *Muqarnas* 30 (2013), 351.

1.1. Fort Palaces

Fortresses hold a significant place among the structures built during Shāh Jahān's reign. Among these, the Agra, Delhi, and Lahore forts stand out. The Agra Fort is located north-west of the Taj Maḥal and stretches along the Yamuna River. Used by the Mughals in the 16th and 17th centuries, the fortress served as the state's main settlement, particularly during the reigns of Akbar and Shāh Jahān. The Mughals used the site until they moved their capital to Delhi in 1638.⁹ The fort has an irregular semicircular shape and was built parallel to the Yamuna River. Including its gates, the fort covers approximately 2.5 km² and is surrounded by a massive crescent-shaped fortification wall, 22 meters high, with regularly spaced bastions forming a semicircular outward arc. Agra Fort is built of red sandstone, hence its name, "Lal Qila" (Red Fort). In his Akbar-nāma, Abū l-Faḍl 'Allāmī reported that there were over five hundred structures within the Agra Fort.¹⁰ After the reign of Akbar, important structures were also added to the Agra Fort during the reigns of Jahāngīr Shāh and Shāh Jahān. Shāh Jahān either repaired or completely demolished and rebuilt many of the structures within the Agra Fort Palace. These structures include the Divān-i Khās, the Khās Maḥal-Ārāmgāh, the Divān-i ām, the Anguri Bagh, the Musamman Burj, the Moti Masjid, the Mina Masjid, the Nagina Masjid, the Sheesh Maḥal and the Shāh Bath. Shāh Jahān's two private quarters are located within the Hās Maḥal complex. Shāh Jahān built the Hās Maḥal, known as the "Ārāmgāh-i Mualla" (Lofty Resting Place) or "Ārāmgāh-i Mukaddas" (Sacred Resting Place), according to his own taste, as mentioned by Lahauri.¹¹ Agra Fort, protected by the Archaeological Centre of India (ASI) since 1920, became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983 (Images: 1-4).



Image 1: General view of Agra Fort¹²



Image 2: General View of the Khās Maḥal

9 Canan Kuş Büyüktaş, "Bâbürlü Devleti'nde İktidara Yön Veren Şehirler: Başkentler", *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* (2021), 148.

10 Ebu'l Fazl Allami, *Akbar-nāma* (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1972), 180.

11 Lahawri Abd Al-Hamid, *The King of the World: The Padshāh-nāma: An Imperial Mughal Manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle* (London: Azimuth, 1997), 236.

12 The images used in the study belong to Fadime Özler Kaya unless a separate source is given.



Image 3: Agra Fort, General Views of the Dīvān-i ām



Image 4: Detail of the Agra Fort Dīvān-i ām Throne or Audience Hall

In addition to the previously constructed Agra and Lahore Forts, Shāh Jahān built the Delhi Fort Palace in the newly established Shāhjahānābād city of Delhi, where he built numerous palaces, mosques, pavilions and bathhouses.¹³ Similar to the Agra Fort, Shāh Jahān also built two monumental gates called the Delhi-Lahori Darwaza, the Naqar Khana (palace adornment workshop), the Dīvān-i ām, the Dīvān-i Khās, Khās Maḥal-Ārāmgāh, a hamam, the Shāh Burj and the Moti Masjid¹⁴ (Images: 5-6).



Image 5: General view of Delhi Fort Dīvān-i ām



Image 6: Detail of the Delhi Fort Dīvān-i ām

The Naulakha Pavillion and Shāh Burj in the Lahore Fort were also built by Shāh Jahān.¹⁵ The Agra, Lahore, and Delhi Forts are important because they also housed the palace residences where the members of the dynasty lived. These forts were also called “Daulat Khana” (State House) because they were the residences of the Mughal rulers.¹⁶

1.2. Mosques

Mosques constitute another important group of structures built during Shāh Jahān's reign. The Juma Masjids in Agra, Delhi and Fatehpur, Wazir Khan Mosque in Lahore and the Shāh Jahān Mosque in Thatta are among the prominent mosques of the period. As mentioned above, numerous mosques and masjids were built within the fort-palaces during

13 Fadime Özler Kaya, “Bâbürlü Saray ve Kaleleri (Agra Kalesi Örneği)”, *Sanat Tarihi Alanında Araştırmalar ve Değerlendirmeler*, ed. Rüçhan Bubur (Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2024), 26.

14 Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2014), 136.

15 Koch, *Mughal Architecture*, 136.

16 Ram Nath, *History of Mughal Architecture* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1994), 4/281.

this period, especially the Juma Masjids in Agra, Delhi and Fatehpur. Important mosques in the Shāh Jahān period include The Agra Fort Mina Masjid (1630), the Agra Fort Nagina Masjid (1630), the Lahore Wazīr Khān Mosque (1634-35), the Agra Jama Masjid (1648), the Agra Moti Masjid (1647-53), the Agra Taj Maḥal Mosque (1640-50) and the Delhi Jama Masjid (1650-56). The Agra Jama Masjid, one of the most important of Shāh Jahān's Juma (Jama or Congregational) mosques near Agra Fort in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, was built between 1644 and 1648 by Shāh Jahān's daughter, Jahānāra Begum (d. 1092/1681). Historian Lahori writes in his Pādshāh-nāma that Shāh Jahān gave this task to his daughter and that this mosque was named as Jahānāra Begum Mosque. Constructed entirely of red sandstone, the structure also featured a large amount of white marble, black marble and precious stones. A marble-like plaster called "chunnam" was also used in Shāh Jahān's period. The mosque has a rectangular plan running north-south, with five entrances in a row of pointed arches of which the wider and taller is in the middle, the building has two naves parallel to the mihrab and is topped by three domes in bulbous shape. The mosque, situated on a large rectangular platform, has staircases leading to the main entrances on the north, south, and east. It has a large rectangular courtyard, centered on a rectangular pool for ablutions. Two more mihrab niches are positioned symmetrically on either side of the mosque's white marble mihrab niche. The three-stepped marble pulpit is located immediately west of the mihrab and bears a relief drawing of the mosque (Images: 7-8).



