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- 3.8 Mullah Shah Badakhshi Mosque and Khanaqah, Srinagar, Kashmir (1650).
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## Curriculum Vitae

### **EDUCATION**

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#### **Wellesley College**

JUNE '88

Bachelor of Arts in Architecture

Honors Thesis: *'The Gothic Arch or an Islamic Icon?'*

Advisor: Peter Fergusson

#### **Harvard University**

JUNE '97

Masters in Design Studies

Area: *History, Theory and Criticism*

Thesis: *'Architecture of Gordon Bunshaft: Locating 'Asian' Aesthetic and Affinities'*

Advisors: Malcolm McCullough (Harvard)

#### **Boston University**

JUNE '05

Masters in Art History

MA Thesis: *'Memory, Nostalgia & the Islamic 'Souvenir':*

*An aesthetic framework for the Venetian Landscape'*

Advisors: Jodi Cranston (Art History)

#### **University of Vienna**

Jan. '09

Institute of Fine Arts ABD/PhD

Dissertation: *'Gendered' Landscapes': Jahan Ara Begum's Patronage, Piety and Self-Representation in 17<sup>th</sup> C. Mughal India'*

Advisors: Ebba Koch (Univ. of Vienna Art History), Sunil Sharma (BU, Literature)

### **TEACHING:**

**SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY**, Boston, MA

SEPT. '05-Present

**Assistant Professor**

- **Art History I and II (Pre-historic to Contemporary)**
- **Court to Empire: Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Arts**
- **Contemporary Indian and Islamic Art: Framing and 'Reclaiming' Identities**
- **Arts of the Silk Road**
- **Women in Art and Society: Eastern and Western Perspectives**

**DARTMOUTH COLLEGE**, Hanover, MA

SEPT. '06-'08

*Senior Lecturer-Art History Dept.*

*Honors Thesis: Second Reader and Advisor (History Dept.): "Perceptions and Personas of the Mughal Empress Nur Jahan, 17<sup>th</sup> C. India."*

- **The 'Sensual' in the Sacred and Secular: Female Agency in the Arts of India** This course introduces Indian art and visual culture from the 1st to the 20th century. The primary objectives of the course is to see how the arts reflect and engage with Indian notions of gender and body politics, visions of love, and sexuality, power, and memory.
- **Art History I & II**

**WELLESLEY COLLEGE**, Wellesley, MA

SEPT. '03-JUNE '05

*Visiting Lecturer- Art History Dept.*

*Honors Thesis: Second Reader and Advisor (Art History Dept.): "Objects of Veneration and Souvenirs of Christian Pilgrims: Enlisting Divine Aid and Memory in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> C. Spain".*

- **The Observed and the Envisioned: Female Identity in 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> C. Rajput and Mughal Miniature Paintings**
- **Piety, Paradise and Palaces: Islamic Art and Architecture (650-1750)**
- **Court to Empire: Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Arts**
- **Art History I and II (Pre-historic to Contemporary)**

### **CURATORIAL EXPERIENCE**

**HOOD MUSEUM, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH**

SEPT.'06-AUG.'08

*Adjunct Curator*

Survey, catalogue and digitally document the diverse 'connoisseur' collection of art and photographs from Iran, India and China dated pre-1945. Mellon grant submitted and awarded to develop exhibition, lectures and film series surrounding the collection show titled, "Artists and Gender Economy in Colonial India 18th-20th century Kashmiri shawl production". Developing the exhibition in collaboration with the History, Economics and Anthropology departments and the Dartmouth Cultural Center.

**DAVIS MUSEUM AND CULTURE CENTER, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA** SEPT.'03-'05

*Adjunct Curator*

Developed an exhibition and catalogue titled: '***The Observed and the Envisioned: Representations of Mughal and Rajput Women –16<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> C. India***', scheduled to open on March 9, 2005. The "Observed and the Envisioned", examined traditional miniature paintings and considered how socio-religious ideology shaped and informed female identity under the male artist's gaze during the 16<sup>th</sup>- 19<sup>th</sup> century in India. The exhibition continued this discourse into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a look at contemporary work by Pakistani artist Ambreen Butt whose work extends the tradition of miniature painting and its focus on women within a non-western context. The exhibition provokes important questions about representations of identity across social and religious boundaries, impacting the viewer's reading not only of persona, but also issues of gender, religion, place and body politics where issues of gender are reconsidered and 'reclaimed'.

**MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, Boston, MA**

JUNE'01-APR. '02

*Adjunct Curator*- Using the classical national epic—*Shahnameh* (Book of Kings)- to interpret aesthetic and gender values in 16<sup>th</sup> C. Persian Textiles for exhibition, "***Poetry of the Loom***". The 11th C. Persian poem, the *Shahnameh* was used to interpret the narrative 'weave' of the iconography of sixteenth-century Persian textiles as fashion and function.

### **PUBLICATIONS**

**Marg Publications, Sept. '08.**

"The 'Light' of the Timuria: Jahan Ara Begum's Patronage, Piety and Poetry in 17<sup>th</sup> C. Mughal India",

**The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History, Dec. 2007.**

- Maham Anaga
- Fatima Jinaah
- Hurrem Sultana

**ABC-CLIO Publisher, Dec. 2007.**

"Islam: Saints and Love", Encyclopedia of Love in World Religions,

**Davis Museum Journal Spring, 2005.**

"The Observed and Envisioned: Female Identity in 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian Miniature Paintings", Wellesley College.

## **CONFERENCES**

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**American Association of Religion, Annual Conference Nov. '08: 'Fathers and Daughters in Islam'**

**University of Pennsylvania, History of Art Symposium Fall '08: "Visions of Legacy: Female Patronage in Mughal-Timurid Dynasties"**. October '08.

**Dartmouth College. "Framing the Divine: The Poetic and Pious Discursive in Medieval Delhi, 17<sup>th</sup> C"**.

**CAA/Historians of Islamic Art Associations**, "Reading Sufi Subtext: The Case of the Agra Mosque and Mullah Shah Mosque/Khanaqah, Srinagar, Kashmir. Feb. 2007

**American Council of South Asian Arts:** "'Gendered Landscapes': Jahan Ara Begum's Patronage and Piety in 17<sup>th</sup> C. Mughal India. March. 2007

**Association of Asian Studies:** "From Shariah to Tariqah: The Passionate Piety of a Princess: 17<sup>th</sup> C. *Risalah-i-Sahibiyah*"  
March 2007.

## **AWARDS:**

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- AICA-International Association of Art Critics MAY '06  
Best Historic Museum Show for 'The Observed & Envisioned: 16th to 19th Century Indian Miniature Paintings of Mughal and Rajput Women at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center.
- Mellon Grant for Asian Arts and Cultural Studies (Hood Museum) 2006
- Fulbright Research Scholarship: Japanese Cultural Studies '94 – '96

**LANGUAGES** Persian, Arabic, Urdu, French and Japanese.

**AFFILIATIONS:** Museum Council Steering Committee (MFA, Boston), Advisory Council for Asian Arts (Institute of Contemporary Arts, Boston), HIAA, CAA, AAS, ACSAA.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the constant scholarly support, encouragement and advice of many individuals located across several continents. First and foremost I am grateful for my advisor, Professor Ebba Koch at the University of Vienna and the pivotal role she played from the beginning to the end of my dissertation. Professor Koch's scholarly dedication and passion of as well as compelling research on Mughal history has been infectious and provided the impetus to pursue my own research in this area. Professor Koch's lecture in 2004 on the Mughal Hunt at Harvard University allowed our first meeting where we discussed the possibilities of pursuing the topic of female patronage in the Mughal Arts and her willingness to take me on as a graduate student at the Institute of Art History within the University of Vienna. From this first meeting until the writing of these acknowledgements, Professor Koch's involvement in the research has been steadfast and filled with suggestions for necessary modifications in the pursuit of perfection. For these contributions, I will forever be in her debt and hope to make my current and future research worthy of her advisement. Professor Sunil Sharma of Boston University was instrumental in teaching me Persian and introducing me to a world of Persian literature and poetry that laced the realm of the 'Mughal machine' with an anesthetized aura of romanticism. Professor Sharma's daily diligence in monitoring my progress and keeping me focused on the objectives of my thesis were both heroic and beyond the limits of his advising role. Professor Sharma's help extended beyond Cambridge, MA and reached Delhi, India as he personally accompanied me to several locations in my quest to locate Jahan Ara Begum's original Persian manuscript, *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*. I would also like to thank his father, the senior Mr. Sharma for his time and patience at the Apa Rao Bhola Nath Library in Ahmedabad, India going through over five hundred manuscripts in an effort to locate the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*. I would like to thank Dr. Yunus Jaffrey the eminent Indo-Persian scholar-in-residence in Delhi, India and his family for their generosity in hosting me daily at their home for two weeks in December 2006 as Dr. Jaffrey painstakingly translated a Persian manuscript with me. I am grateful to his niece, Nausheen Jaffrey and her vision in researching and documenting Jahan Ara Begum's life and her informative MPhil dissertation that facilitated my own research. Dr. M. Ikram Chaghatai in Lahore, Pakistan was instrumental in helping me finally locate a copy of the original *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* within the Islamabad University archives. Mr. R.S. Fonia, the Director of Exploration & Excavation at the Archaeological Survey of India, in Delhi provided maps, site plans, working drawings and access to the Mullah Shah mosque in Srinagar, Kashmir. I am grateful for his help in locating these documents. Additionally, Superintendent of the ASI office in Agra, Archaeologist Mr. D. Dayalan personally assisted my search in the archives of photographs and drawings of the Agra mosque and its environs. The Head Librarian Mr. Shakeel Ahmad Khan at the Aligarh Muslim University helped locate and retrieve relevant manuscripts and documentation on several occasions. Pamela Karimi was unfailing in her commitment to the Persian translation of another Sufi treatise and provided insightful commentary and compelling ways to look at the text. Professors Gulru Necipoglu (Harvard) and Nasser Rabbat (MIT) were willing to review conference talks/papers on the dissertation topic and provided encouragement, enthusiasm and constructive comments for its effective delivery. Dr. Elisabeth Goldarbeiter-Liskar at the Institute of Fine Arts gave her support and immediate help in facilitating the sometimes challenging administrative process for my application and approval of my dissertation. Dr. Monika Leisch-Kiesl was gracious and generous of her time in evaluating the dissertation at the last minute and serving as a Reader.

I am most thankful to my family and friends who supported me through their patience, love and encouragement for the past six years while I dedicated my attention to my research and made everything secondary in its pursuit. Of these worthies, my husband, Scott Chisholm deserves the most praise. Scott not only supported my research in multiple ways but encouraged several extended trips to India for fieldwork without complaint. My sons, Essah, Noah and Yusef were forgiving and patient of their mother's absenteeism particularly at noteworthy school and sporting events. My mother-in-law Sandra Chisholm was heroic in her willingness to drop everything to care for her grandchildren during my frequent moments of need and absence. To my longtime and dear friend Clyde Rousseau I extend my heartfelt thanks for accompanying me to Srinagar, Kashmir and all the uncertainties that surrounded the trip. Clyde's cheerful and insightful comments and diligence in helping me measure and draw the Mullah Shah complex facilitated the difficulties of the journey and efficiently surveyed the architecture.

## ABSTRACT

### ENGLISH:

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the physical and ideological 'translations' of Jahan Ara Begum's Sufi affiliations as functions of the princess' patronage and piety in seventeenth century Mughal India. The research considers the manner in which Jahan Ara Begum's major sacred commissions and her biographical treatises are self-representations influenced and guided by her strong affiliations to Sufism and particular Sufi saints. The study considers how these mystical affinities may have sanctioned a 'weaker' *parda* hold on the unmarried princess and allowed her to fully participate in the socio-religious public landscape not as a veiled spectator but as an active contributor who not only commissioned the first congregation mosque in Mughal history but also a major Sufi center of learning dedicated to her pīr Mullah Shah Badakhshi in Srinagar, Kashmir.. The thesis also aims to critically analyze the complex issues of representation raised through Mughal imperial *parda* injunctions, the feminine dimensions of Sufism, Jahan Ara Begum's position in the imperial harem, her writings and her commissions.

### GERMAN:

Das wesentliche Ziel dieser Forschungsarbeit ist das Analysieren der gegenständlichen und ideologischen ‚Übersetzungen‘ von Jahan Ara Begum's Sufi-Zugehörigkeit unter der Schirmherrschaft und Frömmigkeit der Prinzessin im indischen Mogulreich des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts.

Die Forschungsarbeit befasst sich mit der Art und Weise in der Jahan Ara Begum's wichtigste Auftragsarbeiten und ihre biographischen wissenschaftlichen Abhandlungen als Selbstdarstellungen zu betrachten sind, die von ihren starken Bindungen zum Sulfismus und bestimmten Sufi-Heiligen beeinflusst und geleitet wurden.

Die Arbeit beschreibt weiterhin, wie diese geheimnisvollen Bindungen u.U. einen weniger strengen Einhalt des Schleiertragens *parda* für die unverheiratete Prinzessin gebilligt haben, und ihr ermöglicht haben, in der sozi-religiösen Landschaft nicht nur als verschleierter Zuschauer, sondern als aktive Mitwirkende teilzunehmen, und somit nicht nur die erste Moschee in der Mogulreich-Geschichte zu beauftragen, sondern auch ein großes Sufi-Lernzentrum, welches ihrer pīr Mullah Shah Badakhshi in Srinagar, Kashmir gewidmet ist.

Die Arbeit zielt auch darauf ab, die komplexen Darstellungsprobleme zu analysieren, die durch den kaiserlichen *parda*-Vorschriften des Mogulreichs, die weibliche Ausmaße des Sulfismus, Jahan Ara Begum's Position im kaiserlichen Harem, ihre Schriftstücke, und ihre Aufträge bewirkt wurden.

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Fig. 118: Mullah Shah exterior perspective view from maqdoom sahib dargah on northern end (photo: A. Bokhari '06)

## INTRODUCTION

As an art historian of non-Western Arts the methodology of this research is broadly conceived in its consideration of the complex socio-political, historical and religious factors that cultivate an iconological framework in which the contributions of Jahan Ara Begum can be critically and comprehensively examined. The expanded approach not only richly informs Jahan Ara Begum's choices in her patronage, piety, poetry and political diplomacy but pressures and utilizes the male-centered methodology employed by earlier Mughal historians in their critical examination of Mughal emperors and imperial males. Casting Jahan Ara's life and contributions within the same historical framework that has been ascribed to Mughal males not only endorses and locates the princess' place in imperial hierarchy but establishes it as commensurate to her male counterparts in the annals of history both in text form and in memory. The methodology used by Dr. Ebba Koch in her seminal research on Mughal emperors is applied in this research to critically examine the construction of Jahan Ara Begum's personas and legacy.

There is an aspect of Mughal social history that is directly relevant to the subject of this thesis and research. The social strand of history belongs to the genre of scholarly work on the biographies of elite Muslim women. Most of these studies convey the marginal visibility of imperial women and their power as relegated to only domestic spheres. What emerges from this trove of women's histories in the twentieth century is that the

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<sup>1</sup> Bonnie G. Smith. *The Gender of History: Men, Women and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA: 1998), p. 1, 6.

female subject has not been considered intrinsic to the making of official 'history' and therefore given a cursory glance even in female historiographies. Bonnie G. Smith writes that "prestigious professional history based on deep reflection and weighty political topics was for men, while 'amateurish' women pursued a more 'superficial' kind of writing about women and the past." This trend in writing about women was also followed by male historians who wrote about female histories.

Smith's assessment can apply equally well to the way in which Mughal women biographical accounts have been recorded and received. Most biographical sketches of elite Muslim women claim to 'bring a women to life' and continue not to be included in serious mainstream histories nor even as important part of the thinking of "Mughal history". Instead, these biographies (discussed in detail in Chapter I) seems to occupy a separate and not equal realm compared to their male counterparts. For the most part Mughal females are relegated marginal 'filler' spaces in historical biographies of Mughal men where women's 'bold, unbecoming and masculine' maneuvers are contested and even reviled and even counterproductive to sustaining sovereignty as in the case of Nur Jahan discussed later in this work. The unprecedented power brokering of Mughal women is never normalized into a framework that is conducive to or worthy of formal histories.

The biographical survey of this thesis aims to open a neglected area of History and not just an addendum to female historiographies. The thesis not only elucidates the imperial designs on domesticity through Jahan Ara Begum's agency but poses questions about the accepted boundaries of family, household, public and private spheres, gender relations and political power. Jahan Ara Begum uses both her role as the head of the

imperial harem and the spiritual sphere of Sufism to both question and sanction her personal contestations of the stricture of traditional Islam where the unmarried princess modifies the mode of 'dynastic reproduction' to perpetuate the Timurid-Mughal legacy.

This work is not singular in its contribution to Mughal women's histories. During the mid to late twentieth century several biographical sketches and surveys on Mughal women have been written. Both Rekha Misra <sup>2</sup> in 1967 and Renuka Nath <sup>3</sup> in 1990 relied on official histories and sources to inform their biographies of Mughal women and even peppered their lives with the unverified claims of European traveler's accounts. However, what each female historian accomplishes is faithfully replicate the sources without critical examination and comprehensively provide a list of contributions of each female without discussing the consequences or ramifications of those actions and whether these modes of operation were dictated by a patriarchal source or self-initiated or motivated by the imperial female. This style or trend of writing on Mughal women notables remained the dominant trend until Ellis Banks Findly's book in 1993 <sup>4</sup> on Nur Jahan. We are finally given a more nuanced, personalized and even humanized view of the negotiations of female representation and power and its contestation by the prevailing patriarchal-bureacracy. Findly's survey of the prescient feminist is both instructive and revealing however, only considers Nur Jahan's political machinations as a mode of power and doesn't extend the query of representation to the empress' prolific patronage of art and architecture and/or historicize the works alongside Mughal males. Nur Jahan doesn't author text or writings either personal or official that would allow a deeper and more personalized views of her motivations and/or trials and tribulations

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<sup>2</sup> Rekha Misra. *Women in Mughal India 1526-1748 A.D.* (New Delhi: 1967)

<sup>3</sup> Renuka Nath. *Notable Mughal and Hindu Women in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries A.D.* (New Delhi: 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Ellison Banks Findly. *Nur Jahan, empress of Mughal India: Empress of Mughal India* (Oxford, US: 1993).

during the negotiations of power. The contested queen is judged by and against her male counterparts and her assumptions of power are not her successes but the failure of her husband emperor Jahangir to 'control his mistress.

Up until 1993, for the most part, chronological summaries and itemized list of imperial imperatives and obligations imposed on women are the common trend in reporting the histories of women. Rare if not absent from female historiographies is the case where a Mughal woman's voice is enunciated through her own writings to advocate her own authority as a crucial component in the 'Mughal machine'. The only eyewitness account of early Mughal life are the early accounts and narratives of Gulbadan Begum (1523-1605) in her unfinished memoir/biographical treatise on her brother Humayun's (1508-1556) reign, however with beginnings in her father, Babur's (1483-1531) kingship and the details of life surrounding the Timurid-Mughal domestic phenomenon. Though Gulbadan faithfully records and cultivates a rare and rich view of all aspects of early Timurid-Mughal life of both men and women, the unquestioned subjectivity of the author's didactic reporting places her volume on the same 'encyclopedic shelf' as Misra, Nath and to some extent Findly, however, with more details of her laundry list. Though every opportunity exists for Gulbadan to critically examine, pass judgement and/or offer other modalities of existence for herself and the women of her era, she opts for complacency and acquiescence.

Gulbadan as author, historian and documentarian are clear precedents for Jahan Ara Begum's in the writing of her two Sufi treatises: *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* (1640) and *Munis-al-Arvah* (1638). However, unlike the *Humayunama* the treatises are used to explore the multiple ways that Jahan Ara Begum establishes new precedents for female piety,

patronage and political diplomacy and both questions and modifies not only the existings acceptable modalities of practice and representation for royal females but offers through her treatises a more textured, nuanced and polyvocal understanding of female history. Instead of the itemized accounts of Misra, Nath and Findly, we get a personalized view of the inner and outer dimensions of an imperial female whose pattern of participation and negotiations within imperial and patriarchal bureaucracy not only richly informs her life but forges a lens through which we can examine the lives of other royal women. Further, the current research on Jahan Ara Begum's life and contributions critically examines her persona as a function of her writings, patronage and piety and discusses how the princess accepted and negotiated the prescribed imperial and religious values and more importantly how these were modified and recast inot the Mughal landscape as a result of these negotiations.

Recent scholarship that has been instrumental in forging an interdisciplinary and appropriate working methodology and served as 'visionary' as source material for this thesis includes the work of Dr. Ebba Koch whose numerous articles and texts provided historical and ideological information regarding the Mughals and their social and political history. Among Dr. Koch's works, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press 2001) and *The Complete Taj Mahal and the Riverfront Gardens of Agra* (London: Thames and Hudson 2006) have been particularly relevant to my current and on-going research of the Mughals patronage and politics. The ground-breaking front to back essays in *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies* edited by D. Fairchild Ruggles (ed.) (State University of New York Press, 2000) particularly Kishwar Rizvi's: "Gendered Patronage: Women and Benevolence During the Early Safavid Empire" that considers the 'spatial' assertions of royal females in

imperial-significant contexts and how these contributions are forms of 'self-representations' and reifications of gendered authority. Additionally, the collected essays in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, edited by Gavin Hambly (St. Martin's Press, 1998) provided a broad Islamic civilization base from which a pattern of women's participation could be used to locate or use as a point of departure for Jahan Ara's activities. Within this text, Stephen Blake's comparative analysis of Safavid vs. Mughal women in their patronage and representation ("Contributors to the Urban Landscape: Women Builders in Safavid Isfahan and Mughal Shahjahanabad") was particularly thought-provoking and not only listed Jahan Ara Begum's contributions but showed how her major commissions emboldened other imperial women to commission their own high-profile commissions.

Ruby Lal's book *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005) is the first analysis of its kind that not only makes Mughal women visible but also accountable to their positions in the imperial harem. Lal's assertions and critical analysis establishes the framework used in this thesis to challenge the dominant trends of reporting and documenting used by earlier historians regarding Mughal women. Considering the harem as a politically active and complex center of power with women as the players instead of the sleepy, complacent sequestered quarters conveyed in earlier historical and even orientalist accounts of the East. Lal's assertions are intensified and to some extent legitimized by her use of architecture and the proximity and hierarchical arrangements of women's rooms around the emperor's that consciously made them aware of their responsibilities to state, household and empire. The lens of accountability established the point of departure in this thesis to convey Jahan Ara Begum as a female who was 'enjoined' to contribute to the Mughal landscape and was sanctioned and expected to do so. Lal's very original

line of query is precisely what was required for my study of a princess whose predecessor left very little for conjecture.

Jahan Ara Begum's writings that included her poetic ruminations required the thesis to further broaden the interdisciplinary nature of its objective. Just as the princess did not function in a vacuum without influences or resistance, the poetry she wrote was informed by a prevailing interest of the Mughal court and proclivity for cultivating and nurturing Persian poetry. For the Mughal male warrior-aesthete, poetry provided the salve of decency to the treachery and savagery experienced both on the battlefield and in the imperial courts. For women, poetry provided the abstract form that veiled and expressed the deepest and most passionate desires that could never be made transparent. For the Mughal court, patronage and promotion of poetry dulled the harsh realities and allowed the nobles to bathe the ether of sublimity. Dr. Sunil Sharma's encyclopedic knowledge base and critical understanding of Indo-Persian and Sufi poetry particularly the seventeenth century court poet, Abu Talib Kalim's contributions in the form of panegyric poetry on behalf of Jahan Ara Begum's character and her well-being. Additionally, Dr. Sharma's experience with Kalim's writings allowed a critical examination of the epigraphical programs included in Jahan Ara's commission of the Mullah Shah Mosque (1650) in Srinagar, Kashmir.

## **METHODOLOGY AND CRITERIA:**

The institution of *parda* (seclusion of women) and imperial etiquette have been a mark of Islamic societies across the world and through the ages. As a result of this social order, women of the Mughal dynasty in India led sequestered lives where their character was largely hidden from public consumption. The ruling Mughal dynasties (15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries) depended on imperial women to visibly convey spiritual and political well-being through the giving of alms or commissioning large sacred and secular monuments. This expectation allowed imperial women to play a primary, yet private, role in maintaining and sustaining both traditional and folk-religions of Islam in particular the cults of Sūfi saints, their tombs and shrines.

