



# CONSERVATION OF THE WAZIR KHAN MOSQUE LAHORE

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON  
CONDITION AND RISK ASSESSMENT



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE  
AGA KHAN CULTURAL SERVICE - PAKISTAN

## **PART I: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**



## 1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Masjid Wazir Khan was built in 1634 AD (1054 AH) by Hakim Aliuddin<sup>1</sup> (sometimes also referred to as Hakim Ilmuddin). At the time of its construction, half a century before the construction of the Badshahi Masjid, the mosque was considered the largest in Lahore, superseding the Begum Shahi Mosque constructed during the reign of Emperor Jahangir in 1614 (1023 AH). Hakim Aliuddin came from the town of Chiniot on the banks of the river Chenab, and had been employed as a court physician by prince Khurram (later Emperor Shah Jahan). His services during various campaigns earned the appreciation of the prince, earning him the title Wazir Khan,<sup>2</sup> and he remained one of Shah Jahan's most trusted aides in the earlier years of his reign. He was appointed *subedar* of the province of Lahore in 1632 and relinquished this position in 1639. It was Wazir Khan, along with Prince Shah Shuja, who was entrusted in 1632 with the task of bringing the body of the deceased queen Mumtaz Mahal from Burhanpur to Agra to be buried at the site of the Taj Mahal.

According to Abdullah Chaghatai, whose book *The Wazir Khan Mosque, Lahore*<sup>3</sup> is the main source for later publications on the subject, the mosque was built outside the limits of the old city wall<sup>4</sup> that existed prior to the new fortifications built during Emperor Akbar's reign (1556 - 1605). According to the author, the mosque is located on the site of an old *madrassa* previously established by Syed Ishaq Gazruni (d. 1384 AD, 786 AH). It is possible that by the 17<sup>th</sup> century the *madrassa* or Sufi *takya* had ceased to function and existed as a derelict site where the graves of Syed Ishaq Gazruni, Syed Suf and Syed Sarbuland lay within 100 metres of one another, as they continue to this day. In building the Wazir Khan Mosque, the grave of Syed Ishaq Gazruni was incorporated in the complex, and can be found in a chamber about 2.5 metres (7.87 feet) below the mosque's raised plinth, underneath the floor of its courtyard. Chaghatai further speculates on whether such a large undertaking on the site of a previously existing group of grave-shrines could have been intentional, aimed at re-sanctifying the site of the Sufi institution that had existed at the site three centuries earlier.

Much of the historical and contextual background to the mosque can be gleaned from the *waqf* document published in Latif's late nineteenth century book on the history of Lahore.<sup>5</sup> From the *waqf* we learn that the mosque was built together with a bazaar, a *hammam*, a "large" *serai*, some wells and *katras*. Chaghatai interprets the description in the *waqf* document to mean that all shops built on both sides of Delhi Gate Bazaar right up to the Delhi Gate were part of the buildings created together with the mosque. This interpretation first appears in a 1903 article by F. H. Andrews reprinted in the book. However, the *waqf* document just mentions "shops on either side of the road" without precisely identifying the road in question. It could just as well have been the road running along the mosque's northern side. Today there are no signs of a bazaar built as a single architectural project of the 17<sup>th</sup> century between Delhi Gate and the mosque.<sup>6</sup> The *waqf* mentions twenty shops (and their upper storeys) intended free of charge for calligraphers and bookbinders as part of the endowment, which could also mean the shops forming the "bazaar" on the north and south of the mosque's entrance *dewrhi* (although these are only sixteen in number, unless we include the four niches built into four sides of the octagonal space which comprises the domed *dewrhi*). No traces remain of the *serai*, although the space of the Chowk or *jilau khana* of the mosque is typologically similar to the form of caravanserais as they were built during the Mughal era.

Chaghatai also reflects on the larger cultural role the mosque may have played over the centuries of its existence. His observation was keen enough to notice an inscription engraved on the plaster render (created in the 17<sup>th</sup> century) in the niche north of the prayer chamber. From this and from a comparative study of other sources, he concludes that certain parts of the mosque were used as a centre for intellectual discourse. Some of the *hujras* of the mosque were also used by persons belonging to specific building trades, of which he mentions the trade of the *naqqash* after which a specific *hujra* (the third from the east of the northern row of *hujras*) was named.

*Opposite: View across Wazir Khan Chowk of the entrance iwan of the mosque. Photograph probably taken c. 1970's.*



## **2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COMPLEX**

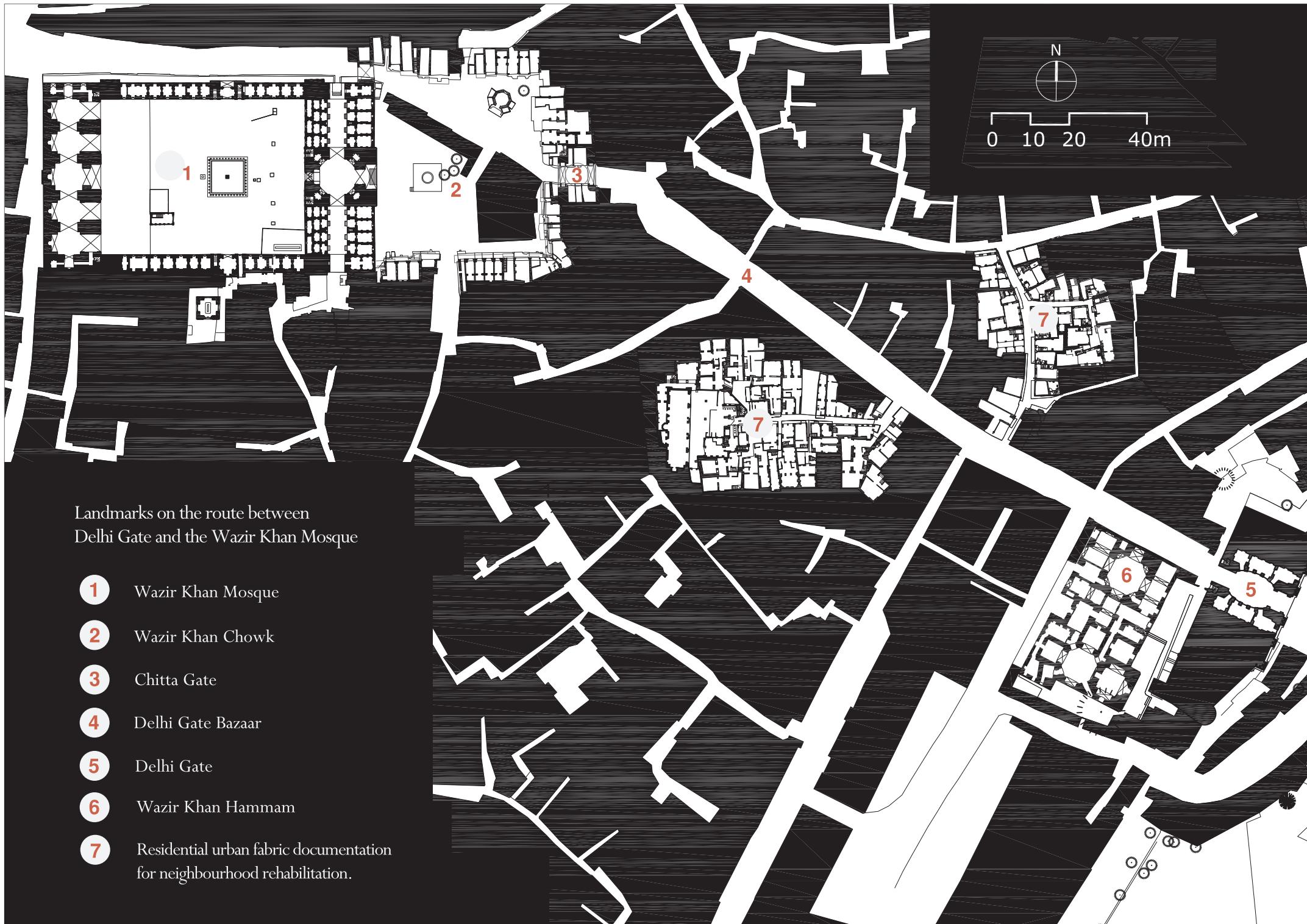
In 1924, the Wazir Khan Mosque and Badshahi Mosque were included in the list of monuments protected<sup>7</sup> under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act of 1904 and were, at the time of Independence, among more than one hundred monuments and sites protected under that Act. The 1904 Act was replaced with the Ancient Monuments Preservation (Amendment) Ordinance in 1964. Six years later, a new legislation called the Antiquities Act 1968 was passed by parliament. It was further amended and finally replaced with the Antiquities Act 1975 which is currently the main legislation in Pakistan for heritage protection.<sup>8</sup>

Until the 1980's, the Federal Department of Archaeology and Museums was the only national organisation competent under law to declare "protected" any monument or ancient site. Since the mid-eighties the provincial governments have created their own laws<sup>9</sup> and departments of archaeology, and have been listing monuments as "special premises" in the Punjab and "protected heritage" in the province of Sindh. However, the Wazir Khan Mosque, Chitta Gate, the north-western gate of Chowk Wazir Khan and the well of Dina Nath remain protected monuments under the federal legislation.<sup>10</sup>

Most of the religious buildings in Pakistan are under the provincial *auqaf* departments for their maintenance, management and administration of daily affairs and the management of the Wazir Khan Mosque complex is therefore the responsibility of the Punjab Auqaf Department.<sup>11</sup> A manager and support staff are permanently stationed in the Auqaf office at the Wazir Khan Mosque. This office also serves as a base to manage the other religious monuments in the Walled City. The office manages activities related to rents, annual agreements and negotiations with the tenants of shops.

