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THE EMPEROR'S GRIEF: TWO MUGHAL TOMBS

With his publication on the Dome of the Rock nearly half a century ago in *Ars Orientalis*,¹ Oleg Grabar established the centrality of inscriptions for the understanding of a building's political, religious, and social significance. His affirmation of the importance of architectural epigraphs has been a constant throughout his career, brilliantly demonstrated in his study of the Alhambra, among other works. My efforts to understand the architecture of the Delhi Sultanate through its inscriptions owe much to his elegant and rigorous work. In its epigraphic analysis the examination of early Mughal architecture that I submit here in his honor is clearly informed by his methods. Additionally, as I developed this study of the youthful Akbar and the tensions among officials at his court in 1562, I recalled Oleg's argument (stemming from the creation of the great Il-Khan *Shāhnāma* in the fourteenth century, which arose from power struggles at the royal court) that great art can arise in times of great tension as a compelling statement of ambition and authority. A patron's aesthetic decisions are rarely frivolous: Akbar's choice of materials and his conscious and pointed references to the past were as self-aware as those of 'Abd al-Malik in the late seventh century.

Oleg's work is also vital for its exploration of the meaning of holiness and the ways in which a piece of land and the buildings on it become sacred. In my study of Sultanate and early Mughal Delhi, a tomb situated in the fourteenth century *dargah* (shrine and Sufi center) of Nizamuddin Awliya in Delhi becomes a shrine to one of Akbar's most loyal adherents, commemorating a defining event in Akbar's kingship, one that marks a cultural shift and the formation of a new dynastic direction. Akbar symbolically appropriates the land—a key concept in Oleg's work—transforming the site into a pilgrimage shrine.

I am pleased to submit this essay in honor and recognition of Oleg Grabar's eightieth birthday. I owe more than I can say to him, his scholarship, his teaching, and the care he has shown for his students over the years.

PERSONAL POLITICS AND THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

On May 16, 1562 (12 Ramadan 969), a dreadful incident occurred at the court of the young Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) in Agra, stunning everyone who saw or heard about it and rapidly becoming the stuff of legend. Akbar's minister, historian, biographer, confidant, and boon companion Abu 'l-Fazl 'Allami considered the event so remarkable that he described it at great length in his *Akbarnāma*. For him, Akbar's response to this shocking act stood as a brilliant example “of the majesty and extensiveness of the justice of His Majesty, the Shahinshah.”²

Ataga Khan and Adham Khan, two of Akbar's closest aides, had long been at loggerheads: they and their extended families and associates had been struggling for years for influence over Akbar, who had come to the throne in 1556 at the age of fourteen, upon the death of his father, Humayun, the second Mughal ruler (r. 1530–40 and 1555–56).

On what was surely a very hot day in the Agra fort, Adham Khan and two accomplices, following a calculated though very risky plan, broke into the palace and brutally murdered Ataga Khan. According to Abu 'l-Fazl, they had long been jealous of Ataga Khan's eminence under Akbar; their envy was further provoked by Mu'nim Khan, the Khan Khanan, another powerful noble.³

The account of this affair is that Adham Khan, the younger son of the cupola of chastity, Maham Anaga, had neither understanding nor good conditions. He was intoxicated by youth and prosperity and was continually envious of Shams al-Din Muhammad, the Ataga Khan. Mun'im Khan, the Khan Khanan, also suffered much from this malady and used to throw out dark hints, such as the generality could not comprehend, instigating Adham Khan to strife and intrigue...On a court day (16 May 1562), Mun'im Khan, Ataga Khan, Shihab al-Din Ahmad Khan, and other magnates were sitting in the royal hall transacting public business, when Adham Khan suddenly entered in a

riotous manner, attended by others more riotous than himself. The members of the assembly rose to do him honor, and the Ataga Khan rose half-up. Immediately upon entering, Adham Khan put his hand to his dagger and went towards the Ataga Khan. Then he angrily signed to his servant Khusham Uzbek and the other desperadoes who had come with their loins girt up for strife, saying: "Why do you stand still?" The wicked Khusham drew his dagger and inflicted a dangerous wound on the breast of that chief-sitter on the pillow of auspiciousness. The Ataga Khan was thoroughly amazed and ran towards the door of the hall. Immediately thereon, Khuda Bardi came and struck him twice with a sword. That great man was martyred in the courtyard of the hall of audience.

The horrendous story continues. Suddenly aware of the likely consequences of the impetuous act that he had been put up to, a panicked Adham Khan made a single-handed assault on the royal palace. It was Ramadan, and it must have been particularly demanding to keep the fast in the hottest time of the year: Akbar was resting in his second-story bedchamber when he was warned of the danger by a chamberlain, who brought him a sword. Adham Khan met Akbar on the veranda and dared to grab the emperor by the hands. With his fist, Akbar knocked Adham Khan senseless with a single blow to the head. He then ordered his servants to bind Adham Khan and throw him off the terrace. Surviving the first fall, the gravely injured Adham Khan was dragged up the stairs and again thrown down, head first, whereupon he died. This demonstration of imperial decisiveness and physical strength became one of the most celebrated events in Mughal hagiography and was a favorite subject in illustrated copies of the *Akbarnāma* (fig. 1). As the closing installment of a long-standing feud, Akbar's action almost immediately took on the character of dynastic myth.

Several years older than Akbar, Adham Khan was a longtime Mughal retainer who held the high-ranking position of *pañj-hazārī*, or commander of five thousand troops. Abu 'l-Fazl reports that Adham Khan's father was a certain Shihab al-Din but also intimates that Adham Khan may have been one of Humayun's progeny.⁴ He was the younger son of the noblewoman Maham Anaga, who had been responsible for supervising Akbar's attendants when the emperor was a child, and who for several years thereafter remained a powerful figure at the court. In particular, Maham Anaga and her husband, Shihab al-Din Ahmad Khan, the governor of Delhi, had allied themselves with Mu'nim



Fig. 1. *Execution of Adham Khan*, painting by Miskin and Sankar. From a manuscript of the *Akbarnāma*, ca. 1590. Victoria and Albert Museum, no. 2, 1896, I.S. 29.117. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

Khan to undermine the influence of Bayram Khan, the previous Khan Khanan, who had protected the young emperor and the Mughal Empire in the years immediately after the death of Akbar's father, Humayun. Mu'nim Khan was appointed Khan Khanan after Bayram Khan was removed from that post in 1560. Maham Anaga apparently had easy access to the emperor, and her son was regarded as Akbar's foster brother.

Adham Khan was famous for his bravery and success on the battlefield, notably at the siege of Mankot in 1557. He led the victorious expedition against Malwa in 968 (1560–61),⁵ though he later misgoverned the region, keeping its sizeable treasury and several of its women for himself until Akbar admonished him. His subsequent displays of outrageous behavior prompted the emperor to replace him with a new governor, Pir Muhammad Khan Shirwani. Adham Khan was recalled to the royal court, where he was nevertheless honored by Akbar, who was well aware of his impetuous personality and was apparently determined to restrain his foster brother from further folly and to improve his character.⁶ An auspicious marriage, approved by the emperor, was arranged with the daughter of Baqi Khan Baqlani, one of the learned grandees at court.⁷ Despite these signs of royal favor, Maham Anaga involved her son and several other court officials in her ruthless intrigues. In charge of the royal harem, she helped Adham Khan purloin two dancing girls acquired following the conquest of Malwa. When Akbar noticed the loss, Adham Khan became alarmed and made it appear that the girls had fled. After they were apprehended, Maham Anaga ordered their execution to cover up the crime.⁸

Maham Anaga was fiercely jealous of Ataga Khan, who headed the largest faction at court and was trusted by Akbar. The son of a farmer, Shams al-Din Muhammad Ataga Khan had been a humble soldier until he saved the life of Emperor Humayun at the battle of Kannauj in 1540. During his exile in Iran from 1542 to 1544, Humayun entrusted his infant son Akbar to Shams al-Din Muhammad and his wife Jiji Anaga, who became Akbar's principal wet nurse. Both as heir apparent and as youthful emperor, Akbar recognized Shams al-Din Muhammad and Jiji Anaga as his foster parents: the honorific *ataga* means "foster father."