The seventeenth-century princess Jahan Ara Begum (1614-1681), daughter of Shah Jahan (r.1638-1658), took the imperial and spiritual charge imposed on her gender and used the framework of mystical Islam and its seemingly 'female-centered' ideology to cultivate, empower and physically represent her 'official' and private personas within the boundaries of imperial and Islamic paradigms and in the spiritual, literary and built Mughal landscapes. The Agra mosque is analyzed as an example of the princess' 'official' persona and the Mullah Shah mosque and khanaqah complex is considered her private and more personal representation. Further, the personal and passionate narratives contained in Jahan Ara Begum's Sūfi treatises (*Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and *Munis al-Arvāh*) are considered modes of empowerment that facilitated the unmarried princess' broader social, political and religious participation. The study maintains that Jahan Ara's active, authentic and visible engagement with Sūfism was not limited to her ascension in the spiritual sphere but extended to the political realm where her

uncontested, revered, and sanctioned political authority was commensurate with male imperial hierarchies and articulated through her commissions.

This study considers how the mystical affinities and her elevated position in the imperial hierarchy may have sanctioned a 'weaker' *parda* hold on Jahan Ara Begum and allowed her to fully participate in the socio-religious public landscape not as a veiled spectator but as an active contributor. The study hopes to answer the following questions towards its objective: How did Jahan Ara Begum's spiritual achievements within Sūfism liberate her from the confines of her imperial class and gender? Was there, any relationship or correlation between her 'visibility' in her commissions and her role as a Sūfi disciple within the Qadriyāh order? How did Sūfism and her commissions accommodate the 'unrealized' potential of her dynastic reproduction as an unmarried princess and still promote empire and herself the 17<sup>th</sup> century Mughal landscape? The thesis aims to critically analyze the complex issues of representation raised through Mughal imperial *parda* injunctions, the feminine element of Sūfism, Jahan Ara Begum's position in the imperial harem, her writings and her commissions.

Jahan Ara Begum's patronage of sacred buildings and gardens in Northern India and Kashmir, her own writings as well as court documents and panegyric poetry praising these achievements represent a temporal and spiritual aggregate of her Sūfi-informed patronage and affinities and visually express her piety for the mystical branch of Islam. Two primary sources written by Jahan Ara Begum in 1639 and 1640 respectively, *Munis al-Arvāh*, the anthology of the Chishtiyāh saints including Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti and the *Risalah-i-Sahibiyāh*, a treatise whose narratives describe the princess' personal journey within the Qadriyāh order also includes a biography of her Sūfi master, Mullah

Shah Badakhshi. Each of these compelling treatises are historicized and critically analyzed in this thesis as vital and largely ignored sources to understanding Jahan Ara Begum's ideological framework and inner workings. Both literary sources are in the seventeenth century Mughal court vernacular of Persian. The primary fieldwork was conducted in Agra, Srinagar, Ajmer and Delhi.

Islamic theology and jurisprudence formed the underpinnings for the Timurid-Mughal imperial ideology and legitimized their sixteenth century conquest of and expansion in India. Sūfism, however, and its mystical belief systems had a significant influence on the socio-political psyche of the imperial line. The innate constructions of Sūfism viscerally attended some of the most deeply felt social and spiritual needs of the Mughal elite and commoners that orthodox Islam may not have addressed. Sūfi saints served as political and social advisors to Mughal emperors and their retinue where their intercession was informed by religious texts and Sūfi ideology and locally configured frames of spirituality. The inextricable connection of the imperial family to Sūfi institutions was galvanized by marrying state to household that required women to “visibly” represent the pietistic objectives of the ruling house through their largesse. These Mughal ‘enunciations’, according to Ebba Koch, “emerged as forms of communication through a topos of symbols”<sup>5</sup> that ‘gendered’ the Mughal landscape and further, participated in what Gulru Necipoglu has described as the ‘staging’ for the performance of ‘optical politics’ as a

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1 Ebba Koch, Lecture: “The Mughal Hunt”, Harvard University, Dept. of Sanskrit and Indian Studies. April, 2007. I am grateful and indebted to Ebba Koch for her insights, wisdom and encyclopedic knowledge in guiding my studies and analysis of the Mughals and Jahan Ara Begum in particular. Further, Dr. Sunil Sharma’s critical analysis and poetic ‘visions’ of Mughal splendor have been pivotal to my research in cultivating a comprehensive framework for historicizing the Jahan Ara Begum’s literary contributions.

direct function of imperial patronage.<sup>6</sup> The highly politicized and ‘staged’ religiosity of royal women thereby sustained the sovereign and the historical memory of the patrilineal line. Emperor Shah Jahan’s (r.1628-58) daughter, Jahan Ara Begum (1614–81) fully participated in the patterns of political patriarchy and her father’s imperial vision by constructing her ‘stage’ through her Sūfi affiliations, prodigious patronage, and literary prowess. The princess’ contributions fully conformed to the Mughal dictates imposed on her gender and enabled her to assert her spiritual and imperial authority as an agent of her own representation.

This essay examines the Jami Masjid in Agra (1648) [figs. 1,2] and the mosque of the Sūfi saint Mullah Shah Badakhshi in Srinagar, Kashmir (1649–50) [figs. 3,4] as “translations” or visual articulations of the dual personas of the Mughal princess Jahan Ara Begum. The study explores the duality of the princess’ character as exemplified in the design of the mosques and her biographical Sūfi treatise, *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*,<sup>7</sup> as functions of the princess’s imperial obligations and her spiritual affinities within the Sūfi

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<sup>2</sup> For the usage of this term see G. Necipoglu-Kafadar, “Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces”, pp. 303-4. Gulru Necipoglu uses the term ‘ocular politics’ as an ‘instrument’ of visual control used by imperial males within the Ottoman, Mughal and Safavid empires to spatially and socially organize royal women’s visibility and hierarchy that yielded an ‘asymmetry of power’ in gender politics. See, “Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Palaces,” *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): p. 304.

<sup>7</sup> Several translated and original copies of Jahan Ara Begum’s *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* (1640–41) Sufi manuscript have been consulted for this study. The original Persian MS has been cited in the Apa Rao Bhola Nath Library at Ahmadabad (India). The author was unable to locate this MS in the library’s holdings. See citation in the bibliography of Qamar Jahan Ali in her published Ph.D. dissertation (Aligarh Muslim University, Department of Persian): *Princess Jahan Ara Begam: her life and works* (1950), published by S.M. Hamid Ali in Karachi, 1991. A typed Persian copy of the original manuscript was published by Professor Muhammad Aslam in the *Journal of Research Society of Pakistan*, 16/4 and 17/1, an Urdu translation of the original was published by Professor Tanvir Alvi in *Nava-yi-adab*, October 1986, (Anjuman-i-Islam Urdu Research Institute of Bombay, India), pp. 34–51. An unpublished English translation of Alvi’s Urdu work was completed by Dr Yunus Jaffrey and Afshan Bokhari in Delhi, January 2007, and an unpublished English translation of Aslam’s Persian copy completed by Dr Sunil Sharma in Cambridge, MA, 2007.

Qadriyāh<sup>8</sup> order and as “controlled definitions” of her identity. Further, the study considers the unmarried princess’ spiritual authority as a *piri-muridi*<sup>9</sup> that legitimized her “lighting the light of the Timuria” and hence the Mughals into perpetuity<sup>10</sup> in lieu of dynastic reproduction. The study pays particular attention to issues of identity, religion, and gender, and how these are at play in the narratives of the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and in Jahan Ara’s authorial constructions of self. According to Tamiya Zaman, the dynamics of personal narratives written during Shah Jahan’s reign were particularly conditioned by subjectivities “that existed simultaneously” as both personal and imperial prerogatives.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Qadiriyyah order, considered the earliest of the Muslim formal mystic Sufi orders and based primarily upon the principles of Shari’ah, was founded by the Hanbali theologian ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1078–1162) in Baghdad, Iraq. Al-Jilani may have intended the few rituals he prescribed to extend only to his small circle of followers, but his sons broadened this community into an order and encouraged its spread into North Africa, Central Asia, and especially India. For a general overview and history of the Qadiriyyah order in India and Pakistan, see Arthur Buehler, “The Indo-Pak Qadiriyya”, *Journal of the History of Sufism* (Special Issue, the Qadiriyya Order), and Fatima Bilgrami, *History of The Qadiri Order in India During 16th–18th Century* (Delhi, Sadr Bazaar: Jayed Press, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> A *pir* (usually male) is a Sufi master who is well-versed in the philosophy of his particular Sufi order. A *pir* guides and counsels others on the Sufi path. Women were generally disallowed this revered status. However, those who did ascend to the level of a *pir* through observance of Sufi doctrine, “union with the divine”, constant prayer, etc. would informally earn the status of *pir-murid* (master-disciple). For an overview of the *pir-murid* state, see Kelly Pemberton, “Muslim Women Mystics and Female Spiritual Authority in South Asian Sufism”, in *Contesting Rituals: Islam and Practices of Identity-Making*, eds. P. Stewart, and A. Strathern (Durham: North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 3–39. Please note: Though the term *piri-muridi* is not used in the context of Sufism earlier than the 20th century, the author has classified Jahan Ara’s spiritual persona thus to facilitate discussion and to distinguish her rank within the Qadiriyyah order.

<sup>10</sup> See Ebba Koch’s explanation for “divine effulgence”: “A Persian concept of a manifestation of the sacred element of fire or light in the person of the rightful ruler, which had evidently endured from Sasanian times but without its original Zoroastrian implications”, in “The Delhi of the Mughals Prior to Shahjahanabad as Reflected in the Patterns of Imperial Visits”, in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology, Collected Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 174. Further, mosque lamps were used to “visualize” God in a religious setting. In an imperial context the “light” of the lamp was a metaphor appropriated to describe the “semi-divine” nature or power of reigning emperors like the Timurid and later Mughal dynasty. The light of the lamp is a visual and a metaphysical “re-creation” of God’s light as well as a symbol for an enduring imperial dynasty.

<sup>11</sup> Tamiya R. Zaman, “Inscribing Empire: Sovereignty and Subjectivity in Mughal Memoirs” (PhD dissertation, (University of Michigan, 2007), 124-131.

Mughal political alignment with Sūfism and particularly the Chishtiyāh order<sup>12</sup> reflected the exclusive relationship between Sūfis and emperors and what Ebba Koch regards as “exponents of worldly and spiritual powers”.<sup>13</sup> Physically and spiritually the Sūfi-Sovereign affiliation established an “aura of sanctity”<sup>14</sup> around the imperial family and metaphysically around Mughal-sponsored shrines and mosques. Jahan Ara Begum’s Sūfi associations and subsequent spiritual ascension under the guidance of her pīr Mullah Shah Badakhshi (1585–1661)<sup>15</sup> extended the imperial imperatives imposed on her class and gender. The princess reached beyond her relegated role of female agency in service of the state and was motivated to seek an elevated Sūfi state or a *piri-muridi*<sup>16</sup> that legitimized her spiritual authority in making claims to an enduring Timurid-Mughal legacy.

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<sup>12</sup> A Muslim Sufi order in India and Pakistan, named after Chisht – the village in which the founder of the order, Abu Ishaq of Syria had settled. The mystical tradition was brought to India by Khwajah Mu’in-ud-Din Chishti in the 12th century. The Chishtiyah gained prominence during Emperor Akbar’s rule (1556–1605) and became intrinsic to Mughal imperial ideology. For an overview of the intrinsic relationship between the Mughal ideology and Sufism, see J.F. Richards, “The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangīr”, in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. J.F. Richards, South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison Publication Series, no. 3 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 252–85; and D.E. Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire* (Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 89–91.

<sup>13</sup> Ebba Koch in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology, Collected Essays*, p. 176.

<sup>14</sup> Kishwar Rizvi, “Gendered Patronage: Women and Benevolence during the Early Safavid Empire”, in *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 123–53. Rizvi analyses the Safavid precedent and tradition of cultivating a shrine-specific “imperial aura” and culture to visibly “enact their vision of rulership”.

<sup>15</sup> For a biographical sketch of Mullah Shah Badakhshi’s life and works see Tawakkul Beg’s Sufi treatise, *Nuskhah-i Ahwal-i-Shahi* (Persian), MS British Museum, 3203, Rotograph (No. 138), 1667.

<sup>16</sup> See Kelly Pemberton’s contemporary classification of this liminal Sufi-devout state, in *Contesting Rituals: Islam and Practices of Identity-Making*, pp. 3–39.

## CHAPTER I

### **The Presence and the Paradigm of The ‘Absent’ Timurid-Mughal Female**

A recurring female stereotype in Muslim societies has generally been described by pre-modern western historians and scholars to occupy an ‘invisible’, yet despised, servile, contested or highly sexualized position in the social, political or economic framework of Islamic civilization. Aside from the scholarly strides taken in the field of women’s studies since latter half of the twentieth century, the elite and common Muslim woman and her ‘self-representation’ in the public realm had been either dismissed or at best marginalized by historians and confined to a domestic sphere where aside from her role in reproduction remained ‘invisible’ and ineffectual in the annals of history. Ronald C. Jennings <sup>17</sup> has surveyed Islam from its ‘beginnings’ to the first half of the twentieth century and maintains that the religious and social belief systems have supposedly heaped indignities and scorn upon the ‘weaker sex’ and has relegated them to an inferior status without any recourse from women, regardless of social or economic status. Other scholars and historians have made passing reference to the status of all

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<sup>17</sup> Ronald C. Jennings, “Women in Early 17<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Judicial Records—The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18 (1975): 53-54.

women and their lack of participation and representation in Islamic society and have relied heavily on emphasizing the practice of *parda*, or veiling, polygamy, concubinage, and the social politics of the imperial *haram* as factors complicit in relegating women their 'second-class' citizenship or making them unaccountable and therefore, 'invisible' in society.

The objective of this chapter is two-fold. It aims to explore the activities of select exemplary elite women from the Timurid-Mughal lineage to make 'visible' and disabuse their contested absence from the social, religious and political landscape of their imperial legacies and secondly to use the rubric of this historic female legacy to consider the actions of the seventeenth-century Mughal princess Jahan Ara Begum (1614-1681), the primary subject of this dissertation. The study will survey imperial women's participation in the practical politics of constructing empire to cultivate an informed framework in which to consider how the established precedents, paradigms and patterns of power and female representation were appropriated, modified or rejected not only by each successive royal female in the Timurid-Mughal lineage but specifically how Jahan Ara Begum (1614-1681) responded to her female legacy in wielding and making 'visible' her own authority and identity. The analysis considers the distinct manner in which each royal female enunciated, couched or artfully negotiated her power and identity and how these actions may have been perceived by the reigning emperor and/or his retinue and remembered by official histories. From the politics, participation and accountability of Timurid-Mughal females emerges several archetypes to modify and dispel the existing canons or stereotype of Muslim women. The canon is further enhanced and 'textured' by Jahan Ara

Begum's nuanced contributions during the reign of her father the emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658) and whose authority and political and spiritual proclivities made 'visible' yet another female paradigm in the Timurid-Mughal legacy.

Through Jahan Ara Begum's spiritual affiliation and agency as well as the actions of her Timurid-Mughal female predecessors, this study 'modifies' or broadly re-defines Jennings' absolute and unchanging assumptions of all strata of Islamic society and the role of women as unaccountable. The research is specific to examples of elite women in Islamic society and though it does not explore the case of the subaltern woman in Muslim society which is beyond the scope of stated objective, it offers new perspectives and axes to re-assess the existing canons. The survey dispels the myth of the oppressive female as constant or relegated to a servile place in medieval or modern society and instead offers an evolving paradigm with shifted female roles and agencies. The most compelling phenomenon that champions Islamic ideology in privileging women is conveyed through Jahan Ara's spiritual devotion to Islam's mystical branch, Sūfism. The princess described her devotion in her own words in her two Sūfi treatises, *Munis al-Arvāh* (1639) and *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* (1640). The personal and passionate narratives contained in the treatises are the crux of this paper's thesis where Islam and its mystical belief systems are considered modes of empowerment that facilitated the unmarried princess' broader social, political and religious participation. The study maintains that Jahan Ara's active, authentic and visible engagement with Sūfism was not limited to her ascension in the spiritual sphere but extended to the political realm where her uncontested,

revered, and sanctioned political authority was commensurate with male imperial hierarchies and articulated through her commissions.

Two dominant portraits of medieval elite Muslim women emerge from early modern histories and convey a 'skewed' analysis of their personas. The women are either prescient 'feminists' such as the Mughal empress Nūr Jahan (1577-1645) who was willing to defy the strictures of a strictly orthodox and 'misogynistic' society to advance her own political agenda <sup>18</sup>, or they are portrayed as oppressed, sexualized and ineffectual members of the imperial *haram*. While the first 'caricature' forces medieval Muslim women into a modern European or American 'ideal' of womanhood the second perspective ignores or politicizes their position and personas. Neither category places women or Islam in terms of their actual practice or 'lived' experience or locates them within an appropriate cultural and historical context to explore the complexity, nuances and highly 'textured' quality of Muslim women's lives, their positions and their shifting roles over time as function of practical politics, social norms and religious 'ideals' in Muslim societies. Further, given the wealth of recent research on elite Muslim women their patronage and political leadership, few studies have emerged from the field of visual culture that conveys their self-representation as a primary and full expression of their authority.

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<sup>18</sup> Ellison Findly, *Nur Jahan: Empress of Mughal India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); see Barbara Metcalf, "Narrating Lives: A Mughal Empress, A French Nabob, A Nationalist Muslim Intellectual," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 54 (May, 1995): 474-80, Gavin Hambley (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), D. Fairchild Ruggles (ed.), *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*. (Albany: State University Press, 2000).

The issues of self-representation, empowerment and 'visibility' are best addressed and understood by analyzing women's political power and their patronage of the arts in conjunction with and during the various historical and dynastic periods of Islam. This methodology offers an alternative axes to interpret the participation and presence of the 'invisible' sex and how women negotiated their representation in the public sphere. Patronage and piety is considered as a form of public participation and as an index of the seventeenth century Mughal princess, Jahan Ara Begum's authority and status as commensurate with male hierarchies of dynastic power, particularly her father emperor Shah Jahan and the Mughal princes in his retinue. The overall theoretical framework and methodological approach of this research is to culturally historicize and 'realize' Jahan Ara Begum's self-representations and contributions to the seventeenth century Mughal landscape as intrinsic to her persona, piety and 'visions' of Timurid-Mughal legacy. This chapter locates the 'realization' of Jahan Ara's authority as a continuum and not precedent among the long line of Timurid-Mughal females who 'paved the way' and/or provided patterns and modes of participation for later imperial women.

Jahan Ara's example, however, compared to her Timurid-Mughal female predecessors conveys an alternative mode of evaluation for the 'invisible' sex of Islamic civilization as independent and not 'ideal' and non-conforming to the stereotypes or caricatures described by earlier historians. This chapter considers Jahan Ara Begum's 'visibility' and authority as commensurate and departing from earlier elite Timurid-Mughal women by examining preceding royal females political and social roles and their patronage in the Timurid-Mughal landscape

between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Toward this objective, the research will shed light on an area of Muslim women's representation that has been often overlooked or dismissed by historians and one that facilitates a historicized profile of an elite female by considering her predecessors, her spiritual affinities, her literary works, her visible and high profile contributions to the Mughal landscape and finally how these operated in Shah Jahan's imperatives for a 'Timurid Renaissance' as specific to his visions of his sovereignty and for an enduring legacy.

### **1.1 Recent Scholarship of Imperial Women: Ruby Lal, Ignaz Goldziher, Leslie Pierce, Stephen Blake**

Recent studies<sup>19</sup> of elite Muslim women have explored a neglected area of investigation, with biographical sketches that include details of women's political activities, commercial engagements, education and artistic talents, construction and supervision of buildings, establishing endowments, and organization of politically-motivated marriages. Ruby Lal writes the first critical social history of women and the cultivation of power in a domestic sphere in the Mughal Empire.<sup>20</sup> Lal dispels the still-prevalent view of the *haram* as little more than a salacious 'paradise' for male fantasies and romantic interludes. Instead, from a wider perspective and new sources<sup>21</sup> Lal conclusively establishes that a

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<sup>19</sup> Gulru Necipoglu in her seminal study of the chief royal Turkish architect Sinan dedicates several chapters to female patronage to explore innovative ways and integrative categories for critically analyzing and understanding his imperial projects as icons or metaphors for female representation, socio-political hierarchies and religious symbolism. See, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), chapters 7-9.

<sup>20</sup> Ruby Lal. *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Lal's work does not consider the primary sources for Jahan Ara Begum in the form of her two Sufi treatises or Aurangzeb's daughter, Zebunnissa's (1638-1702) poetry in her diwan. Besides

significant archive for Mughal social history does exist, even in the canonical sources, contrary to the scholarly consensus that has denied women the privilege of political power in the imperial *haram*. Lal's research writes and speaks from these sources and from the historical and social realities of the Mughal domestic sphere and its female power relations in its own cultural terms and not the stereotypical lens perversely cultivated from early historiographies.

Though Lal's study is significant in highlighting the inextricable links between Mughal males and females and between the political and domestic worlds and particularly female participation in the imperial landscape, these interdependent connections are made to substantiate and serve as extensions of the emperor's and specifically emperor Akbar's (1542-1605) 'epitome of sovereign masculinity'. In Lal's critical analysis imperial women emerge and become 'visible' and accountable to demonstrate their agency however, within a patriarchal framework. Throughout Lal's comprehensive indexes of female authority, one finds little that suggests the inner workings, personal passions or personalities of these imperial women or how these attributes may have been a crucial component of cultivating female agency and authority as constructions of self and not just part and parcel to imperial ideology. The study falls short in only considering Gulbadan Begum's (1523-1603) literary contributions as the only text in a female 'voice' that gives a female perspective on Mughal history.<sup>22</sup>

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Gulbadan Begum, Lal acknowledges not being aware of any manuscripts penned under imperial women.

<sup>22</sup> Lal makes a cursory mention of Zebunissa's (Aurangzeb's daughter) poetic contributions and makes no mention of Jahan Ara Begum's Sufi treatises. Though a critical analysis of these women's literary contributions may have been beyond the scope of Lal's objective for her book, the mention of these women's literary contributions would add another layer of interpretation of 'power' in the domestic sphere of the haram.

Though Lal's study on Mughal women as active political agents in the *haram* certainly makes the royal female intrinsic to the imperial power structures, a closer examination of imperial Muslim women's personal lives and conditions is vital in understanding the connections between their personas and the monarchy and in making them not just 'visible' but accountable in the imperial designs of Mughal courts. It follows, then, that Jahan Ara Begum's patronage and Sūfi treatises, *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*<sup>23</sup> and *Munis al-Arvāh*<sup>24</sup> and the social, religious and political role she played during Shah Jahan's reign will modify and dispel the stereotypical assumptions of medieval Muslim women and expand the existing canonical sources on Muslim women's visibility and their contributions. Through a detailed and critical examination of the Mughal princess' literary and artistic contributions, the study reveals a nuanced, highly textured and multivalent profile that emerges from the 'invisible' or not yet discovered archives and makes 'visible' female agency not only for this particular female figure but conveys a finely honed lens through which other imperial females could be analyzed and reconsidered. Additionally, the contents of Jahan Ara Begum's treatises 're-casts' Shah Jahan's empire and history within a new framework that may revise and richly inform perceptions and frameworks used by Mughal historians that are

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<sup>23</sup> Several translated and original copies of Jahan Ara Begum's *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* date 1640-41 Sufi manuscript have been consulted for this study. The original Persian MS has been cited in the Apa Rao Bhola Nath Library at Ahmadabad (India). The author was unable to locate this MS in the library's holdings. See citation in the bibliography of Qamar Jahan Ali in her published PhD dissertation (Aligarh Muslim University, Dept. of Persian): *Princess Jahan Ara Begum: her life and works* (1950), published by S. M. Hamid Ali in Karachi, 1991. A typed Persian copy of the original manuscript was published by Professor Muhammad Aslam in the *Journal of Research Society of Pakistan*, 16 no. 4 and 17, no.1, an Urdu translation of the original was published by Professor Tanvir Alvi in *Nava-yi-adab*, Oct.1986, (Anjuman-i-Islam Urdu Research Institute of Bombay, India),34-51 and unpublished English translation of Alvi's Urdu work completed by Dr. Yunus Jaffrey and Afshan Bokhari in Delhi, India, January 2007 and an unpublished English translation of Aslam's Persian copy completed by Dr. Sunil Sharma in 2007 (hereon referred as Aslam).