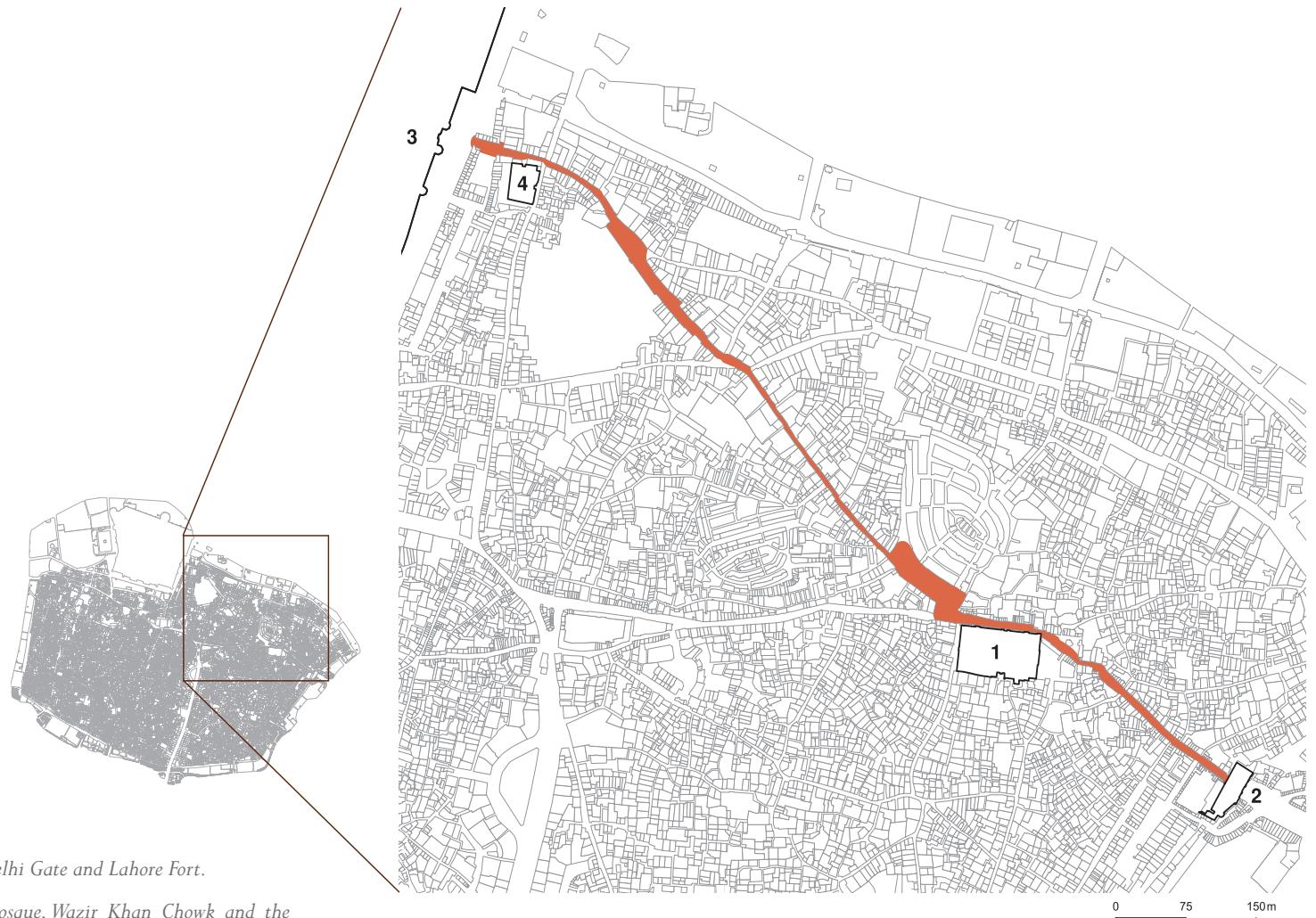
The conservation, restoration and major repair work of the mosque, however, are the responsibilities of the provincial Department of Archaeology. A mosque committee is responsible for the management of daily activities related to the prayers and also arranges the programmes on special religious days.

*Opposite: Detail of floral and geometric fresco work on the western-facing wall in the prayer chamber.*



### 3 THE URBAN CONTEXT

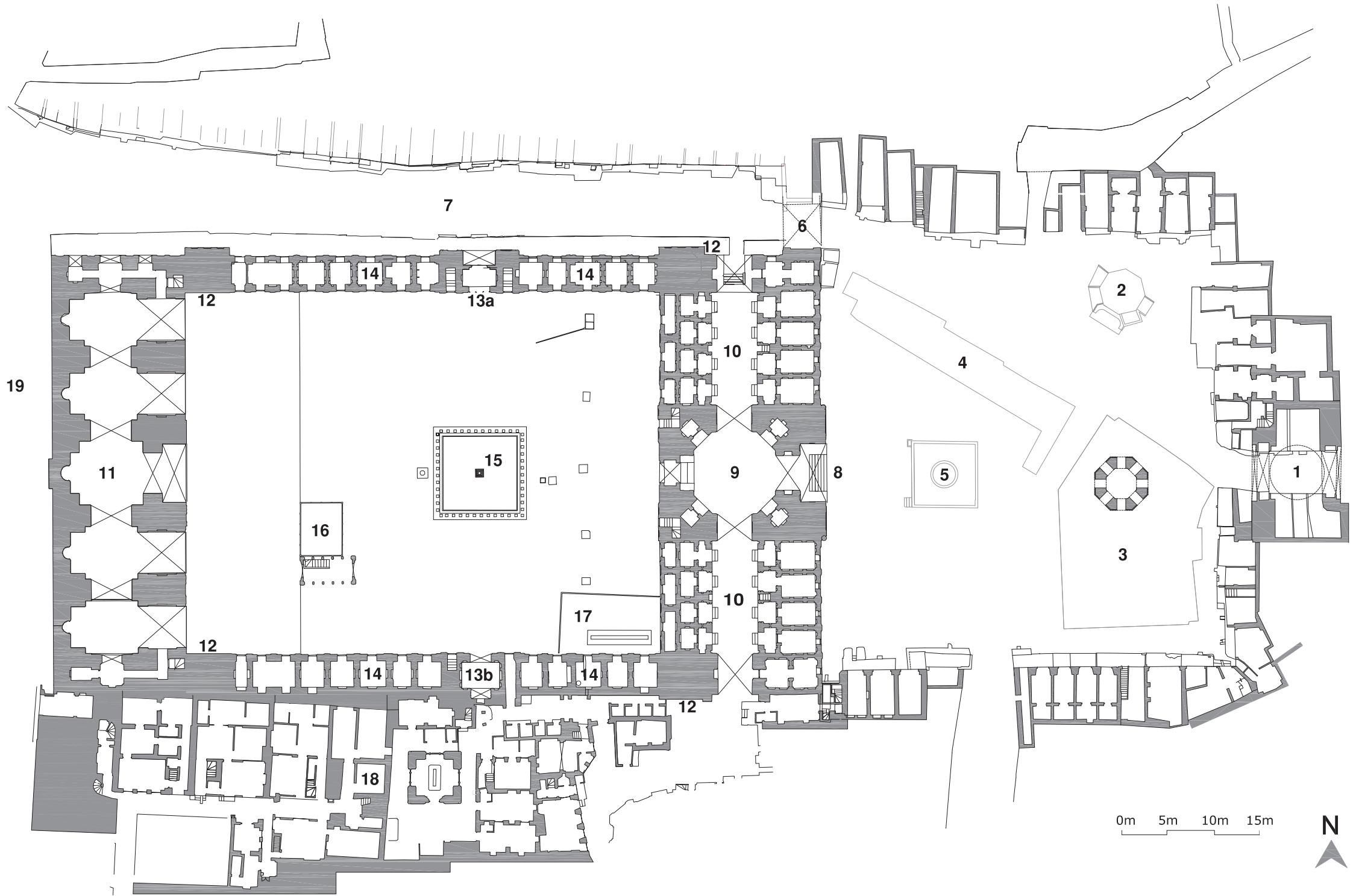
Historically, as part of the royal thoroughfare connecting Delhi Gate and the Lahore Fort, the Wazir Khan Mosque together with its square formed a singular and very important element punctuating the urban fabric of the Walled City. Located about 260 metres (853 feet) from Delhi Gate, and surrounded by the dense, organic, urban tissue of the Walled City, the Wazir Khan Mosque complex is the centre piece of an historic ensemble and represents urban design trends of the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This ensemble includes Chowk Wazir Khan (a formal, introductory urban open space), the mosque itself, the double row of shops integrated in the entrance system of the complex, and the shops at street-level built into the body of the monument on its eastern and northern sides. On the southern side the perimeter of the mosque is physically obstructed by houses built contiguous to the historic walls in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An open street leading off the main throughfare forms the western limit of the complex.