Image 7: General view of the Agra Jama Masjid



Image 8: Detail of the Agra Jama Masjid Mihrab

The Agra Moti Masjid is located north of the Dīvān-i ām Mosque, near the eastern gate of Agra Fort. It was built on high ground sloping westward, just before the northern entrance gate of the surrounding of Dīvān-i Khās. The mosque is entered through three gates, located on the east, north and south sides. The mosque's main gate, which is also known as the "Khidr Gate," is located in the east. It has a more monumental size than the other gates. The entrance from the river is through this gate. The gate is a two-storey iwan-shaped structure made of red sandstone with staircases on either side. There are octagonal white marble chhatris on the gate. The interior of the gate is made of white marble. The masjid has a square courtyard with a central pool and is surrounded by walls measuring approximately 50 square meters. It is the only rectangular mosque with a central courtyard. Each side of the ablution pool is 11.35 meters. A sundial is also located in the courtyard for keeping time. Simplicity was given importance in the outer courtyard walls of the Moti Masjid. The mosque stands on a rectangular platform, measuring 71.40 meters east-west and 57.20 meters north-south. It has two-storey vaulted rooms on the north, east and south sides.

Its facade features a portico having seven equally sized arches. The arches are supported by piers. Unlike the mosque's red sandstone exterior, the main structure is constructed entirely of white marble. The prayer hall, located west of the courtyard, measures 48.46 x 17.07 meters and has three naves parallel to the mihrab. The prayer hall is divided into twenty-one sections and only three of those in the central nave are covered with domes. The other sections have flat ceilings. The mosque is topped by three bulbous domes and seven chhatris set into a red sandstone floor. The central dome is higher and wider to designate the area where the mihrab is located. The top of the domes ends with a lotus finial. The monumental domes and chhatris are made of white marble and their surfaces are plain. Along the western (qibla) wall, there is a deeply carved white marble mihrab, decorated with colored stone inlays and surrounded by three shallow arched niches opposite to the naves on either side. It has a four-stepped marble pulpit. The interior's white marble floors are laid with musallas surrounded by bands created by inlaid technique with black and pale-yellow stone. Two enclosed chambers are located to the north and south. It is thought that these two chambers, darker than the prayer hall, may have been reserved for the prayers of the male members of the dynasty as well as the women of the palace. In accordance with this idea, this section features fine stone latticework, allowing the women to view the prayer hall without being noticed. This structure, devoid of any decoration on the interior or exterior, represents the final phase of Shāh Jahān's reign, when simplicity was prioritized. According to other inscriptions on the mosque, it was built by Shāh Jahān over a period of seven years, with the expenses largely spent on the daily wages of the craftsmen and artists. The main structural material is the white marble left over from the Taj Mahal's construction. After the Taj Mahal, the most monumental structure of the period is the Moti Masjid.¹⁷ This is a Jama Mosque and, therefore, is separated from the harem quarters by high walls. The structure has been restored intermittently by the ASI since 1920 and remains closed to the public to prevent any potential damage. Similar to the Moti Masjid within Agra Fort, there is another large mosque, also named Moti Masjid, built entirely of white marble by Shāh Jahān, within the Delhi Fort. These forts also housed smaller prayer rooms used by the women of the harem and only the members of the royal family. The Nagina and Mina Masjids of Agra Fort are constructed entirely from similar materials, with rectangular plans, simple structures supported by piers and multi-foil arches with wide spans and are topped by three bulbous domes (Images: 9-12).



Image 9: General views of the Agra Fort Moti Masjid



Image 10: General views of the Delhi Fort Moti Masjid

17 Nath, *Mughal Architecture*, 4/457.



Image 11: General View of the Agra Fort
Nagina Masjid



Image 12: Detail of the Nagina Masjid

1.3. Tombs

Examples of monumental mausoleums built during Shāh Jahān period include the Tomb of Jahāngīr Shāh in Lahore (1628-38), the Tomb of Asaf Khān (d. 1051/1641) and the Taj Maḥal in Agra (1632-54). It was built in Lahore by his wife Nūr Jahān (d. 1055/1645) for his father, Selim Jahāngīr Shāh, who died in 1627. The single-storey mausoleum, built in the chār-bāgh style and located at the heart of a large garden, occupies an area of 500 m². The mausoleum is constructed of red sandstone and white marble and its corner minarets (approximately 30 m high), also made of white marble, are adorned with colored stone inlays. This single-storey square sandstone structure has rich ornamentation decorated with white marble with colored stone inlays. The structure has two entrances on the north and south sides. Each entrance leads through the central hall, known as the Akbar Sara-i, to the main tomb chamber, which houses a vaulted white marble sarcophagus. The interior of the tomb is richly decorated with floral frescoes and marble patterns. The exterior decorations of the structure are symmetrically inlaid with white marble, red sandstone and various colors of stones. The decorative elements include geometric and floral motifs. Inside, the main tomb chamber and the sarcophagus of Jahāngīr Shāh are decorated with geometric and calligraphic ornamentation, with a predominance of floral ornamentation created with colored stone inlay. Furthermore, the fresco decorations in the niches within the structure are particularly noteworthy (Images 13-14).