After the dismissal of the Khan Khanan Bayram Khan in 1560, Akbar transferred the insignia and the office of Vakil (prime minister) to Ataga Khan. This appointment of an old and trusted servitor with an extensive family (referred to as the *Ataga Khayl*, or Foster-Father Clan) posed a great threat to the party associated with Maham Anaga, who had doubtless expected the office of Khan Khanan to pass to one of her people. She, her husband Shihab al-Din Ahmad Khan, and Mu'nim Khan did not conceal their discontent, and if they did not actually plot with Adham Khan they clearly goaded him on. After the assassination of Ataga Khan, both Shihab al-Din Ahmad Khan and Mu'nim

Khan fled Agra, only to be recalled and pardoned by the emperor, who needed their expertise and experience. Judging by his other actions, Akbar was also eager to defuse the situation and impose a strict and evenhanded calm. Stunned by Adham Khan's summary execution, Maham Anaga nevertheless acknowledged the justice of Akbar's action and, according to Abu 'l-Fazl, died forty days later.

Ataga Khan's family likewise accepted the emperor's justice and did not continue the feud with Maham Anaga's faction. Ataga Khan's three brothers and two sons, also Akbar's milk brothers, served Akbar well. The elder son, Yusuf Muhammad Khan, was fourteen when his father was murdered. He became a distinguished field commander but died of alcoholism in 1566, when he was only eighteen, his death perhaps brought on by grief over his father's assassination. The younger son, Mirza 'Aziz Koka, was a commander of five thousand whose daughter married Akbar's fourth son, Murad. In 1580 he received the title of A'zam Khan, once held by his father. Celebrated for his intelligence, knowledge of history, eloquence, and straightforward speech, "he grew up with Akbar, who remained attached to him to the end of his life. Though often offended by his boldness, Akbar would but rarely punish him; he used to say 'Between me and 'Aziz is a river of milk which I cannot cross.'"⁹

Up until 1562, the two court factions had presented the young emperor with unwanted conflicts and a painful division of loyalties. After all, he stood in a foster relationship to the matriarchs of both clans: Maham Anaga had been in charge of all the infant Akbar's nurses and female attendants, and Jiji Anaga had been his wet nurse. Thus, in addition, Akbar had powerful foster relationships with Adham Khan, Ataga Khan, Yusuf Muhammad, and Mirza 'Aziz. After years of relying upon Ataga Khan, Maham Anaga, and Adham Khan, their deaths within a forty-day period must have been a grievous loss. But Akbar was now freed from an increasingly troublesome problem: at one blow, the internecine warfare between the two clans was ended, and the young ruler's power was dramatically asserted by his prompt, personal punishment of Adham Khan. Seeking to reconcile those who remained, he dispatched the bodies of Adham Khan and Ataga Khan for burial in Delhi, far enough away to prevent their relatives and adherents from centering their grievances on graves in Agra. He pardoned Mu'nim Khan and Shihab al-Din Ahmad Khan, as already noted, and made it widely known that he

was putting the young members of both clans under his personal protection. After the death of Maham Anaga, he even accompanied her funeral procession for some distance out of Agra; in Delhi two substantial and important tombs were constructed for her remains and those of Adham Khan and Ataga Khan. Abu 'l-Fazl was well aware of the importance of these new buildings:

The body [of Maham Anaga] was also sent with much respect to Delhi; his Majesty personally escorted it for some paces. All the state officers and the great ones of the sublime family paid the dues of respect and regret. In accordance with orders, a lofty building was erected over the [grave]s of Maham Anaga and Adham Khan. Similar mourning was made for [Ataga] Khan. The hearts of his brethren and children were soothed, and the wounds of the whole clan were healed. His Majesty devoted great attention to the educating of this faithful band and to the furthering of their advancement.¹⁰

Abu 'l-Fazl dwells on this incident in order to educate the uninitiated into key aspects of Akbar's policies. Imperial authority is not to be disputed, even by near-family members, who are as subject to severe punishment as others. For anyone remembering Humayun's misfortunes, occasioned by his repeated generosity and mercy to his brother Kamran, it was an important lesson. The fact that the execution of Adham Khan was so often illustrated in copies of the *Akbarnāma* underscores its importance as a demonstration of imperial authority. (There was nothing haphazard about the choice of subjects to be illustrated by painters in the royal manuscript workshop.) This authority also had to be focused on the reconciliation of enemies; the effort to bridge hostilities and bring foes into agreement under the Mughal aegis is a recurring theme in Akbari politics. Akbar was determined to avoid feuding between the rival families and to bring under his protection and watchful eye the younger generation, to whose education and advancement he had committed himself.

The emperor was keenly aware of the power of architecture, since he ordered that tombs be built as part of the mourning for the deceased, the process of "soothing the hearts of the brethren and children." In the years around 1562 Akbar emerged as a great architectural patron: the tomb for his father Humayun was also begun in Delhi at that time. The two smaller tombs, one for Ataga Khan and the other for Maham Anaga and Adham Khan, stand as monuments not only to the deceased but also to that day

in May when the emperor, through his personal courage and decisiveness, declared his authority in a way that no one could fail to understand.

MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE AND POLITICS

Neither of the two structures should be regarded simply as a tomb. Emerging out of a complex political situation, each was linked to individuals besides the ones for whom they were built. Both relied on a well-developed visual language to explicate the multiple political and personal relationships of those associated with them. Not just Akbar but also subordinates like Maham Anaga, Shihab al-Din Ahmad Khan, and Muhammad 'Aziz Kokaltash were prominent patrons of architecture, whether of tombs, mosques, or madrasas. To some degree we may understand the period through its buildings, as if they constituted the strategically placed pieces of a complex military game such as chess or shogi.

The tomb of Adham Khan and Maham Anaga

Delhi was the capital of the Delhi Sultanate for most of the period from 1192 to 1526 (fig. 2). Successive sultans had lavishly endowed the city with walls, forts, mosques, madrasas, *dargahs*, stepwells, canals, and gardens; in the sixteenth-century Islamic world Delhi's only rivals in architectural splendor were Cairo and Constantinople. The site selected for the mausoleum of Maham Anaga and Adham Khan was on the southwest side of the Lal Kot, the pre-Islamic "red fort"—the oldest part of Islamic Delhi. The tomb lies about 600 meters to the southwest of the Quwwat al-Islam Mosque and its Qutb Minar.¹¹

Two earlier royal tombs—the tomb of Sultan Iltutmish (ca. 1235) and that of Sultan 'Ala al-Din Khalji (ca. 1318) (fig. 3)—are situated directly behind the west (qibla) wall of the Qutb Mosque, the old great mosque of Delhi. Aligned with the direction of prayer, they occupied a place of particular honor. As the center of the first capital of Islamic India, the land around the Quwwat al-Islam enjoyed special status: when Babur, the first Mughal emperor (r. 1526–30), took Delhi in 1526, he circumambulated the royal tombs and residences in its vicinity.