*Right: The Lahore Walled City, and the Shahi Guzargah route between Delhi Gate and Lahore Fort.*

*Below: Panoramic view looking east and south, of the Wazir Khan Mosque, Wazir Khan Chowk and the neighbourhood. Left of image is the north-eastern and eastern neighbourhood; left of centre is the Syed Suf Shrine with its green dome and Chitta Gate behind; the right half of the image shows the Wazir Khan Mosque complex in the foreground with the mosque's southern neighbourhood in the background.*





## 4 THE MONUMENTAL COMPLEX

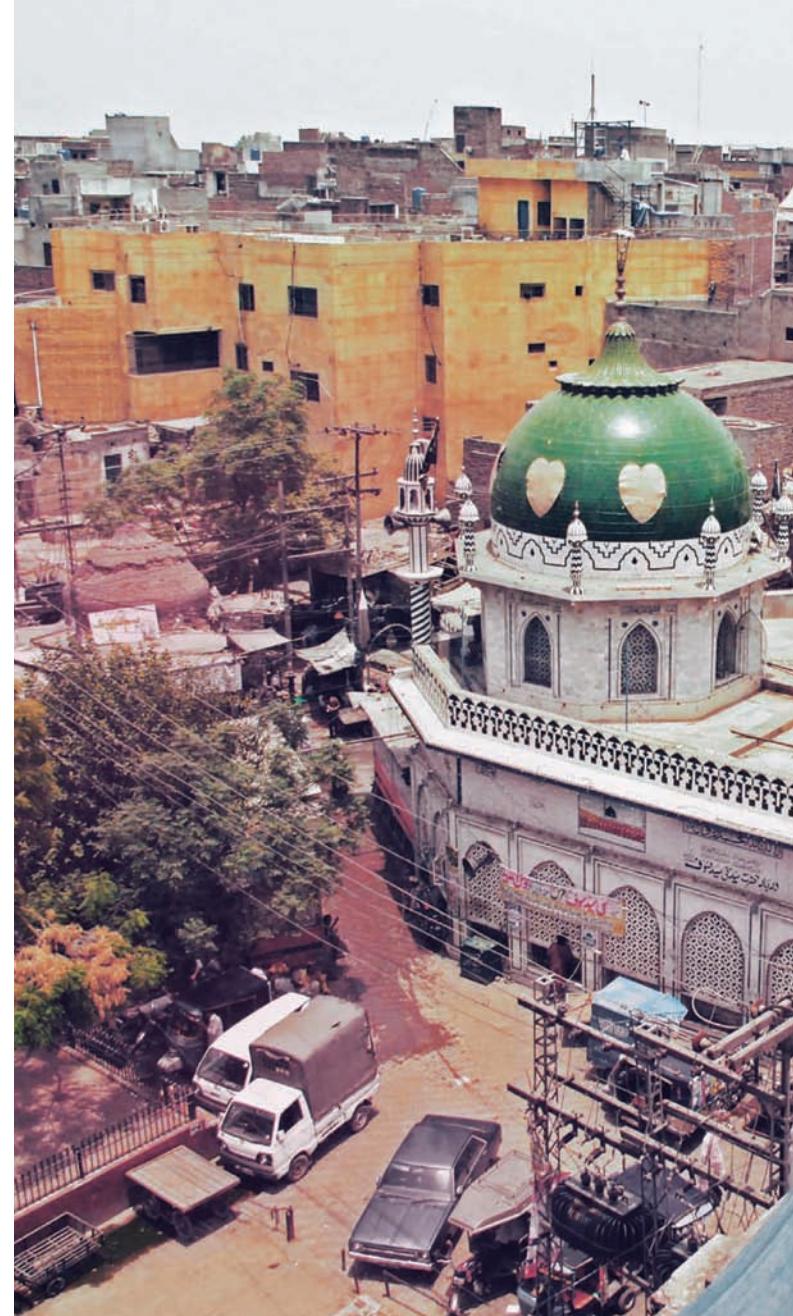
### 4.1 THE CHOWK

At the urban scale the complex comprising the mosque building and Chowk Wazir Khan is a significant example of urban design in the Shah Jahan era. The Chowk represents a typology of urban space described by the term '*jilau khana*', which signifies an introductory space of arrival and first sighting, and has its parallels in other great mosques and funerary monuments of the period. Historically, the shops lining the perimeter of the square would have played an important role in creating a formal urban ambience and in supporting commercial activities in the square. Even in its present deteriorated form, the Chowk contains some of its original formative elements which endow it considerable character: the Chitta Gate to the east and the gate in the north-western corner of the Chowk leading into the Kotwali Bazaar are sympathetic to the architecture of the mosque by virtue of their scale and stylistic attributes.

Once an open public square of the Walled City, Chowk Wazir Khan has now lost its original form and prime function. Shops that were built along with and integrated into the mosque building on its northern side have been expanded into the street with structures that shelter the current commercial activities. These shops pay rent to the Auqaf Department. Structures that constitute the perimeter of the Chowk have illegally occupied the space of the square to a dramatic degree, intruding into the latter by as much as 5.75 metres.

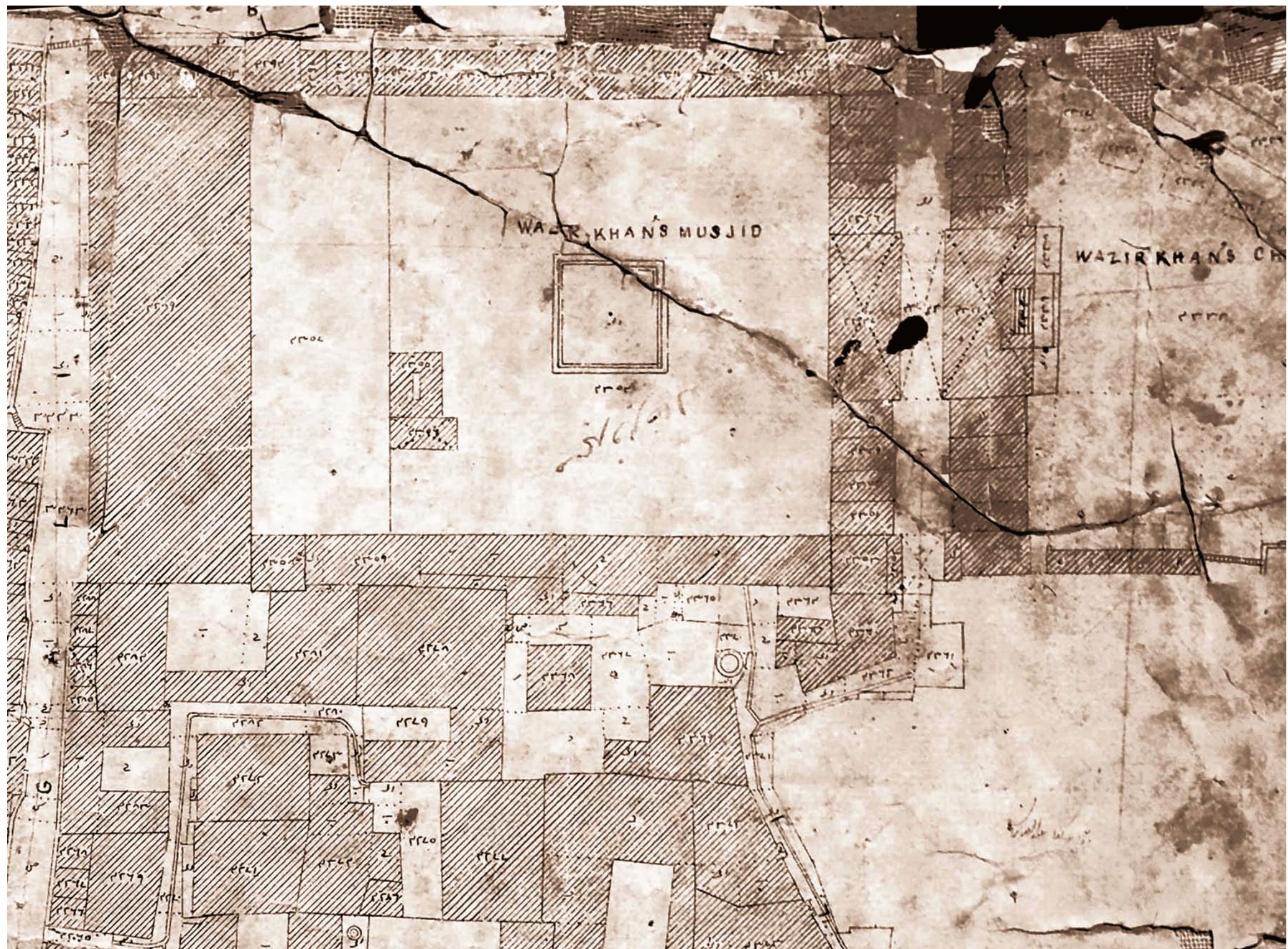
Vehicle and pedestrian access to the square is made possible through Chitta Gate sitting astride the main road connecting Delhi Gate and the Lahore Fort, on the Chowk's eastern side. Traffic conditions today are intense in their density and mixed modes (pedestrian, pedal bicycles, motor cycles and motorized passenger and goods vehicles, bullock and horse driven goods transports and push-carts). Much of this through traffic carries goods for warehousing and retail trade in the Azam Cloth Market, the Pakistan Cloth Market and the Kashmiri Bazaar situated in close proximity north and west of the mosque complex.

The form of the square is reminiscent of the typology of Mughal *serais* and the square could well have been the *serai* mentioned in the *waqf* deed (Latif op. cit). The cellular spaces lining the square, many of which contain present-day shops, could (in this interpretation) have been the residential cells of the *serai*.



Opposite: The Main Elements of the Monumental Complex (see legend below).