Image 13: General view of the Tomb of Jahāngīr
Shāh

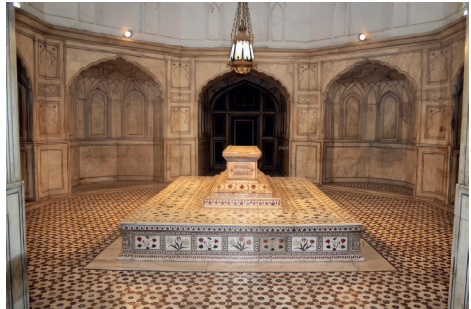


Image 14: Detail of the Tomb of Jahāngīr Shāh
(Anjum, 2017)

Built during the reign of Shāh Jahān and one of the most monumental mausoleums in the history of world architecture, the Taj Maḥal is a large building complex with a tomb, mosque and guesthouse within a chār-bāgh garden on the south bank of the Yamuna River in Agra, India. Unfortunately, Shāh Jahān, unlike other Mughal rulers, did not have a tomb of his own. He is buried in the Taj Maḥal in the tomb he built for his esteemed wife Mumtāz Maḥal. Shāh Jahān had the tomb built in the name of his wife Mumtāz Maḥal and was buried next to her when he passed away in 1666. The Taj Maḥal is the most magnificent work of the Mughal state in terms of its plan and design. Although its construction took a long period of approximately 22 years, a large amount of money was spent for its construction. Perhaps this is the most important reason why Shāh Jahān was unable to have a personal tomb built for himself. The Taj Maḥal Mausoleum, unlike other Mughal period tombs, differs from the classical understanding by being located not at the very center of a garden in the chār-bāgh style, but on the banks of the Yamuna River and at the farthest point of the complex. The northern section housing the tomb section in the main center of the complex is impressive with its meticulously designed architectural arrangement. The architectural balance and harmony established in this section have created perfect harmony not only with the arrangement of the main tomb but also with the symmetrical arrangement of the structures on the two sides.¹⁸ The tomb was built on a platform consisting of two separate levels. The first of these measures 110 m x 250 m and 1.30 m in height, has a rectangular plan and is constructed of red sandstone. On this platform, the Taj Maḥal Tomb is located in the center, a mosque built of red sandstone to the west of the tomb, and a guesthouse also built of red sandstone to the east. The second platform measures 109 m x 109 m and is 6 m wide.¹⁹ It is the platform on which the Taj Maḥal Mausoleum, constructed solely of white marble, stands. Rising in all its splendor in the center of these structures, the main mausoleum stands on a square base measuring 95 meters on a side. Framed by 42-meter-high minarets at the corners, the main mausoleum building has an octagonal plan. The center of the building has a plan consisting of an octagonal interior, four wide iwans connected to this interior and four corner rooms connected to the central area by a corridor between the iwans. The central area, measuring 18 meters in diameter, is covered by a 24-meter-high interior dome. The units surrounding this domed space are two-storey and arranged to enclose the central area of the mausoleum, which also houses the marble sarcophagi.²⁰ The building opens to the exterior via large and pointed-arched iwans, 32 meters high, facing four directions. There are two-storey and pointed-arched smaller iwans next to the big ones on each facade and this arrangement makes architectural harmony and symmetry more impressive. These smaller iwans also connect to the two-storey spaces inside. A 44-meter-high exterior dome in bulbous shape sits majestically on a large drum. The height of the building from the base to the tip of the finial on this dome is 74 meters. The tomb's appearance is made much more elegant and magnificent by the four small domed units placed on the sides of the dome drum, which is to some extent obstructed from outside view by the high iwans in the middle. Its roof system is one of the finest examples of Indo-Islamic archi-

18 A. Engin Beksac, "Tac Mahal", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2010), 39/337-339.

19 Suut Kemal Yetkin, *İslâm Mimarisi* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1965), 329.

20 Beksac, "Tac Mahal", 39/338.

texture. Except for the southern entrance to the central chamber, which houses the marble sarcophagi, all entrances are covered with screens, and these screens are decorated with glass mosaic inlay. The acoustics of the dimly lit central space, illuminated by the glass mosaic ornamentation found on the upper floors and exterior facades, have become legendary. Beneath the central space, where the coffins are located, lies the crypt (mummy chamber), where the actual burial place exists.²¹ Because the Taj Maḥal was built based on a sublime love story, not only its architectural achievement but also its ornamentation have become secondary. The Taj Maḥal Mausoleum's exterior, which was built entirely of white marble, features dense floral decoration created in high relief and occasionally inlaid with various precious-colored stones. The floral decoration consists primarily of naturalistic flowers such as lilies, daffodils, toadflaxes, crown imperial and tulip, along with rumi, palmette and lotus motifs. The building decoration also includes geometric patterns. In addition, Surahs from the Quran are inscribed on the arch of the Taj Maḥal Mausoleum's iwan-shaped crown gate, which contains some of the finest examples of calligraphy, and on the outer borders of the iwans on the other sides of the facade. Vegetal decorations created in high relief on marble, along with floral patterns inlaid with colored stones are featured in the interior of the mausoleum. The surfaces of the two-storey units surrounding the main chamber, which is the mausoleum's center, are adorned with vegetal and calligraphic ornamentation. The vegetal decorations, which are most prevalent in the interior, appear in the form of more elaborate and naturalistic flowers in vases. Furthermore, the sarcophagi of Mumtāz Maḥal and Shāh Jahān, located in the main tomb chamber, have vegetal decorations created with precious-colored stones and unique calligraphic ornamentation, complementing the structure's decorative composition (Images: 15-16).