<sup>24</sup> A manuscript copy of the *Munis'ul-Arwah* marked "Ms. Fraser 229", 38 pages and dated 1639, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford England, consists of 83 folios in Persian. At the end of folio 83a the name of the transcriber is "Jahan Ara". The original Persian copy was translated by the author with the invaluable assistance of Pamela Karimi from June-August '06 and further modified with the assistance of Dr. Sunil Sharma. I am grateful for their help.

often limited by entrenched politics and women on the periphery or orbiting around their male counterparts. From this study will emerge a 'new' female Mughal archetype, including the composite of the princess Jahan Ara Begum as both visible and viable in Mughal social, political and religious history.

This chapter surveys existing biographical sketches of select Timurid-Mughal women from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries and considers their contributions to the imperial landscape through their particular *modus operandi* to cultivate the banner of their 'self-representation'. The study maintains that the 'invisible' medieval Muslim woman becomes 'visible' through the didactic maneuvers and contributions of a select group of Timurid-Mughal women and the precedent they established for each successive imperial female. Through the close study of these ambitious, resourceful and resilient elite females emerges an influential and empowered 'archetypal' feminine elite that facilitates and re/directs the pattern of participation of later Mughal women particularly Jahan Ara Begum.

As conveyed earlier, Jahan Ara Begum's actions and decisions did not function in a vacuum. The 'powerful' precedents established by Timurid-Mughal females may have de-sensitized the populace to the particular modes of 'activated' female authority, whether through political acts or prolific patronage, and allowed the unmarried princess to exploit and use these axes of representation by transcending potential limitations posed by Mughal patriarchy or religious dictates. Further, the cultural climate of Shah Jahan's 'Timurid-Renaissance' initiatives motivated Jahan Ara's 'construction' of her authorial self

as the agency that made socio-political and spiritual connections to her Timurid heritage as an imperial obligation and a genealogical argument. In the act of serving as the 'catalytic' agent, the unmarried princess gives 'life' to the Timurid legacy by lighting the 'lamp of the Timuria' into perpetuity as indicated in her self-authored Sūfi treatise *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*.<sup>25</sup> From the Timurid-Mughal female historiography, it is possible to construct a more engaged archetypal imperial woman that serves as the basis for a broader consideration of both the position they occupied within their imperial *haram* and the precedent they established for later 'Indian-Timurid' women like Jahan Ara Begum beyond the temporal realm.

For the most part, generations of scholars of the Islamic past, whether they emerged from indigenous Islamic traditions or were part of the European orientalist frameworks, largely ignored the existence of Muslim women. It isn't until a decade ago that the contributions and roles of early and late medieval Muslim women have been critically analyzed by scholars beyond and outside the shroud of Islamic 'oppression' and jurisprudence. The omission of women from the landscape or as part of critical analysis was all the more strange because medieval Muslim writers by no means avoided the subject, but the majority of nineteenth and early twentieth-century European scholars and travelers viewed Islamic religious culture and law as being repressive toward women. These studies maintained that the women of a Muslim household were 'repositories of male honor' and therefore an improper subject for analysis. Having no contacts with actual women other than servants, slaves, and, from a distance, peasants and nomads, they concluded that, apart from the atypical figures mentioned

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<sup>25</sup> Jahan Ara Begum, *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Persian copy. Aslam, p.11.

above, Muslim women had played no significant role in the shaping of Muslim history or culture.<sup>26</sup>

The 'construction' of the ubiquitous 'oppressed' Muslim female stereotype was not surprising since most European travelers of all periods were disallowed both physical and psychological access to elite women, who remained in their homes or imperial complexes and/or veiled on the street. The 'absence' of the Muslim female from the European visitor's immediate landscape promoted sexual fantasies that included the hidden and exotic attractions of the denizens of the *haram*. This framework was constructed through the reliance on second-hand information or 'bazaari' gossip generated by servants and attendants.<sup>27</sup> The 'eroticizing' of the 'other' is a theme that runs through much of European travel-literature relating to the Middle East, and it occurs as early as visits to Mughal India in the sixteenth-century by English, Italian, Dutch and French travelers. Such polemical and exaggerated descriptions hardly constituted Muslim women's history in the twenty first century sense of the term. One scholarly attempt to 'reveal' medieval Muslim women and bring them to the front of the stage is Ann K.S. Lambton's work *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia* of 1988, in which she devoted a chapter, "The Women of the Ruling House," to women's political

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<sup>26</sup> Many of the observations/conclusions in this paragraph are distilled from the following sources: Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Haram: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp5-8, Gail Minault, *Voices of silence*, (English translation of Khwaja Altaf Hussain Hali's *Majalis un-nissa and Chup ke dad*. Trans. & edited by Gail Minault (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1986), Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale Press, 1992), Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Haram Girlhood* (Reading, MA: Basic Books, 1995) and *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (Reading: Basic Books, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> Peter Burke. "The Philosopher as Traveller: Bernier's Orient," in Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubies (eds.), *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), Introduction and pp. 131-134.

and economic roles of the Saljukid and Ilkhanid dynasties.<sup>28</sup> Lambton analyzes the tribal customs of the Saljukids and considers Saljuk women as agents of social and political change through marital alliances where they played an important role in political policy among the succession states. In her study, Lambton asserts that from the 'hazards of the early Saljuks, Ilkhanids' and later Timurid women's nomadic lifestyles emerged resilient and resourceful women who were motivated and required to fully participate in the domestic and political life of the peripatetic pre-dynastic tribal societies.

Domesticity and politics were not the only spheres where medieval Muslim women's role has been considered. Over a century ago, the Islamicist Ignaz Goldziher considered and questioned the part women had played in the world of traditional Islamic folk-religion, where the cults of holy persons, their tombs, and shrines addressed some of the most deeply felt needs of the community. In an article, "Le culte des saints chez les Musulmans," he challenged the notion that women were essentially excluded from the spiritual life of Islam.<sup>29</sup> Goldziher correctly recognized that women played a major part in the maintenance of folk-cults and pilgrimages to local shrines, besides sometimes being in themselves objects of intense veneration. The cult of holy women was, for him, clearly indicated in the Cairene shrines of al-Sayyida Nafisa and al-Sayyida Zaynab.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> New York: Persian Heritage Foundation, 1988. I should also mention another important article written by Franz Rosenthal, "Fiction and Reality: Sources for the Role of Sex in Medieval Muslim Society," in *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, ed. A.L. al-Sayyid Marsot (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1979), pp.3-22.

<sup>29</sup> I. Goldziher, "Le culte des saints chez les Msusulmans" *Revue de l'Histoire des religions* 2 (Paris,1880): 257-351; see pp. 286-95. For an English translation of Goldziher, see *Muslim Studies*, ed. S. M. Stern, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1966-71), vol. 2, pp.270-79.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Sayyida Nafisa was the great-granddaughter of Imam Husan, himself the grandson of the Prophet. Celebrated for her learning and piety, her mausoleum near the mosque of Ahmad ibn Tulun became a focus of pilgrimage.

Goldziher's archetypal Muslim female in the figure of elite Timurid and Mughal woman exercising their spiritual and imperial authority as functions of their piety will be an underlying theme in this research and discussed in detail in chapter two through the framework of analyzing Jahan Ara Begum's affinities for Sūfism, Islam's mystical and often contested 'cousin' and through her architectural commissions. Jahan Ara's example is particularly relevant to Goldhizer's analysis of Muslim women's role and spiritual authority specifically women's relationship to shrines of revered mystical saints and as spiritual 'agents' that ensure imperial legitimacy and perpetuate dynastic legacy as part of practical politics.

Goldziher's insights may have inspired Margaret Smith's full-length study of the life and teachings of the early woman mystic, Rabi'a of Basra (95-185/713-801), which first drew attention to the role of women Sūfis.<sup>31</sup> In doing so, Smith posed questions which have yet to be answered regarding the place of women in Islamic spirituality, and especially in its mystical branch of Sūfism. Annemarie Schimmel committed to studying Sūfism and its 'feminine' element both in its theology and its practice:

"The attitude of Sūfism toward the fair sex was ambivalent, and it can even be said that Sūfism was more favorable to the development of feminine activities than other branches of Islam. The veneration of Fatima in Shia circles is indicative of the

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<sup>31</sup> Margaret Smith, *Rabi'a the Mystic and Her Fellow Saints in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928.)

important role that could be assigned to the feminine element in Islamic religious life.”<sup>32</sup>

For J. Spencer Trimingham, “Mysticism was the only religious sphere where women could find a place,”<sup>33</sup> whether as individual devotees or as members of religious communities. It is no exaggeration to say that the study of women in relation to Sūfism is still in its infancy, whether in terms of the lives and teachings of individual women mystics, of women’s roles in the lives of Sūfi *shaykhs* and on the Sūfi literature by female mystics.

Jahan Ara Begum’s seventeenth-century Sūfi treatises, *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and her anthology of Sūfi saints, the *Munis-al-Arvah* are particularly relevant in not only supplanting the ‘misogynistic’ views of some Sūfi mystics towards their female counterparts<sup>34</sup> but also in shedding light on the role of women in and the practice of mystical Islam. The contents of the treatise not only authenticate Jahan Ara’s mystical experience but are offered as proof of her spiritual authority as a *piri-muridi*.<sup>35</sup> The treatises are closely analyzed later in this work and ‘read’

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<sup>32</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p.426.

<sup>33</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 18.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Hujwiri (d. ca. 1071), writer of a manual on Sufism, entitled *Unveiling the Hidden*, argues for celibacy in males as the primary means to enlightenment and toward this end openly expresses misogynist attitudes toward women and particularly those female who claim to be mystics.

<sup>35</sup> A *pir* (usually male) is a Sufi master who is well-versed in the philosophy of his particular Sufi order. A *pir* guides and counsels others on the Sufi path. Women were generally disallowed this revered status. However, those who did ascend to the level of a *pir* through observance of Sufi doctrine, ‘union with the divine’, constant prayer, etc. would informally earn the status of *pir-murid* (master-disciple) or a *khalifat* or *pir*’s delegate. For an overview of the *pir-murid* state, see, Kelly Pemberton’s article, “Muslim Women Mystics and Female Spiritual Authority in South Asian Sufism”, in *Contesting Rituals: Islam and Practices of Identity-Making*, eds. Stewart, P and Strathern, A. (Durham: North Carolina Press, 2005) pp.3-39. Please note: As the term *piri-muridi* is not used in the context of Sufism earlier than the 20<sup>th</sup> C., the author has taken liberties to label Jahan Ara’s spiritual persona to facilitate discussion and to distinguish her rank within the Qadriyah order. See footnote 13 in this chapter.

from within their proper historical and social context. This methodology will allow an analysis of the contents of the treatises as an ‘active’ repository in response to or conditioned by contemporary socio-political phenomenon. The literary works penned under Jahan Ara Begum’s authorship attempt to bring a more nuanced and polyvocal understanding of both mystical Islam and women’s place within it.

The treatises have not received the scholarly attention they merit considering they are not only a rare personal account of an elite Muslim woman’s spiritual quest that attempts to personify both Islam through a female ‘voice’ and the ambiguities of the feminine in Sūfi hagiography but also provokes questions of how the framework of mystical Islam and its seemingly ‘female-centered’ ideology<sup>36</sup> may have enjoined an imperial female to cultivate and empower her dual personas within the boundaries of imperial and Islamic paradigms. Further, to consider how the dynamics surrounding Jahan Ara’s spiritual persuasions were informed or ‘shaped’ in major monuments through her prolific patronage in the Mughal landscape and how her example may have encouraged other contemporary royal females to follow suit.<sup>37</sup>

Though mysticism may have provided what Schimmel terms as a female ‘space’ or ‘voice’ in the religious sphere, there existed another pervasive current in Islamic thought favored by the disenfranchised *ulema* during emperor Jahangīr’s (r.1605–27) and into Shah Jahan’s reign that argued in favor of the total exclusion of women from public life, harking back to the *hadith*, “those who

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<sup>36</sup> For an overview of the ‘feminine’ element in Sufism, See; Annemarie Schimmel’s seminal work in *My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam* (New York: Continuum, 1999)

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 3 of this dissertation for details of three imperial female-sponsored congregations mosques built in Shah Jahan’s capital of Shahjahanabad, within one to two years of Jahan Ara’s Agra mosque in 1650.

entrust power to a woman will never enjoy prosperity.”<sup>38</sup> According to al-Bukhari, this *hadith* was quoted by one of the Prophet’s former companions following ‘Ali’s victory over the supporters of Aisha at the so-called Battle of the Camel in 35/656. This *hadith* was what the reformers in the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire had in mind when they deplored the interference of palace women in imperial affairs from the time of Murad III (982-1003/1574-95) down to the early years of the reign of Murad IV (1032-49/1623-40) when the phrase *Kadinlar Saltanati* (the sultanate of women) was coined.<sup>39</sup> Some historians of the Ottoman Empire since the seventeenth century, whether indigenous or Western, have also concurred that the influence of the *haram* was a factor contributing to the Ottoman ‘decline’.<sup>40</sup>

Leslie Pierce’s monograph, *The Imperial Haram*, challenged the notion of the ‘*haram* politics’ as detrimental to the reigning sovereign. The *haram* described in Leslie P. Peirce’s study not only dispels the myth of the women’s quarters as a lascivious ‘sexual playground’ as conceived by the Western imagination but a dynamic, effective and viable loci of power in the Ottoman Empire. The role of women who produced sons was particularly important and pivotal in provincial politics. The rule of the House of Osman was a family affair: sovereignty was held less by any particular (male) sultan than by the family as a whole. This outlook and attitude is broadly derived from both Islamic and Turko-Mongol traditions and one that sanctioned and encouraged Timurid and later

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<sup>38</sup> See Denise Spellberg’s “Political Action and Public Example: ‘Aisha and the Battle of the Camel,” in N. Keddie and B. Baron (eds.) *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*. (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1991) pp.45-57 to fully comprehend the context and meaning of this *hadith* or sayings of prophet Mohammed.

<sup>39</sup> Fanny Davis. *The Ottoman Lady* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 171-172.

<sup>40</sup> Patrick Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire* (New York: Morrow Quill Press, 1977), Introduction.

Mughal women, particularly during Akbar's reign, to cultivate an imperial authority in keeping with the acceptable social and religious paradigms.<sup>41</sup> The general roles assigned to women in Timur's family are similar to those ascribed to females in other nomadic Mongol and Turkic groups of eastern Iran and Central Asia. In such a world the Timurid and later Mughal women of the imperial household could, under certain conditions, hold a considerable degree of power.

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Peirce's analysis is a detailed survey of the conditions which, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, afforded the women of the Ottoman dynasty a remarkable share of both the trappings and substance of sovereignty. Pierce claims that in reality, well-placed women in traditional Islamic societies always had the opportunity to influence public affairs, even if that influence was used inconspicuously. There was always the possibility of a strong female personality determining the actions of a less forceful husband, son, or brother, or of a ruler becoming infatuated with one of the women in his *haram*. This 'pattern' of empowerment among royal females has been exploited by historians to frame Nūr Jahan as the 'beautiful, graceful yet 'cunning' ' consort queen who according to Munis Faruqi, used her power and political acumen to advance her and her family's political agenda.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The standards of assigning authority to female matriarchs in the imperial haram were formalized and instituted during emperor Akbar's reign through both policy and his palace complex at Fatehpur Sikri. See Ruby Lal's *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World*.

<sup>42</sup> Pierce, p.116, 147, 170-185.

<sup>43</sup> Munis D. Faruqi's "Princes and Power in the Mughal Empire, 1569-1657" (Ph.D dissertation, Duke University, 2002), pp.198-200.

More typical of female power in the medieval Muslim world was the figure of the forceful queen-mother who sought to advance the interests of her son, the heir-apparent or emperor, against possible rivals and in doing so, found herself forced to intervene in affairs of the state. There are numerous examples of this phenomenon among imperial women in Muslim empires and their machinations and court intrigues have highlighted their particular 'female' proclivity in the official imperial histories. The political machinations of Akbar's wet-nurse, Maham Anaga (d. 1562) and her mobilization of the 'petticoat government' to protect the young emperor's interests is one significant example that 'visibly' portrays women's participation outside of their sequestered domestic quarters.<sup>44</sup> However, other frequently cited archetypal imperial females played the role of advisors and mentors who made their influence felt by providing valuable counsel to a brother, son, or husband. Jahan Ara Begum, sister to Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb, struggled in her advisory role in the War of Succession and made emphatic attempts to quell the political rivalry and ruthless carnage among the brothers and particularly between Aurangzeb and his father the emperor Shah Jahan.<sup>45</sup> Though Jahan Ara's role as an intercessor and an advocate of royal fealty and filial piety was at times ineffectual, it was revered and acknowledged in official histories and by the royal family as well as political rivals and European visitors and inhabitants.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Akbar Nama*, vol. III. Txt, Bibliotheca Indica Series [1873-87]. Tr. H. Beveridge (Calcutta; Low Price Publications, 1989), p. 130 and pp.142-144.

<sup>45</sup> See *'Amal-i-Salih*, vol. III, pp.290-291, for the letter Jahan ARa sends Aurangzeb during the War of Succession on behalf of her father. See also, Inayāt Khan's *Shah Jahan Nama*, p. 544-554.

<sup>46</sup> Specific incidents where Jahan Ara's diplomacy was sought in detailed later in this chapter.

A work that analyzes royal women and their relationship between familial affairs and domestic conditions of the Mughals is the work of Stephen Blake in his study of Mughal imperial capital, Shahjahanabad, in the years 1639-1739. Stephen Blake makes the argument that the Mughal state was a patrimonial-bureaucratic structure, in which the emperor and his household were of overwhelming importance.<sup>47</sup> According to Blake, a careful reading of the Mughal documents reveals a “remarkable congruence between the state Akbar organized and the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire.”<sup>48</sup> Blake’s conclusions certainly conform to Ruby Lal and Leslie Pierce’s assertions of the inextricable relationship of marrying state to household as part of practical and social politics. In Blake’s close reading of the *A’in-i Akbari* the Mughal emperor is depicted as a ‘divinely-aided’ patriarch whose household was the central element in government. Imperial women’s rank was made accountable through their conspicuous contributions and participation in social politics within and beyond the imperial *haram*. Members of the army were dependent on the emperor, the administration “a loosely structured group of men who were controlled by the imperial household”<sup>49</sup>.

Blake’s study describes the intimate and immediate nature of the Mughal monarchy that was intrinsic and co-dependent on the domestic sphere of the ruling house particularly the politics and participation of the *haram* and conveys other indirect and perhaps more ‘acceptable’ patterns for female participation through private counsel, upholding religious values, and supporting a munificent

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<sup>47</sup> Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India 1639-1739* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.65-69.

<sup>48</sup> Stephen P. Blake, “The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals,” in Kulke (ed.), *State*, p. 38.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

patronage of the arts. The current study elaborates these themes through the figure of Jahan Ara Begum and illustrates the manner in which the 'secondary' and 'sanctioned' means of female authority, noted in Blake's work, were utilized by the princess and through which she makes an authoritative 'gender leap' to her bold commission of the Agra congregation mosque, a structure typically commissioned by imperial males. By crossing the gender lines of patronage, as part of her imperial transgressions, Jahan Ara Begum raised the bar on the historical limitations imposed on female imperial authority and modified existing notions and 'constructions' of medieval Muslim elite women.

## **1.2 Biographical Sketches: Timurid and Mughal Women's Domesticity and Politics**

### **1.2.1 Timurid Women (14<sup>th</sup>- 16<sup>th</sup> century)**

The authority exercised by elite women in the Mughal empire, particularly during emperor Akbar's reign, was real enough even if the practiced and prescription was in the imperial *haram* and whose precedents can be traced to their Timurid female ancestry. Ibn Battuta, visiting the Dasht-i Qipcaq<sup>50</sup> in the 1330's, was astonished to see the authority which was asserted publicly by the wives of Ozbek, Khan of the Golden Horde, during the khan's absence.<sup>51</sup> This tradition of women exercising 'real' power ran as a clear thread through the Turko-Mongol dynasties of Central Asian origin, such as the Saljukids, Ilkhanids the Khans of the Golden Horde, the Caghatayids, and the Timurids followed by the Indian Timurids or Mughals.<sup>52</sup> Many women of the Timurid and Mughal

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<sup>50</sup> The large central desert of Kazakhstan since the ninth century.

<sup>51</sup> H.A.R Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta* Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society, 1958), vol. 2, pp. 340-341.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.480-89 and Introduction.

dynasty wielded substantial power in collaboration with or on behalf of husbands but sustained it and made it more accountable and effective through their own socio-political acumen. A royal female who utilized this privilege to its extreme end was the Mughal Empress Nūr Jahan who is often portrayed in literary sources as the power behind and in Emperor Jahangīr's throne.<sup>53</sup>

Information about the lives, personalities, and importance of women within the Timurid dynasty comes mainly from sources and chronicles of the period, but if many of these 'excerpts' are linked together and placed within a broader context, patterns of rituals and traditions emerge and perceptions of women begin to shift, alter and re-emerge. Some Timurid practices have close parallels to those followed by the Cingizid Mongols, whereas others reflect Islamic traditions current in the cities of Central Asia. In general, Turko-Mongol customs are strongest in the realm of personal life, attitudes toward women and Islamic ideology particularly in the area of architectural patronage. The founder and ruler of the Timurid Dynasty was Timur, or Tamerlane, who reigned from 1370 to 1405 and is one of the best-documented members of the Timurid dynasty. There exists extensive documentation regarding the female members of his family in his *Zafar-nama* or his biographies.<sup>54</sup> Through these documents, the general roles and duties of women of elite circumstances can be understood and can be used to alter the constancy of Jennings' Muslim woman's profile and to better

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<sup>53</sup> Munis Faruqui, p.270.

<sup>54</sup> Sources used to construct Timur's historical sketch include: John E. Woods. "Timur's Genealogy" in *Intellectual Studies on Islam, Essays written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, (eds.) Michel M. Maszzouni and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City: U. of Utah Press, 1990) and "The Timurid Dynasty", *Papers on Inner Asia*,no.14 (Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, Indiana University, 1990), Beatrice Forbes Manz, *Tamerlane: His Rise and Rule*,(London: The Folio Society, 2005) and Justin Marozzi, *Tamerlane: Sword of Islam Conqueror of the World* (London: Harper Collins, 2004).

understand later Timurid-Mughal women as conforming to cultural normative practice.

In general, Timurid women were expected to manage all social and financial decision-making in the absence of the male figures who were engaged in hunting or military campaigns. The absentee emperor or head of household also passed the fiscal responsibility to the imperial females and this role was built into the social framework and fabric of the Timurid imperial household and later adopted by Indian-Timurid royal females. Women's participation extended to even fighting in Timur's army. Many daring Timurid women warriors skilled in using bows, spears and swords were enlisted in Timur's army and risked limb and life.<sup>55</sup> Pre-dating Timurid women's military involvement are the women who enlisted in Chengiz Khan's army.<sup>56</sup> Women's involvement and visibility on the battlefield encouraged elite women to accompany their husbands during extended military campaigns. Humayun's queen, Maryam Makani accompanied her spouse in battle and while he was in exile in Safavid Iran for four years. Women's military involvement expanded their responsibility beyond the domestic and political sphere into the front lines of battle fighting to assert their filial piety sustain the reigning sovereign and his legacy.

Timur as the best documented member of the Timurid dynasty includes detailed accounts of his sisters, wives, daughters, daughters-in-law, and

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<sup>55</sup> Ahmad ibn Muhammad, called Ibn 'Arabshah [1389-1450], *Tamerlane, or Timur, the Great Amir*, translated by J.H. Sanders...from the Arabic life of Ahmed ibn 'Arabshah (London: Luzac Press, 1936), p.324.

<sup>56</sup> Ralph Winston Fox, *Genghis Khan* (London: John Lane,1936), p.45.

granddaughters. The most important texts are his biographies, the *Zafar-namas*, written by Nizam al-Din Shami and Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi, although the comments of foreign observers such as the Spanish envoy Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, and the Syrian Ibn 'Arabshah, help to complete the picture.<sup>57</sup> Genealogical tables of the Timurid dynasty provide lists of the wives and concubines of various family members.<sup>58</sup> Also, a few historically identifiable depictions of Timurid women appear in the illustrated manuscripts of the period.<sup>59</sup> In addition to these literary sources, architectural monuments erected for Timurid women provide insight into their ambition, aspirations, general roles and duties of women and the multiple ways they expressed these characteristics.