- |   |  |                    |  |   |
|---|--|--------------------|--|---|
| 1 Chitta Gate                                       | 6 North-western Gate to Kotwali Bazaar | 11 Prayer Chamber  | 14 Row of <i>Hujras</i>                            | 17 Recently added ablution facilities         |
| 2 Dina Nath's Well                                  | 7 Kotwali Bazaar                       | 12 <i>Minar</i>    | 15 Ablution Pool                                   | 18 Residential neighbourhood on southern side |
| 3 Syed Suf Shrine                                   | 8 Entrance <i>Iwan</i>                 | 13a North Pavilion | 16 Syed Ishaq Gazruni Shrine and adjacent pavilion | 19 Street                                     |
| 4 Encroaching shops on angular pathway across Chowk | 9 <i>Dewhari</i>                       | 13b South Pavilion |  |   |
| 5 Public tap / fountain                             | 10 Calligraphers' Bazaar               |                    |  |   |



## 4.2 THE MOSQUE

Today, the monument itself is limited to the mosque building, the entrance portal of what used to be a “calligraphers’ bazaar”, the mosque courtyard, the prayer chamber, the *minars*, the *hujras*, a pair of two-storey pavilions on the central axis transversely crossing the courtyard, and the shops at street-level on the northern and eastern sides. These architectural elements are described in the following paragraphs.

For analytical purposes, the structure of the mosque can be divided into three horizontal planes. Level 0 corresponds to the street-level where the shops on the eastern and northern sides are located. The floor level inside these shops is now lower than the street-level. Level 1 corresponds to the podium on which the main ensemble of the mosque and the buildings that frame the courtyard are based, occupying the major proportion of the covered area of the complex. Level 2 corresponds to those spaces which can be accessed from Level 1 via staircases at different locations.

The layout of the mosque is rectangular in plan, measuring 86.17 m x 50.44 m (282.7 ft x 165.5 ft) on its extreme limits. The four imposing *minars* define the corners of the main courtyard. The prayer chamber, courtyard, *hujras*, vestibule and bazaar constitute the main elements of the mosque complex. Among the architectural elements and decorations of the Wazir Khan Mosque which represent influences from the pre-Mughal era and from neighbouring regions such as Persia and Central Asia, one special feature is the formal “bazaar” which constitutes a key element of the entrance system to the courtyard of the mosque. This bazaar comprises two rows of shops facing each other and traversing the entire width of the site. The shops forming the two legs of this bazaar arrangement could with some conjecture be said to be the shops intended free of rent for calligraphers and bookbinders of the Quran in the *waqf* deed included in Syed Muhammad Latif’s book.<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy that the principal entrance façade of the mosque is also the external façade of the outer layer of shops that form the Calligraphers’ Bazaar,<sup>13</sup> and not of the enclosure of the mosque proper. Half way along its length, the linear axis of this bazaar crosses the axis of the entrance to the mosque. This crossing is marked by an octagonal dome. This is the first example in the subcontinent (and not widely emulated elsewhere), of a purpose built bazaar in an adaptation of a Central Asian *chorsu*. However, in this ensemble only two bazaars lead off from the dome of the *chorsu*, the remaining bazaars having been replaced by the axis of movement into the entrance of the mosque.<sup>14</sup>

Right: Waqf deed of the Wazir Khan Mosque, as translated in Latif, Syed Muhammad, ‘Lahore: Its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities, with an Account of its Modern Institutions, Inhabitants, Their Trade, Customs, &c.’ (1892), Lahore.

Opposite: 1907 cadastral map

“Praise be to God who enabled His servants to honour religious edifices, and benedictions and salutations to Mahomed, His Prophet, who persuaded people to spend money on charitable objects, and to his descendants and companions, the mine of virtues and the source of good, so long as there is duration to earth and skies.

Be it known that this is a writing to declare that I, the humble slave of the threshold of God, Hakim Ilm-ud-dín, alias Wazír Khán, son of Sheikh Abdul Latif, son of Sheikh Hisám-ud-dín, Ansári, have, while in full possession of my health and senses, and the enjoyment of my property, and all the privileges pertaining thereto, out of property exclusively owned and best earned by me, dedicated to pious uses the Chief Mosque, situated in the Lahore city, with all its lawful accessories and appendages;

And that in order to give permanency to this sacred Institution, I have endowed for its expenses all the shops situated on both sides of the road, together with the upper storeys, habitable quarters, the large serae, bath, two wells worked with Persian wheels, and several miscellaneous plots of ground, each of these properties just mentioned having known boundaries and manifest marks.

The legacy is valid, binding, certain, and imperative; it is not subject to sale, mortgage or dower; it is un-inheritable, and is under no circumstance or cause to become the property of anyone until the day when God shall assume heritage of all lands, for He is the best of the inheritors; and this is my final endowment to poor Mussalmans.

And the conditions in regard to the legacy before mentioned are these:—

The control and charge of the endowments, the dismissal and appointments of the servants of the mosque, &c., the disbursement and the apportionment of expenses, the increases therein and investments and divestments relating thereto, the location and ejectment of the tenants of the shop, will permanently for life be in the hands of the testator himself. After him the power shall rest with one of his lineal descendants, and Mahomed Sai’d Khán, after whom it shall rest with Mirza Mahomed Anwar; after him with the ablest of his male descendants, and the descendants of that descendant, progeny after progeny, and generation after generation, so long as their offspring shall last. Should none be left of his male descendants, then the power shall rest with his nearest of kin, in the order already mentioned.

Further, it is provided that there shall be one Imám (prelate) and preacher to the mosque, thoroughly skilled in the art of reading, and familiar with the rules of prayer, and one public crier to prayers who must be fully conversant with the death ceremonies.

Further, it is laid down that twenty shops outside the eastern gateway, together with their upper storeys, shall be for the exclusive use of the bookbinders and book-sellers of the books of Islám, free of rent in perpetuity.

Further it is covenanted that there shall be two teachers for the said mosque for the purpose of giving instruction in theology.

The following are the provisions regarding the remuneration of the establishment attached to the endowment. The Imám and preacher to receive from one rupee to ten rupees per diem; the public crier to prayers four annas a day; each teacher one rupee.

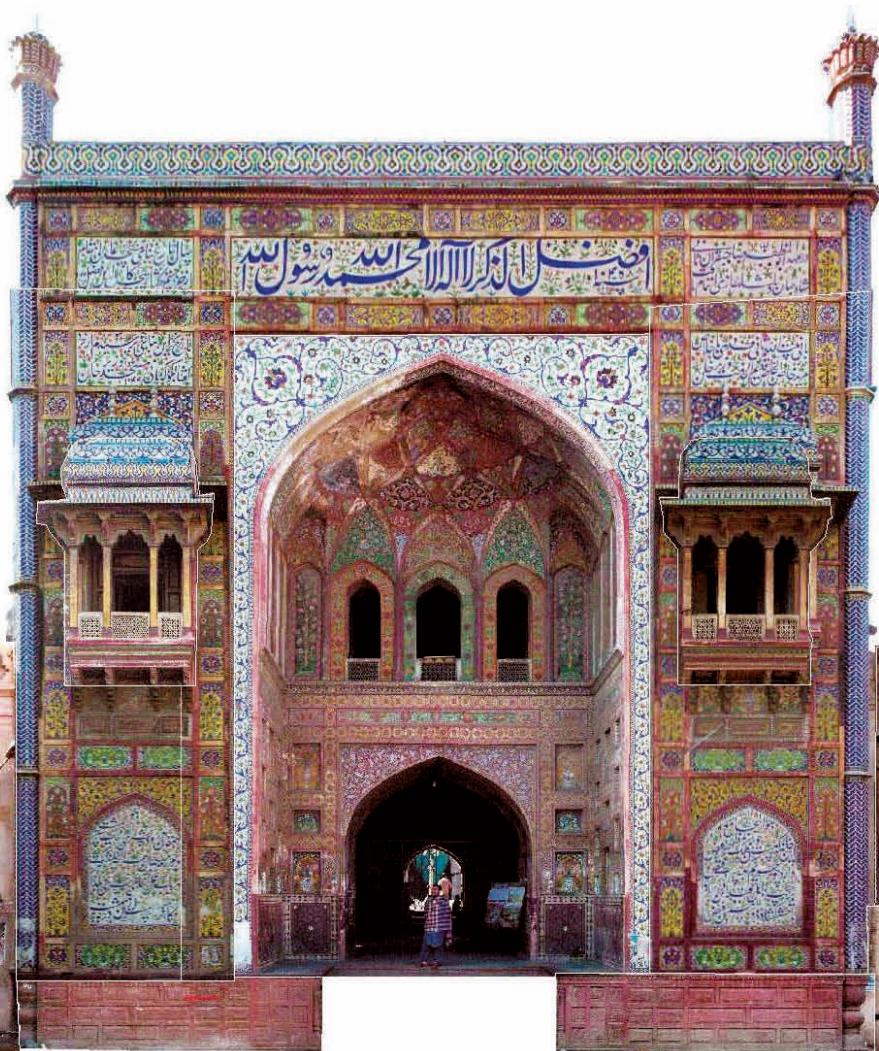
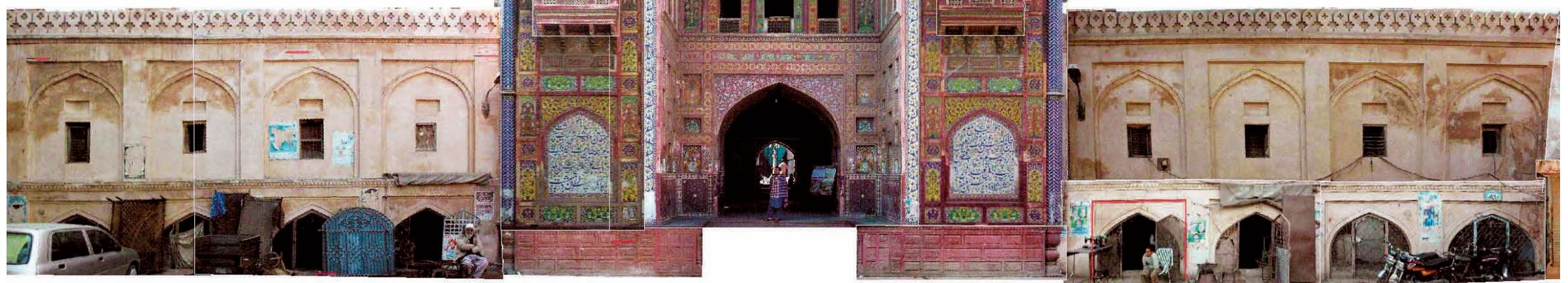
Any one of the descendants of the testator in charge of the legacy aforesaid, shall receive each month one-sixth of the income of the endowed property; and any one of his near relations who may be in charge shall receive a ninth share of the same and the share shall decrease according to the remoteness of consanguinity.