Image 15: General view of the Taj Maḥal Mausoleum



Image 16: The sarcophagi of Shāh Jahān and Mumtāz Maḥal

During the Mughal period, magnificent mausoleums were built not only for the rulers but also for the members of other dynasties. The Tomb of Asaf Khān, built during the reign of Shāh Jahān, is one such example. Asaf Khān (Mirza Abū'l-Hasan) served as a wazīr in the Mughal court and he was Shāh Jahān's father-in-law, Mumtāz Maḥal's father and Nūr Jahān Khātūn's brother. The Tomb of Asaf Khān was built by Shāh Jahān around 1641. The tomb is located in the Shāhdara Gardens in Lahore, adjacent to the tombs of Jahāngīr Shāh and

21 Beksaç, "Tac Mahal", 39/339.

his wife, Nūr Jahān Khātūn. Red sandstone was used in the tomb's construction and the dome is made of white marble. The Tomb of Asaf Khān shares a similar concept with its contemporaries, the Taj Maḥal and Jahāngīr Shāh's Tomb, in terms of its plan and decorative details. Furthermore, the tomb stands as one of the most well-preserved examples of Mughal architecture.

1.4. Gardens

Mughal gardens have always had a strong influence on architectural history and design as a leading expression of Islamic art, culture, and values.²² The garden arrangement in India dates back to approximately nine centuries before the tenth century, when regular Turkish raids increased and, subsequently, the Turkish dominance showed gradually began to show its influence with the Ghaznavids. However, these gardens were Buddhist temples and monasteries and in a free form far from the garden style that achieved a regular appearance with the chār-bāgh garden system, which began to be implemented during the reign of the Delhi Sultan Firuz Shāh Tughluq (1351-1388) and continued to be used by becoming prevalent during the Mughal period.²³ In a difficult geography in every sense and with limited resources, Bābur Shāh came to establish his state in India, a country with “a hot, dusty and waterless environment,” in order to prosper and to satisfy his longing for Turkestan, he built the first of his chār-bāghs on the banks of the Yamuna (Jamna) River, where it was easy to obtain the water necessary to activate the canals dividing the gardens. Mughal gardens, which began with the efforts of Bābur Shāh and developed during the time of Jahāngīr, reached their peak in every sense during the reign of Shāh Jahān.²⁴ The oldest Mughal gardens in India located in the cities of Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Kabul and Kashmir are among the major Mughal gardens, most of which have been restored and are in very good condition today. They include the courtyards and gardens of the Red Fort and Lahore Fort in Delhi, the Chashme Shāhi (Kashmir, built for Shāh Jahān) and Pari Maḥal Garden in Kashmir, Mehtab Bagh and the Taj Maḥal Complex Garden (Agra, built by Shāh Jahān for his wife Mumtāz Maḥal) and Jahānāra Bagh (Zahara Bagh) in Agra, Nimla Garden in Kabul and Shalimar Bagh (built for Shāh Jahān) in Lahore,²⁵ and all of them were built during Shāh Jahān period (1627-1658). Mehtab Bagh, located in Agra, is located north of Agra Fort and east of the Yamuna River. It is located opposite the Taj Maḥal and Agra Fort, on the other bank of the river. It is known that Mehtab Bagh was designed by Bābur Shāh as one of nearly eleven gardens when he first settled in Agra.

Shāh Jahān named the garden as “Mehtab Bagh” (Moonlight Garden) and put it into its final form.²⁶ Mehtab Bagh has been brought into the light as a result of a recent excavation. It is an imperial garden of excursion situated on the Yamuna River opposite the Taj Maḥal.

22 Z. A. Latiff- M. M. Yaman, “A Review Into The “Islamic” Tradition In The Mughal Garden: (Re)Shaping Our Stand On Islamic Art and Design”, *Planning Malaysia: Journal Of The Malaysian Institute Of Planners* 15/1 (2017), 170.

23 Gönül Evyapan, “Bahçe”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1991), 4/481.

24 Evyapan, “Bahçe”, 4/481.

25 Ute Franke-Thomas Urban, “Bagh-e Babur, Kabul: Excavating a Mughal Garden”, *South Asian Archaeology* 2003 (2005), 145.

26 I. N. Khan Arshi, *Black Taj Mahal The Emperor's Missing Tomb* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury Publishing India, 2014), 76.