The mausoleum of Maham Anaga and Adham Khan is situated far from this hallowed area. Nor is it near the dozens of fifteenth-century tombs, mosques, and

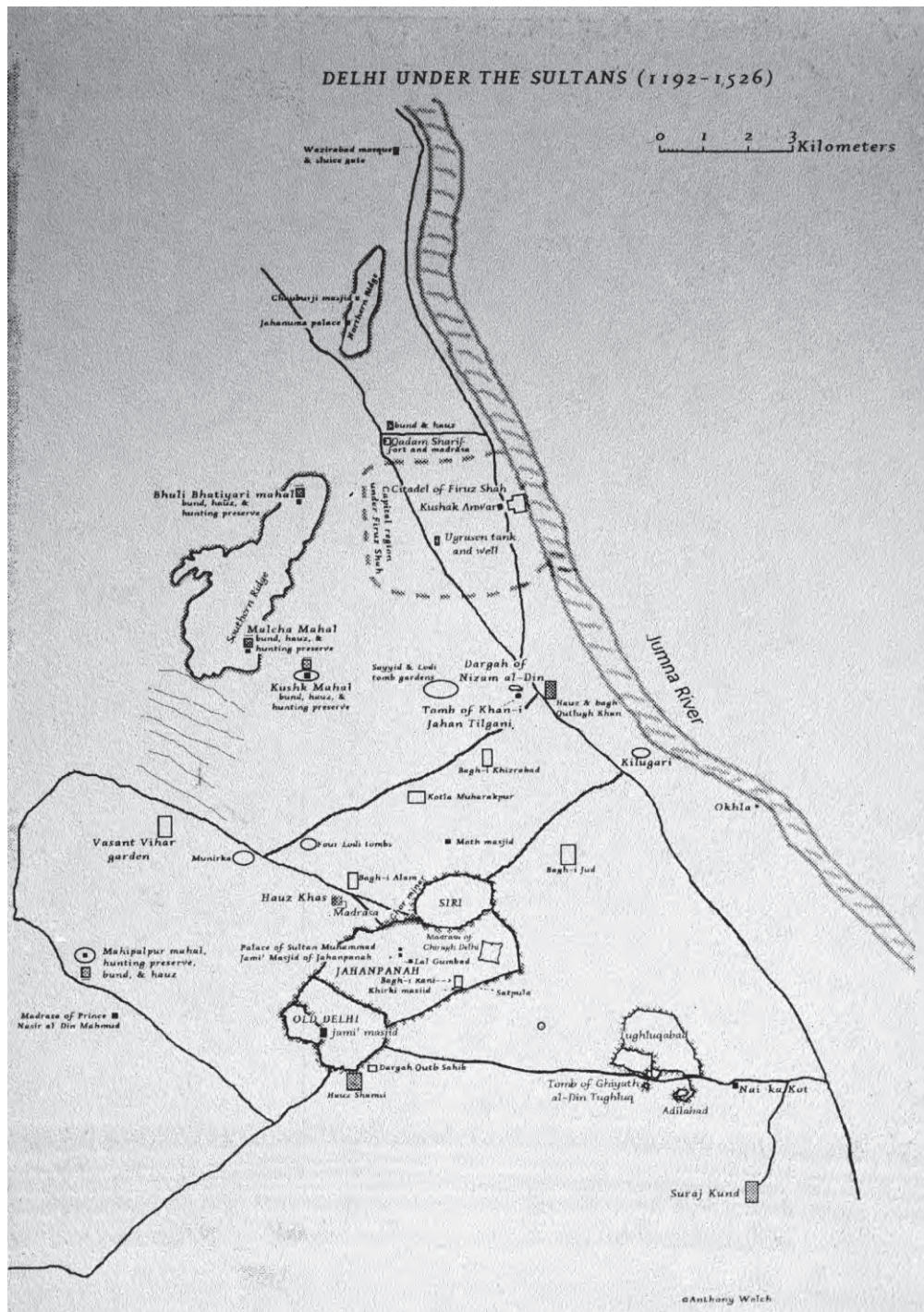


Fig. 2. Delhi under the sultans. (Map: Anthony Welch)



Fig. 3. Quwwat al-Islam Mosque, Delhi. View of the qibla and the madrasa, with the tomb of Adham Khan visible in the distance. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

stepwells in the oldest part of the city, in the village of Mehrauli to the south. Under patronage of the Lodhi dynasty (1444–1526) and then the Mughals, numerous mausolea had been constructed and *dargahs* established in and around Mehrauli, turning it into a city of the formerly pious and powerful dead. Lying between the Quwwat al-Islam Mosque and the necropolis of Mehrauli, Adham Khan's tomb stands apart, partaking of neither.

The entire mausoleum is 19 meters high and consists of three parts (fig. 4). A massive 3-meter-high octagonal platform rises beside the road. Two flights of stone steps lead to a veranda bounded by a 3-meter octagonal wall with low towers at each corner (figs. 5 and 6). In the center of the platform is the tomb, consisting of an octagonal ambulatory 6 meters in height and a central-domed octagonal chamber of 10 meters (fig. 7).¹² Together, the ambulatory and central tomb chamber are 15.5 meters in diameter. Each of the eight sides of the tomb is pierced by three openings; the massive walls enclose several interior passages that intersect, resembling a maze (fig. 8).¹³ On the exterior, the eight corners of the first story and the

sixteen corners of the drum are marked by decorative 3-meter-high minars. To a height of some 4 meters the base of the tomb is constructed of pale brown stone, but the upper portion is built of brick, now covered with blackened plaster facing but originally painted white, while the spandrels, the horizontal panels below the parapet, and the merlons were all painted red, as is shown in a nineteenth-century watercolor (fig. 9). The color scheme imitates that of the red sandstone and white marble in such Sultanate buildings as the 1325 tomb of Ghiyath al-Din Tughluq.

The dome rises high above the cenotaphs. The interior is well lit from its large doors and eight clerestory windows. In keeping with earlier Sayyid and Lodhi buildings, it is almost entirely devoid of inscriptions. Circular disks on the exterior and interior bear the *shahāda* and pious invocations such as *yā Allāh* and *al-Mālik Allāh*, hardly a complex inscripational program.¹⁴

On the northwestern wall of the veranda a gateway leads through the courtyard wall into the Lal Kot, the ancient Delhi fort. In the southwestern wall another gateway opens onto a mosque about 19 meters to the



Fig. 4. Site of the tomb of Adham Khan. (After Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture*, 2 vols. [Calcutta, 1942], vol. 2, *Islamic Period*, pl. XXI)



Fig. 5. Tomb of Adham Khan, exterior. (Photo: Anthony Welch)



Fig. 6. Tomb of Adham Khan, veranda and drum. (Photo: Anthony Welch)



Fig. 8. Tomb of Adham Khan, interior. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