And whatever shall remain after defraying the expenses of building, the servants of the mosque and other necessary expenses, shall be spent in maintaining guests, providing for the carrier of fire-wood (for baths), and the chamberlain and other rightful persons attached to the mosque.

And in appointing the servants of the mosque, the Law of the Hanfi sect shall be taken as a guide.

And the rules above detailed have been framed by the testator himself. Any one who attempts to make a change in them after he has once heard them, shall be deemed a transgressor. This legacy has a binding force; and whatever I have herein written is attested as binding by the Qázi of the time, who has put his sacred seal on it in confirmation of the same.

Written on the first date of the holy Ramzan, in 1051 (1641 A.D.) of the sacred Hijri era.”



#### 4.2.1 The Main Entrance

The central, double-storied mass of the main *iwan* represents an entrance system of some complexity. With a set of seven steps<sup>15</sup> from the Chowk one reaches the first plinth level of the mosque under the entrance dome. At this point the space leads off into three directions in addition to the direction from which one has entered. The two rows of shops for calligraphers and book binders on the north and south sides form passageways that are open to the sky. These passageways open out on the north side to the Kotwali Bazaar, while on the south side they would have formerly opened into the open land which was part of the endowment, but now comprises a residential neighbourhood. Movement in the third, western, direction is through a door after a set of three steps, and leads into the courtyard of the mosque. On the right and left before the doorway are platforms that are to this day used by persons looking after shoes that must be taken off prior to the entry into the courtyard.

The entire façade of the *iwan* on the eastern side is decorated with *kashikari*, of which a predominant component comprises calligraphic work, described in Section 5.2. A band of small squares and rectangles provides a boundary for larger rectangles containing calligraphy in *nastaliq* script in both Arabic and Persian.

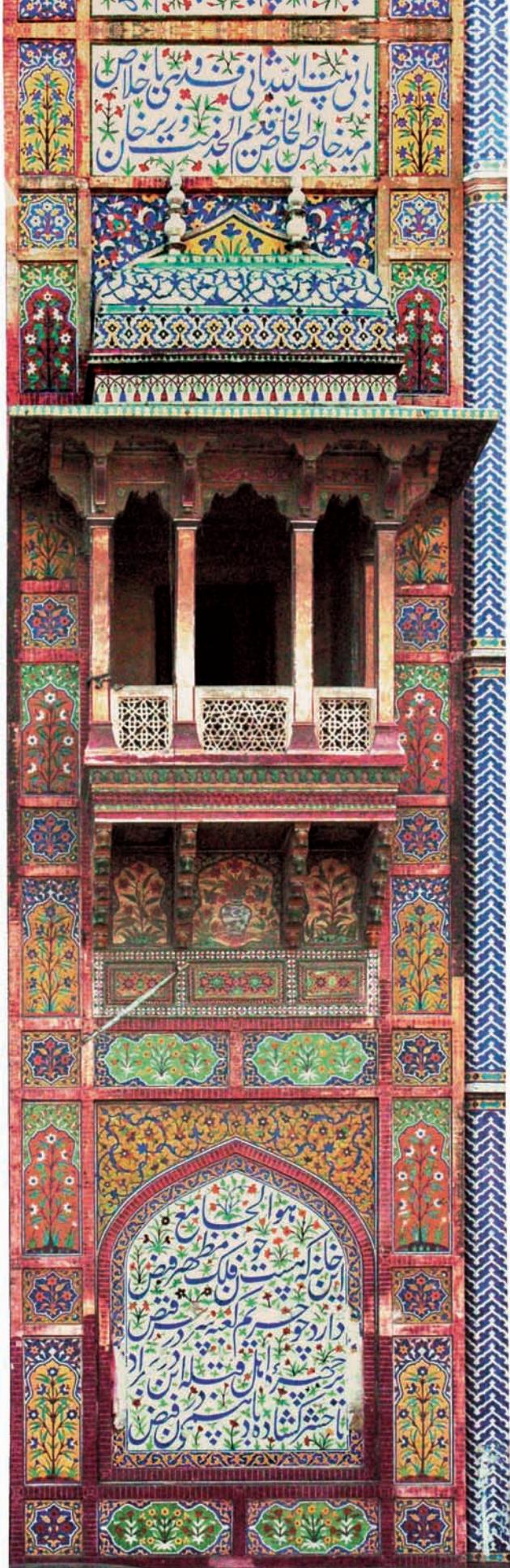
The arched recess of the *iwan* is formed of *qalibkari* (*muqarnas* or stalactite work) and decorated with *naqqashi* (fresco work), the latter also on the *entrados* of the *iwan* arch. The recess also contains three oblong arched windows which open on to the Chowk from the Level 2 gallery looking into the entrance *dewrhi*. This whole eastern façade is well separated from the rest of the face by being projected outwards 0.586 metres (23.07 inches). It is distinguished by two small octagonal engaged minarets on either ends of the face of the *iwan*, each topped by a miniature *chhatri*.

An interesting feature on the façade is the presence of two projected balconies which mark the points at which the façade is fenestrated at the upper level (Level 2). This typological accent does not appear to be very common in Mughal *iwan* architecture in the region. The balconies enrich the façade of the *iwan* by bringing its decorative arrangement into high relief and establish a strong outward spatial engagement of the façade with the space of the Chowk. The balconies also characterize the architecture of the mosque as the late stage of a Lahori regional style, to be overshadowed by the architecture of the high Shahjahani period some years later.



Above and Right: Detail of the balcony on the east facing façade of the entrance iwan.

Opposite: Rectified photographs of the entrance iwan, the adjacent Calligraphers' Bazaar at Level 1 and the shops at Level 0.



## DIAGONALLY OPPOSED VIEWS OF THE MOSQUE COMPLEX:

Panorama of the mosque complex and its northern and eastern residential neighbourhoods, photographed from the south-western minar.

In the background from left to right, are the western, northern, eastern and south-eastern residential and commercial neighbourhoods.

In the foreground, from left to right, is the prayer chamber, the north-western minar, the northern row of hujras with central pavilion, the north-eastern minar, the entrance dewrhi flanked by the double row of the Calligraphers' Bazaar, the south-eastern minar with the roofs of the southern row of hujras and pavilion visible immediately in front.

Within the courtyard, the ablution pool is in the centre with its service pipe from the southern pavilion visible. In the immediate foreground is the complex of the shrine and pavilion of Syed Ishaq Gazruni. To the north of this is a line of prayer mats laid out.

In the south-eastern corner of the courtyard, to the right of the entrance, there is the recently added ablution facility.



Panorama of the mosque complex and adjacent Kotwali Bazaar, photographed from the north-eastern minar.

In the background from left to right are the southern, western and northern residential and commercial neighbourhoods.

In the foreground from left to right, is the entrance dewrhi, the minars of the entrance dewrhi and the south-eastern minar, the southern row of hujras and their central pavilion, the south-western minar, the prayer chamber, the north-western minar with the roofs of the northern row of hujras and pavilion visible immediately in front.

To the right of the image is Kotwali Bazaar - immediately adjacent to the mosque on its northern side. The shop awnings clearly demarcate the road.



#### 4.2.2 THE CALLIGRAPHERS' BAZAAR

The Calligraphers' Bazaar, used in the past to support the activities of calligraphers and book binders, is an integral part of the mosque complex. Arranged in two rows the total number of shops on the northern and southern sides of the *iwan* is 16. Each shop has a small portico in the front which serves as a transitional space. Shops on the western side are smaller than the shops on the eastern side. Currently four rooms on the north-eastern end are used by the Auqaf Department whilst the remaining rooms are used either as storage or are vacant.

#### 4.2.3 THE COURTYARD

The large open courtyard, measuring 52.62 m x 40.02 m (172.64 ft x 131.29 ft), is paved in brick and divided in two parts by a small change in level. Each façade facing the courtyard is well decorated with *kashikari* and *tazakari* work. The lower portion of the courtyard has an ablution pond in the centre.

##### a. FLOOR

A variety of patterns executed in cut brick cover the entire surface of the courtyard. A major drain in the eastern part of the courtyard for storm and waste water from the courtyard and the ablution pond runs in a south to north direction.