Like traditional Mughal gardens, it has a perfect square plan in approximately 300x300 meters in chār-bāgh design. It complements the Taj Maḥal on a symmetrical plane with its size and layout visually, and it is understood that it was built between 1632 and 1643, during the same period with the Taj Maḥal.²⁷ This clearly demonstrates that Shāh Jahān continued the importance he placed on symmetry in architecture in his landscaping. The Taj Maḥal garden, like other Mughal gardens in Agra, is situated directly on the banks of the Yamuna River. However, the main structure is not positioned in the center of the garden as in the classical Mughal period chār-bāgh, but extends along the bank on a rectangular platform (plinth). The complex consists of a four-storey garden with a cross-axis in the form of a classical chār-bāgh and a raised platform towards the river on which the monumental tomb and its side buildings are located. The Taj Maḥal garden follows the typical Mughal riverbank garden form. In other words, it is a specific chār-bāgh form developed by the Mughals for Agra's riverside situation. Here, the water source for the chār-bāgh canals was not a mountain spring, as in the Mughal homeland of Turkestan, where it would be easy to transport due to its elevation, but rather the low-flow Yamuna River, whose water had to be brought to the garden by watermills. Therefore, the Mughals designed a garden type that took advantage of this riverbank location: the main building was not positioned at the center of the garden, as in the classical Mughal chār-bāgh, but rather extended along the shore on a rectangular platform. The Taj Maḥal garden is the most developed example of the riverbank garden type. There is a large aqueduct and waterworks in the west of the Taj Maḥal Complex built to bring water from the Yamuna River.²⁸ The garden section is on the landward side of the platform. The Taj Maḥal is a rectangular garden surrounded by high walls on the exterior, with chatris at each corner. Upon entering the garden, the first thing you see is the water channels with walkways at both sides that converge at a rectangular pool set in the center of a white marble platform. By this means, the garden is divided into four square areas in a chār-bāgh design with canals running east-west and north-south converging at the pool in the center and with the walkways on each side. Each square area is further subdivided into four square areas by cross-shaped walkways in the middle. These square areas are divided into sixteen equal parts and create an exact symmetry. Each square area creates a colorful view with flower beds of geometric shapes full of roses, daffodils, lilies and jasmines. In addition, cypress trees are aligned symmetrically along the water channels and paved walkways. Rectangular water tanks made of red sandstone sit on the walls bordering the east-west channels that form the main structure (at the center of the garden's east-west border). Like the first courtyard, the garden, designed in the form of a chār-bāgh, is surrounded by porticoes constructed of red sandstone. The garden, along with walkways, fountains and decorative trees, continues along classical Mughal lines, a square divided into four by long waterways (pools). The garden arranged according to the fundamental principles of Persian garden architecture using the "chār-bāgh" system created a unique atmosphere with its canals and pool fountains and it was attempted to create a paradise-like image through the beauty of the flowers and trees.²⁹ The Taj Maḥal Complex has an entirely orderly geometric arrangement. The garden of the tomb, one of the com-

27 D. Fairchild Ruggles, *İslami Bahçeler ve Peyzajlar* (İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2017), 317.

28 Ebba Koch, "Mughal Palace Gardens From Bâbü'r to Shāh Jahān (1526-1648)", *Muqarnas* 14 (1997), 143.

29 Beksaç, "Tac Mahal", 39/338.

plex's most important components, continues this geometric arrangement. The garden's general form consists of rectangles and squares. The pavements are proportional. Each area in the Taj Maḥal is considered as a separate quadrangular garden. The waterways dividing the area into four squares intersect at the center, and the intersection point creates a pool in the middle of the second section.³⁰ Symmetry is at the forefront in the Taj Maḥal Complex when considered together with its garden, pools, water wells, water tanks, pavilions with chatris (baradari), water channels, walking paths, the Taj Maḥal Mausoleum and the mosque and the guesthouse located on the same plan scheme on both sides of the mausoleum.³¹ The Shalimar Gardens, built by Shāh Jahān in 1641-1642, have an important place among the gardens of the Mughal period and are unique in terms of their design (Image: 17-19).



Image 17: A general view of the Taj Maḥal from Mehtab Bagh



Image 18: General view of the Taj Maḥal Tomb Garden

30 P. Doraj-Ü. Akar, "Gestalt İlkeleri Bağlamında Dört Bahçe Sistemi Yapılarının Analizi (Taç Mahal Örneği)", *Black Sea Journal of Engineering and Science*, (2023), 33.

31 Fadime Özler Kaya, "Bâbürlü Bahçeleri (Agra Şehri Örnekleri)", *Sanat Tarihi Alanında Araştırmalar ve Değerlendirmeler*, ed. Rüçhan Bubur (Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2024), 70.

Image 19: General view of Shalimar Gardens³²

2. Handicrafts of The Shāh Jahān Period

The Shāh Jahān reign is a period in which architecture was prominent and monumental works were constructed. Many fields of art are observed to reach their peak in this period, as in Mughal architecture. During the Shāh Jahān period, handicrafts were not merely ornamental but also considered a symbol of cultural wealth, palace splendor and political power. Craftsmen were under the protection of the palace and their work was carried out with great care. Significant advancements were made in calligraphy, gilding and especially painting and miniature art. While many of these works are now in various European countries, the Shāh Jahān Album is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Images: 20).

Image 20: Shāh Jahān on horseback (Metropolitan Museum)³³

32 Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA), “Shalimar Garden” (Access 11 October 2024).

33 The Metropolitan Museum of Art (THEMET), “The Emperor Shāh Jahān with his Son Dara Shikoh, Folio from the Shāh Jahān Album” (Access 2 July 2025).