The multiple responsibilities of imperial females were built into the social framework and fabric of the Timurid imperial household and were central to its upkeep and endurance. Timurid women had access and the privilege to use the imperial treasuries and were empowered by this freedom. Consequently, the Timurid women included in their broad responsibilities to building empire, the right to commission buildings. Elite women exercised their financial freedom and their dominant roles particularly through their patronage of funerary and commemoration monuments. In the category of powerful Timurid female patrons one finds Timur's wife Saray Mülk Khanam (1341-1408) his daughter-in-law Khanzada-Begam, and his eldest sister Qutlugh Tarkan Agla. Each has

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<sup>57</sup> Nizamud al-Din Sami, *Zafar-nama*, ed. F. Tauer, Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi, *Zafar-nama*, ed. M. 'Abbasi, 2 vols. (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1336-1957); Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlane: 1403-1406*, trans. Guy Le Strange (London: Routledge, 1928), *Timur* [1336-1405], Shushil Gupta (Calcutta: Sushil Gupta, 1952).

<sup>58</sup> John E. Woods, *The Timurid Dynasty, Papers on Inner Asia no. 14* (Bloomington, Ind.: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, Indiana University, 1990).

<sup>59</sup> See Eleanor Sims' Ph.D dissertation, "The Garrett manuscript of the Zafar-Nama : a study in fifteenth-century Timurid patronage", New York University, 1973 for images of the empress Saray-Mulk Khanum, Princess Khanzade, Delshad-Agha,

'gendered' the Timurid landscape through their patronage of madrasas, khanaqahs, funerary complexes and mausoleums.<sup>60</sup> The complex of Shah-i Zinda and its 'gendered' patronage built in 1376 in Timur's capital city of Samarkand is discussed in its entirety in chapter three of this work as precedents for Jahan Ara Begum's commissions three hundred years later.

The origins of Timurid patterns and paradigms for female power can also be traced to Timur's wife Saray Mūlk Khanim. Saray Mūlk Khanim's chevron of prestige was her Cingizid heritage as the daughter of the last ruler of the Khan line, Qazan Khan (d.1346-47).<sup>61</sup> Saray was one of Timur's eighteen wives and was acquired not through formal marital negotiations or to forge military alliances, as was the custom but as war booty from the *haram* of Amir Husayn<sup>62</sup> and Saray Khanim did not contribute biologically to the imperial imperative of dynastic reproduction.<sup>63</sup> Saray Khanim's genealogical prestige not only legitimized Timur's rule but gave her unlimited fiscal access to Timur's treasuries and war booty and earned her a dominant position in the household and enabled architectural commissions like a madrasa and her own tomb mausoleum in the imperial capital of Samarqand which were logically and ideologically linked to the patronage of Timur's monuments. Saray Khanim's madrasa faced Timur's mosque and created a parenthetical relationship to the patron's piety but also reflected imperial precedents in Samarqand: Muhammad Sultan's madrasa-khanaqah

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<sup>60</sup> Roya Marefat, "Timurid Women: Patronage and Power," *Asian Art*, 6:2 (Spring 1993): 29-49.

<sup>61</sup> Yazdi, *Zafar-nama*, ed. 'Abbasi, vol. 1, p. 154; Clavijo, *Embassy*, pp.212-13. Timur's marriage to Saray Mulk Khanim allowed him to add the title of 'guergen' to his honorific.

<sup>62</sup> Clavijo, p.212-213.

<sup>63</sup> Timurid histories refer to Saray Mulk Khanim as *mahd-l a'la* [the exalted cradle], an epithet usually reserved for women who have borne children, however, no biologically conceived children are attributed to her in the sources. See Woods, *Timurid Dynasty*, p. 18. Saray was given charge of Timur's youngest son, Shah Rukh and several of his grandchildren, including Ulugh Beg., This type of guardianship may have 'won' her the matronly title. See Woods, p. 43.

complex.<sup>64</sup> Saray Khanim and Timur's representation through their confronting commissions conveyed their imperial power and their roles as 'keepers' of Islam.

Saray Khanim's madrasa is not unique in the type or size of the structure but its location and relationship to Timur's congregation mosque and in the sight lines of the main Samarqand city gateway. The overall design and the decorative motifs made visual links but the proximity and the sight lines linking Timur's mosque complex with Saray Khanim's *madrasa* conveyed personal and political relationships and confidently locates his wife within the realm of his imperial hierarchy.<sup>65</sup> The pattern of using female-sponsored architecture to 'represent' female authority through its visual link with imperial male agency of the emperor and his hierarchy is also apparent in Jahan Ara's patronage of the Agra congregation mosque and its link with the imperial seat of government at Agra Fort. However, unlike Saray Khanim who remains within the typology acceptable for female-sponsorship: madrasas, khanaqahs, tombs and gardens, Jahan Ara's unprecedented patronage of a congregation mosque at Agra, crosses the gender lines and modifies existing patterns of female representation by making them commensurate with male patronage, power and the larger corpus of imperial monuments and propaganda.<sup>66</sup>

### 1.2b Mughal Women (16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> century)

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<sup>64</sup> Golombek and Wilber, *Architecture*, vol. 1, pp.259-60, and vol. 2, figs.27, 29. Anthony Welch and Howard Crane, "The Tughluqs: Master Builders of the Delhi Sultanate," in *Muqarnas* (New Haven: Yale University Press), vol. 1 (1983), pp.130, 154.

<sup>65</sup> For a description of the *madrasa* and the mosque, See Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, *Architecture*, vol. 1, pp.254-55, vol. 2 pls.63-65, and Clavijo, *Embassy*, pp.280-81.

<sup>66</sup> See chapter 3 of this work for a more detailed discussion of these dynamics in Jahan Ara's patronage.

The contribution of Mughal women to politics during the founding and consolidation of the dynasty were on par with their Timurid 'sisters' and equally relevant to building empire. The importance of the Mughal era in the history of India rests not only on the unification of virtually all of India under an elaborately centralized administration but also on the complexity of its political culture. The finely nuanced character of the 'power games' that shaped the fortunes of the dynasty are nowhere better illustrated than in the lives and acts of the imperial women at the Mughal court, who often exerted an influence far beyond the limits granted them by their male-dominated polity.

Although in principle the Islamic faith acknowledges the equality of men and women in both ability and intelligence, in practice in Muslim civilizations across social demographics, women were not relegated to a servile position but may have been to a subordinate to male authority. The manner in which they negotiated and not acquiesced to this position is the central argument to their empowerment and the crux of this paper's objective. Stephen Blake notes, "...in Mughal India, the contribution and extensive financial resources of royal females as indicated through their extensive patronage conveys a far greater equanimity among the sexes than Islamic 'ideals' may have dictated."<sup>67</sup> Yet despite the constraints on women, many of the mothers, daughters, and wives of the Mughal emperors were the driving forces behind reigning sovereigns and who protected and advanced them by their own will, talents and ambitions all from the confines and comforts of the imperial *haram*.

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<sup>67</sup> Stephen Blake, "Contributors to the Urban Landscape: Women Builders in Safavid Isfahan and Mughal Shahjahanabad", in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, (ed.) Gavin Hambly (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 425.

The Mughal domestic sphere as a locus of power is fully explored in Ruby Lal's seminal study of sixteenth-century court politics and the place of women.<sup>68</sup> Like Pierce, Lal challenges orientalist views of the women's quarters where a domestic world of privacy and at the behest of the emperor's sexual wishes. Instead, Lal weaves an analysis of elite men and women whose everyday lives and public-political affairs were contested and negotiated in the palace and on the battlefield. The study claims and confirms that domesticity and power of Mughal women were a more institutionalized and regulated form of imperial statecraft and ideology during emperor Akbar's reign and was pivotal in the making of a new Mughal monarchy. Lal describes how the Mughal women were not ineffectual inhabitants of the *haram* but were an integral part of the diverse and complicated procedures that went into the making of Mughal imperial polity.

Akbar's new 'gender' standards and ideology were physically instituted by Akbar, on the imperial *haram* through both the design and planning of the Fatehpur Sikri palace complex and through his new imperial policies. The *haram* is therefore not a site where the emperor fulfills his every salacious desire but is the ever-shifting epicenter of politics and power the reigning emperor and stratifies the domestic sphere in several ways: not only in the titlature bestowed upon women and other nobles of the household, but also in the assigning of roles and the performance of activities. What distinguished the female power brokers

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<sup>68</sup> See Ruby Lal's *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

within the *haram* is how they negotiated and sanctioned their imperial authority which ultimately determined how they were perceived.

Timurid-Mughal women's machination in court politics and imperial affairs begins with Aisan Daulat Begum (d. 1505), the maternal grandmother of Zahiruddin Mohammed Babur the 'father' of the Mughal dynasty. The diplomatic maneuvers of Babur's grandmother contributed to his unprecedented military and political success in Central Asia and India. When Babur became the ruler of Farghana at the age of eleven in 1494, he also inherited the legacy of Chengiz Khan through his maternal grandfather, Yunus Khan, the Grand Khan of Mughlistan.<sup>69</sup> But the independence of Farghana was soon endangered by the onslaughts of his paternal and maternal uncles.

Had Babur not had the armed support of some loyal emirs and the active intrigues of his grandmother at this critical moment, it is doubtful whether he could have survived.<sup>70</sup> Aisan Daulat Begum (d. 1505) is known in Mughal history for her courage and integrity. The story of her encounter with her abductor Sheikh Jamal-ud-din Khan conveys both her physical and emotional strength of character in extreme adversity. Aisan Daulat Begum, and her husband, Yunus Khan, were taken prisoner by Sheikh Jamal ud-din Khan. Yunus was forced to surrender her to one of the Sheikh's officers, with no apparent protest by Aisan Begum, who received the officer in her apartment at night. But within moments the man was overpowered by her and her maidservants, stabbed to death, and

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<sup>69</sup> *Babur Nama*, Edited and Translated by A.S. Beveridge (London: Luzac Press, 1922), pp. 12-24.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43.

his corpse flung on the street. The sheikh was impressed by her courage, and she was allowed to return with honor to her husband.<sup>71</sup>

It was with Aisan Begum, a resolute and willful woman that Babur lived from the age of five and under whose tutelage he grew up when his grandfather died. He acknowledged her influence in his memoir in the following words: “She was very wise and far-sighted, and most affairs of mine were carried through under her advice.”<sup>72</sup> Aisan Daulat’s bold maneuvers to protect herself as the repository of her husband’s and tribe’s honor were sanctioned, even if ‘unbecoming’ of a female. Her participation in practical politics to ensure the Timurid legacy, as an advisor to Babur and to serve the sovereign certainly forged the ‘feminist’ framework for later Mughal women’s assertion of imperial authority. Babur’s acknowledgement of his grandmother’s achievements in his memoirs highlights her as an exemplar among women and her representation archived in his memoirs and read by future members of the Mughal household would condition and shift their perceptions of women’s roles and inform the lens through which they observed and evaluated themselves relative to imperial women.

The early history of Timurid-Mughal expansion was particularly dependent on the contributions of each successive generation of women and their personalized approach in their task of empire building and the position they occupied in imperial hierarchy. Babur’s grandmother was not the only female

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<sup>71</sup> Stanley Lane-Poole, *Babar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), p.23.

<sup>72</sup> *Babur Nama* (1922), p.43.

influence on him. Both his mother, Qutlugh Nigar Khanam, and his elder sister Khanzada Begum were close advisors during his years of struggle.<sup>73</sup> After the conquest of Hindustan, ninety-six women of the Mughal clan who came from Kabul to Delhi at the invitation of Babur received *jagirs* (land grants) and other valuable gifts from him possibly in appreciation of the major or minor role they played in his life.<sup>74</sup> Babur's eldest son Humayun, was no less fortunate in finding a mentor in his mother, Maham Begum, the third wife of Babur, daughter of a noble *shi'a* family of Khorasan, who helped him in building his career. She was highly educated, intelligent, and broad-minded. "Maham was the chief lady of the royal household....She was supreme, and had well-defined rights over other inmates."<sup>75</sup> When Humayun received his first assignment as governor of Badakhshan at the age of twelve, his mother stayed with him and not only looked after his comforts but also helped him form his strategies during the days of his apprenticeship.<sup>76</sup> At Humayun's succession after Babur's death, it was again Maham Begum who guided the young emperor in navigating a political path lined with adversaries.

Emperor Humayun's (1508–56) sister, Gulbadan Begum gives us the first intimate and highly 'textured' view of women's lives in the imperial realm and in the *haram* through the biography she wrote in memory of her brother the emperor. We learn from the *Humayun Nama* that in addition to the powerful advisory role that imperial women held, life at the Mughal court was relatively

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<sup>73</sup> Lal, p.22.

<sup>74</sup> Gulbadan Begum, *Humayun Nama*, [16<sup>th</sup> C.] edited and translated by A.S. Beveridge (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1902)(Indian Reprint; Delhi: Idarat adabiyat-i-Delhi, 1972), p.151.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8-9.

<sup>76</sup> J. L. Mehta, "Mughal Empire (1526-1707)" in *Advanced Study in the History of Medieval India*, (New Delhi: Sterling Press, 1981), p.146-147.

free of restraints. We can infer from the details of the Humayun's biography and the biographies of later emperors, that rules of *pardah* were less strictly observed in the imperial *harams* of the first two Mughal emperors than enjoined later by emperor Akbar (1542-1605) and even later by social and religious customs. This pattern suggests that as the royal women of the Mughal dynasty were further removed from the 'prescient' feminist of their Timurid heritage, they acculturated into the prevalent Islamic orthodoxy in India transported by the Arabs to India in the eighth-century. Gulbadan Begum states in her biography of *Humayun Nama* that the ladies of the royal *haram* mixed freely with their male friends and visitors. They often dressed in male attire, played polo, and engaged in music.<sup>77</sup> They were free to remarry after divorce, and some did so more than once after divorce. Mughal women enjoyed a large degree of freedom in choosing their partners, and marriage was not devoid of personal choice. A Timurid woman who exercised her marital options to the fullest extent of propriety was Hamida Banu Begum.

Hamida Banu Begum, Akbar's mother, was Humayun's Persian wife. After his defeat at the hands of Sher Khan in the battle of Kanauj, Humayun took refuge with Hussain, Sultan of Thatta. Humayun first saw Hamida Banu at a banquet given in his honor by his stepmother, Dildar Begum at Pat, a town in Sehawan, a district of Thatta.<sup>78</sup> Humayun indicated his desire to marry the beautiful Hamida Banu, daughter of Mir Baba Dost, a *shi'a* cleric who was the spiritual preceptor of Dildar Begum's son Hindal. Initially, Hamida Banu refused

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., Introduction, pp.7, 31-32.

<sup>78</sup> Charles Stewart, *Jouhar, The Tezkareh al Vakiat* (Private Memoirs of the Mughal Emperor Humayun), (Indian reprint). (Delhi: Idarah-I Adabiyat-I Delli, 1972), p.31.

to marry Humayun, declaring, “Oh, yes I shall marry someone, but he shall be a man whose collar my hand can touch and not one whose skirt it does not touch.”<sup>79</sup> Humayun courted her for a period of forty days, which convinced Hamida Banu of his sincerity, and she eventually gave her consent to the marriage, which took place in 1541, when Humayun was thirty-three.

Hamida Banu came to be known as Maryam-Makani after her marriage.<sup>80</sup> Their marriage went through in spite of Hindal’s disapproval; his mother, Dildar Begum, organized the wedding.<sup>81</sup> Maryam-Makani remained devoted to her husband through her life. She never left Humayun during the fourteen years when he was in exile in Persia. She did not hesitate to leave her eighteen-month-old son Akbar, to be with her husband.<sup>82</sup> Maryam-Makani’s ‘indulgent’ behavior in forestalling her marriage to Humayun conveys the respect given to royal females in honoring their personal freedoms and life choices. This is particularly exceptional as the institution of marriage in building empire was a political arrangement and women were political actors and not directors in the acquisition of power.

To Maryam-Makani’s wifely devotion, we can add political ability, which was amply demonstrated when her illustrious son, Akbar, ascended the throne as the third Mughal emperor at the age of fourteen in February 1556, with his uncle and guardian Bairam Khan as his guardian. Maryam-Makani played an important role during the initial years of her minor son’s rule. Not only did

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<sup>79</sup> *Humayun Nama* (1972), p. 151.

<sup>80</sup> *Akbar Nama*, Vol. I (1989), pp.8-9.

<sup>81</sup> Stewart (1972), p. 31.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

Bairam chastise Akbar but he also prevented Akbar from maintaining any relation with the emirs who had been close to Humayun.<sup>83</sup> Anticipating the danger inherent in this isolation of Akbar, which could perhaps lead to his overthrow, Maryam-Makani kept her son informed of every turn in the situation. In planning his strategy to secure the empire, Akbar confided “his closely hidden secret”<sup>84</sup> to his foster-mother Maham Anaga and all of those who were close and trusted followers of Maryam-Makani.

Maryam-Makani’s preeminence was due to the political sagacity and determination with which she used her position as dowager queen in the Mughal *haram* and the respect and affection she received from her son the emperor. From the memoirs of Babur (r.1526-30) alone, Akbar would have known of his father’s respect for women but also the part they played in constructing Empire and sustaining the sovereign. As noted earlier during Humayun’s reign, the nomadic circumstances of the early Mughals and Timurids allowed women’s participation in the military landscape. During Akbar’s reign, women’s role as effectual political partners is honored and continued, however, prescribed and practiced from the formalized space of his *haram*.<sup>85</sup>

A striking feature of women’s political position at the Mughal court was that personal ability rather than blood relationship legitimated their participation.

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<sup>83</sup> R.C. Majumdar (ed.) “The Mughal Empire” in *History and Culture of the Indian People* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bharan, 1984), pp.108-109.

<sup>84</sup> *Akbar Nama*, Vol II (1873-87), p.141.

<sup>85</sup> For an critical analysis of Akbar’s imperial ideology and the role Fatehpur Sikri played in the ‘grand design’ of his new monarchy, See Ruby Lal, p.155-166. For a detailed architectural discussion of the design and planning of the complex See, Ebba Koch “Architectural Forms”, p.123-125 in Michael Brand and Glenn D. Lowry (eds.), *Fatehpur Sikri* (Bombay, 1987), and Attilio Petruccioli, “ The Geometry of Power: The City’s Planning”.

An example of this type of merit-based authority is the career of another imperial female who exercised considerable influence in the early years of Akbar's life. This was Maham Anaga, one of Akbar's wet nurses.<sup>86</sup> Because of Humayun's political vicissitudes, Akbar had been separated from his mother in his childhood and breast-fed by several wet nurses.<sup>87</sup> These wet nurses or foster mothers were mostly ladies of rank and were called *anagas*. The most important among them was Maham Anaga. Maham Anaga not only risked her life to save the child Akbar's life from his uncle's plan to kill him but also dedicated her life to his well-being and was completely committed to his welfare, toward which she applied herself with active interest and political shrewdness. In the years of Humayun's adversity, Queen Maryam-Makani fled with him, leaving the infant Akbar in the camp with his nurses.<sup>88</sup> Abul Fazl has recorded: "Maham Anaga, Jiji Anaga and Atka Khan were made fortunate by serving him."<sup>89</sup> Maham Anaga risked her life to save Akbar by protecting him with her person on the rampart at that crucial moment.<sup>90</sup>

It is clear that Akbar's survival as a child, both physical and political often depended upon Mughal women, a pattern that continued into his adult life as an emperor. Akbar went on to mount his father's throne, but in the first four years of his reign, Bairam Khan controlled the administration, and Akbar was merely a figurehead. By 1560, Akbar was trying to assert his desire to become a "king in

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<sup>86</sup> *Akbar Nama*, Vol. II (1989), P. 134.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>88</sup> Stewart (1972), p. 52.

<sup>89</sup> *Akbar Nama*, Vol. I (1989), p. 395.

<sup>90</sup> Khvajeh Nizam al-Din Ahmad, translated by B. De, and Bainsi Prasad, *The Tabaqat-i-Akbari of Khwajah Nizammudin Ahmad*; vol. II (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1929), p. 112.

fact as well as in name.”<sup>91</sup> The faction that organized the coup and won over sections of the nobility envious of Bairam’s power was the “*haram party*” or “petticoat government”. During the political machinations, Maham Anaga, the foster-mother of Akbar and “a marvel for sense, resource and loyalty,” played a major role. In all this, Akbar had the backing of *haram* politics, and the most important role in removing Bairam Khan from the political scene was played by Maham Anaga as the leader of the *haram* party. It was her “real capacity of political intrigue which gained for her an important position in the state.”<sup>92</sup> Though the male-dominated administration was present and mobilized by Maham Anaga, official histories are silent on giving any one male figure as a key player during the tumultuous period of Akbar’s struggle for sovereignty.

Most contemporary historians refer to the great influence Maham Anaga acquired at the royal court after the fall of Bairam Khan as both exemplary and debilitating the empire. Though, Maham Anaga acted as the young monarch’s principal counselor, the extent of her influence has been judged harshly by Vincent Smith, who comments: “Akbar shook off the tutelage of Bairam Khan only to bring himself under the ‘monstrous regiment’ of unscrupulous women.”<sup>93</sup> Smith claims that Maham Anaga assumed power herself, bestowed favor on her own relatives, and furthered only her own interests. She became a kingmaker and initiated a ‘petticoat government’, in which Smith’s conjectures, Akbar became a puppet. One wonders if the real power in this period of Akbar’s reign rested with Maham Anaga. Abul Fazl writes, “In those days, Bahadur Khan had

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<sup>91</sup> V. A. Smith, *Akbar the Great Mogul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), p.32.

<sup>92</sup> *Akbar Nama*, vol. I (1873-87), p. 204.

<sup>93</sup> Smith.,p.204.

the name of Vakil, yet in reality, the business was transacted by Maham Anaga. O ye worshippers of forms, what do you behold? For this noble work, wisdom and courage was necessary, and in truth, Maham Anaga possessed these two qualities in perfection. Many a woman treads manfully wisdom's path."<sup>94</sup>

To unequivocally refute Smith's assessment of Maham Anaga's persona and political ambitions is beyond the scope of this paper. However, Maham Anaga operated outside of the Timurid-Mughal lineage. It is not surprising that like Nūr Jahan, Maham Anaga's 'visions' of legacy may have been ultimately directed to herself and her kin. Similar to Nūr Jahan, Maham Anaga was not part of the imperial genealogical argument that would have sanctioned and legitimized her rightful claim to power and prestige. Though Maham Anaga acted as a wet-nurse/foster mother to the child Akbar neither she nor Nūr Jahan stand at the nexus of dynastic reproduction to ensure empire and sustain legacy. Each woman's 'capital' can be used to sustain sovereignty but if their vision of legacy is redirected for a self-serving purpose or to favor and privilege individuals outside of the Timurid-Mughal gene pool, they are considered willful and arrogant whose actions are tipping the balance of power away from collective vision of enduring legacy and therefore undermining empire-building objectives. By default and in contrast to Nūr Jahan and Maham Anaga, Jahan Ara operated within the genealogical framework but was denied the right to 'contribute' to the dynastic gene pool to graft her own legacy and memory to the enduring Timurid-Mughal line. As this study will illustrate, Jahan Ara artfully negotiates her 'membership' into the genealogical argument by sustaining legacy through her spiritual

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<sup>94</sup> *Akbar Nama* Vol. II (1989) p.151.

devotion that enabled her to 'light the light of the Timuria.' Through this pious act, Jahan Ara grafts her identity into the Timurid-Mughal legacy, elevates her sacred and spiritual authority and all the while centered her visions of legacy on sustaining the sovereign and empire in perpetuity.