##### b. HUJRAS

The north and south sides of the courtyard are formed by rows of small *hujras* (rooms for study and meditation) intended for the staff, teachers and students at the mosque, which open into the courtyard. These *hujras* stretch between the pair of *minars* on either of these sides. At the centre of each row of *hujras*, a double storey pavilion establishes a north - south axis and breaks the monotony of the linear mass. The pavilion structure on the south side has an old cascade recessed in its southern wall, clearly marking the point at which water was brought into the courtyard from the well on the other side of the wall in order to feed the ablution pond. This structure also has a small access way into the southern neighbourhood. The pavilion on the northern side contains an entrance into the courtyard from the Kotwali Bazaar. On the exterior this entrance is marked by a small *iwan* and steps leading up into the courtyard.

##### c. THE ISHAQ GAZRUNI SHRINE

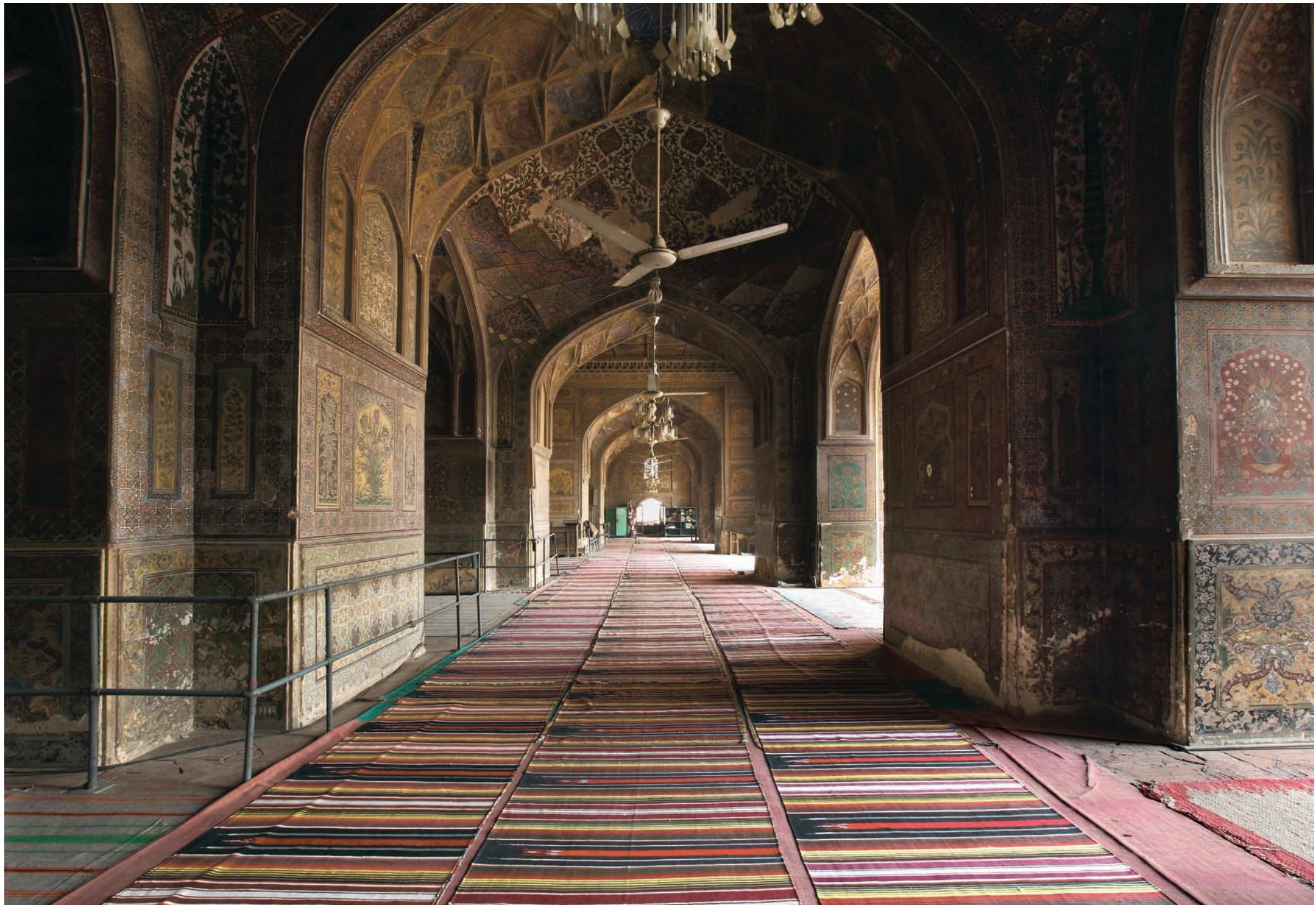
The shrine of Ishaq Gazruni is situated in the south-western section of the courtyard and is marked by a cenotaph at the level of the courtyard. The grave itself is located in the basement which can be accessed from an adjacent pavilion containing a staircase.

*Right Top: View through the Calligraphers' Bazaar from the southern side.*

*Right: Detail of brick flooring.*

*Below: North pavilion with the northern row of hujras.*





*Looking towards the northern end of the prayer chamber.*

#### 4.2.4 THE PRAYER CHAMBER

The prayer chamber is situated on the raised, western side of the courtyard and is marked by another small rise of about 60 mm (2.36 inches) in the floor level. It is the centre piece of the mosque complex, a large structure covering an area of  $710 \text{ m}^2$  ( $7642 \text{ ft}^2$ ). The area occupied by its massive walls is  $273 \text{ m}^2$  ( $2938 \text{ ft}^2$ ) which is about 39% of the total covered area. Other than the central space accessed through the central *iwan*, the chamber is divided into four equal bays, two on either side, and each accessible from the courtyard through a secondary arch.

Five massive domes cover the entire space of the prayer chamber. These are reported to be double domes. The central part of the chamber holds a relatively larger space with a higher and larger dome than the domes on either side. A local precedent of this type of arrangement is to be found in the Begum Shahi Mosque (also called Maryam Zamani Mosque) which was constructed in 1614 (1023 AH), some 20 years earlier than the Wazir Khan Mosque.

The impressive eastern façade of the prayer chamber has its *iwan* in the centre with recessed archway access into the prayer chamber. The entire façade is decorated with *kashikari* (glazed tile work) composed with calligraphic tablets and floral panel arrangements. The recessed portion of the central *iwan* and the whole interior is decorated with *naqqashi*, *qalibkari* and *gachkari*.



Above: View towards the prayer chamber from the roof of the entrance dewri. The present form of the central ablution pool is the result of Auqaf interventions made in the 1990's.

Below: Naqqashi work on the inside of the central dome of the prayer chamber.



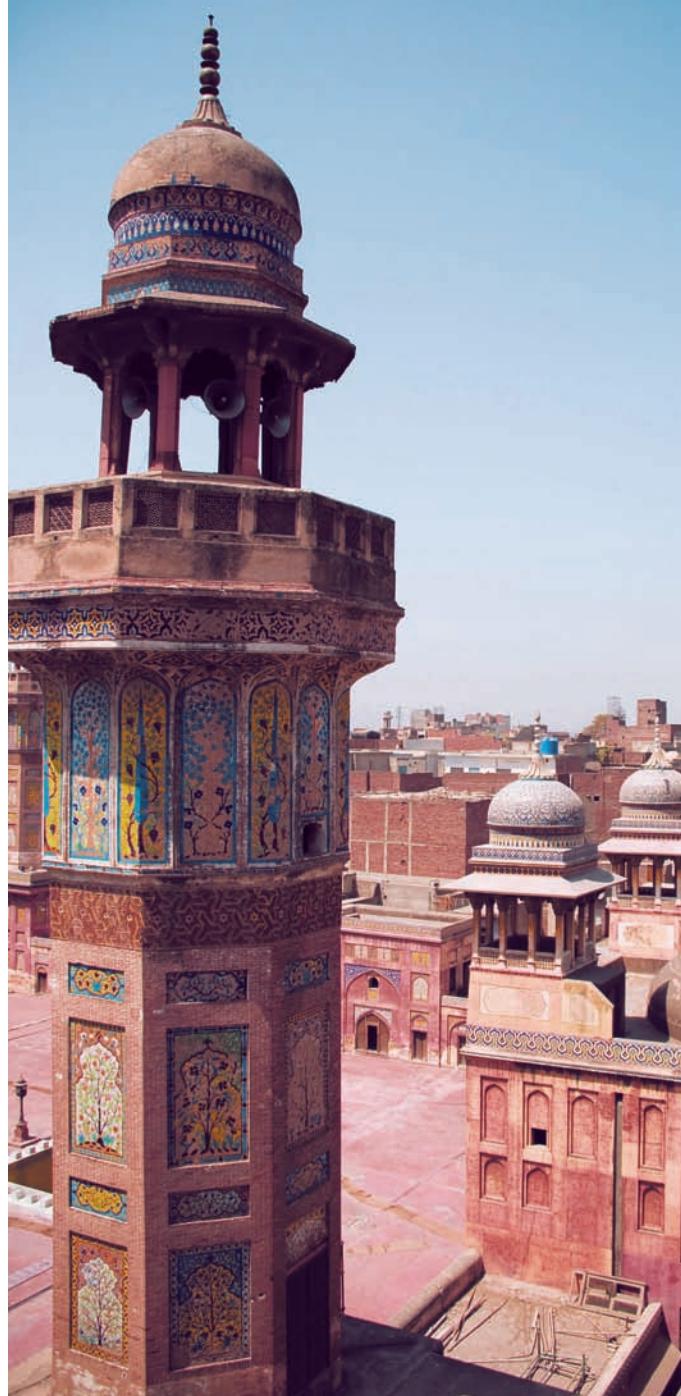
*Right: Photograph of the north-eastern minar as seen from the courtyard of the mosque, taken by an unknown photographer in the 1870s. Part of the Bellew Collection of Architectural Views, British Library Online Gallery.*