The Shāh Jahān reign is the period when the classical style of Mughal miniature art matured and European perspective and chiaroscuro techniques gradually began to be effective. Miniatures are not only works of art but also political propaganda and historical documentation. Like other art forms, miniature art also improved under the protection of the palace. The themes of these realistic and detailed works generally include palace life, idealized portraits of Shāh Jahān and the courtiers, ceremonial and hunting scenes, gardens, architectural depictions, natural observations, and historical scenes. Important miniature artists of the period included Bichitr (d. 1070-1071/1660), Hashim (d. 1065/1654), Payag (d. 1065-1066/1655), and Govardhan (d. 1049-1050/1640). Important miniature paintings from the period are featured in the *Pādshāh-nāma*.³⁴ Various handicrafts from the Shāh Jahān period are also exhibited today in various European museums. These handicraft products are of remarkable quality and reveal the extent of the palace's artistic taste during the reign of Shāh Jahān, combined with the superior skills of the craftsmen (Image: 21).



Image 21: Shāh Jahān's goblets (Victoria and Albert Museum, London)³⁵

Beyond palace structures, artistic techniques were also used significantly in everyday objects and furnishings. Pietra Dura (rivet-making) was one of the leading techniques. This technique was used in jewelry and goldsmithry, as well as in architecture. Crowns, dagger handles, belt buckles, jewelry boxes and even bindings decorated with precious stones on gazelle skin became widespread during this period. Objects decorated with precious stones were produced for diplomatic gifts. Ceramics and tiles were used in architectural decoration during this period, particularly in religious and civil buildings in and around Lahore. The Wazīr Khān Mosque, located there, stands out as a famous work of art for its tile decoration. Carpets were produced in workshops affiliated with the palace in cities such as Agra, Lahore, Delhi and Kashmir. A specific style was used for each city and there were variations in color, motif, and size. Carpets, made using fine knotting techniques with silk, wool, golden and silver threads were interwoven with Turkestan, Persian and Indian motifs. Motifs used in the weaving art included flowers, vines and birds, as well as human faces.³⁶ Palace halls, the Dīvān-i ām, the Dīvān-i Khās, the harem apartments (zanāna), mosques

34 Yeal Rice, "The Routledge Companion to Global Renaissance Art", *The Mughal Imperial Image Between Manuscript and Print*, ed. J. Stephan Compbell-Stephanie Parros (Oxford: Taylor&Francis, 2024), 254.

35 V&A Academy (V&A), "The arts of the Mughal Empire" (Access 12 May 2025).

36 George Michell, *The Majesty of Mughal Decoration: The Art and Architecture of Islamic India* (London: Thames&Hudson, 2007), 39.

and the interiors of tents used during campaigns and travels are prominent fields of use of these carpets. It is also known that carpets held a significant place among diplomatic gifts. Besides carpets, silk fabrics, caftans decorated with gold and silver glitter embroidery, curtains and draperies were also among the products highly sought after. During this period, the embroidery technique known as “Zarduzi”, performed with gold and silver thread, gained popularity. Carving, inlaying and painting techniques were used on wooden objects that were a part of everyday life. Among these, ivory-inlaid boxes, chess sets and prayer beads are particularly noteworthy.

3. A General Assessment of the Architecture, Art and Aesthetics of the Shāh Jahān Period

The transition from the powerful and robust early Mughal style of his grandfather, Akbar Shāh, the third and most powerful ruler of the Mughal Empire, to the beautiful and elegant late Mughal style of Shāh Jahān was both clear and sudden. Red sandstone, the primary material in Akbar’s buildings, gave its place to white marble. Agra Fort is one of the most important examples of this transition and advancement. Many structures built within the fort during Akbar’s reign were either transformed or completely demolished and replaced by new structures by Shāh Jahān. Among the structures within the fort that were rebuilt or transformed are the Khas Maḥal, the Shāh Jahān-i Maḥal, the Anguri Bagh, the Musamman Burj and Palace, the Dīvān-i ām, the Dīvān-i Khās, the Nagina Masjid, the Moti Masjid and the Machhi Bhavan (Fish Palace).³⁷ With Shāh Jahān’s change in building materials, the architectural decorative techniques also changed accordingly. There was a transition from low-relief decorative carvings on red sandstone to inlays of semi-precious and precious-colored stones on marble. The inlay technique of precious and semi-precious stones on marble has gone down in history as a hallmark of Shāh Jahān period. Furthermore, the architectural structures built by Shāh Jahān are remarkably rich in artistic interpretation and ornamentation. Monumentality, massive domes, multi-cusped arches, double columns (Shāh Jahān’s column), symmetry and proportion became the characteristic architectural features of Shāh Jahān period. During Shāh Jahān period, cusped arches were widely used, first in palaces and later in various types of buildings including mansions, residences, mosques, tombs and temples (Images: 22-23).



Image 22: Agra Fort, General views of the Dīvān-i ām



Image 23: Multi-cusped arch details

37 Michell, *Mughal Decoration*, 39.

The change and improvement in architecture manifested itself in a distinctive style, influenced by the interaction of ancient Turkish culture, local culture and surrounding cultures. The structures were constructed with a traditional and innovative approach, far beyond its time. Construction activities were undertaken not only in certain regions of the country but also in other regions, and the structures are in a diverse range.

During Shāh Jahān's reign, importance was attached to the construction of monumental works that emphasized Islamic thought and grandeur.³⁸ The extent of the state's artistic understanding and financial wealth during this period is better understood through ornamentation, decorative combinations, decorative elements and other structural elements seen within their decorative context³⁹ (Images: 24-25).