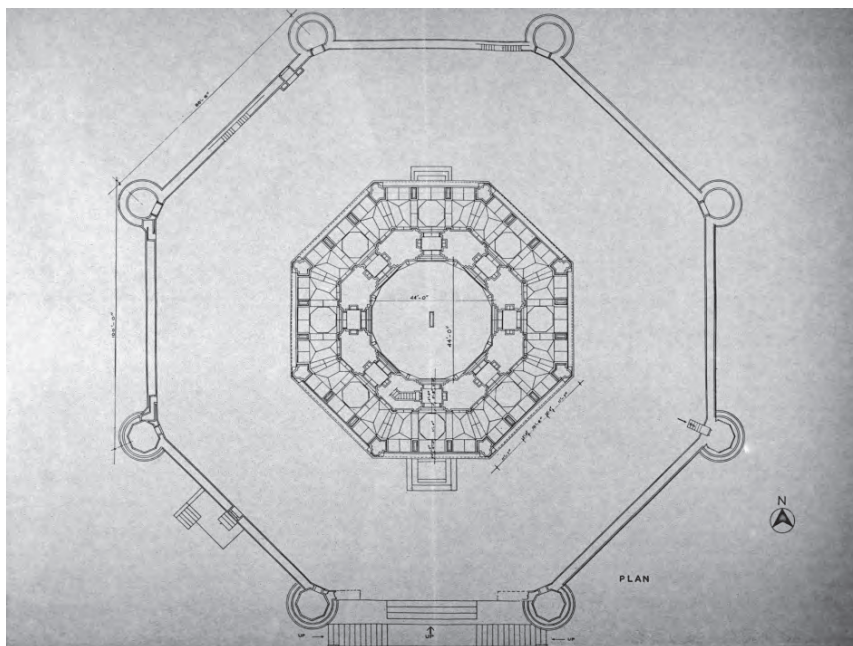


Fig. 7. Tomb of Adham Khan, plan. (Drawing: Anthony Welch)



Fig. 9. *Tomb of Adham Khan*, nineteenth-century watercolor by an unknown artist. Victoria and Albert Museum, I.M. 60.1923. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

west of the tomb. With its immediate vicinity largely vacant, the huge mausoleum is an isolated and imposing structure. In terms of its fortress-like platform, octagonal ambulatory and high central drum, and epigraphic sparseness, the architectural associations of the tomb are distinctly with the Lodhi past. The designer of this very traditional building did not—or was not allowed to—evince any progressive ambitions. Since there are in Delhi contemporary examples of innovative structures completed under Akbar's patronage, such as Humayun's tomb, this heavy-handed recapitulation of the Sultanate past was probably neither haphazard nor accidental. I would suggest that Akbar, with his keen architectural sense and deep understanding of the power of buildings to express political values, made a number of intentional choices with respect to this structure.

Akbar placed the tomb in south Delhi, where the historic presence of the Sultanate was felt more strongly than elsewhere in the city. However, he kept it distant

from the hallowed Quwwat al-Islam Mosque, which, after all, was the burial place of Sultan Iltutmish (r. 1210–35), who was revered as a pious king and a loyal soldier, while Adham Khan was an assassin and his mother a formidable plotter. Thus, in both form and location, the building stands out as an anomaly,¹⁵ symbolically linked with the turbulent, pre-Mughal past. (Also evoking the past, the assertive, Timurid-derived tomb of Humayun, the grandest of Akbar's buildings in Delhi, was intended to suggest that the Mughals, as descendants of Timur, were bringing a new era of peace and organization to India.¹⁶)

The Khayr al-Manazil Mosque and Madrasa

Akbar expended little money to build Maham Anaga and Adham Khan's tomb. He isolated it from the sacred area of Nizamuddin, where Humayun's tomb was under construction and where Ataga Khan was to be buried. In so doing, he effectively deprived it of any

wider context, either of piety or royalty. The choice of this less-than-favorable site is even more significant given that Maham Anaga had built a madrasa in distant central Delhi, just to the west of the citadel of Din Panah (or Purana Qila), where Akbar resided and worked when in the city. The fort contained the Purana Qila Mosque, almost certainly constructed by Humayun's adversary, the Afghan leader Sher Shah Suri, between 1540 and 1545, as well as the Sher Mandal, a garden pleasure pavilion in Timurid style, built in 1555 by Humayun (who, the following year, fell down its staircase to his death). For the Mughals, the citadel of Din Panah had important associations: the defeat of the usurping Suris, the triumph of the victorious Mughals, and the tragic death of the empire's long-suffering second emperor.

Like Ataga Khan, Maham Anaga had staked her reputation, revenue, and even life on the victory of Humayun and Akbar. Through her favored position at court and her special relationship to Akbar, she had acquired the resources to build the large and innovative Khayr al-Manazil mosque and madrasa on a choice tract of land, quite literally across the street from Din Panah. The structure was close enough to Akbar's Delhi residence and workplace to remind the emperor on a daily basis of Maham Anaga's role in the Mughal triumph. Situated just to the west of Sher Shah Suri's Purana Qila Mosque, it may have been intended as an alternative place of worship. No one would have failed to notice that it was only two kilometers to the north of the *dargah* of Nizam al-Din Awliya, near which Akbar's tomb for his own father would be built.

Sher Shah's successor, Jalal Khan, had been defeated by Humayun in 1555 and Bayram Khan deposed five years later. The construction of the Khayr al-Manazil mosque and madrasa was meant to highlight not only the victory of the Mughals but also the ascendancy of Maham Anaga and her associates. It is dated 969 (1561–62)—the same year as Adham Khan's assault on the emperor, though presumably it was completed somewhat before that memorable event. It is reasonable to assume that its patron intended to add her tomb to the complex; the eventual location of her burial place in Mehrauli was a posthumous exile.

Maham Anaga's mosque and madrasa are built around a central *sahn* (courtyard) (fig. 10). An imposing entrance on the east side dominates the Delhi–Mathura road. On the north and south sides of the

sahn are two-storied arcades consisting of seven arched rooms. The five-arched qibla on the west side has a high central dome; the central arch bears an inscription that credits as patrons both Maham Anaga and Shihab al-Din Ahmad Khan:

In the time of Jalal al-Din Muhammad [Akbar]
[Who] is great among the just kings,
Maham Begam, the root of purity,
Laid the foundation [of this house] for good men.
But the building of this gracious house was helped by
Shihab al-Din Ahmad Khan Bazel.
What blessings [there are in] this auspicious building
That its date is found in the words: "Blessed among
Houses!"¹⁷

The first eight verses of *Banī Isrā'īl*, chapter 17 of the Qur'an, are inscribed around the central arch preceding the prayer chamber. One of the inscriptions most commonly found on Sultanate buildings, it begins with the celebrated reference to the Prophet's *mi'rāj* (ascension into Paradise). The following seven verses recount the revelation to Moses and the punishment meted out to the Children of Israel for turning away from that revelation. In particular, verses 4–8 describe two armed struggles:

And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Scripture: Ye verily will work corruption in the earth twice, and ye will become great tyrants.
So when the time for the first of the two came, We roused against you slaves of Ours of great might who ravaged (your) country, and it was a threat performed. Then we gave you once again your turn against them, and We aided you with wealth and children and made you more in soldiery,
(Saying): If ye do good, ye do good for your own souls, and if ye do evil, it is for them (in like manner). So, when the time for the second (of the judgments) came, (We roused against you others of Our slaves) to ravage you, and to enter the Temple even as they entered it the first time, and to lay waste all that they conquered with an utter wasting.
It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you, but if ye repeat (the crime) We shall repeat (the punishment)...¹⁸

In their Sultanate context, the verses appear to allude to the first and second battles of Tarain, in 1191 and 1192, where initial Muslim defeat was followed by decisive victory. On Maham Anaga's mosque and madrasa, however, the reference may be to two later battles—namely, the defeat of Humayun in 1540 and his subsequent victory in 1555. Maham Anaga's madrasa was



Fig. 10. Khayr al-Manazil Madrasa. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

completed in 1561, under the supervision of Shihab al-Din Ahmad Khan. A clear architectural indicator of her ascendancy, it would have been the perfect location for a tomb where, as in earlier Sultanate examples, the students and faculty of the madrasa could regularly say prayers for the departed founder. But Maham Anaga's plot to gain even greater power had failed, and she joined her impetuous son in "exile" in an isolated mausoleum ten kilometers to the south.