There is no doubt that Akbar loved Maham Anaga like his own mother and had great regard for her and her people and for what she did for him in his minor period. Not mature enough to gauge the intricacies of politics all at once, Akbar actively associated the *haram* party in setting state policy. As the leader of the *haram*, party, Maham Anaga enjoyed great authority at that time. However, Akbar was the master of his own will, as soon as he felt that anyone was encroaching upon his sovereignty or 'redirecting' the vision of legacy away from his person, he acted swiftly to cut that person down to size, although he continued to trust Maham Anaga as a valued advisor.<sup>95</sup> Abul Fazl's comment earlier on women's 'manly abilities' is interesting not only as an estimate of notable women of his time but also as a gendering of character values: power and manliness were/are inseparable. Maham Anaga's "manliness" became the cause of her undoing, for the qualities that earned awe and respect for her also placed her in a transgressive gender role. Her resolute spirit made the young emperor feel that Prime Minister Maham Anaga was 'overbearing' and 'aggressive'. Moreover, the Mughals had no tradition of being controlled by a woman prime minister, however capable that woman might be. Maham Anaga

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<sup>95</sup> Majumdar (1984), p. 112.

was politely asked by Akbar on September 10, 1560, to hand over the *vakalat* to Munim Khan, who became the fourth prime minister.<sup>96</sup>

Abul Fazl's rationale of Maham Anaga's appropriation of 'manliness' in her behavior as affording her the wisdom necessary to ascend to her elevated rank in the imperial hierarchy may have been the conventional wisdom used by Jahan Ara Begum as justification for her spiritual ascension to a *piri-muridi* and for crossing the gender gap in her patronage of the Agra congregation mosque. Jahan Ara quotes the Sūfi biographer Attar in her *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, where he justifies the first female mystic Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya's spiritual devotion "when a woman becomes a 'man' in the Path to God, she is a man and one cannot anymore call her a woman".<sup>97</sup> Jahan Ara flexes her 'manly' muscles not only in the spiritual realm but in her transgressive gender role in patronage of major monuments. Jahan Ara's particular *modus operandi* will be detailed in later chapters in this work. It is noteworthy that though the princess operated in similar political spheres as Maham Anaga and Nūr Jahan, the means or 'feminine paradigms' through which the princess 'visibly' announced or wielded her authority was not met with contestations or disapproval as her 'masculine' female predecessors and more importantly how the emasculated Mughal chronicler or modern historian we have perceived and recorded their power in the annals of history.

A common theme among female participation in imperial politics is the shifting perceptions of female power both in the mind of the sovereign and his

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p.113.

<sup>97</sup> Attar, p. 40.

political retinue. Both Aisan Daulat Begum and Maryam-Makani are recorded in the emperors' biographies as exhibiting exemplary political qualities. Maham Anaga's activities were exceptional but only to the extent when they served the emperor and empire. When the wet nurse's 'visions of legacy' were redirected toward herself and her extended family, particularly her son, her persona and power were contested and she was no longer exemplary but 'unscrupulous, aggressive even monstrous' to the extent that Akbar removes her from her role as Prime Minister. Through Maham Anaga's example, one is reminded of Munis Faruqi's assessment of Nūr Jahan's self-serving initiatives which politically and financially privileged her father, brother and extended family during Jahangīr's reign and for which she earned similar contestations as Maham Anaga, though not from her husband, the emperor but certainly from his administration and retinue.<sup>98</sup> These 'extraordinary' enunciations of female power and the framework in which they were cultivated and perceived will serve as a point of departure when surveying and analyzing Jahan Ara Begum's authority and how it and she was received and remembered.

Gulbadan Begum (1522-1603), Humayun's sister came to India when her father Babur conquered the northwest region of India and established a rudimentary kingdom. Gulbadan was merely six at the time that she has entered India but then found herself in Kabul again during the years when Humayun was in exile in Persia.<sup>99</sup> Like other royal women of the *haram*, Gulbadan's daily patterns of life were woven into and at the behest of the Mughal kings. In

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<sup>98</sup> Faruqi, pp.196-204.

<sup>99</sup> For a 19<sup>th</sup> C. account of Gulbadan's life see Annette Susannah Beveridge, "Life and Writings of Gulbadan Begum (Lady Rosebody)", *Calcutta Review*, 106 (1892), pp.346-74.

Gulbadan's case, three emperors: her father Babur, brother Humayun and nephew Akbar. Once Humayun regained his foothold in India, he established his capital in Delhi and continued the plans of his father to establish an Empire. At this time, Gulbadan along with an entourage of Mughal women of the *haram* traveled together and arrived in Agra at the behest of Akbar, who had begun his rule after the demise of Humayun a year upon his return to India.<sup>100</sup> In an effort to systematically establish dynastic rule with legitimacy, Akbar requested Gulbadan Begum to record in biographical format, the story of his father and her brother Humayun as well as the the early history of the Timurid-Mughals. Babur, Humayun's and Gulbadan's father had already established the precedent with his *Babur Nama*, for recording and chronicling imperial biographies.<sup>101</sup> What was unprecedented is that an imperial woman was charged with this important task in which she would assume an 'authorial' voice to convey the history and details of an imperial male. Akbar admired his aunt and recalled her avid storytelling skills from when he has a child. However, he outsourced his own history and commissioned an eminent male historian, Abul Fazl to pen the chronicles of his own imperial life and entrusted his father's to Gulbadan.<sup>102</sup> Akbar requested Gulbadan to commit to pen and paper any details from her life that specifically related to Humayun's glory days that included both his victories and defeats, his loves and anxieties and to list and detail the orbit of nobles or people that supported his social and political. Gulbadan Begum committed her memory to

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<sup>100</sup> *Humayun Nama*, by Gulbadan Begum. Edited and translated by A.S. Beveridge (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1902) Indian Reprint: (Delhi: Idarah-adabiyat-i-Delhi, 1972), pp.279-281.

<sup>101</sup> A.S. Beveridge, *Babur Nama*, (1922).

<sup>102</sup> Beveridge, *Akbar Nama*, (1989).

pen and paper and produced an unprecedented (though unfinished) *Humayun Nama*, the first and only biography of an emperor written by a woman.<sup>103</sup>

Akbar's imperial charge to Gulbadan Begum conveys his high regard for women's acumen both in the political and literary sphere. Gulbadan and later Jahan Ara and her niece Zebunissa's contributions also indicate imperial women's superior education, access to imperial libraries as well as their abilities as literary authorities.<sup>104</sup> Gulbadan begins the biography in a self-effacing manner similar to Jahan Ara's noting the 'obligation' and reluctance to write so as not to seem 'bold' or 'brazen' in their persona: "There had been an order issued, Write down whatever you know of the doings of Firdous-Makani (Babur) and Jannat-Ashyani (Humayun). At this time when his Majesty Firdaus-Makani passed from this perishable world to the everlasting home, I, this lowly one, was eight years old, so it may well be that I do not remember much. However in obedience to the royal command, I set down whatever there is that I have heard and remember."<sup>105</sup> Gulbadan's opening to the *Humayun Nama* echoes some of the same sentiments that are duplicated in both of Jahan Ara's Sūfi treatises. However, for Jahan Ara the compulsion and charge to write did not come from 'mere mortal' or an outside force but from spiritual urgings both internal and as commanded by God. Regardless of the reasons behind the impetus for literary 'self-representation', each female was sanctioned in their step outside of their

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<sup>103</sup> The extant Persian manuscript (in British Museum) of *Humayun Nama* is incomplete: it ends in 1552 instead of at Humayun's death in 1556.

<sup>104</sup> For an inventory of Akbar's vast holdings in his imperial library that included the external collections from the harems, See Joh Seyller "the Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts in the Imperial Mughal Library". *Artibus Asiae*, vol.57, no.3/4 (1997), pp.243-349.

<sup>105</sup> Beveridge (1902), p. 83.

prescribed gender and imperial roles and became 'visible' as they 'emerged' into and out of the intertextuality of their prose and literary contributions.

Gulbadan's memoir is both enlightening and 'gendered' <sup>106</sup> and adds an female voice to the history of early Timurid-Mughal era while also giving nuanced details of the families of Babur and Humayun and a privileged view into the complexity of their lives. That the biography was written by a woman is compelling in itself but that it is also rich in detail and often objective in tone about lived experiences and socio-political realities sets it apart from other accounts of the time particularly Abul Fazl's panegyric and highly politicized propaganda of Akbar's administration and notions of sovereignty in the *A'in-i Akbari*. <sup>107</sup> The women in Gulbadan describes are not femme fatales of a royal court but real, authentic and courageous women, only slightly 'evolved' from their nomadic ancestors. These hardy women took extended and difficult journeys and endured hardship in the unforgiving climate and terrain. They moved with their men and tribe from Central Asia to North India, according to the shifting political objectives or expansionist schemes of their male relatives. Humayun's exile from India included taking his pregnant wife on the journey back to Persia with only one helper to tend to her, and only a few men to help him safely navigate the

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<sup>106</sup> Lal distinguishes Gulbadan's literary style and format from other official chronicles particularly as the contemporary writers of her age labeled their histories *tarikhs* (referring to annals, history or chronological narrative). Gulbadan chooses *ahval* as the genre label of her work meaning conditions, state or circumstances. See, Lal, pp. 57-58. Though Lal does not conjecture as to why Gulbadan does this, it is clear that the princess' objectives were not to detail a history but a fully enhanced, textured life of the early Mughals in a voice that only a woman would and could articulate and therefore the study claims it as 'gendered'. The highly nuanced recordings of Gulbadan are in parallel to Jahan Ara's format and style of her treatises in that they allow a vignette not into the perfunctory motions of imperial life as the official histories written by men systematically describe but transport the reader into an experiential realm that fills the impoverished gaps of emperor's biographies with the human experience.

<sup>107</sup> The following translations were surveyed for a comparative analysis: H. Beveridge (trans.). *The Akbarnama* of Abu-ul-Fazl, vols. I-III (1907-39; rpt. Delhi, 1993), H. Blochmann and H. S. Jarrett (trans.), the *A'in-i Akbari*, vols. I-III (1873, 1894; rpt. Calcutta, 1993).

passage. All the while, Humayun and his entourage are closely pursued by the Afghan armies and their general Sher Shah which alone conveys only one example of the endurance and tolerance shown by early Mughal women. The lives of women and the complexity of their relationships to each other and the emperor are meticulously described. The social order and hierarchy that existed among women and the emperor was in place in early Timurid-Mughal society and we can assume would have served as an outline or rough 'draft' for Akbar's imperial designs particularly in making the imperial *haram* accountable in preserving and perpetuating his 'semi-divine' notions of kingship.

Gulbadan's life along with other royal females was to some extent dependent upon a father, brother, or nephew, however, she managed to keep her independence intact as her biography indicates. In the *Humayun Nama*, we gain an adequate understanding of the multiplicities that were imposed on both men and women and the intricate ways they negotiated these obligations. Among the rich details, a significant theme throughout the *Humayun Nama* and one that is relevant to this study is the equanimity Gulbadan conveys among royal couples in their share and responsibility of dynastic reproduction and in perpetuating imperial rituals while sustaining *adab*<sup>108</sup> or rules for proper conduct. Though the distribution of royal duty was split along gender lines, women bearing children, men minding the office, these decisions were derived through consensus. The equality in representation was also carried through in social

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<sup>108</sup> *Adab* charged the nobility to discern the quality of discrimination –of being able to recognize socially approved behavior, talents and virtues (e.g., spirituality, holiness, piety, charity, filial piety and creative talents particularly poetry and music. See Barbara Daly Metcalf, (ed.), *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

affairs where men and women mingled and conversed with ease and within *adab* mandates. The independence and equanimity among the sexes was perhaps a mode of behavior established from their nomadic compared to the later restrictions imposed through Islamic orthodoxy. The later Mughal women would change in their assumption or ambition for power of during the reigns of later emperors. The gradual increase in Islamic orthodoxy from Babur to Shah Jahan is particularly relevant to this work and supports Jahan Ara Begum's reason's for seeking alternative spiritualities within Islam that were less prescriptive and more practiced.

The Mughals were a disparate tribe and the constant infighting among Babur's sons and other nobles were events that the women of the family tolerated with patience and resolve. Many of the savage outcomes of war and the loss of familial relations must have caused them considerable pain that they endured silently. Through it all the women managed to assert their independence which is extraordinary given the climate of the times. Like Jahan Ara Begum's Sūfi treatises, the *Humayun Nama* reveals that within the boundaries of familial obligations the royal women managed to hold onto some autonomy even if on the pages of an emperor's biography. For Gulbadan, the page may have represented the 'sphere' where she activated her authorial voice, however, only to the extent where the complexities of relationships and personalities described remain peripheral to her own persona and inner workings.<sup>109</sup> Unlike Jahan Ara's personal and passionate narratives documented

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<sup>109</sup> See Lal, p.54-57 for her analysis of Gulbadan's deliberate 'rejection' of contemporary literary models for her own work.

in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, the received image of Gulbadan is one where her literary agency is used by Akbar to invoke the Timurid-Mughal past to legitimize his new imperial visions and sovereignty.

A close reading of Gulbadan and Jahan Ara Begum's literary works one can discern the thinly veiled 'codes' of behavior and the artful obfuscation of these mandates. Timurid-Mughal women were not confined to a domestic sphere; they were dynamic individuals who used visual and literary forms to express their sentiments. These tenacious women acknowledged through social, political and religious venues an alternative system of beliefs and values, and constituted through these forms of dissent and subversive discourse. Therefore, the level of transparency resulting from transgressive actions dictated how imperial women would be remembered: 'willful' and 'wicked' or 'noble' and 'diplomatic'.

The place of women in Timurid-Mughal history is crucial to understanding how Jahan Ara Begum's activities and aspirations were facilitated and encouraged within the context of her Turko-Mongol heritage. Critically analyzing the activities of imperial women who preceded the princess are important in forging an understanding of the *haram* in general but specifically to trace the shifts of the ever-evolving medieval Muslim female a phenomenon that ultimately dispels the notion of the constancy of any archetype in Islamic society. Female patronage and public displays of piety were specific in their goals to project power and prestige. According to Lal, this rubric that constituted female participation and projection of authority through various means was intrinsic to

constructing each new regime within the Mughal dynasty and of establishing its power and endurance. That these woman eventually became *pardeh-giyem* (veiled ones), does not alter the point that their status and conduct was of critical importance in the establishment of imperial traditions and imperial grandeur and an intrinsic part of the becoming of a (grand) monarchy.

### **1.3 Nūr Jahan (1577-1645): The Prescient Feminist or Jahan Ara's Nemesis?**

The first royal female to reach the full 'potential' of or 'exploit' Akbar's gendered political and social policies was the empress Nūr Jahan, wife of Emperor Jahangīr (1569-1627). Nūr Jahan's 'frenzy' to establish legitimacy through her political machinations was inversely proportional to the level of her obscurity and status as one of lower nobility before becoming the emperor's wife. Afzal Hussain<sup>110</sup> and Irfan Habib<sup>111</sup> have analyzed the increase of *mansabs* or salaries of Nūr Jahan's family members upon her ascension as empress. Each historian's work asserts that the sudden political prominence and the exponential growth of Nūr Jahan's immediate and extended family's finances was directly related to her marriage to emperor Jahangīr (1569-1627). Nūr Jahan's blind ambition, filial piety, the sudden ascension in imperial ranks, nepotism for installing her family members in high-ranking government positions came at the cost of internal tensions between the 'Empress of Mughal India' and her subjects

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<sup>110</sup> Husain, Afzal. "The Family of Sheikh Salim Chishti during the reign of Jahangīr", *Medieval India, a miscellany*, Vol. II (Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University Press, 1972) pp.63-64.

<sup>111</sup> Habib, Irfan. "The Family of Nur Jahan during Jahanagir's reign—A political study", *Medieval India, a miscellany*, Vol. I (Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University Press, 1969).

and the imperial household.<sup>112</sup> In addition to the prominent political role Nūr Jahan played by accompanying Jahangīr during his public audiences and generally in the administration of the empire, her commercial activities were also ‘visually’ announced as she was the only Mughal queen to have her face inscribed on a coin of the realm and one of only three imperial women to own trading ships. The other two women who owned ships were Jahangīr’s mother, Maryam Makani and Jahan Ara Begum.<sup>113</sup>

The prescient ‘feminist’, Nūr Jahan not only functionally controlled Mughal India through her marriage to Jahangīr but established a precedent and framework for her niece Jahan Ara to use as a point of departure or emulation. As her contemporary, Jahan Ara was conscious of and personally experienced her maternal aunt’s machinations through her father, Shah Jahan’s political dealings on the rival end of Nūr Jahan’s maneuverings. Jahan Ara may have been simultaneously annoyed and empowered by her aunt’s bold articulations of authority and perhaps relied on Nūr Jahan’s political ‘athleticism’, to some extent, to elevate and legitimize her position as Shah Jahan’s ‘consort queen’ upon her mother, Mumtaz Mahal’s demise. At the very least, Nūr Jahan’s ‘bold’ assertions

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<sup>112</sup> Comprehensive analysis of the contesting and competing views of Nur Jahan’s political role and persona in various Mughal histories and sources and are beyond the scope of this research. I have relied on the following sources to isolate constructed frameworks and aspects of Nur Jahan’s patronage and politics to use as a compelling precedent and point of departure to compare to Jahan Ara Begum’s cultivation of power and Mughal legacy. See, S. Anand, *History of Begum Nurjahan* (New Delhi, 1992); E.B. Findly, *Nur Jahan: Empress of Mughal India* (New York, 1993); Irfan Habib, “The Family of Nur Jahan during Jahangīr’s Reign,” H. A. Farooqi, “Nur Jahan”, *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, 12(1), 1975, pp.21-39 and Munis D. Faruqui’s “Princes and Power in the Mughal Empire, 1569-1657” (Ph.D dissertation, Duke University, 2002), pp.198-200.

<sup>113</sup> The only other instance of this official recording of a reigning queen in the history of pre-British India comes from the Gupta era: Emperor Samudragupta’s coins bear his image with that of his queen. See Lal, p.156-159.

of power would have desensitized the populace against another imperial female who might duplicate her unprecedented authority.

Nūr Jahan's risky and self-serving visions of legacy not only tested and expanded the limits of female power in the imperial realms that subsequently facilitated Jahan Ara's authoritative 'stretch' in her role as the 'keeper' of the royal seal but the empress firmly claims and locates a new place for females in imperial hierarchy. The study will outline how Jahan Ara does not model or emulate the details of Nūr Jahan's authority in her actions but passively accepts the elevated rank in imperial hierarchy to broadly defines her own visions of sustaining Timurid-Mughal supremacy and legacy. Unlike Nūr Jahan whose visions of legacy were specific to her own sovereignty and her family's success, Jahan Ara's objectives were to sustain Mughal sovereignty and the Timurid legacy as a function of her elevated spiritual and imperial authority.

In her work on Nūr Jahan, Ellis Findly describes how Nūr Jahan effectively took control of the government as Jahangīr succumbed to the effects of alcohol and opium and used her architectural commissions to construct and assert her public and benevolent persona. Further, her reign marked the highpoint of the Mughal Empire in the course of which she made great contributions to the arts and the nascent trade with Europe. Findly's account of Nūr Jahan's not only revises the legends that portray her as a 'power-hungry' and 'malicious' woman, but also investigates the paths to power available to women in Islam and Hinduism from inside the imperial *haram*. In Nūr Jahan's example we find the first Mughal female who 'objectifies' the fine arts and architecture to enunciate

her power and prestige. This is a pattern of patronage to be repeated, however, with an understated 'vigor' by Jahan Ara Begum's reliance on monuments and authored texts for representation.

Representations of women increased as Nūr Jahan and Jahangīr were 'captured' in paint either in a heated embrace or at rest. This overt display of female portraits may have offended the Islamic ideals and sensibilities within and beyond the imperial *haram*, however, the visual fact of imperial women present in the Mughal landscape forced an acknowledgment of their presence, accountability and enabled their authority. Female portraits were perceived on the same 'field' of representation as male imperials thereby equating the genders imperial hierarchy. Nūr Jahan and Jahan Ara shared the burden of not being able to produce an heir to the throne and sought alternative means to sustain personal and political legitimacy. However, unlike Nūr Jahan whose visions of legacy were specific to her own sovereignty and her family's success, Jahan Ara's objective was to sustain Mughal sovereignty and the Timurid legacy as a function of her elevated imperial and imperial authority.

Findly along with other Mughal historians have ostensibly portrayed Nūr Jahan's 'extraordinary personality and power---which even in those days would raise criticism in a woman.'<sup>114</sup> Findlay's representation of Nūr Jahan as strongly feminist helped to justify her banner announcements of her power in contrast to the ineffectual Jahangīr. Findly portrays Nūr Jahan with qualities fitting of a

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<sup>114</sup> Flora Annie Steel, *Mistress of Men: A Novel* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1917), p. vii.

'heroine of empire'. Nūr Jahan excels in three areas: her passion for and loyalty to her biological family and husband the emperor Jahangīr, her political acumen and literary and artistic intellect and her physical prowess as an exemplary markswoman. As a result of her multiple exemplary qualities, Nūr Jahan's femininity is seen as both a pathway and an obstacle to greatness. She uses her beauty and 'feminine wiles' to curry political and fiscal favor from her husband and is vilified by the administration for the same reasons. Nūr Jahan's power as 'perceived' behind Jahangīr's throne is sometimes fully revealed and for this she is reviled.

Jahan Ara Begum was privileged with the same exemplary intellectual, social and political characteristics as her great aunt, Nūr Jahan. However, in comparison to Nūr Jahan, Jahan Ara's duties are specific to the Timurid past and its future legacy through her female agency and authority. Jahan Ara 'stepping out' of her prescribed female role of 'secondary' patronage (madrasas, dargahs and khanaqahs), as the first royal Mughal female to commission a congregation mosque is sanctioned by her spiritual agency where the otherwise 'bold' and perhaps 'unbecoming' characteristics to be noble and just in official histories and under popular scrutiny.<sup>115</sup> In the eyes of Nūr Jahan's contesters her political and social 'arrogance' and self-esteem is seen as 'unbecoming' a female elite and is at the mercy of social laws and attitudes that remained patriarchal except for Jahangīr who privileged his wife without compromise. The emperor's latitude toward his queen was interpreted as superficial and based solely on Nūr Jahan's physical and superficial attributes: "She lived solely by reason of the beauty

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<sup>115</sup> Jahan Ara Begum's character and her virtues are mentioned in Mughal court chronicles and described in detail in their appropriate historical context later in this work.

which had captivated a King.”<sup>116</sup> This is not an overstatement as Nūr Jahan does not mitigate the importance and power of her femininity. As previously mentioned, it is through her femininity that Nūr Jahan attains her power over Jahangīr and through qualities traditionally perceived as masculine (intelligence, strength, determination) that she holds that power.

Negotiating power to the extent of one’s femininity either privately or publicly is another point of departure for both Nūr Jahan and Jahan Ara. Nūr Jahan used her ‘feminine wiles’ privately on Jahangīr to gain leverage in imperial hierarchy, however, her femininity is kept in reserve for practicing public politics where she enunciates her masculine attributes and for which she is reviled. Jahan Ara maintains her ‘graceful, noble and chaste’ feminine persona in both her public and private exercise of her authority without contestation or compromise because she doesn’t extend beyond the social limits of her femininity. Nūr Jahan transformed the paradigm of the ‘ideal’ royal female and shifted perceptions of female identity and authority.

### **1.3 Jahan Ara Begum (1614-1681): Archetypal Imperial Female and Her Political Propriety**

Jahan Ara may have been challenged and privileged by Nūr Jahan’s powerful precedents of female authority, particularly at age seventeen when she assumes her mother’s role as Shah Jahan’s ‘consort’ queen. The complexities and negotiations of Jahan Ara’s representation in asserting legitimate imperial power without dynastic reproduction and without projecting ‘unbecoming’ masculine qualities were challenging in cultivating a ‘safer’ and socially

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<sup>116</sup> Steel, Flora Annie. *Mistress of Men* (London: Heinemann, 917) p. 204.

acceptable means of self-representation in contrast to Nūr Jahan's unprecedented approach. Jahan Ara uses her religiosity and devotion to Islamic belief systems through Sūfism as the 'safer' and more 'noble' means through which she wields her imperial power. In addition to her place outside of the Timurid-Mughal genealogical framework, Nūr Jahan operates outside of the Islamic feminine 'ideal'.