#### 4.2.5 THE MINARS

The *minars* of the mosque are the most visible features at the urban scale, located on each corner of the courtyard. The square bases of the *minars* on the western side form part of the courtyard enclosure and are visible in it being set out from the body of the prayer chamber. On the contrary, the bases of the eastern *minars* are embedded within the assembly of architectural forms containing the *hujras* and the Calligraphers' Bazaar. The total height of a *minar* from the floor level of the courtyard is 30.5 metres (a little over 100 feet) while the height of the *minars* from the street-level on the northern side is 32.91 metres (107.97 feet). The form of each *minar* can be divided into four sections: the first is the square base with a height of 8.46 metres (27.75 feet); from this base, the octagonal shaft of the *minar* reaches a height of 11.37 metres (37.30 feet); the third section is the projected section of the *minar* which forms an open ambulatory. The fourth section is an octagonal pavilion (*chhatri*) formed of red sandstone base structure, in turn covered with a cupola with projected *chujjas*. One can access the ambulatory at the top of the *minar* through a spiral staircase in the octagonal shaft.

The square base and the octagonal section of the *minars* are decorated with *kashikari* composed in recessed rectangular panels. The upper most section of the octagonal shaft is also decorated with *kashikari* but in a more elaborate manner, forming a transition to accommodate the larger diameter of the projected ambulatory. This transition begins by a frieze of terracotta panels with interlaced geometric motifs in relief within which fine *kashikari* work is embedded. The frieze is topped by a piece of the *minar* shaft divided into 16 oblong panels of *kashikari* work, each panel comprising a distinct composition of arboreal motifs. 8 of the 16 panels are wrapped around the vertices of an expanded octagonal shaft. At the top of each of the 16 panels is an interlaced system of *qalibkari* that enables the diameter to curve out and expand once more to accommodate the span of the octagonal ambulatory surrounding the *chhatri*. The base of the ambulatory is decorated with another *kashikari* frieze. The walls of the ambulatory sit atop this final frieze and are separated from it by a decorated *kashikari* moulding. The existing fragments of glazed tile on the dome and the base of the *chhatri* suggest that the surface used to be covered with glazed tiles.



Above: View towards the courtyard with the south-eastern minar in the foreground and the north-eastern minar in the background.

Right: The north-western minar, with the base clearly visible from the courtyard.





#### 4.2.6 CONSTRUCTION METHOD AND ARCHITECTURAL FABRIC

The entire complex is built in brick masonry laid in lime mortar. A significant construction device used for covering the relatively shorter roof spans is the ‘flat dome’. Aside from the prayer chamber, the entrance portal and the cupolas, all but a couple of the roof and upper floors structures use the flat dome technique in spans of up to 4 metres. The construction, seen ubiquitously in the architecture of the period comprises brick placed on edge in concentric circles and embedded in thick lime mortar bed and cover. A slight curved rise in the underside of the dome enables the creation, with a thick plaster render, of a flat horizontal soffit which hides the arcuated construction of the flat dome. The supporting system devised for roof spans of more than 4 metres in the Level 2 courtyard pavilion on the south side is interesting. Here, the span is divided longitudinally into two by the introduction of a series of brick columns in the centre, thus turning the ordinarily square roof span into two oblong rectangles of unequal width, each spanned by the same flat arcuated system. The depth of the roof structure, including all renders, varies from 0.5 metres to 1.5 metres.

##### a. BRICK FLOORING

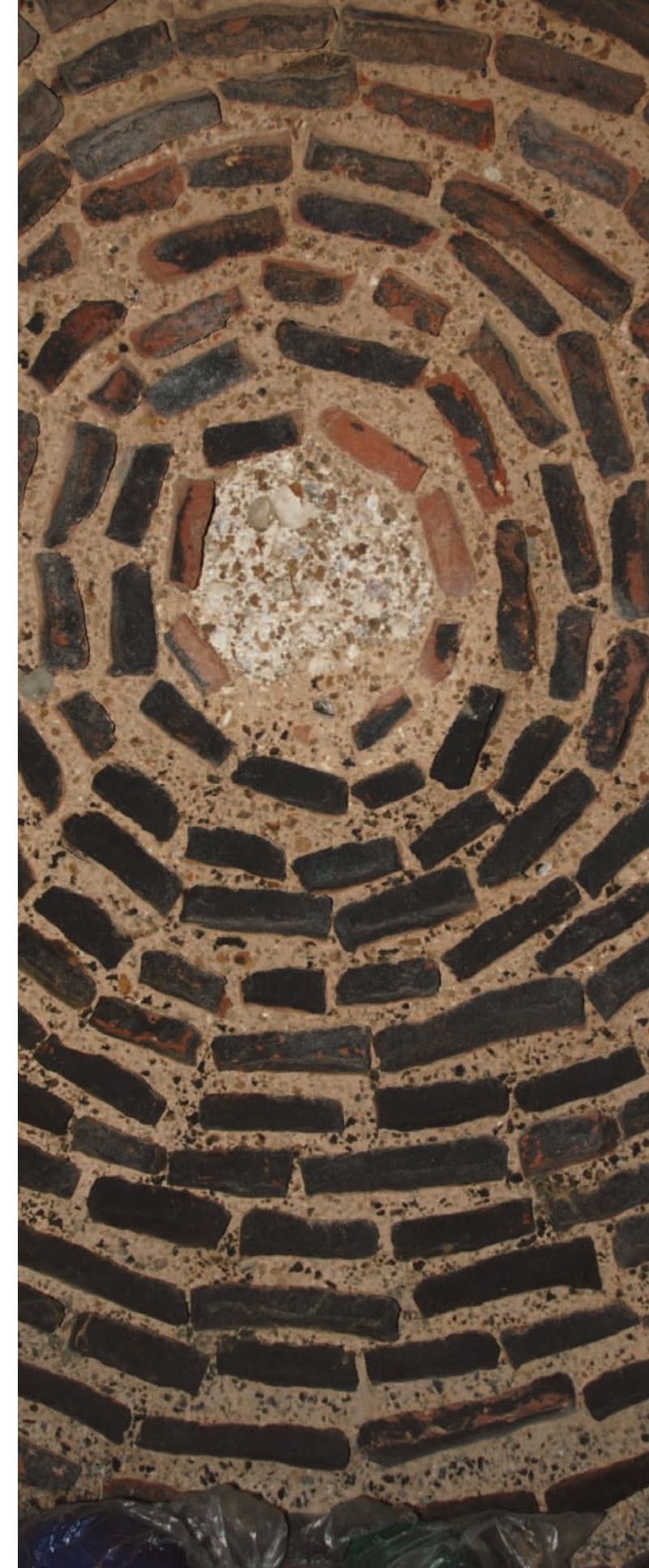
All the floors in the mosque are made of brick laid in a variety of geometrical patterns, particularly in the courtyard and the prayer chamber. The floor of the prayer chamber of the mosque is exclusively in fine bricks laid in interlacing patterns. The geometrical patterns in the lower, eastern, portion of the courtyard are a rather simple arrangement of octagons and squares, the latter created by alternate vertices of the octagons. The sides of the octagons are defined by bands of brick placed at 90° to the vertex. The brick floors in the upper level of the courtyard and the prayer chamber are delicately executed both in terms of their detailed geometrical patterns and the craftsmanship. Here, the major shapes formed due to the interconnected octagons have a thin border of black brick. This type of brick flooring is also observed in the Lahore Fort and the Shalimar Gardens.



Above: The small waziri brick and lime mortar used in the Wazir Khan Mosque. Photographed on the mosque's southern wall.

Right: Detail of the underside of a flat dome.

Opposite: Restoration of the courtyard floor, showing in detail the design and geometric layout of bricks used extensively across the mosque's floors.





## b. DECORATIVE SCHEME

Artistically, the mosque displays some of the best examples of regional Mughal architectural, ornamental and decorative techniques, surpassing others in its delicacy and comprehensive decorative scheme. Most of the other Shahjahan era monuments in Lahore - Dai Anga Mosque, Asif Khan Tomb, Gulabi Bagh entrance<sup>16</sup> also have a combination of *kashikari* (glazed tile work), *naqqashi* (frescoes) and *tazakari* (incised faux brickwork) as architectural décor but the enormous scale of these decorations in the Wazir Khan Mosque certainly makes this mosque conspicuous in its artistic worth.

On the exterior, the decoration chiefly comprises a combination of fine exposed brickwork or plaster render with a thin layer of incised faux brickwork framing panels of glazed cut tile *kashikari* mosaic. The dramatically coloured glazed tiles are found in floral and arboreal motifs as well as calligraphic verses in geometrically coordinated panels placed in recessed niches and surrounded by the brickwork or the faux-brickwork schema. This forms the overriding organisational basis for the façades. On the *minars*, the decorative features comprise glazed tiles, exposed brickwork and in the case of the south-eastern *minar*, *tazakari* work from the late 1970's.