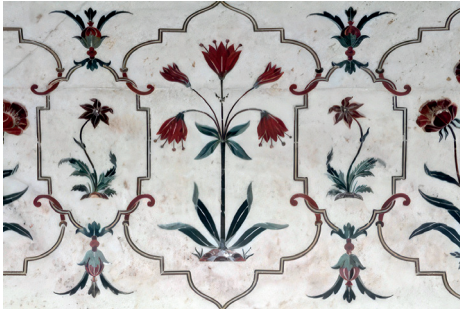


Image 24: Colorful stone inlay decoration details



Image 25: Colorful stone inlay decoration details

Besides architecture, other handicrafts also diversified. These arts developed under the protection of the palace and were produced in palace workshops. Handicrafts were intensively supported to reflect the grandeur of the palace and the mastery of the craftsmen. A sophisticated style blending Turkestan, Iranian, and Indian traditions emerged. Artworks were used not only as aesthetic symbols but also as symbols of power, faith and status. Handicrafts were considered as indicators of superiority in interstate relations, palace life and daily affairs.

Conclusion

One of the fundamental factors that forms the foundation of civilization is the expressive power of art, which transparently reveals the mindset, tastes, beliefs, aesthetic concerns of societies and their reflections and the blending of past and future, tradition and modernity. Mughal art stands as one of the most concrete examples of this power. Sometimes we see an example of elegance in a motif crafted into the details, while at other times we can feel the influence of power and authority in the symbolism of magnificent structures. Mughal art includes a significant period in which both Turkish-Islamic aesthetics

38 M. Abdula Chaghatai, "The Architect of the Taj and Its Place in World Architecture", *İslâm Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi* 7/3-4 (1979), 171.

39 Fadime Özler Kaya, "Bâbürlü Sanatında Bir Süsleme Tekniği: Perçinkârî", *Diyanet İlmi Dergi* 59/4 (2023), 1566.

and Indian local elements were synthesized, producing original works of art. Change and improvement in art was also revealed with a unique approach through the interaction of Turkish, local and surrounding cultures. The presence of rulers who personally embraced and supported art, and who utilized their resources to the fullest extent possible for its development is evident in the Mughal period as in previous periods. During their reigns, these rulers had work or works that were stand out from others, featured and were valued in all their aspects. Among the Mughal sultans, Akbar Shāh, Jahāngīr Shāh and Shāh Jahān are prominent in this regard. While there are minor, indistinguishable differences between the works of Akbar Shāh and Jahāngīr Shāh's era, there are clear, visible differences between the works of Shāh Jahān and his grandfather, Akbar Shāh. While the Indian architectural style was strongly felt during the Akbar and Jahāngīr periods, the Indian style gradually diminished in Shāh Jahān's period, while original works were created with an innovative yet traditionalist approach. Arches, rarely seen in the works of Akbar Shāh and Jahāngīr Shāh's era, were diversified and used extensively during Shāh Jahān's era. During the reigns of Akbar and Jahāngīr, red sandstone, dense geometric patterns, and mosaic techniques were employed. The monumental entrance gates of Akbar Shāh's Tomb are an example of this practice. During Shāh Jahān's period, red sandstone gave way to white marble and richly colored stone inlays, along with geometric patterns, floral motifs, and calligraphic ornamentation. During Akbar's reign, the use of tiles was seen in the roof coverings of Fatehpur Sikri, in the third-floor chadors of Akbar's Tomb during the reign of Jahāngīr. It is also seen in the Tiled Ravza during Shāh Jahān's reign, and in the façade decorations of the Sultan Mosque of Lahore during the reign of Aurangzib (d. 1118/1707). The difficulty of production and climate factors can be attributed to the low use of tiles. Just as Fatehpur Sikri is the distinctive work of Akbar Shāh period and Lahore Fort Jahāngīr Shāh period, the Taj Maḥal remains not only the most important work of Shāh Jahān period, but also stands unique in the art of the centuries, continuing to leave its mark on all times. As it is known, Shāh Jahān was a great builder, patron and artist. The dramatic transformation of Mughal architecture during Shāh Jahān period stems from many other factors as well as these features of Shāh Jahān. In addition to Shāh Jahān's exceptional resources, a superior understanding of building art and being a genius to bring together all the resources and inspiring ideas for the Mughal Renaissance with a mindset open to different cultures and innovations come into prominence. Other important factors include Shāh Jahān's architectural training in Ahmedabad while he was governor of Gujarat during his principedom, putting his knowledge of architecture into practice through building the Shāh-i Bagh Palace there.⁴⁰ Furthermore, his father, Jahāngīr Shāh used marble in buildings much earlier, particularly in the Itimadu'd-Dawla Mausoleum, where he perfectly combined marble with colored stones using the parchīn-kārī technique. In addition, stucco and hand-carved ornamentation combination was used in the interior wall paintings of this structure. Shāh Jahān drew considerable inspiration from all these factors. Furthermore, it seems impossible to consider the construction of such a structure like the Taj Maḥal, built during Shāh Jahān's reign, as a coincidence. Shāh Jahān's work appears on the plans of many buildings. The construction of the Moti Masjid using the remaining materials from the Taj Maḥal is another significant indicator of Shāh Jahān's level of technical and pragmatic knowledge during his

40 Nath, *Mughal Architecture*, 4/457.

period. Monumentality in buildings, huge domes, multi-cusped arches, double columns (Shāh Jahān column), symmetry and proportion became the characteristic architectural features of the Shāh Jahān period.