Jahan Ara's authority is 'laced' with religious sentiments where Islam is central to the 'argument' that cultivated and activated her dual personas. The 'silent' vigor with which Jahan Ara articulated her authority is confirmed by the court poet Abu Talib Kalīm's *mathnawi*:

"Though the princess [Jahan Ara] is on the apex of sovereignty of the sun of fortune [Shah Jahan], she is always hidden behind the cloud of chastity. May the second Mary always endure the splendor of the king of the world. May the shadow of God be on her head as long as the sun is shining."<sup>117</sup>

Unlike Nūr Jahan's subversive femininity that advanced her political agenda, the references to Jahan Ara's femininity as 'chaste' and 'devout' in Kalīm's praise are the princess' 'signature' virtues and are the basis for her sanctioned and uncontested representation at the 'apex' of the Mughal sovereignty. Jahan Ara's self-effacing manner as a Sūfi-devout through which

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<sup>117</sup> Muhammad Qahraman [Divan-i Abu Talib Kalīm Hamdani [d.1651] (Mashad; Astan-i-Quds-i Razavi, 1990); p. 151, lines 232-236. This is an unpublished translation by Dr. Sunil Sharma on 9.15.07. Description

she 'lit the lamp' of the Timuria conformed to socio-religious and Islamic paradigms and parameters and located her identity alongside exemplary women of Islam's and the Timurid-Mughal past. It can be likened to a stealth bomber she was silent in manner and speech but stalwart in action and deed.

Jahan Ara Begum's 'enunciations' of her authority and contributions to the Mughal landscape are received without question and contestation and sanctioned by the imperial household and general populace as a direct function of the public and private display of her religious persuasions and as extensions of her 'noble, chaste and pious' persona. Jahan Ara Begum, oldest daughter of Emperor Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal assumed the title of 'Begum Saheba' at age seventeen and with it all the responsibilities of the chief queen after her mother's untimely death in 1631. As the first lady of the *haram*, Jahan Ara functioned to some extent as Shah Jahan's 'consort queen', however, the emperor's detailed biographies reveal very little about the women in the imperial *haram* including Jahan Ara. This deliberate omission makes the contents of the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and *Munis al-Arvāh* precious and compelling in making transparent the life of an imperial female and in making the otherwise 'minor sources' <sup>118</sup> as part of the canon of Mughal history and as Lal demands that the imperial female 'voice' not be trivialized but central to "foundational sources" on the Timurid-Mughal historical memory.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Lal claims Gulbadan's 'personalized' approach to her *Humayun Nama*, relegated the biography to an inferior status as the contents of the manuscript is not considered in the compilation of the *Akbarnama* and that it isn't even listed in 'minor historical' works during Akbar's reign in Harbans Mukhia's work titled *Historians and Historiography During the Reign of Akbar*. See, Lal, pp.55-56.

<sup>119</sup> Lal, p.55.

The 'accidental' assumption of her imperial position made Jahan Ara Begum's 'enunciations' of her persona and prerogatives acceptable, 'forgiving' and as the normative practice of imperial polity compared to the seemingly 'self-serving' objectives of Nūr Jahan. At seventeen, Jahan Ara stepped into a fully formed socio-political framework dictated by Shah Jahan's legacy-building objectives and 'Timurid Renaissance' initiatives. The princess' association and affiliation with the Qadriyāh Sūfi order ensured a continuation of the Sūfi-Emperor relationship that predated Emperor Babur. The Sūfi-Princess connection substantiated and linked Shah Jahan's claim to his Timurid legacy and the practice of public piety portrayed 'good government' under the just emperor with Jahan Ara as one link in Shah Jahan's 'chain of justice.'<sup>120</sup> Chapter two of this work describes in detail the manner in which Jahan Ara uses the imperial charge imposed on her position to privilege her political and spiritual rank in the imperial hierarchy.

Jahan Ara took risky political initiatives as a social and political intermediary or 'intercessor' during the turbulent 'War of Succession'<sup>121</sup> in 1658 between Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb jockeyed for the throne of Delhi and Jahan Ara played a pivotal role as an intermediary assuaging and mitigating the potential violence and familial rift among the male members of her family. Though the heir-apparent was Dara Shikoh, Shah

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<sup>120</sup> See, Ebba Koch, p. 127, note 142, for a description of the origins and multiple meanings of the 'chain of justice' iconography an ideology dating as far back as the Achaemenid dynasty in ancient Persia. Koch has analyzed this icon in relationship to the *jharoka* detail in Shahjahani art and architecture.

<sup>121</sup> For a more comprehensive reading of the events of the War of Succession, see *Amal-i-Salih*, vol. III, pp. 219-220; *Waqiat-i-Alamgiri*, p. 16-17; J.D. Sarkar. *History of Aurangzeb (based on Persian sources)*, vol. II (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar and Sons, 1912-16).

Jahan's oldest son, Aurangzeb, the youngest son made rightful claims to kingship where he considered his capability and not seniority to merit ascension. At a critical point in the military operations on both sides of the opposition Jahan Ara, interceded with an impassioned plea to Aurangzeb in the form of a letter to withdraw his troops and accept the emperor's will for Dara Shikoh to succeed him on the throne. The following excerpt from her letter highlights the themes central to her argument:

“...You should yourself judge how impolite it is on your part of encounter and draw the sword against your own father, in whose obedience lies the pleasure of God and His Prophet, and to shed blood of innocent people. Even if your expedition is due to the antagonism to Prince Dara Shikoh it cannot be approved by the principal of wisdom, for according to the Islamic law and convention the elder brother (Dara Shikoh) has the status of father...for the life of a few days in this transitory and evil world and its deceitful and deceptive enjoyments are no compensation for eternal infamy and misfortune...you should refrain from shedding the blood of the followers of Islam during the auspicious month of Ramadan. You should submit yourself to the orders of your benefactor and your ruler, as the commandment of God in that respect refers to obedience to the Emperor.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> J.N. Sarkar. *History of Aurangzeb*, vol. II, p. 73-74.

Jahan Ara invokes God, his Prophets, Islamic jurisprudence and filial piety to provoke Aurangzeb to give up his military stance. As 'God's shadows' on earth, the Mughal family and particularly the imperial line is obligated to abide by God's laws and Man's laws to sustain and legitimate their rule. Jahan Ara appeals to Aurangzeb's sense of duty to God, the Empire and its subjects. In this letter, Jahan Ara expresses her diplomacy, religiosity and equanimity and reveals herself, at the tender age of thirty, to be the noble, graceful and pious princess as she is billed in Mughal chronicles and histories. In the letter, she clearly obligates Aurangzeb in making the 'right' choice in his surrender and submission to God and the emperor as his representative, however, not without extolling his virtues:

“...the unbecoming and improper action of this wise and prudent brother (Aurangzeb), who is endowed with an elegant disposition, a noble mind, amiable manners and mildness of temper...the strife and hostile contest began by this sagacious and high-minded brother (Aurangzeb), who is esteemed for his laudable demeanor, praiseworthy behavior and generous disposition, and who has always endeavored to fulfill the wishes of the holy and blessed Emperor...”<sup>123</sup>

Jahan Ara praises her brother's superior qualities and impresses upon him the risk he's taking in compromising these noble attributes. Here Jahan Ara exhibits the same political sagacity and determination that Maham Anaga exercised when

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p. 73-74.

Akbar's foster-mother used her position and affection for the emperor to advocate a particular social and/or political maneuver. Nūr Jahan's political and social machinations may have lacked the finesse or 'artfulness' utilized by Maham Anaga and Jahan Ara to delicately negotiate their own needs as part of and not apart from the greater imperial objectives. Jahan Ara's efforts were made to no avail as Aurangzeb responded with a petition to Shah Jahan and dispatched and readied his army for the battle at Samugarh against his brother Dara Shikoh.

Aurangzeb defeats Dara Shikoh's army and takes possession of Agra in 1658 and is supported by other imperials in this seizure.<sup>124</sup> Shah Jahan is deprived of power and access to his treasuries. Jahan Ara intercedes again on behalf of the emperor but this time personally delivers her father's message of partitioning the Empire between Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh.<sup>125</sup> Jahan Ara takes an active and visible role in conveying to her combatant brother the love that his father still maintained for him regardless of Aurangzeb's aggression toward his brother and father. Jahan Ara tries to convince Aurangzeb to accept his equal share of the empire that Shah Jahan has proposed to divide among the brothers and above all he must reconcile with Dara Shikoh and the emperor. Jahan Ara's valiant attempts failed in their objective to quell Aurangzeb's aggression toward his father and in convincing him to dismiss his plans for

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<sup>124</sup> *Amal-i-Salih*, vol. III, pp. 228-229.

<sup>125</sup> *Waqiat-i-Alamgiri*, p. 28-29. Correspondence between Jahan Ara and Aurangzeb are documented and archived in *Adab-I Alamgiri* (Lahore: Idarat-i Tahqiqat-i Pakistan [1971]). The contents and details of the letters confirm her influence in matters social, political, matters of appointments, settlement of disputes and other legal matters. Jahan Ara's involvement indicates that her agency and her rank might have expedited resolving the conflict or transaction. Historical records also convey that Jahan Ara's involvement was not exclusive to conflicts between the Mughals and rival factions but that she took a conciliatory role between provincial enemies.

attacking Dara Shikoh's armies for the purpose of usurping the throne. The significance of Jahan Ara's actions during this pivotal period in Mughal history is not only her visibility and political acumen that is commensurate with the actions of Maryam Makani, Maham Anaga and Nūr Jahan but that she appeals to Aurangzeb's sense of duty to his father, Islam and to his royal subjects. Jahan Ara's imperial authority is revered among high-ranking imperial males as legitimate and commensurate with male authority.

Though Aurangzeb rejects Shah Jahan's petition via Jahan Ara for partitioning the empire, he receives her in his royal apartments with imperial distinction and respect.<sup>126</sup> Regardless of his political objectives, and Jahan Ara's loyalty to their brother and his arch rival, Dara Shikoh, Aurangzeb accorded her the reception she deserves as his oldest sister and one who had served a significant role as a surrogate mother in contracting and preparing his wedding ceremonies as well as interceding on his behalf in an earlier dispute with Shah Jahan during a critical period in the princess' life.<sup>127</sup> In 1644, Jahan Ara took an active role in negotiating a political reprieve from Shah Jahan on behalf of Aurangzeb during her recovery period from an accident where half of her body was burned and afflicted with life-threatening wounds.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> *ibid*, p. 29.

<sup>127</sup> See: Ināyat Khān, [ca. 1627-1670] *The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan : an abridged history of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan*, compiled by his royal librarian : the nineteenth-century manuscript translation of A.R. Fuller (British Library, add. 30,777) / edited and completed by W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai. (Delhi; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990) p. 318-319.

<sup>128</sup> Ināyat Khān, [ca. 1627-1670] *The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan*, (Delhi, New York : Oxford University Press, 1990), p.309-310.

Aurangzeb was swayed by unwise counsel to abandon his duties in the Deccan thereby incurring the wrath of Shah Jahan. His *jagir* (allowance) and rank were immediately removed by the emperor for disobeying his royal order. Jahan Ara appealed to the Emperor to forgive Aurangzeb and restored him to his former rank and was given additional honors and financial increases. Jahan Ara rose to the physical and emotional challenge as she found herself once again serving as an intermediary between father and son where she successfully convinced the emperor to reverse his royal edict on Aurangzeb. Though Shah Jahan had committed the same crimes against filial piety and fealty to his own father, Emperor Jahangīr, operating in the highly charged climate of Shah Jahan's 'Timurid Renaissance'<sup>129</sup>, Jahan Ara's objectives use the patterns of ensuring legacy by maintaining peace among its dynastic members as had been the socio-political culture of the early Timurid and Mughal rulers.

Shah Jahan's decision to overturn his official decree and reinstate Aurangzeb to his former rank at the behest of Jahan Ara is documented in Shah Jahan's official histories where her authority is on par to the emperor's. That the emperor defers to the wisdom of Jahan Ara's argument is in itself upholding her authority as equal to if not surpassing his own and also creates an opportunity for the emperor to convey the princess' and thereby the sovereign's qualities of diplomacy, justice and tact. Additionally, Shah Jahan's decision to financially 'castrate' Aurangzeb by withholding his allowance is laced with political and

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<sup>129</sup> The author has taken the liberty of classifying Shah Jahan's political and cultural initiatives as a form of "Timurid Renaissance" where the emperor constructed historical and political links with his Timurid heritage primarily through his multiple and unsuccessful invasions of his ancestral grounds of Balkh, appropriating honorific titles similar to Timur. The dynamics of this phenomenon extended into Jahan Ara's narratives in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* where she describes her deep disappointment of separating from her brother Dara Shikoh as he departs for another Balkh invasion at the behest of emperor Shah Jahan.

paternal admonishment perhaps in response to the transparency of his son's disgruntled and bellicose attitude toward his father and the role he has given him in the empire. Shah Jahan risked revealing an element of vulnerability toward his bellicose son when he granted Jahan Ara her request and reversed his decision. This fact alone serves as a compelling argument in support of Shah Jahan's perceptions and representation of Jahan Ara's exemplary imperial qualities.

The success of Jahan Ara's role as a social and political intermediary may have been facilitated by her elevated rank as a Sūfi-devout or *piri-muridi* and the physical 'realizations' of this position through her two Sūfi treatises completed in 1639-40, her patronage of several Sūfi monuments in Srinagar and Ajmer and her public and prolific association with the Qadriyāh order. Pre-dating the Mughals, the Timurids used Sūfi pīrs as political advisors and intermediaries in resolving social and political conflicts and served as the most compelling advocates of the reigning ruler in the local communities where they lived.<sup>130</sup> In addition to her exemplary and notorious political role, Jahan Ara played the role of a surrogate mother to her brothers in arranging their weddings as well as in alleviating tensions between father and sons. In 1653, Aurangzeb's slow but successful progress in financially and physically reinvigorating the Deccan territories received a critical and unappreciative response from Shah Jahan.<sup>131</sup> Aurangzeb details his disappointment in his father's reaction in a letter to his sister. The tone of the letter makes the dejected Aurangzeb's despondency,

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<sup>130</sup> This phenomenon of Timrid history is surveyed and critically analyzed in chapter three of this work.

<sup>131</sup> Faruqui, p.300-301.

despair and rejection almost palpable and almost legitimizes the cruelty he shows his father upon usurping his throne.

“If His majesty wishes that of all his servants I alone should spend my life in dishonor and die in obscurity, I cannot but obey...it is better that by order of his Majesty, I should be relieved from the disgust of such a life so that no harm may reach the state and other people’s heart (i.e. Dara Shikoh) may be at rest.”<sup>132</sup>

Primary sources do not reveal how Jahan Ara responded to her brother’s impassioned letter and only indicate that she relayed Aurangzeb’s feelings and sentiments to Shah Jahan.<sup>133</sup> The prince made transparent his innermost feelings and disappointment regarding his self-worth and his views toward his father. He made this known to the woman albeit his sister, who is Shah Jahan’s closest confidant and most loyal subject. Only a trustworthy individual and with whom he shared a level of familial intimacy would be privileged in knowing the kind of self-effacement that is documented in the above correspondence. That Jahan Ara is trusted with this information from a potential adversary of the emperor speaks volumes in substantiating the conventional wisdom regarding her exemplary attributes as noble, just and diplomatic.

In addition to Shah Jahan’s verbal exhortations and inclusion in his official histories, Jahan Ara’s imperial persona and identity was ‘inscribed’ in the Mughal

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<sup>132</sup> Zahiruddin Faruki. *Aurangzeb and his Times* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1972), p.17-18.

<sup>133</sup> *Adab-i-Alamgiri* was edited by Abdul Ghafur Chaudhri, based on a single manuscript in Lahore’s Public library and has Urdu commentary. The information regarding Aurangzeb’s letter and Jahan Ara’s response are contained in letter # 27 and # 28.

landscape through her privilege of issuing royal edicts in the form of *farmans*, *nishans* and *hukums*.<sup>134</sup> Soon after her mother, Mumtaz Mahal's death, the title of 'Sahibat-uz-Zamani' (Mistress of the Age) was conferred upon Jahan Ara and with this title she was given the royal seal for political, social and commercial transactions and considered the official keeper of the imperial seal.<sup>135</sup> Though the act of issuing royal edicts through the royal seal may have been a perfunctory act for Jahan Ara, it indelibly 'represented' her authority in official records. Further, passing royal edicts was often a two-step process and involved stamping and announcing where Shah Jahan's state-sponsored architecture played a pivotal role.

Shahjahani architecture represented the sovereign and his ideology and was both instructive and a reminder of his semi-divine and omnipresent qualities. Ebba Koch's seminal study<sup>136</sup> and analysis of the elevated *jharoka* or throne balcony feature in Shah Jahan's audience halls describes its many functions including the location from where the announcer and conveyer of the newly minted edict. Through the ritual and frequent act of ceremoniously announcing edicts, Jahan Ara's authority would be publicly perceived and 'framed' as commensurate with the emperor's whose absence or presence above and in the balcony itself would locate Jahan Ara's elevated imperial authority in absentia.

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<sup>134</sup> *Farmans* were imperial orders issued with a royal seal assigning land grants or food grants for benevolent or meritorious purposes. *Nishan* is translated as a sign, signal, mark, impression, emblem issued by princes of royal blood and similar to *Farmans* in issuing informal deeds of land, revenue or food stuff. *Hukum* is a privileged order of a queen consort, queen mother or any favored person with any kind of relationship with the royal family.

<sup>135</sup> *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 213, Ināyat Khān, [ca. 1627-1670] *The Shah Jahan Nama* (Delhi ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990) p. 74.

<sup>136</sup> Ebba Koch. *Mughal and Imperial Ideology*, p.67-83.

The graceful curve of the *bangla*<sup>137</sup> canopy detail was also used in the design of Jahan Ara's apartments at the Red Fort in Agra. One imagines that Jahan Ara signed the royal edicts from the privacy of her apartment under the same curved canopy roof from where the decree would be announced under the *bangla* canopy of the *jharoka*. The formal and deliberate pattern of associating imperial authorities, their rituals through architecture describes Ebba Koch's "the hierarchical and systematic principles" of Shah Jahan's imperial ideology and its promulgation through the details and design of his commissions.<sup>138</sup> Shah Jahan's deliberately linked ritual to architecture, and subsequently to the sovereign and his ideology was a systematic way of understanding Shah Jahan's notions of kingship and its preservation into perpetuity. That Jahan Ara is a 'player' in what Ebba Koch terms as Shah Jahan's 'personal ideology of power'<sup>139</sup> does not mitigate her authority as subordinate but privileges it by placing and rooting it within the aesthetic and ideological construct of Shah Jahan's imperial visions and hierarchy.

Jahan Ara's role in resolving conflicts through diplomacy and social tact extended beyond the disagreements within her family and was well-known among Mughal enemies or rival factions. In 1654, Shah Jahan's armies led by Khalilullah Khan attacked Raja Prithvi Chand, king of Srinagar in the Garhwal

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, p.67. The curved *bangla* roof form is also used to frame Sufi saints' tombs mausoleums within their shrine precincts. This form also appears on the exterior of the *mihrab* wall in Jahan Ara's patronage of the Mullah Shah mosque in Srinagar. See chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of this form.

<sup>138</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, Introduction, p.xxvii.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, p. xxvii.

hills.<sup>140</sup> The war ensued for two years when in 1656 the king sent Jahan Ara correspondence assuring her of his loyalty to Shah Jahan and his willingness to submit to the armies. Jahan Ara was successful in negotiating a retreat and for seeking a royal pardon on Raja Prithvi Chand's behalf. Another incident where Jahan Ara's equanimity and conciliatory agency is sought is in 1656 at the behest of Abdullah Qutb Shah whose territory in Golconda had seen overtaken by Aurangzeb and who Qutb Shah claimed had made unfair fiscal demands from his kingdom. Jahan Ara was sent several letters imploring her to intervene on Qutb Shah's behalf. For the beleaguered Qutb Shah, the princess gained a royal pardon and indemnity from all payments of tribute arrears.<sup>141</sup>

As a keeper of the royal seal, Jahan Ara's imperial identity and authority were also made 'visible' in the commercial sphere as she was granted the territory of Surat and the revenues collected from the highly trafficked international port.<sup>142</sup> Mughal administrative records (*nishans*) indicate Jahan Ara, as the keeper and user of the royal seal in conducting local and international trade and commerce.<sup>143</sup> However, the manner in which her body and its recovery from a burning incident stood at the nexus of negotiations between commercial and international politics and for provoking panegyric poetry certainly modifies the existing Islamic definition of women as 'repositories of male honor'

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<sup>140</sup> Inayāt Khan. *Shah Jahan Nama*, p.582, pp.507-509.

<sup>141</sup> K.R. Qanango. *Dara Shikoh*, tr. Hindi and English (Calcutta: S.C. Sarkar Press, 1953), pp.89-93.

<sup>142</sup> Ināyat Khān, [ca. 1627-1670] *The Shah Jahan Nama* (Delhi ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990)

p.318.

<sup>143</sup> Several political and commercial edicts can be found in three sources by the same author: Tirmizi, S.A.I. *Calendar of acquired documents (1402-1719)*, (New Delhi : Manohar, 1989-1995), *Edicts from the Mughal Haram* (Delhi : Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1979), *Mughal Documents (1628-1659)*, (New Delhi : Manohar, 1989-1995).

and religiosity. Instead, Jahan Ara's burned body and its recovery can be perceived as an agent of social change, commercial enterprise and literary inspiration in the multiple ways she 'gendered' the Mughal landscape.

#### **1.4 The Body Politic: The Political and Commercial Negotiations of Jahan Ara's Well-Being**

On April 4 1644, while attending the traditional festival of the "World-Illuminating Nauroz (Persian New Year)", the gauzy material of Jahan Ara Begum's dress brushed against a floor lamp and was instantly engulfed in flames. Though several of the princess' attendants tried to put out the fire on her person, it was to no avail. Before the fire could be extinguished, Jahan Ara's backside and hands and some parts of the front of her body were badly burned and caused the death of two of her attendants. The badly burned princess lapsed into a twenty-month slow recovery period.<sup>144</sup> The events that followed include the immediate and urgent call by Shah Jahan for medical treatment without prejudice <sup>145</sup> from the local and international communities in both the sacred and secular realms. The frequent and impassioned attempts by Shah

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<sup>144</sup> Ināyat Khān, [ca. 1627-1670] *The Shah Jahan Nama* (Delhi ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990) p. 309-310.

<sup>145</sup> Unani medicine was introduced into India in the 7th century C.E, however, its real development took place throughout the Mughal period starting in Akbar's reign. The roots of Unani medicine can be traced to Hippocrates (sp. Ionian) and Avicenna and its concepts are similar to ayurvedic practice. Apart from the literary works done on the Unani medicine since its introduction to India, several hospitals were established by Mughal emperors and nobles in various parts of the country to privilege both the aristocracy and the public. It allowed the Mughals to control the dispensation of medicine and medical care as part of their all-encompassing notion of kingship as 'semi-divine' which renews and preserves. Development of Unani medicine in India during the Mughal period was superior both in quantity and quality as compared to the development made during the pre-Mughal period. For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon See, Jan Van Alphen, *Oriental Medicine: An Illustrated Guide to the Asian Arts of Healing* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1995), p.52-55, Seema Alavi's article, 'Medical Culture in Transition: Mughal Gentleman Physician and the Native Doctor in Early Colonial India', *Modern Asian Studies*, July, 2007 (Cambridge University Press Journals) and A.A. Azami, 'Development of Unani medicine during Mughal period', *Bulletin of the Indian Institute of the History Medicine Hyderabad*, 24 (1), January, 1994, pp.29-39.

Jahan to locate effective treatments for Jahan Ara, to some extent 'objectified' her recovery and was used as leverage for financial pardons, international trade and even penitence. Jahan Ara's tragic circumstances and the process of amelioration can be analyzed as an event that reveals the inner workings of the emperor, the intensity of his adoration, compassion and respect for his daughter and the importance of her imperial authority within and beyond the imperial realm. The fact that Shah Jahan sought help outside of Mughal-sponsored Unani medicine which supported a central theme in imperial ideology and was privately and publicly utilized throughout the Mughal eras preceding his reign, is compelling and indicates his high regard for his daughter who was worthy of this transgression.

Immediately following the tragic events of the burning incident, Shah Jahan called upon the 'pious saints' (Sūfi), to offer prayers and blessings and for three days liberally gave charity and alms to the poor. The emperor's 'deep gloom', dampened spirits and dismissal of his imperial duties matched his emotional constitution thirteen years ago at the passing of his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Similarly, Shah Jahan curtailed his public affairs and daily meetings in order to personally tend to Jahan Ara's wounds and bandages. The emperor was emphatic in his search for medical remedies from various specialties and corners of the Mughal domains. He entertained treatments that were mystical and temporal, eastern and western, administered from royal hakims, mendicants and even commoners. All protocols for ensuring privacy, *parda* and modesty were clearly discounted in search for a panacea. Jahan Ara Begum's

disembodied urgent 'call for help' resonated throughout the empire making person, persona and authority 'visible' in the public consciousness and context.