The Tomb of Ataga Khan

In stark contrast to Adham Khan's tomb, the mausoleum erected for Ataga Khan is 15 kilometers north of the Quwwat al-Islam complex, in the heart of Akbar's Delhi. It sits, as noted, on the periphery of Nizam al-Din Awliya's *dargah*, a center for Sufis of the Chishtiyya order—one of the most sacred spots in Delhi. Founded during the reign of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Tughluq (r. 1320–25), the *dargah*, which contained the graves of several distinguished and pious people,¹⁹ is only a kilometer to the west of Humayun's tomb (fig. 11).

The *dargah* was the heart of a great architectural complex that included a number of significant build-

ings, including a large cistern (*baoli*) to store water for the *dargah*'s community (fig. 12); a mosque (*jamā'at khāna*) completed under the patronage of Ghiyath al-Din Tughluq, with additions by subsequent rulers and notables; the tomb of Amir Khusraw Dihlavi, the eminent Persian-language poet and mystic; and, most importantly, the tomb of Nizam al-Din Awliya, refurbished by Sayyid Faridun Khan in 1562. To the west was the octagonal tomb (ca. 1370) of the great fourteenth-century vizier Khan-i Jahan Tilangani; adjoining it on the north was the Kalan Masjid (ca. 1370), one of the most impressive mosques built under Tughluq patronage (fig. 13).

Already in the fourteenth century the *dargah* and its tombs had the power to attract major architectural patronage. Akbar's decision to place the tomb of Ataga Khan at the most auspicious site in all of Delhi was a signal honor. That Humayun's tomb was in the immediate vicinity only increased the esteem being shown to Ataga Khan.

Located in the northeastern part of the *dargah* complex, Ataga Khan's tomb sits on a raised site and is considerably higher than the *dargah*'s courtyard (fig. 14). A visitor would ascend a narrow flight of stairs to a masonry platform and walled enclosure that

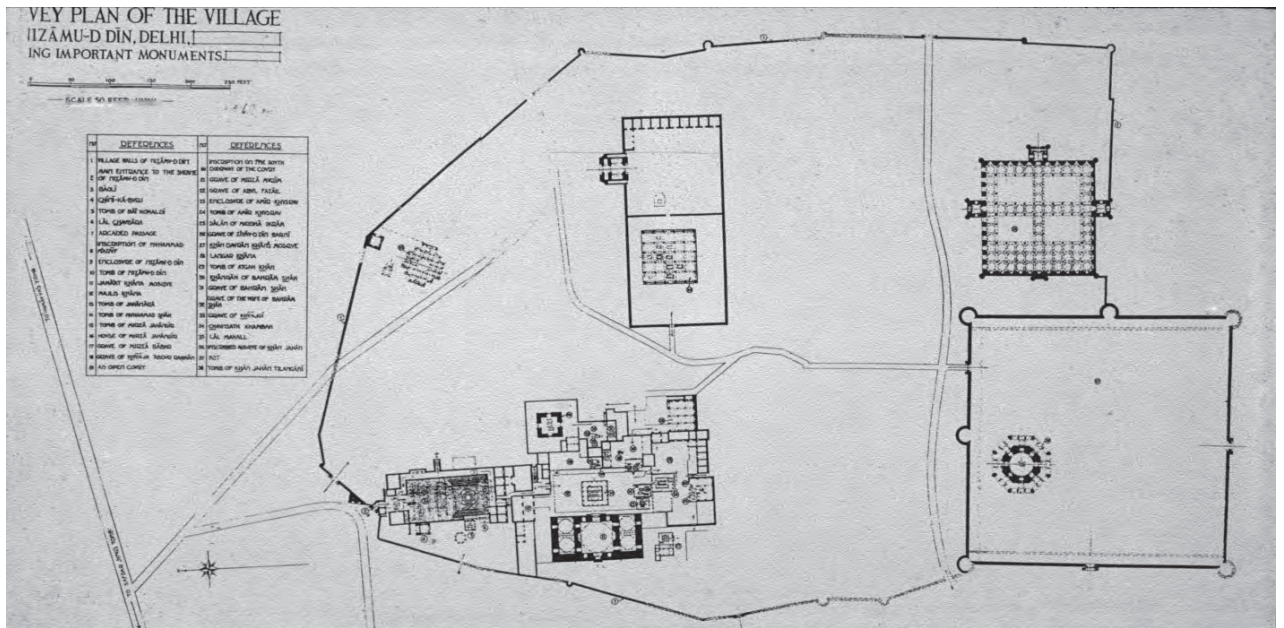


Fig. 11. Nizamuddin site plan (After Zafar Hasan, *A Guide to Nizamuddin*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, no. 10 [Calcutta, 1922], pl. 1)



Fig. 12. Nizamuddin stepwell. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

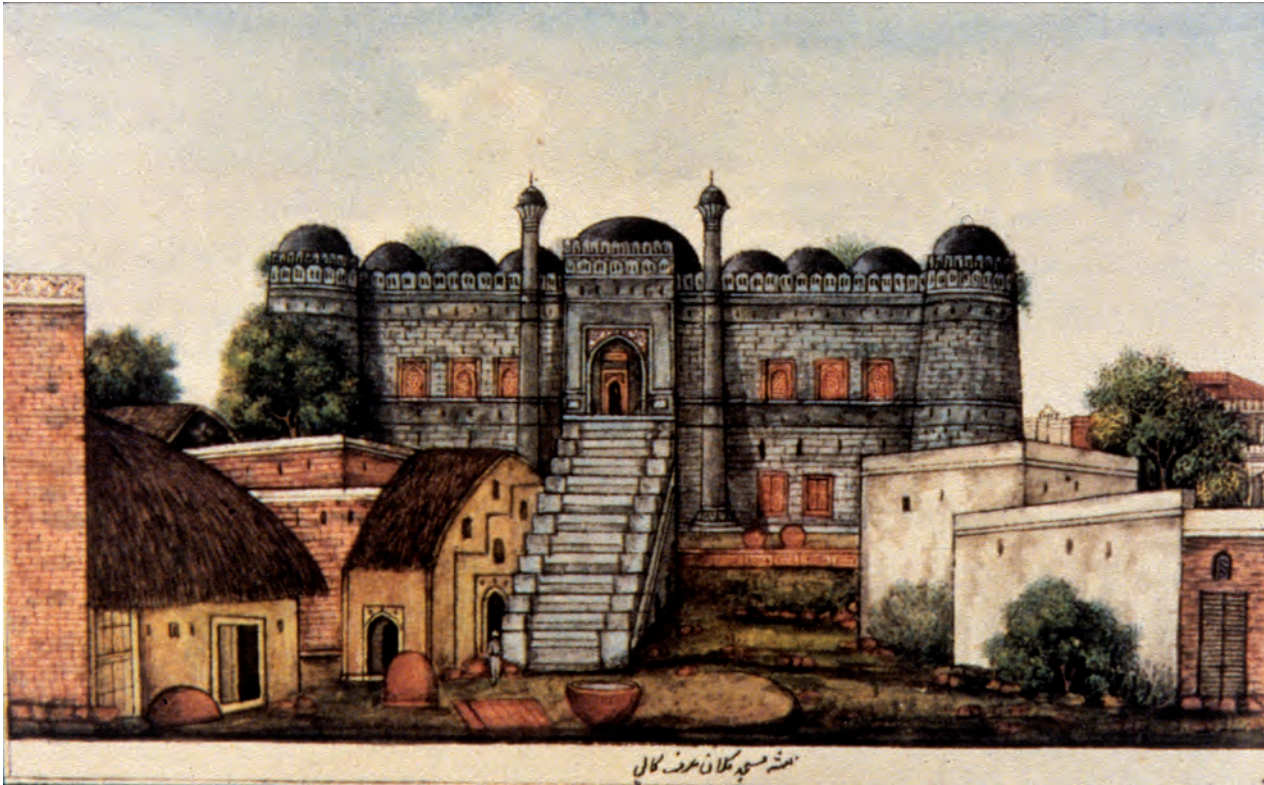


Fig. 13. Kalan Mosque, Nizamuddin, nineteenth-century watercolor by an unknown artist. (After Emily, Lady Clive Bayley, *The Golden Calm*, ed. M. M. Kaye [Exeter, England, 1980], 141)