The vividly displayed and superb glazed tile mural decoration and calligraphy has been ascribed a direct relationship with the calligraphy of the Safavid monuments in Esfahan (Iran), built only a few years before the Wazir Khan Mosque.<sup>17</sup> The artistic and technical ancestry, however, has also been linked to the tradition of calligraphic decoration to be found in Central Asian sites such as those in Samarkand and other Timurid sites in Iran, Turan and present day Afghanistan.

The superb calligraphy by master calligraphers contains verses from the Holy Quran, the Hadith, and Persian poetry in elegant forms of *nastaliq* and *thuluth*. Calligraphic work and geometrical and floral decoration in *kashikari* and *gachkari* (raised relief in lime plaster) along with large-scale fresco painting and *tazakari* decoration lends the Wazir Khan Mosque an exceptional and unique heritage status.

In the interior of the mosque, the chief architectural and

artistic characteristic resides in its profuse fresco work, bordered occasionally by floral *tazakari* work. The original frescoes have been touched up or painted over throughout the centuries by successive attempts at 'restoration', so much so that it can be said with some certitude that no original work is now visible. Yet the interior of the mosque has a stunning chromatic richness in its collective ambience that provides an artistic balance to the tile mosaic on the exterior.

### i. KASHIKARI (GLAZED TILES)

*Kashikari* or glazed tile-work predominates all other forms of surface decoration, at least in the exterior, and it could be said more in the Wazir Khan Mosque than any other Mughal monument in the region. The *kashikari* covers an area of approximately 1400 m<sup>2</sup>, of which nearly 160 m<sup>2</sup> is missing.

Except on the *minars*, most of the *kashikari* was selectively restored during the restoration efforts in 1971-78. Later in 1984-85, the *kashikari* on the north-eastern *minar* was replaced with new materials using old techniques. This second phase of work could not be continued owing to a paucity of funds. The rest of the *minars* contain old *kashikari* work, possibly the original. To a certain extent the *kashikari* work restored in 1971-78 on the main façade of the prayer chamber, on the faces of the *hujra* walls and on the main façade of the entrance portal seems to be in a fair condition. The condition of *kashikari* on the north-eastern *minar* is generally good but the condition of *kashikari* on the other three *minars* and on the north façade of the mosque, which appears to be older than that on the eastern façade, is not in a good state of repair.

Part of the *kashikari* work in the mosque is executed as calligraphy. Together with the floral and arboreal motifs, the calligraphy is woven into the overall decorative scheme of the mosque, in a manner which gives it prominence without detracting from its integrated place in the larger decorative scheme.

Right: Detail of *kashikari* work on the north-west minar.

Opposite: *Tazakari* and *kashikari* decorative techniques used in combination on the rows of *hujras* facing inward to the courtyard.





### ii. TAZAKARI (INCISED FAUX BRICKWORK)

In addition to *kashikari* most of the wall surfaces in the entrance bazaar and courtyard are covered with *tazakari* or incised faux brickwork. The process is carried out by applying a thin layer of lime plaster tinted dark with red ochre on a base of white lime render. While the red ochre layer is still wet, thin grooves which represent mortar joints are scoured out with a special instrument to expose the underlying white lime render in a pattern imitating fine brickwork.

Most of the *tazakari* surface in the elevations of the courtyard has changed colour due to its direct exposure to rain and sunlight. There is evidence of repeated restoration of *tazakari* work at several locations. Erosion and flaking of the surface are the other kinds of damages noticed during the documentation of surface finishes. The use of non-mineral colour additives to the plaster might result in the colour washing away with the rain, as mineral red ochre mixed and carbonated into the lime would not run but only lose its red pigmentation due to exposure to sunlight and slow chemical changes with the passage of time.

### iii. NAQQASHI (WALL PAINTING)

A major part of the interior wall and domed surfaces are decorated with wall paintings (*naqqashi*). Calligraphy and the compositions of plants and curvilinear shapes are the main themes displayed in these paintings. Although the wall paintings appear to be applied *secco* work, the team has documented instances of earlier work with the pigment embedded in the lime. In this report, all wall paintings are referred to as fresco work.

Almost all fresco paintings have been repainted/restored several times during past restoration campaigns and are now left with very rare examples of original work. It is believed that during these restoration efforts the old and authentic paint surfaces have been removed before applying a new fresco layer. Most of the damages on fresco paintings are observed on the lower levels of walls and at the base of domes due to water ingress from the floor and roof. In several places the plaster render bearing the fresco is damaged at the base of walls where electrical outlets have been installed.

A certain proportion of the work on the wall also comprises the technique of engraved fresco, used mainly in framing borders and panels around ordinary fresco.



This page: Details of fresco work in the prayer chamber.

Opposite: Tazakari work being executed during a previous restoration phase.





iv. Glazed tiles interlaced with unglazed terracotta lattices:

This special form of glazed tile terracotta decoration is to be found in panels on the northern façade of the northern axial pavilion, and in bands encircling the top most part of the shafts in all four *minars* before the shaft begins to cantilever out to form the ambulatory around the *minar chhatris*. In general considerable damage is found in this kind of treatment.

v. Terracotta *jalli* work:

Terracotta *jalli* manufactured to a quality and mass rarely seen has been used, but sparingly, in the mosque. The size of each fired piece of terracotta was found to extend to as much as 900 mm x 500 mm x 70 mm thick. It is found in the following locations:

1. In the parapet / balustrade surrounding the *minar* ambulatory;
2. The ambulatory at Level 2 looking into the domed space of the *dewrhi*, as well as the railings looking out into the open areas at the end of the northern and southern pavilions of the Calligraphers' Bazaar.
3. As panels of screens in the upper register of the northern and southern axial pavilions.



Right top: Terracotta *jalli* work in the balustrade surrounding the north-western minar's ambulatory.

Right: Glazed tile work interlaced with unglazed terracotta lattices at the top of the south-eastern minar's shaft.

Opposite: Looking across the domed space of the *dewrhi* at jalli panelling in the ambulatory at Level 2.



## ENDNOTES

- 1 Chaghatai, Abdullah, (1975) *Masjid Wazir Khan, Lahore: History and Architecture*, Lahore: Kitab Khana-i-Naurus. The author, relying on the manuscript Zakhiratul Khawaneen, prefers to use the name ‘Ali-uddin’, while both Latif and Kanhaiyya Lal prefer to use ‘Ilmuddin’.
- 2 Hakim Aliuddin was granted the title of Wazir Khan in 1620. Wazir Khan was entrusted with the building of the Khwabgah and Hammam-e-Badshahi in Lahore Fort, just before Shah Jahan embarked on his journey from Lahore to Kashmir in the summer of 1634. He was also responsible for the construction of *havelis*, bazaars and bath houses, a surviving example of the latter is the Wazir Khan (or Shahi) Hammam just inside Delhi Gate.
- 3 Chaghatai, Abdullah, (1975) op.cit. This book is in the main in Urdu but includes a smaller section in English. The material here referenced to this work has borrowed on both the Urdu and the English text.
- 4 The reference is to the city wall that existed prior to the construction of the new fortification for an expanded city during the reign of Jalal ud Din Muhammad Akbar (1556-1602 AD). The present perimeter of the Walled City conforms to the Akbari walls, demolished in two stages by the British between 1859 and 1884.
- 5 Latif, Syed Muhammad, (1892) *Lahore, its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities*, Lahore: New Imperial Press. The authenticity of the will is held by Chaghatai to be doubtful on account of the date of the *waqf* deed being a year later than the reputed date on which Wazir Khan is known to have died. Chaghatai also recounts a claim to the position of the *mutawalli* of the mosque contested in the court of an early British administrator.
- 6 As late as the mid 1980’s the Delhi Gate Bazaar contained an assortment of Sikh or early British period buildings of considerable artistic worth. Of these only a handful have survived total demolition.
- 7 Chaghatai, Abdullah, (1975) op.cit.
- 8 Mughal, Rafique, (1996) *Protected Archaeological Sites and Monuments in Pakistan*, Pakistan Heritage Society, Peshawar-Lahore.
- 9 In the Punjab, the Punjab Special Premises (Preservation) Act 1985, was the precursor for similar legislation enacted in Sindh, Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa and Balochistan.
- 10 Ibid. Under the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan, passed by the Pakistani national parliament in April, 2010, a process which will result in the devolution of the subject of culture and heritage from the Federal to the Provincial level is currently under way. It is assumed that at some point during this process, the Federal Act will be repealed and its jurisdiction transferred to the Provincial Governments.
- 11 Qureshi, Muhammad Abdullah, (1962) *Masaajid: Ahd-e-Ghazvani se zamana - e - haal tak*. In Nuqoosh, Lahore Number, Lahore: Idara - e - Farogh - e - Urdu.
- 12 Latif, Syed Muhammad, (1892) op.cit.
- 13 In the remaining part of this report, these shops will be referred to as the Calligraphers’ Bazaar.
- 14 Kanhaiyya Lal mentions the term “*char soor*” for this arrangement at the Wazir Khan Mosque, in his *Tarikh-e-Lahore* (1884).
- 15 19<sup>th</sup> century illustrations depict at least two more steps. Since the original floor of the Chowk was a good 1.2 m below the present one, several more steps of the original configuration of the staircase could be concealed below the earth fill forming the present level of the Chowk.
- 16 Not to speak of the Masjid Mian Muhammad Saleh Kamboh and the now destroyed Chiniaan Wali Masjid within the Walled City itself.
- 17 Chaghatai, Abdullah, (1975) op. cit.