In Inayāt Khan's *Shah Jahan Nama*, Shah Jahan's charitable deeds are meticulously recorded. The emperor liberally gave alms to the poor on a daily basis and sought both physical and spiritual cures from medical experts and Sūfi saints. The emperor anticipated and expected Jahan Ara's recovery through these measures as well as the 'blessed prayers' and good will of those who benefited from his munificence. In the paragraph that describes the emperor's initial reactions to the accident, Inayāt Khan includes an official administrative matter where the emperor 'revoked an edict he had passed, authorizing investigations to be made into the claims of all proprietors of rent-free lands and other stipends throughout the imperial dominions—some of whom had got possession of landed estates and pensions by means of forged letters of patent.'<sup>146</sup> The paragraph continues with matters related to appropriate remedies for Jahan Ara and the type of expertise sought for an effective cure.

It is unclear why an imperial edict or a mundane administrative act is mentioned alongside Shah Jahan's imperative search for remedies to cure his daughter of a life-threatening condition. The aggrieved individuals were rightfully incarcerated when they claimed rent-free lands by presenting fraudulent documents to the imperial house. What then is the injustice? What ultimately provoked guilt in Shah Jahan and revealed his penitent state when he revoked the edict? The decision in administering the edict may have weighed on the

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 310.

emperor's conscience before Jahan Ara's incident but may have been particularly disturbing as this act of imperial 'injustice' was not conducive to creating a charitable 'aura' around his daughter and her well-being. Perhaps, the fear of losing the daughter toward whom his affection 'exceeded all that he felt towards his other children', <sup>147</sup> required Shah Jahan to clear his mental and imperial sphere of malice and contempt and spiritual ill-will that might impede Jahan Ara's recovery.

Revoking an imperial edict was not an insignificant and perfunctory task, particularly one where forged documents were used to deny revenues to the imperial treasury.<sup>148</sup> The imperial edict in question affected individuals and their families throughout the Mughal dominions. Hence, the decision of its revocation and association with the amelioration of Jahan Ara's condition would have been known across the vast reaches of the imperial domains and served as a precedent for subsequent commercial transactions that were leveraged against the princess' medical treatment. A month after Jahan Ara's condition had stabilized, suffered a relapse and Shah Jahan vigorously continues in his efforts to create an aura of blessings, good will when he released the prisoners who were charged with 'defalcations of revenue and similar offenses should be discharged forthwith, and also absolved from the obligation of paying the seven *lakhs* of *rupees* of actual taxes that were still due from them.'<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>148</sup> Gregory C. Kozlowki. 'Imperial Authority, Benefactors and Endowment (Awqaf) in Mughal India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 38, no. 3, The Waqf (1995), pp.355-370.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 312.

For Shah Jahan, the revocation of imperial edicts would seemingly open and 'clear' the channels of God's grace but would also increase the equity of Jahan Ara's health against commercial enterprises and establish an inextricable link of imperial revenues to the money economy of Mughal India. It is compelling to note the meticulous recording by Inayāt Khan of the exact amount of alms and gold *mohurs* distributed on behalf of Jahan Ara to ensure her recovery. The money is not linked to commerce, taxes or land deeds but for the sole benefit to incur blessings for Jahan Ara. The 'commercial/spiritual transaction', however, is mediated and ensured through money and gold and its dispensation is meticulously recorded in the annals of Shah Jahan's biography.

Jahan Ara's imperial authority and health and Shah Jahan's vindication of the 'injustices' he may have committed are measured and conversely proportional to the increased dispensations from the imperial treasury. As Jahan Ara's health declined the more penitent Shah Jahan became and subsequently more money was distributed and greater imperial infractions were absolved. Several trajectories of Shah Jahan's imperial ideology were projected from Jahan Ara's tragic circumstances. Shah Jahan's charitable deeds and actions are linked to one another as part of the prevailing imperial ideology in which, once again, Jahan Ara's circumstances play a central role. The emperor's benevolence conveyed his self-propagated power as a *mujaddid*, upholding the 'chain of justice' and whose powers extend throughout the vast reaches of his empire. Jahan Ara is also represented in this imperial conveyance. The spiritual, commercial, social and medical landscapes are imbued with the ever present

and palpable persona of the princess, her imperial authority, hierarchy and spiritual grace.

The daily distribution of alms, the perpetual search and implementation for medical expertise, the banner announcements of waiving imperial injunctions and even the sound of imperial kettle drums to announce Jahan Ara's partial recovery sustained her memory among the imperial subjects in the sacred domains of the Mughal landscape and of Islam. Offerings were distributed as far as the 'sacred precinct of Mecca, half of which was intended for the Sharif and the rest for the poor. At the same time, 50,000 rupees worth of goods were also dispatched to the revered city of Medina for distribution in charity among the deserving...together with a jeweled candle stand that had been fashioned at the command of Her Royal Highness [Jahan Ara] after her recovery, which was to be delivered to the glorious grave of the Prophet.' <sup>150</sup>

Jahan Ara's personal contribution and fabrication of the candle stand and its site-specific donation publicizes and links the princess' spiritual affinities and lineage to the Prophet, his memory and to one of the Muslim *axis mundi* after Mecca. Further, the candle stand as a source of illumination prefigures the 'lamp of the Timurids' that Jahan Ara claims to light in her autobiographical Sūfi treatise, *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*. The image of 'eternal light' emanating from the 'sacred aura' at the grave in Medina is consistent with this token as the candle stand sustains the Timurid light and legacy in concert with Prophet Muhammad's.

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

The Risala-i-Sahibiyāh will be discussed in this context later in this work in chapter two.

Following the burning accident, Inayāt Khan writes of the much-adored princess' tragic condition as '...causing the joy of the world to be converted into woe...',<sup>151</sup>. Jahan Ara's persona would truly 'globalize' as the details of her condition are revealed, medical attention sought and the multiple ways her being permeated the Mughal landscape. The princess' self-representation was dominated by Shah Jahan and his retinue, or the manner in which he used (with sincerity) her recovery as commodity through charity to invoke an aura of benevolence and spiritual blessings. Subsequently, the local and international community replied in-kind in exploiting Jahan Ara's circumstances to commercially benefit their own circumstances.

As already indicated, Shah Jahan's imperial ideology found a 'forum' for its devolution during Jahan Ara's recovery, however, another pattern of imperial practice can be observed within this event. Shah Jahan's 'call for aid' from a 'global' community is likened to the aesthetic framework used in Shahjahani works, as Robert Skelton describes, that disparate entities were brought into a harmonious whole through imperial ceremony and ritual and is consonant with Mughal Arts in that they are a compendium of novelty and standards from both near and far.<sup>152</sup> Skelton's fusion of disparate elements coupled with a realistic portrayal can be likened to Jahan Ara's recovery through the help of the international and random community and that the emperor's transgressions and

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>152</sup> Robert Skelton. *The Indian Heritage: Court Life and Art under Mughal Rule*, exhibition catalogue, (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1982), pp.117-24.

stepping outside of imperial protocol and practice in his efforts to help Jahan Ara ultimately justified by her recovery after twenty-two months.

Eight months after the burning incident during which she was medically treated by various specialties and nationalities: ‘...many famous physicians from among the *Farangis*, *Musulmans*, and *Hindus* had exerted themselves to the best of their ability in concocting plasters...’.<sup>153</sup> Dr. Gabriel Boughton, a *farangi* physician in the employ of the British East India Company exemplifies further the exploitation of Jahan Ara’s condition for financial and political gains for the Company, where his medical acumen is used and exploited by his superiors. In 1612, the British defeated the Portuguese in the Battle of Swally near the port of Surat, the most active and international port on India’s western coast. As a result of their victory, the British claimed all trading rights at Surat. In 1615, the Mughal emperor Jahangīr granted the British, via Sir Thomas Roe, the right to build their own factory at Surat and to travel and trade freely throughout the empire.<sup>154</sup> The port of Surat, its territories and its abundant annual revenues were presented to Jahan Ara Begum as part of the ‘bountiful gifts of gratitude for the recovery of that sun of modesty’ upon her first recovery three months after the burning incident.<sup>155</sup>

The precedent for female-owned trading ships and conducting maritime trade was established by emperor Jahangīr’s mother, Maryam uz-Zamani and his wife Nūr Jahan. Each woman had their own Chinese ‘junk’ built to conduct trade

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>154</sup> William Foster. Ed. *The English Factories in India 1618-1669*, vol.1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906-07) and Chakraboti, P.N. *Rise and Growth of English East India Company* (Calcutta: 1994).

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.

overseas and to visibly announce their financial holdings and authority in the Mughal commercial sphere.<sup>156</sup> In 1644, after Jahan Ara was given the Surat port and its revenues, a ship was dispatched to Bassein to retrieve guns as well as material to build a new junk for the princess.<sup>157</sup> Befitting her pious personality, it seems more than any other chartered ship, Jahan Ara's ship named, "Sahabi" (after her royal title, 'Begum Sahib') transported pilgrims of Haj to Mecca along with her cargo. According to Waris, 'On 3<sup>rd</sup> Zil Haj 1065, Abid, brother of Khwaja Bahauddin Samarqandi whose father was Shaikh-i-Alam and learned men, came for pilgrimage from Samarqand, to Kabul, from there to Hindustan and finally to Mecca in a ship the *Sahabi* which belongs to Jahan Ara Begum.'<sup>158</sup> Through Surat passed Muslim pilgrims to Mecca and to the Shi'a shrines of Najaf and Karbala. As the overland passes of the Hindu Kush became unsafe for extended journeys, shorter and safer voyages by sea through ports like Surat became more popular among merchants, scholars, political refugees and excursionists.<sup>159</sup> The Surat port as Jahan Ara's possession and representation reveals another axes through which the princess' position, power and persona were perceived and made 'visible'. The *Sahabi* served as Jahan Ara's 'conveyance' through which the religious goals of pilgrims were achieved, merchants and their wares transported and the vessel ensured safe passage for the populace. The *Sahabi* was the princess' 'proxy' and as such was charged with imperial ideological

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<sup>156</sup> Ellison B. Findly, 'The Capture of Maryam –uz Zamani's Ship: Mughal Women and European Traders.. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 108, no.2 (Apr.-Jun 1988), pp.227-238 and Qaisar, Ahsan, J. *The Indian response to European Technology and Culture A.D. 1498-1707* (Delhi and New York, Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 7.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>158</sup> Muhammad Waris. *Padshah Nama*, Persian MS 6556. Preserved in Salarjung Museum Library, Hyderabad. Also in Noor Microfilm, Iran Culture House, New Delhi, 1676.

<sup>159</sup> Douglas Haynes surveys the history of Surat and its ports in the seventeenth century when it occupied a dominant place in India's domestic and international trade until the nineteenth century. See, Douglas Haynes. *'Rhetoric and Ritual' in Colonial India: The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1852-1928* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

objectives and assurances: to promulgate and preserve spirituality, ensure safety for royal subjects and sustain empire and the sovereign through lucrative commercial activities and its revenues. Further, the female-owned trading ships represented their owners to some extent and could be perceived as the 'repositories' of male honor in Islam's socio-religious belief systems. Highly charged with these meanings, female-owned ships had the exceptional privilege of warding off piracy <sup>160</sup> which would give its passengers and its cargo an assurance of safe passage and hold its owner in high regard.

Shah Jahan and his imperial retinue were fully cognizant of the generous revenues procured at the port of Surat when he assigned the province to her as *inam* or gift in gratitude for her recovery. The sum granted to Jahan Ara via Surat publicized and underlined the exceptional nature of the emperor's relationship with her but also indicated her enhanced status as a function of her debilitating condition. The extraordinary proceeds of Surat are extolled by Inayāt Khan, 'She was also granted the territory of Surat, which yields an annual revenue of three *crores* of *dams*, equivalent to seven *lakhs* and 50,000 *rupees*—but its port dues are nowadays nearly double as much, owing to the increased traffic of merchants from all quarters.'<sup>161</sup> It is clear the 'gift' of Surat allows Shah Jahan to boast Jahan Ara's imperial authority and agency by entrusting her with vast sums of fiscal freedoms to exercise in the manner befitting her official title. Additionally, the Surat endowment 'reveals' and makes 'visible' Jahan Ara's and women's

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<sup>160</sup> Though Maryam uz-Zamani's ship was attacked and looted on one occasion, sources do not indicate if the *Sahabi* was similarly pirated. See Findly's article in note 140 of this work.

□ Ināyat Khān,[ca. 1627-1670] *The Shah Jahan Nama* (Delhi ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990) p.318.

substantial involvement and agency in the crucial building of empire and in pre-modern India's foreign trade.

The Surat revenues and imperial allowances were used as part of a consistent building program from 1648-1651 through which Jahan Ara's public and pious persona is constructed in the urban centers of Agra, Delhi and in the valley of Kashmir in Srinagar. The international and local traffic that traversed through the imperial capitals for commercial and spiritual purposes is conscious of Jahan Ara's self-presentation in both the sacred and secular realms. As trade tariffs are paid at Surat, goods exchanged, passage on the *Sahabi* negotiated or as Muslim pilgrims are carried in the *Sahabi* whose journey to Mecca is heavily subsidized by Jahan Ara's largesse the memory, presence and authority of the princess is continually invoked and the representation of her pious and public persona extended beyond Mughal domains. To sponsor and ensure the pilgrim's spiritual quest to Mecca is a corollary and extension of Jahan Ara's own religious persuasions and affinities and legitimizes Her official persona is documented in the English factory records showing officials communicating directly with Jahan Ara to curry favors or *farmans* through her seal and authority and her esteemed relationship with Shah Jahan. <sup>162</sup>

During the princess' second recovery period in November 1644, Shah Jahan made emphatic and urgent requests from all corners of his dominions including specialists from the international arena particularly the English trading communities established at the port of Surat. Trading ships from Europe to India

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<sup>162</sup> Foster, William. Ed. *The English Factories in India 1618-1708* (1642-45, 13 vols. (Oxford: 1906-1927),) p. 148.

were obliged to include doctors and priests on board for incidents requiring their expertise.<sup>163</sup> The medical community established residency in India and often trading concessions the trading Company procured were often obtained through the offices of its doctors and surgeons. Here, Surat serves as an extension of Jahan Ara and represents her interests both physically and in the commercial sphere.

Dr. Gabriel Boughton was dispatched to Agra in 1644 at the behest of Emperor Shah Jahan to assist in Jahan Ara's recovery period when her wounds had ruptured and remained open. Boughton's superiors equip his faculties with the request for tax-free trade in the Bengal territories in the event his remedy ameliorates the princess' condition. Boughton is successful in healing the princess' burn wounds and his request is met with approval. Myth and legend have obscured the exact nature of the privilege redeemed by Boughton and subsequently abused by the English East India Company. However, the fact remains that Jahan Ara's recovery is considered collateral for commercial enterprises and testifies to her imperial agency and its 'active' representation in various sectors of society and imperial realms.

As previously mentioned, there was an initial stage of recovery in June 1644, four months following the burning incident.<sup>164</sup> During this recovery period, a royal celebration lasting eight days took place. 'Her Royal Highness was once again able to pay His Majesty homage in person—after a lapse of altogether

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<sup>163</sup> S. Chaudhuri. *The Myth of the English East India Company's trading privileges in Bengal*, 1651–1686;

<sup>164</sup> Ināyat Khān, [ca. 1627-1670] *The Shah Jahan Nama* (Delhi ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 314.

eight months and eight days, during which time she had been confined to her bed continuously.’ Along with the usual imperial rituals and rites of bequeathing robes, jewels, luxurious gifts, gold and money, Shah Jahn ‘ordered her [Jahan Ara], to be weighed against gold—an observance [*Roz-i-Wazn*] hitherto limited solely to the person of the Emperor.<sup>165</sup> And a vast multitude were gratified and enriched by the sums disbursed in charity this occasion.’<sup>166</sup> The ritual and ceremony with which the Mughal emperors surrounded themselves had, to a large extent, eliminated the element of novelty at court, however, this particular imperial ‘transgression’ of weighing Jahan Ara against gold is profound, unprecedented and even novel.

The unprecedented nature of Jahan Ara’s participation in the *Roz-i-Wazn* is self-evident particularly as the imperial ideology surrounding this ritual is specific to the Emperor and royal males and makes Jahan Ara’s imperial authority and agency commensurate with the sovereign and male agency. Though the private ritual took place for Shah Jahan to witness alone, it is clearly an imperial transgression and one that is recorded as an ‘official event’. This ceremonial gesture is a compelling detail that is recorded in the Emperor’s biography making Jahan Ara’s place not just ‘visible’ within imperial hierarchy but equal to him in rank and remembered in perpetuity. Shah Jahan’s anxiety stems from the severity of Jahan Ara’s physical condition and the potential loss of her life. These circumstances provoke Shah Jahan to transgress several dynastic

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<sup>165</sup> The rich details of Shah Jahan’s weighing ceremony is described in detail in Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebba Koch’s *King of the World: the Padshahnama, an imperial Mughal manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle* (London : Azimuth Editions ; New York, NY : Distributed by Thames and Hudson, c1997), p. 39-40. The ‘*Amal-i Salih*’ written by Muhammad-Salih Kanbo, adds more specifics to the solar, lunar and birthday weighing ceremonies of Shah Jahan, See vol. I pp.321.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

principals: imposing the weighing ceremony, revoking imperial injunctions against tax-evaders, showing clemency toward prisoners, in an effort to incur blessings for Jahan Ara's successful recovery. These imperial transgressions convey the emperor's deep admiration and paternal empathy for his daughter but also publicly use her 'body' or agency its spiritual, physical and fiscal well-being to convey what Koch describes as 'Shahjahani propaganda, which emphasized the continuity everlastingness of the emperor's rule...and Mughal imperial ideology'<sup>167</sup> where Jahan Ara as the 'body politic' is used in the dialogue between state and society.

## 1.6 Imbuing the Poetic Landscape: In Praise of Jahan Ara's Recovery

Jahan Ara's burning incident also extended her representation into the literary landscape of seventeenth century panegyric court poetry. Abu Talib Kalīm, one of the court poets during Shah Jahan's reign composed poetry for official imperial functions as well as extolling and commemorating imperial edifices and/or commissions. *Qasa'id*<sup>168</sup> or *qasidas* in particular were written for and to be read during one or another of the various court festivals or ceremonies held at the imperial court. Kalīm composed and read his *qasi'd* for Jahan Ara as part of the celebrations for her recovery and includes a long description of her

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<sup>167</sup> Ebba Koch, p. xxvii.

<sup>168</sup> The *qasida* was considered the most elevated form of poetry, the vast majority of Kalīm's *qasa'id* were written to be read during one or another of the various court festivals or ceremonies. Of the official court functions for which Kalīm composed, the Persian New Year (Nawroz), held on the vernal equinox, and the Weighing Festival ( *Jashn-i wazn*), celebrated twice a year on the emperor's solar and lunar birthdays, are the most representative in his *Diwan*. For a more in depth history of Abu Talib Kalīm, See Wheeler McIntosh Thackston, "The Poetry of Abu-Talib Kalīm: Persian Poet-Laureate of Shahjahan, Mughal Emperor of India," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1974.

illness. The celebration was held on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1644, eight months after the incident.<sup>169</sup> Some excerpts from the *diwan* of Abu Talib Kalīm's *qasa'id* read:

“The celebration of your health is better than spring for the world, your well-being is the ornament of the garden of the world...From every side of the world, may the people's hand in prayer serve in protection like eyelashes...In the confines of the candle the flames were restless and in their restlessness jumped on your skirt...The spark and flame acquired honor and respectability by touching your noble skirt...The candle became ashamed and the moth left it in disgust for its crime in burning you...You are the sea of mercy and your blisters are pearls<sup>170</sup> that which became precious from the blazing fire...Did the blisters become manifest on your body out of the intensity of the fire or did stars suddenly appear in the heavens that fateful night?...The fire of your devotion to God made a mark from the heart. The effects of the fire of your heart have manifest itself on your body...The mirror of your being is pure of dust...The ambition of the pure people of every land had a hand in your recovery.”<sup>171</sup>

The *qasida* contains forty-seven lines almost half<sup>172</sup> of which describe Jahan Ara's condition and praises her and offers her benediction and then the latter half

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>170</sup> The poetic metaphor that associates blisters with pearls is a common reference in later Persian poetry to convey Sufi concept of 'suffering to reach spiritual maturity'. See, Thackston, p. 193. According to Thackston, Kalīm had used this liberally from 1633 since composing a poem for Dara Shikoh wedding celebrations.

<sup>171</sup> Unpublished English translation by Dr. Sunil Sharma from Kalīm, Abū Tālib, [d. 1651], *Dīvān-i Abū Tālib Kalīm Hamadānī* (Mashhad : Muassasah-i Chāp va Intishārf-i Āstān-i Quds-i Razāvī, 1991), p. 59-60.

<sup>172</sup> The equal representation in text of Jahan Ara and Shah Jahan in Kalīm's *qasida* parallels the verses on the central *pishtaq* on the Agra mosque. The right half of the *pishtaq* is in praise of the

recalls the burning incident. The poetry is very stylized exemplifying Kalīm's own skills as a poet rather than specifically referencing the details of her character or the event. Metaphorical references of candle flames, sparks and fire are used to implicate them in the crime and sin they commit and their 'collective shame' in burning the noble and pious princess. Kalīm invokes and describes a parallel universe of the celestial bodies and the details of the Sūfi-devout princess' 'wounds'. The court poet frames the wounds of the fire on her body as a 'stigmata' of her devotion to God that also conveys how her piety ultimately saves her life. He shifts from praising the princess to Shah Jahan and how his 'material' efforts for her recovery created a fort around her for protection from illness or bad omens. Though Kalīm as Shah Jahan's court poet was amply rewarded for composing this *qasida* for the occasion of Jahan Ara's recovery, he uses her tragic condition to 'feed' his own poetic conceit not unlike Dr. Gabriel Boughton who also used his expertise to serve his company and himself.

Chandar Bhan Brahman, a Hindu poet and *munshi*,<sup>173</sup> was also present at Jahan Ara's recovery ceremony and recorded the particulars of the events.<sup>174</sup> In sum, Chandar Bhan's recordings are faithful to Kalīm's poetic renditions of the recovery ceremony and the events surrounding the burning incident. A few details depart from the stock description of the event primarily in the metaphors that are used by Chandar Bhan to describe Jahan Ara and her recovery that conform to the Shah Jahan's self-propagated image of as a *mujaddid* or religious

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emperor and the left half is dedicated to Jahan Ara. This equanimity privileges Jahan Ara on two counts: Shah Jahan makes visible his respect and the high esteem he holds his daughter and that she is perceived on equal footing to the emperor in the imperial hierarchy.

<sup>173</sup> Meaning tutor or chronicler.

<sup>174</sup> Chandarbhān Barahman, [17th C.], *Chahār Chaman*, Special Issue of the Journal Qand-i-Parsi, vol. #22, (Delhi: Iran House, 2004), 1<sup>st</sup> section, p.2-5.

renewer. Chandar Bhan invokes the memory of Muslim female exemplars such as Maryam (Jesus' mother), Zubeida, the wife of Harun-al Rashid and Rabi'a the Sūfi mystic to extol the princess' virtues. He uses Rabi'a name repeatedly to make references to Jahan Ara, i.e. 'acting like Rabi'a' or 'like the Rabi'a of our times'. This invocation of the female Sūfi mystic and likening her persona to Jahan Ara's indicates the public knowledge of the princess' Sūfi devotion and her elevated status.

Another distinction between Kalīm and Chandar Bhan is how each poet's religious affiliation as a Muslim and Hindu (respectively) may have influenced the manner in which they projected Jahan Ara's identity. In the second half of Chandar Bhan's description, he uses animistic references to associate Jahan Ara's recovery to a sequential renewal of nature in spring, however, in eight parts and as part of eight assemblies or celebratory events to mark her recovery. Kalīm explores the human qualities of the Self through the princess' body or figure or the oneness of God in Islam versus Chandhar Bhan's Hindu pantheism and reliance on an animistic framework.

“Eight assemblies (paradises) were held from the 5<sup>th</sup> of shawwal to the 12<sup>th</sup>. All the spending made the people awash in riches.