physically set the tomb off from the *dargah*, though it was embraced by the *dargah*'s *baraka* (aura of blessing) and inevitably became a place of pilgrimage. On its raised ground, the tomb looks over the western wall toward the tombs of Nizam al-Din Awliya and Amir Khusraw Dihlavi, as well as toward the mosque of Nizamuddin and the great stepwell (fig. 15). This modest physical separation of tomb from *dargah* reflects the fact that, for all his merits, Ataga Khan was not a Chishtiya in the same class as Nizam al-Din or Amir Khusraw.²⁰

While the tomb was constructed on Akbar's orders—and presumably with an allocation of funds from his treasury—it is reasonable to assume that Ataga Khan's extensive family (the *Ataga Khayl*) would also have supported the construction. Indeed, since his second son, Mirza 'Aziz Koka, was eventually buried in the Nizamuddin area—in the pillared, domed hall now known as the Chawsanth Khamba, to the east of the *dargah*—the family's links with the Chishtiya order must have

been strong; it thus seems likely that Mirza 'Aziz was the patron immediately responsible for overseeing the construction of the tomb.

Humayun's tomb was under construction from 1562 to 1571. A far smaller project, Ataga Khan's tomb, also begun in 1562, was finished in 1566. It was not accidental that the two buildings were located in the same neighborhood and constructed of similar building materials. Indeed, the same building crews may have worked on both structures. That three important mausoleum projects, in addition to significant restorations and additions to the *dargah* of Nizam al-Din, were begun in 1562 may signal the particular significance of the assassination as a precipitating event: the three tombs—for Humayun, for Ataga Khan, and for Maham Anaga and Adham Khan—marked both the forced reconciliation of the feuding parties and the ascendancy of the centralized Mughal Empire. From this point on, the tomb of Humayun occupies a special role as the first great Mughal architectural

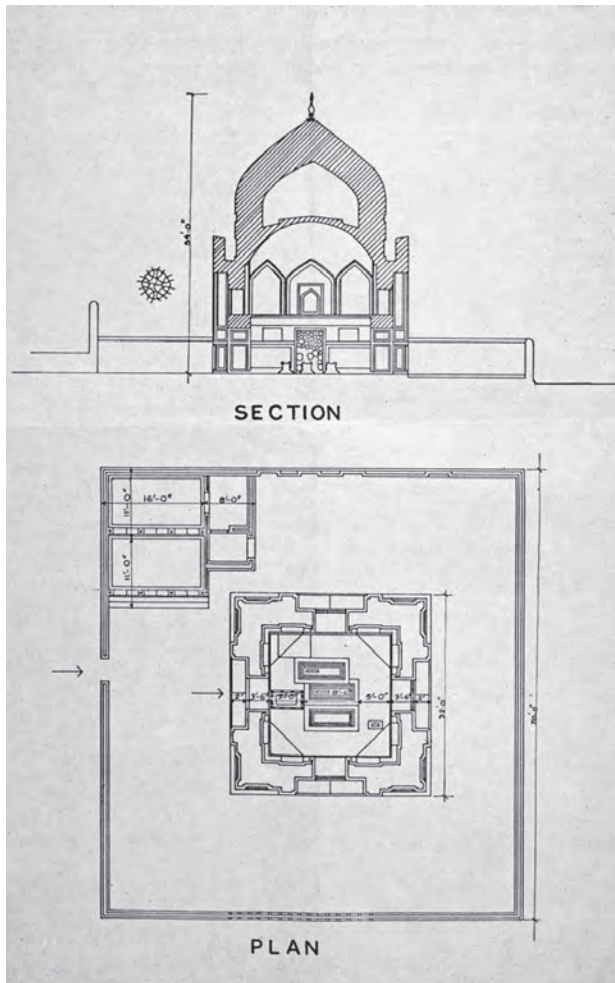


Fig. 14. Tomb of Ataga Khan, ground plan and section. (Drawing: Anthony Welch)

achievement, a founding and continuing referent as powerful as the *Bāburnāma* in Mughal literature. Its interior and its surrounding *chahār-bāgh* (quadrupartite garden) were favored burial places for loyal adherents of the Mughal state. Tomb architecture is nothing if not expressive of core Mughal values.

Ataga Khan's tomb is built of rough sandstone faced with fine red sandstone and marble, the latter covering much of the body of the building and the entire dome. The building is a cube 10 meters on a side and 10 meters to the base of the outer dome, which is 4 meters in diameter (fig. 16). As in Humayun's tomb, this outer dome covers a lower, inner dome, some 9 meters above the tomb floor. Accessed by a wooden



Fig. 15. Tomb of Ataga Khan, north side, with view of the courtyard qibla and the *jamā'at khāna*. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

door, the entrance into the tomb is on the south (fig. 17). Over this entrance is an inscription that provides a completion date of 974 (1566–67). The other three sides have elaborate jalis (stone grill windows) that filter and diffuse light (fig. 18).

Technically, Ataga Khan's tomb is far more refined than the one constructed for Maham Anaga and Adham Khan: its red sandstone and marble facings are superbly carved, its jalis rival those in Humayun's tomb, and its dome glistens in white marble and, importantly, can be seen from the *dargah's* courtyard, where the marble floors and the tomb of Nizam al-Din underscore the Mughal association of marble with saintliness. Its beautiful cursive inscriptions, some of the most powerful



Fig. 16. Tomb of Ataga Khan, south and east sides. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

and impressive examples of early Mughal epigraphy, present a unique and complex program that illuminates the meaning and function of the tomb.

Often associated with kingship and royal authority, the thirty verses of Qur'an chapter 30, *al-Mulk* (Sovereignty), are distributed evenly on the four sides of the exterior, around the marble arches of the iwans. Verses 1–7 on the exterior west wall focus on divine power and God's punishment for disbelievers, while 8–17 on the north wall proclaim God's omniscience and omnipotence and promise resurrection. Verses 18–26 on the east wall describe God as provider and creator; 27–30 on the south wall (fig. 17) issue a deliberate warning to disbelievers. Given the proximity of the *dargah*'s huge stepwell, which is visible from the east wall of the tomb platform, it seems appropriate that the final verse refers explicitly to water: "Say: Have ye thought: if (all) your water were to disappear into the earth, who then could bring you gushing water?"