During Shāh Jahān's reign, art reached its most mature level in many aspects, technically, aesthetically and symbolically. While the Taj Maḥal is the masterpiece of the period and its greatest architectural achievement, the forts, mosques, mausoleums, various civil structures, palaces, mansions and gardens located primarily in Delhi, Agra, and Lahore not only demonstrate the magnificence of the period but also the diversity spreaded over a considerable area, even on a structural basis. The materials used in the buildings, especially marble and precious stones, the splendor and symmetry of the works and the motifs employed carry a meaningful integrity both aesthetically and symbolically. During Shāh Jahān period, symmetry, as in Islamic understanding, was accepted as the reflection of the heavenly order on Earth. Geometry (the golden ratio and octagonal plans), particularly in its connotation of infinity is among other reflections of Islamic cosmology. While octagonal plans are symbolized by eight levels of heaven, chār-bāgh gardens (gardens divided into four equal sections mainly but also capable of being planned in multiples of four) and the waters flowing from these gardens represent Heaven and its rivers through the connotations of water, milk, honey, and wine. In the Quran's descriptions of Heaven: "... in those gardens, rivers flow beneath them..." (A'raf, 43), "... the example of Heaven is as follows: rivers flow beneath it, its fruits are infinite, and its shade..." (Ra'd, 35), "the righteous are by the springs in the gardens of the Heaven." (Hijr, 45), "... and surely you will neither thirst nor remain in the heat here." (Ta-Ha, 119), "... in a high heaven, its fruits are easy to gather close..." (Haqqa, 22-23), and in addition to these, the gates of Heaven, springs and mansions are mentioned. Therefore, water and shade stand out as two important elements at the core of Islamic gardens. The garden layout, created by combining these two important elements, as well as other complementary elements, in a geometrical order with successful form and harmony, is called "chār-bāgh," again referring to the four directions of heaven. Chār-bāgh is a combination of the Persian words "chehar," meaning "four," and "bagh." The chār-bāgh garden system originated in Iran and Turkestan, but experienced its golden age with Islamic Garden culture. The Following the conquest of India, the Mughals, led by Bābur Shāh, who urged the rapid initiation of construction activities and involved in these activities both intellectually and practically as a keen observer, implemented gardens exclusively within and out of their structures in a certain area, both from the period of their foundation and subsequent periods. As he described in his own memoirs, Bābur Shāh established the foundation of these gardens to satisfy his longing for what he saw while living in the land of his ancestor Timur and for Turkestan. They were further improved during the reign of his successors and became among the most important examples of world garden civilization.⁴¹

The use of white marble in buildings is not only a distinctive feature of the period but also an expression of economic power. White marble conveys the meaning of divine purity and simplicity, while red sandstone reflects power and worldly splendor. In addition to architecture, the artistic approach of the period in handicrafts also presents the most ex-

41 Özler Kaya, "Bâbürlü Bahçeleri", 70.

quisite examples of the Mughal art, particularly miniatures, carpets and jewelry. Miniature art developed under the influence of Turkestan and Iran, but was also unique in its specific style. Palace life, nature, Sufism and love are prominent among the themes. The use of color, attention to details, and the subtlety of figures are noteworthy. In the art of weaving, carpets and other textiles rival Persian, Afghan and Ottoman carpets of the period in terms of high-quality materials and natural dyes as well as the patterns and motifs used. In later periods, as the state's power declined, works of art in many areas continued to be produced, but the level of the Shāh Jahān period could neither be surpassed nor achieved. Among the most important reasons for this are the fact that construction activities, in particular, were carried out under Shāh Jahān's supervision, the sultan's considerable knowledge, the cultural environment in which he grew up and his artistic taste and vision. Shāh Jahān's period in Mughal art holds profound meanings in architecture, various handicrafts, and visible arts. This period is based on the idea that beauty, aesthetics and pleasure are not only material but also have an emotional meaning. For example, the Taj Maḥal carries concepts such as love, death and eternity that go far beyond the visible. This understanding gives Mughal art a mystical depth that takes it beyond its time.

In conclusion, the reign of Shāh Jahān represents the Mughal Empire's greatest power in every sense. This period also includes a significant period during which the Mughals' architectural activities were at their most intense, marking the classical age of art and architecture. Architectural change and improvement were presented through the interaction of ancient Turkic culture, local culture and surrounding cultures by including a unique approach. Shāh Jahān succeeded in further developing the great architectural legacy inherited from his ancestors by combining it with regional architecture and incorporating his own unique interpretation. Numerous works were commissioned during this period, and he personally oversaw the construction of many of these works. Even if all historical literature was lost, these surviving works would provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate the extent of Shāh Jahān's reign and power, who built numerous mosques, tombs, palaces, fortresses, mansions, baths, gardens and other works. It is clear that art and artists also enjoyed a significant share of this state power. In addition to financial resources, Shāh Jahān's architectural competence and aesthetic spirit, his appreciation of art as a symbol of grandeur and elegance, and his patronage of talented artists were among the factors that enabled the Mughals to elevate art to the highest levels in architecture and other fields during this period. The artistic genius that reached a unique point in architecture during Shāh Jahān's reign, with the Taj Maḥal, is evident in the astonishing details of large-scale structures, the fine lines of small-scale works, and the exquisitely aesthetic creations of simple everyday objects.

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