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Fig. 17. Tomb of Ataga Khan, south entrance. (Photo: Anthony Welch)



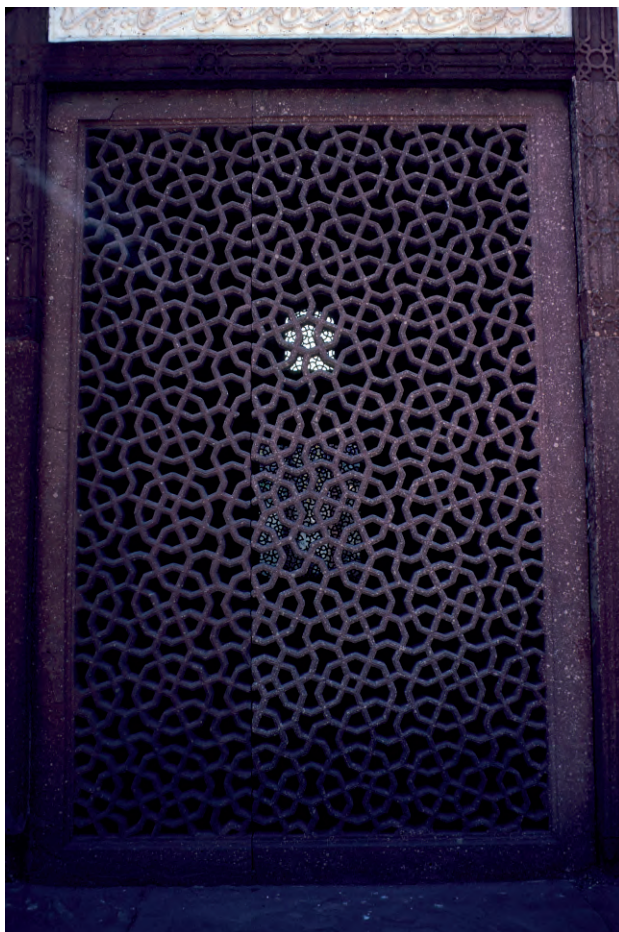


Fig. 18. Tomb of Ataga Khan, east jali. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

These inscribed verses, all from the same chapter of the Qur'an, serve to bind together all four sides of the building, enhancing the unity of the architecture. With its pledge of punishments for disbelievers and its promise of resurrection for believers, *al-Mulk* is often associated with martyrs. Taking into consideration Abu 'l-Fazl's explicit identification of Ataga Khan as a martyr, we may then view the inscriptions as providing a neat tie-in with the nearby *dargah* of Nizam al-Din: Ataga Khan is a pious man and a quasi-holy figure whose death in a clan war is here magnified and interpreted in religious terms. As the righteous one who died in a just cause—service to Akbar—Ataga Khan is entitled to share in the *baraka* of Nizam al-Din's tomb and *dargah*. The location of his tomb in

this holy place guaranteed that it would become a pilgrimage site: it is not an isolated structure, but a building carefully incorporated into one of the most sacred sites in north India.²¹

The epigraphic program of Ataga Khan's tomb does not end with Qur'an chapter 30. Again proceeding from the western to the southern exterior, we find coordinated Qur'anic inscriptions. Above the west jali are verses 168–69 of chapter 3, *Āl 'Imrān* (The Family of 'Imran), which explicitly promise Paradise for those martyrs who die in God's cause: "Think not of those who are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision."²² The same verse is repeated above the north jali, presumably for emphasis. Martyrdom is again highlighted on the east jali, with verses 154–55 of chapter 2, *al-Baqara* (The Cow), which promise eternal life for those who are steadfast. The south jali, which pierces the entrance wall into the tomb, features verses from two different chapters: Verses 180–82 of chapter 37, *al-Shaffat* (Those Who Set the Ranks), offer divine power and peace for those who come to warn disbelievers. They are followed by the five verses of chapter 97, *al-Qadr*, understood by mystics as the preeminent expression of the transforming power of the Revelation. The proximity of this last inscription to the *dargah* founded by one of the greatest Muslim mystics in India was singularly appropriate:

Lo! We revealed it on the Night of Power.

Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Night of Power is!

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.
The angels and the Spirit descend therein, by the permission of their Lord, with all decrees.

(That Night is) Peace until the rising of the dawn.

The tomb entrance is also to the south. Over the doorway is a *munājāt*, an Arabic religious poem comprising a statement of submission and a prayer for forgiveness; it, too, is appropriate for a tomb and pilgrimage site. Moreover, in the spandrels of each iwan is a hexagonal medallion containing a three-part Kufic inscription of the name of 'Ali: the Ataga Khan clan was Shi'i and, like Imam Husayn, its leader had been martyred. The exterior of the tomb, therefore, has a coherent epigraphic program that appears in no earlier Sultanate or Mughal structure.

Unfortunately the interior has suffered terribly. It was once covered with exceptionally fine plaster decoration, of which only small pieces remain. These



Fig. 19. Tomb of Ataga Khan, cenotaphs. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

fragments contain portions of Qur'an 12 (*Yūsuf*): 39–40:

... Are divers lords better, or Allah, the One, the Almighty?

Those whom ye worship beside Him are but names which ye have named, ye and your fathers. Allah hath revealed no sanction for them. The decision rests with Allah alone, Who hath commanded you that ye worship none save Him. This is the right religion, but most men know not.

One of the principal functions of Islamic epigraphs in late-twelfth-century India was to warn the non-Muslim majority to accept Islam. This is doubtless the message of *al-Mulk* on the exterior of Ataga Khan's tomb, and although what remains of the interior inscription program is far too small a sampling to support a detailed interpretation, these verses from *Yūsuf* probably serve a like purpose. The Qur'anic Yusuf was a steadfast worshiper of God and a model of righteous behavior; the most trusted servant and adviser of the king, he withstood the temptation to betray his ruler and has attained the Paradise to which Ataga Khan aspires.²³

Another passage from *Yūsuf* plays a significant role here. Of the seven grave markers in the tomb, three are finely carved marble cenotaphs befitting individuals of high rank. Two of these are identified by inscription as marking the graves of Ataga Khan and his wife Jiji Anaga (fig. 19). No inscriptions identify the third marble cenotaph, but there seems little reason to doubt that it covered the grave of the couple's elder son (and Akbar's foster brother), Yusuf Muhammad Khan, who, as mentioned earlier, died in 973 (1566–67) of alcoholism, perhaps brought on by grief over his father's death. Not only is the use of Qur'an 12:53–56 singularly appropriate for someone named Yusuf; it also strongly suggests that this family member held a position of authority to which the final verse of the selection alludes: "Thus gave We power to Joseph in the land. He was the owner of it where he pleased. We reach with Our mercy whom We will. We lose not the reward of the good."

The contemporary historian Bada'uni (b. 1540) recounts an incident suggesting that Yusuf Muhammad Khan, like the Yusuf of the Qur'an and the works



Fig. 20. Tomb of Ataga Khan, inscription on the south side. (Photo: Anthony Welch)

of Nizami and Jami, was extraordinarily handsome. According to Bada'uni, one Tazarvi of Abhar, serving in the army of the rebellious Bayram Khan, was captured in 1560 by forces led by Ataga Khan. Despite his disloyalty, he was well received by Akbar. Attempting to ingratiate himself with Ataga Khan, he "composed his treatise *Beauty and Yusuf* for Yusuf Muhammad Khan," the twelve-year-old son of Ataga Khan.²⁴ Verses 53–56 of *Yusuf* emphasize the loyal service and personal trustworthiness of the Qur'anic Yusuf, who was also very young; the passage may therefore provide a pointed reference to the Mughal Yusuf, who, only eighteen when his father was murdered, continued to serve Akbar faithfully despite the terrible event. All told, the use of verses from *Sūra Jūsuf* serves a triple purpose, identifying the cenotaph, reinforcing the

function of the building as a family tomb, and underscoring the value of trust and loyal service.

Ataga Khan's tomb also furnishes valuable historical information. The name of the scribe, Baqi Muhammad al-Bukhari, appears over the exterior western, southern, and northern arches; unfortunately, this calligrapher is not mentioned by Abu 'l-Fazl, although he obviously possessed great skill (fig. 20).²⁵ Over the south entrance, the date 974 (1566–67) is provided, along with the information that the tomb was constructed under the superintendence of one Ustad Khuda Quli. He likewise is not mentioned by Abu 'l-Fazl, but the style of the tomb suggests that he was associated with the designer(s) of Humayun's tomb.

Built at the same time, the tombs of Ataga Khan and Adham Khan are dramatically different in form, location, decoration, and function. Adham Khan was not a martyr, and his monumental tomb is therefore deprived of pious context. Indeed, from Abu 'l-Fazl's account, it would seem as if it was built primarily to house his mother, and that his burial there, while necessary, was not meant to be particularly emphasized: the building and his inclusion in it were simply ways to pacify his still-powerful court faction.

Ataga Khan's tomb, in contrast, is part of the Chishti *dargah*. A mere two minutes' walk to the grave of Nizam al-Din himself, it is also in the immediate vicinity of Humayun's tomb. Its extensive epigraphic program is intended to establish Ataga Khan as a martyr whose tragic death, as Abu 'l-Fazl would have it, is to be lamented.

Both of these two foster relatives of Akbar merited tombs: Adham Khan for his military successes and the identity of his mother, and Ataga Khan for his rescue of Humayun and devotion to Akbar as well as for the status of his wife. Indeed, the two women—Maham Anaga and Jiji Anaga—were as important to Akbar as the men. The tombs thus were built as monuments to several individuals, two rival families, and a defining moment for the Mughal dynasty, when the young ruler demanded the reconciliation essential to the future of his empire.

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NOTES

1. Oleg Grabar, "The Uayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem," *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959): 220–24.

2. Abū 'l-Faẓl ibn Mubārak, *The Akbarnāma of Abu'l-Faẓl*, 3 vols., trans. H. Beveridge (repr. Delhi, 1973), 2:269. Abū 'l-Faẓl also tells the story in his *Ā'in-i Akbarī*: see Abū 'l-Faẓl ibn Mubārak, *The Ā'in-i Akbarī*, 3 vols., trans. H. Blochmann (vol. 1) and H. A. Jarrett (vols. 2 and 3) (repr. New Delhi, 1977), 2:340–42. His contemporaries also recognized the importance of the event: it is recorded, though with less dramatic effect, in 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Mulūk Shāh Badā'ūnī, *Muntakhabu-t-tawārīkh*, 3 vols., trans. W. H. Lowe (Calcutta, 1884–1925), 2:49–50, and Shāhnavāz Khān Awrangābādī, *The Ma'āṣir al-Umarā*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3 vols. (repr. New Delhi, 1979), 2:159–60).
3. Abū 'l-Faẓl, *The Akbarnāma*, 2:269–70. Similar information is presented in Abū 'l-Faẓl, *The Ā'in-i Akbarī*, 2:340–42, in his biographical entry on Adham Khan.
4. Abū 'l-Faẓl, *The Akbarnāma*, 1:340: "The name of his father is unknown; he is evidently a royal bastard." He had an older brother, Baqī Khan (ibid., 3:655).
5. Ibid., 2:208
6. Ibid., 2:235
7. Ibid., 2:129
8. Ibid., 2:142
9. Abū 'l-Faẓl, *The Ā'in-i Akbarī*, 1:343.
10. Abū 'l-Faẓl, *The Akbarnāma*, 2: 275. Abū 'l-Faẓl's wording suggests that the building that is now always identified as "Adham Khan's tomb" was intended to be first and foremost the tomb of Maham Anaga and only secondarily the mausoleum of her son. As we will see, in addition to being Akbar's foster mother, Maham Anaga was an important patron of architecture in her own right.
11. Perhaps more accurately identified as Delhi's first congregational mosque and minar, though the modern names will be used here.
12. Beginning with the 1323 tomb of Prince Zafar Khan, octagonal tombs had been constructed in the Delhi area; subsequent Sayyid and Lodi rulers in the fifteen and sixteenth centuries were prolific patrons of the form. Square tombs had been built there since the tomb of Sultan Iltutmish was constructed ca. 1235. There does not appear to be a particular meaning associated with the use of either form.
13. Hence its local name, the Bhul-Bhulaya (labyrinth).
14. The most impressive early Sultanate epigraphic program is found on the Qutb Minar, on the qibla screen of the Quwwat al-Islam Mosque, and on the Alai Darwaza. For an analysis of these inscriptions see Anthony Welch, Hussein Keshani, and Alexandra Bain, "Epigraphs, Scripture, and Architecture in the Early Delhi Sultanate," *Muqarnas* 19 (2002): 12–43.
15. Adham Khan's brother Muhammad Quli Khan was buried about 150 meters southeast of the Quwwat al-Islam Mosque in an octagonal mausoleum consistent with contemporary Mughal tomb architecture.
16. This point is further elaborated in Anthony Welch, "Gardens That Babur Did Not Like: Landscape, Water and Architecture for the Sultans of Delhi," in *Mughal Gardens: Sources, Places, Representations and Prospects*, ed. James L. Westcoat and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, DC, 1996), 59–94. Timur conquered and sacked Delhi in 1398; the Mughals regarded this famous victory as a justification for their invasion of India.
17. The chronogram yields the date 969 (1561–62). Translation from Stephen Carr, *The Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi* (Delhi, 1876), 199–200.
18. English translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York, n.d.), 204–5. All subsequent Qur'anic translations are also from this source. The prayer chamber itself is decorated with circular plaster medallions that are inscribed with the *shahāda* and brief invocations such as "O God, O Victorious, Sovereignty [belongs] to God." Around the central mihrab is a fragmentary inscription of the Throne Verse (2:255).
19. Akbar became a *murīd* (disciple) of Shaykh Salim Chishti and traveled to Delhi in 1564, 1566, 1567, 1568, and 1570 to visit the *dargah* as well as the tomb of his father, Humayun.
20. In the 1597–98 *Thamarat al-Quds* (cited in Zafar Hasan, *A Guide to Nizamu-d Din*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, no. 10 [Calcutta. 1922]), Maham Anaga's husband, Shihab al-Din Ahmad Khan, is credited with building a dome with latticed walls over Amir Khusrāw's grave in 969 (1561–62). If his pious act occurred after the murder, it was probably intended to be a demonstration of his loyalty to Akbar.
21. An early "secular" tomb comes to mind—that of Sultan Iltutmish, behind the qibla wall of the Quwwat al-Islam Mosque. Celebrated for his piety, Iltutmish was the first ruler to be buried in what would become the vast necropolis stretching south and west of the mosque. His tomb was the first structure in northern India to use *Al-Mulk* (Qur'an 67:1–30) in its epigraphic program. It may be worth noting that these verses are also on the Chawsath Khamba, the 1623–24 tomb of Ataga Khan's son Mirza 'Aziz Kokaltash. But in order not to overemphasize possible implications of martyrdom, it must be added that this chapter also appears on the following intervening structures: the late-fifteenth-century Bara Gumbad Mosque, the late-fifteenth-century Munirka Tomb, and Sher Shah Suri's mosque in the Purana Qila.
22. This is the first time in the history of Sultanate and Mughal architecture that this epigraph appears on a building.
23. These verses are also used here for the first time, but the reference to Yusuf is not new. His name, along with those of other saints like Ibrahim, 'Isa, and Musa, appears on the interior of the dome of the tomb of Firuz Shah Tughluq (ca. 1388), where the Qur'an chapter *al-Qadr* also appears. They may well have been added to the tomb in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.
24. Badā'ūnī, *Muntakhabu-t-tawārīkh*, 3:280.
25. I hope that further research will provide some biographical information on this calligrapher, as well as evidence of other epigraphic programs that he may have designed.