(1<sup>st</sup> Majlis): Beginning of the victorious Spring

(2<sup>nd</sup> Majlis): Abundance of vegetation in the garden

(3<sup>rd</sup> Majlis): Abundance of flowers of celebration and happiness

(4<sup>th</sup> Majlis): Strewn pearls of generosity and benevolence

(5<sup>th</sup> Majlis): A ring decorating the garden of celebration

(6<sup>th</sup> Majlis): Planting a garden of good fortune

(7<sup>th</sup> Majlis): Fresh and verdant is the bountiful rose garden

(8<sup>th</sup> Majlis): Gathering of the bounteous bouquets from the garden

All this was the cause of the blossoming and gladdening of hearts.”<sup>175</sup>

The elaborate eight-part association of Jahan Ara’s characteristics with elements of nature,<sup>176</sup> its beauty, its purity, mystery and grandeur is consistent with Chandhar Bhan likening her to the female mystic Rabi’a and the widely-held perceptions of the princess’ persona. The extended celebrations may have taken place to assure Shah Jahan, Jahan Ara and the public of her full recovery and not one that may relapse into an ailing condition.<sup>177</sup> The eight-day recovery ceremony may have been informed by the duration of her total recovery period of eight months and eight days.

Chandhar Bhan’s recordings confirm Jahan Ara’s status as equal to the renowned Sūfi mystic Rabi’a and uses simple and engaging metaphors that facilitate an understanding of the details of her character. Kalīm, in his *qasida*, however, uses the celebration to profess his poetic conceit and genius through excessive and even forced metaphors, tenuous phrases and general hyperbole to distance us from the ‘injured’ party and perceive her in the abstraction and not details of her persona. Ebba Koch describes the use of floral imagery both in Kalīm and generally in court poetry as synonymous and conducive to an iconic

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<sup>175</sup> Chandarbhān Barahman, p.4-5. Unpublished translation courtesy of Dr. Sunil Sharma.

<sup>176</sup> Ebba Koch. *The Complete Taj Mahal* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), p. 222-223.

<sup>177</sup> Jahan Ara had partially and temporarily recovered from her injuries three months after the accident in June 1644. This celebration marked her full recovery after eight months and eight days without relapses. See Inayāt Khan, p. 314 for the initial recovery (June 1644) and for the second recovery (December 1644) p. 317-18 and for the final recovery (February 1645) p. 321.

representation of Shah Jahan's imperial symbolism and propaganda and where flowers themselves were symbols of Mughal kingship.<sup>178</sup> Koch notes, 'The writers and poets of Shah Jahan eulogized him as the 'spring of the flower garden of justice and generosity.'<sup>179</sup> Further, the floral metaphors served as imperial 'insignia' also extended to Jahan Ara Begum where as Ebba Koch notes, 'in Shahjahani rhetoric' the princess was 'the noble palm-tree of the orchard of magnificence and excellent fruit of the plant of grandeur'.<sup>180</sup> In Chandhar Bhan's recordings, Jahan Ara's dual personas are magnified and conveyed: spiritual through Rabi'a and imperial through Shah Jahan.

If in fact the floral imperial iconography and its ideological associations were prevalent and operative during Shah Jahan reign then it follows that Chandhar Bhan's personification of 'spring' as Jahan Ara's renewed and recovered person locates and conveys another 'visual axes' of her power and imperial hierarchy as commensurate with Shah Jahan's. The 'spring' of Shah Jahan's iconic kingship is at the heart and essence of her recovery in Chandhar Bhan's poetic recordings. At the very least, the eight-part series of Jahan Ara's recovery celebrations and the consistent spring metaphors created an 'aura' of Shah Jahan's kingship as both omni/present in the person or body of the princess and as the 'renewer' of her being. Similar to the manner in which Jahan Ara's commission and design of the Agra mosque and other major commissions as well as the unprecedented weighing ceremony crossed the gender divide and located her authority among male imperial hierarchy.

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<sup>178</sup> Ebba Koch. *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 222-223.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p.223.

<sup>180</sup> Muhammad Kazim, '*Alamgirnama*', trans. in W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai 'Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Mughal and European Documentary Sources (Cambridge, MA.: Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, c1989), p.157.

Chandhar Bhan sustains Jahan Ara's elevated rank through the imperial 'iconic' references in his account of the recovery celebrations. Several poems praising Jahan Ara's edifices and gardens were also composed by Kalīm including poetic encomiums on the Mullah Shah Badakhshi mosque in Srinagar, Kashmir (1650).<sup>181</sup> The Srinagar mosque and its design elements as well as other commissions by Jahan Ara and gardens given to or maintained by her are discussed in chapter three of this work.

Jahan Ara was constant in her fealty and filial piety to Shah Jahan as she remained by his side in his remaining days during his imprisonment in the Agra Fort from 1658 until his death in 1666. The princess' unwavering support for her father in his struggle against Aurangzeb was not only profound but a poignant moment in her life and recorded with all the emotional details befitting her pious and noble stature in Shah Jahan's biography. Aurangzeb's cruelty toward his father are clearly conveyed when he incarcerated his father to the Shah Burj tower of the Agra Fort like a common prisoner and even in death Aurangzeb denied his father the honor of a proper burial fit for a Mughal emperor. The Mughal historian Kanbo describes in his *Amal-i-Salih* the events that followed Shah Jahan's death.<sup>182</sup> Kanbo's solemn and highly textured account walks the reader from Shah Jahan's last lucid moments where he assembles the ladies of the *haram*, prays with Jahan Ara, to the open and vigorous display of grief by the ladies of the *haram* at his passing.

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<sup>181</sup> Kalīm composed several *qit'a* and *mathnawi* for buildings and gardens commissioned by Shah Jahan, Dara Shikoh and Jahan Ara Begum from 1638-1648. See Thackston, p. 203-4, 232.

<sup>182</sup> Translated and edited in Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p.101 and Muhammad Salih Kambuh, [d. 1674], *Amal-i-Salih*, ed. by Ghulam Yazdani (Calcutta: Asiatic Society Press, 1923-46), vol.3, p.150.

Kanbo describes Jahan Ara's specifications and request for a proper, noble and imperial burial during the daylight hours but her request was denied by Aurangzeb. During her father's imprisonment, Jahan Ara was unable to assert the imperial authority she had once used liberally and with success as an intercessor, political diplomat, surrogate mother, Sūfi-devout, and patron to artfully negotiate personal and public needs and objectives. Without Shah Jahan as the epicenter around which Jahan Ara's orbited and represented her authority, the princess had reached the limits of her representation within and beyond the imperial domain and she remained respectfully at the mercy of Aurangzeb's will. Following Shah Jahan's death in 1666, however, Aurangzeb elevates Jahan Ara's position in the imperial hierarchy and doubles her allowance.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

From the brief survey in this chapter with some level of certainty we can surmise that women of both the Timurid and Mughal courts played crucial roles in the power games, sometimes counterproductive to their objectives, however, they shaped they expanded the medieval women's history in both Persia and India. Whether at the beginnings of Mughal power or during the expansionist schemes, Timurid-Mughal women some extent prejudiced policy and exercised considerable power over the administration and within their domestic sphere. Comprehensive histories of these remarkable women remains to be written, but telling and unprecedented elements through Jahan Ara Begum's agency emerge

even from the brief overview contained in this paper that compels or challenges a revision of existing women's historiographies.

The Timurid-Mughal women were intelligent, determined, proud and daring. Without these character attributes, they couldn't not have remained hovering above the political turmoil of the time. The women seemingly labored primarily for the benefit of the male figures around whose sovereignty they served. These women were motivated it seems, by both admiration for their emperor and the dynastic obligations and never attempted to take the reins of empire in their own hands or make any claims to the throne.<sup>183</sup> Except for Nūr Jahan, when Timurid-Mughal women were seated literally next to the throne, as was Jahan Ara Begum and Maham Anaga, they may have moved in the shadows of their male occupant but always in the 'light' of the sphere they had cultivated for themselves. In Jahan Ara's case, her patronage of major monuments, her spiritual ascension within the Qadriyāh order, her political diplomacy and her literary contributions to Sūfi hagiographies extended her self-representations beyond the shadow cast by Shah Jahan's imperial presence and authority.

At the same time, the history of the Timurid-Mughal women reveals an element of society not often recognized for the uncertainty it represented. Women were not completely helpless creatures who acquiesced to every whim of the emperor as the early historiographies convey and hold regarding Muslim women. Within

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<sup>183</sup> The only woman ever to ascend the imperial throne was Sultan Rizia of the pre-Mughal Mameluk dynasty in the thirteenth century, but she could keep it only for a short period. Her father Ittutmish "chose for his successor his daughter Razyya, whom he considered a 'better man' than his sons. This queen was a brave and clever woman, however the warrior chiefs, owing to their Muslim prejudices, saw subordination to a woman as dishonorable" (Antonova, et al. (1979), pp. 203-04. Ceaseless conspiracy by the chiefs brought her down after four years.

the constraints of religion and custom, there was enough room for these women to socialize and communicate with men on the basis of mutual respect and, more importantly to achieve personal and political development. This is demonstrated by the substantial body of Jahan Ara's and her female predecessors and their literary, artistic, and commercial enterprises. The greatest advantage that these women enjoyed was their access to education and literacy, to which helped them become conscious of their identities, ambitions beyond domesticity, and cultivated a tactical sense, which was employed in political diplomacy and persuasiveness. Combining these refined elements of women's persona allowed their self-representation in multiple ways in the Mughal landscape. This formula of success and representation did not apply to all Mughal women but to those like Jahan Ara Begum and other educated and assertive Timurid-Mughal women conveyed their ambitions in multiple certainly makes a legitimate argument for the limitations of the patriarchal-bureaucracy in which they functioned. It would be just as false to assert that in Mughal society specific *forms* of power were gendered, as it would be to claim that the basis of that power was strictly a male domain.

Were these Mughal women anomalies? Or as Ruby Lal claims in her seminal study that there was some idea of freedom and power in the domesticity of the Mughal *haram* that legitimated and required crossing gender boundaries? Was it despite the conditions of Mughal society that women acceded to power or because of them? Out of answers to these questions, and through close studies of women like Jahan Ara Begum may emerge a re-evaluation of Mughal women their social and political culture, and to answer them, a full history must first be

written of the women of the time, if only to bring them out of the stereotypical shadows to which they have been historically subjected.

It follows, then, that this research on Jahan Ara Begum's through court chronicles and particularly through her Sūfi treatises, *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and *Munis al-Arvāh* attempts to modify and dispel the stereotypical assumptions documented in early modern histories of medieval Muslim women particularly as 'invisible' or simply agents of imperial authority but will allow a personal, closer and nuanced perspective of the princess' imperial and spiritual persona and how these attributes were articulated through her major commissions and in making the Mughal monarchy and Timurid legacy.

Finally, Jahan Ara Begum's multiple representations as a function of her religiosity and imperial rank broadens the narrow field of Islam as described by Ronald Jennings in the opening paragraph of this work as oppressive and repressive towards Muslim women throughout history without change or recourse. Through Jahan Ara's female agency and contributions the perceptions of the stereotypical Islamic 'ideals' and its prescriptive norms for Medieval women shifts and is modified from the constant and static uniformity it has been relegated in early modern history.

The brief survey of Timurid-Mughal women in this work suggests that in fact, there is no archetypal female and that instead each woman has cultivated a personal paradigm that is used as a point of departure and 'springboard' for the successive royal females to use for their self-fashioning. We perceived through

the 'enunciations' of Timurid-Mughal women not a bombastic display of power but instead through a particular thinly-veiled 'artfulness' these women have challenged and negotiated a larger operative sphere for their social and political representations and their visions for legacy. Muslim women should be perceived as 'visible' and accountable and as composites or 'shifting planes' of power and self-representation unlike the seemingly one-dimensional uniformity of imperial ideology that royal males had 'worn' to ensure sovereignty and legacy.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **‘Visions’ of Timurid Legacy: Jahan Ara Begum’s Piety and ‘Self-Representation’**

Sūfism significantly contributed to the characteristic tenor of Islam in the subcontinent of Asia and particularly a ‘nuanced’ Sūfi-Islam from the sixteenth-century during the reign of the Indian-Timurids/Mughals in northern India. Though orthodox Islamic theology and jurisprudence formed the basis of life and political ideology in Mughal India, the influence of Sūfism and its mystical belief systems were an integral part of the political psyche and imperial ethos. The innate constructions of Sūfism also attended some of the most deeply felt social and spiritual needs of the Mughal elite and commoners that ‘official’ Islam may not have addressed. The inextricable connection of the imperial family to Sūfi institutions was further galvanized and made more ‘visible’ through the women of the ruling house, their piety and their largesse. Imperial female support of Sūfi leaders and patronage of monuments associated with Sūfi orders was conducive to Timurid-Mughal ideology of the ruling milieu and ‘located’ axes that could be used to ‘reveal’ elite women’s socio-political roles, the power they wielded, and the manner in which they represented themselves.

This chapter objectifies the analysis of chapter one by examining Jahan Ara Begum’s multiple ‘axes’ of participation in the Mughal milieu as a function of her role in

the Sūfi Qadriyāh order. The analysis will rely on the Sūfi treatises *Munis al-Arvāh* (1639-40) and *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*<sup>184</sup> (1640-41) attributed to Jahan Ara Begum's authorship by placing them in a larger social, religious and political contexts to consider how the texts serve as a field of inquiry for the princess' spiritual 'self-fashioning' in asserting and claiming her Sūfi spiritual authority in an elevated state of *pīri-muridi* and her imperial authority as the 'Begum Saheba'. This chapter critically explores Jahan Ara Begum's character and conflicts within the lines of her prose and poetry and the role the literary works played in her 'self-fashioning'. Sūfi hagiographies written by elite women are few in the vast corpus of Sūfi literature (largely unpublished), however, facilitate an understanding of the place of women in mysticism and its place in Mughal courtly life.

Using official and primary sources<sup>185</sup> of Mughal histories and biographies, the study will attempt to historicize the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* to construct and understand the context in which the Sūfi treatise was written and the particular socio-religious and political factors that motivated the literary 'translations' as functions of Jahan Ara's spiritual persona. The objective for critically analyzing and historically situating the princess' personal narratives is to highlight an alternative form of representation for one elite Muslim woman and the ways in which she made her Self 'visible' as a function of her piety and imperial imperatives. Issues of identity, spirituality and gender inform the framework through which the narratives of the treatise are analyzed to consider how

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<sup>184</sup> Muhammad Aslam, Typed Persian copy of the original 17<sup>th</sup> C. manuscript. 'Risalah-i-Sahibiyah', *Journal of Research Society of Pakistan*, 16 no. 4 and 17 (hereafter cited as *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and *Munis'ul-Arwah* marked "Ms. Fraser 229", 38 pages and dated 1639, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford England, consists of 83 folios in Persian.

<sup>185</sup> The study relies heavily on Jahan Ara Begum's *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* (1640) and *Munis al-Arvāh* (1639), Inayāt Khan's *Shah Jahan Nama*, 'Abd Hamid Lahori's *Badshahnama*, Tawakkul Beg's *Nuskha-i Ahwal-i Shahi*, 1077/1667 and Shikuh, *Sakinat al-Awliya*, to construct a socio-religious and political context for the analysis. Please see bibliography for full details of these texts.

they operate in Jahan Ara's authorial constructions of Self both as a Sūfi *pīri-muridi*<sup>186</sup> and as the head of the imperial harem.

## 2.1 Risala-i-Sahibiyāh: Legacy-Building Piety and Spiritual Authority

The auto/biographical Sūfi treatise, *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, attributed to the Mughal princess Jahan Ara Begum (1614-1681) daughter of emperor Shah Jahan, is a testament of a royal female fulfilling imperial imperatives through her association with Sūfi institutions, however, within the boundaries of her Timurid and Mughal folk and cultural traditions. The *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* is a testimony of the princess' initiation and 'self-realization' on the mystical path of Sūfism under the auspices of her Sūfi master Mullah Shah Badakhshi. In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara's primary claim is that as a direct function of her piety the light of the Timurid lamp<sup>187</sup> is finally and eternally illuminated.<sup>188</sup>

“In our family no one took the step on the Path to seek God  
or the truth that would light the Timurid lamp eternally. I was

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<sup>186</sup> For an overview of the *pīri-muridi* state, see, Kelly Pemberton's article, "Muslim Women Mystics and Female Spiritual Authority in South Asian Sufism", in *Contesting Rituals: Islam and Practices of Identity-Making*, eds. Stewart, P and Strathern, A. (Durham: North Carolina Press, 2005) pp.3-39. Please note: As the term *pīri-muridi* is not used in the context of Sufism earlier than the 20<sup>th</sup> C., the author has taken liberties to label Jahan Ara's spiritual persona to facilitate discussion and to distinguish her rank within the Qadriyāh order.

<sup>187</sup> See Ebba Koch's explanation for 'divine effulgence': 'A Persian concept of a manifestation of the sacred element of fire or light in the person of the rightful ruler, which had evidently endured from Sasanian times but without its original Zoroastrian implications', in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology, Collected Essays*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 164. Further, the Arabic inscriptions on the base and neck of some mosque lamps are verses from the Qur'an (xxiv.35), in which the light of God is likened to the light from an oil lamp. This indicates that mosque lamps were fabricated to 'visualize' God was in a religious setting and in an imperial context the light of the lamp was a metaphor appropriated to describe the semi-divine nature or power of reigning emperors like the Timurid and later Mughal dynasty. The light of the lamp itself is a visual and metaphysical 're-creation' of both God's light and as a symbol for an enduring imperial dynasty.

<sup>188</sup> See note 183 in this work.

grateful for having received this great fortune and wealth.

There was no end to my happiness.”<sup>189</sup>

Further, this paper analyzes the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*'s role not only as a field of inquiry or literary referent into Jahan Ara Begum's self-representation in an elevated state of a Sūfi *pīr-muridi*<sup>190</sup> but also in its key role and accumulated significance in portraying the socio-religious and political dynamics of Shah Jahan's court and his “Timurid Renaissance”<sup>191</sup> initiatives.

The thirty-nine pages of the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, written in 1641 C.E in Persian, include Jahan Ara Begum's poetic ruminations, the biography of her *pīr* Mullah Shah Badakhshi and a narrative of the intense interiority of her mystical experience. The ‘spiritual journey’ enables Jahan Ara to cultivate a ‘voice’ and make herself ‘visible’ through her professions in ink where her personal prose and poetry can be seen as a discursive on the feminine element in Sūfi transcendental ideology. Jahan Ara's emphatic ‘invocations’ in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* provoke questions of how the framework of mystical Islam and its ‘feminine-centered’ ideology may have provoked an imperial female to cultivate and claim an individual identity and not an exalted Islamic ideal. While the treatise serves as visible evidence of the princess publicly fulfilling her imperial obligations and upholding Islamic paradigms in ‘professing’ her piety and

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid, p. 9-10.

<sup>190</sup> A *pīr* (usually male) is a Sufi master who is well-versed in the philosophy of his particular Sufi order. A *pīr* guides and counsels others on the Sufi path. Women were generally disallowed this revered status. However, those who did ascend to the level of a *pīr* through observance of Sufi doctrine, ‘union with the divine’, constant prayer, etc. would informally earn the status of *pīr-murid* (master-disciple). For an overview of the *pīr-murid* state, see, *Contesting Rituals: Islam and Practices of Identity-Making*, eds. Stewart, P and Strathern, A. 2005. Please note: As the term *pīrī-muridī* is not used in the context of Sufism earlier than the 20<sup>th</sup> C. , the author has taken liberties to label Jahan Ara's spiritual persona to facilitate discussion and to distinguish her rank within the Qadriyāh order.

<sup>191</sup> See note 113 in chapter one page 53 for full description and details.

maintaining Mughal/Timurid folk traditions, her public and private personas are simultaneously 'hidden' and revealed in the intertextuality and subtext of her Sūfi prose, poetry as well as her patronage of architecture.

Sūfism, its political value and integration into the field of Mughal statecraft requires clarification to fully comprehend Jahan Ara's ideological framework and spiritual persuasions. Mughal political alignment with Sūfi saints particularly in the Chishtiyāh order reflected the specific relationship that existed between mystical Islam and emperors as 'exponents of worldly and spiritual powers.'<sup>192</sup> The Mughal-Sūfi affiliation created a 'sanctity of aura' around the imperial family and Mughal-sponsored *dargahs* and mosques. To effectively and visibly achieve political and spiritual imperatives, the ruling house assimilated state to household requiring royal women, the 'keepers' of imperial genealogies, to make public associations with exemplary Sūfi personalities through their piety and patronage of religious institutions. This study maintains that Jahan Ara Begum's association and subsequent spiritual ascension under the guidance of her pīr<sup>193</sup> transcended imperial expectations imposed on her class and gender. Through her deliberate and sincere participation in Sūfi practice, Jahan Ara extended beyond her relegated role of female agency in service of the state where her public piety was part of an imperial prerogative as well as a personal imperative that ultimately legitimized her claims to her authority and sustained an enduring Timurid legacy.

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<sup>192</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Arts and Imperial Ideology*, p.176.

<sup>193</sup> For a biographical sketch of Mullah Shah Badakhshi's life and works see Tawakkul Beg's 17<sup>th</sup> century MS. *Nuskhah-i Ahwal-i-Shahi* (Persian MS British Museum, 3203, Rotograph (No. 138).

Though the women of the Mughal dynasty led sequestered and private lives where their personalities and personas were hidden from public scrutiny, imperial ideology and Mughal statecraft relied for its political and spiritual well-being on visible evidence of piety from its women. The ruling house required imperial women to make public associations with exemplary religious personalities through their piety and the patronage of religious institutions.<sup>194</sup> As early as emperor Babur's invasion in 1526, spiritual beliefs among Mughal emperors found expressions within a spectrum of piety including Sūfism which involved deeper commitments to holy persons or saints than to details of Islamic theology. Beginning with the Mughal's ancestor Timur, the development of a cult of the sovereign associated with historical and contemporary Sūfi saints and scholars became one more argument on behalf of Timur's descendants' right to dominion. The Timurid dynasty's endurance rested in particular in its ability to secure the support of prominent Sūfi saints and scholars and further to employ female agency in publicly forging political ties with Sūfi institutions.

The cultivation of the Sūfi-king association, where Sūfi saints or *shaykhs* served as imperial emissaries in local communities, is one that Timur actively used to advance their social and political agendas.<sup>195</sup> However, the reliance on female agency or 'matronage' to advance the reigning emperor's political agenda was an appropriation by the early Mughals from indigenous Hindu belief systems. S. R. Sharda claims that Indian Sūfi literature of the post-Timur period shows a significant change in thought content and includes veneration and even deification of women through what Ursula

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<sup>194</sup> The Emperor-Sufi relationship is analyzed from the Sufi *Naqshbandiyāh* perspective later in this chapter.

<sup>195</sup> For a comprehensive and detailed discussion of the Sufi-king dynamics and history, see p. 42-26 of this chapter.

King terms as an ‘androcentric perspective’ based on the first female mystic Rabi’a.<sup>196</sup> Further, Sharda claims the literature is pantheistic and engages Vedantic discourse in its multiple loci for spiritual focus beyond the mosque and specific to Sūfi shrines. It would follow that the invasion of the Timurid-Indians in early sixteenth century may have witnessed a decline of Muslim orthodoxy as a result of the resurgence of Indian Sūfism that canonized using indigenous Hindu belief systems into a form of piety that complemented and not displaced Islamic ideology. During emperor Akbar’s (r. 1556-1605) reign Sūfi saints and their followers became ‘free’ from the control of the strictures of Islamic doctrine and began formal and constructive dialogues with Hindu saints, who influenced the social and ritual practices of Sūfis and their imperial supporters.<sup>197</sup>

Through the Sūfi saints, the Mughals adopted and formalized the concept of ‘visible’ female devotion distilled from the Vaishnava Vedantic doctrine that included the ecstatic *bhakti* devotion to Krishna, the Puranic ‘domestic’ commentary regarding the auspicious female of *shakti*, and the aesthetic *rasa* theory of Sanskrit poetics.<sup>198</sup> Ritually and liturgically these ‘visible’ forms of devotion were centered on the presence of the auspicious female, her agency and authority. The popularity of the Vedantic pantheism and among the Sūfis had reached its zenith during emperor Akbar’s reign. The emperor promoted his imperial visions of kingship and spiritual pluralism throughout the Mughal domains and particularly by ‘activating’ the imperial *haram* as intrinsic and

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<sup>196</sup> King, Ursula, *Women and Spirituality: Voices of Protest and Promise*, London, 1989. p. 99-100. ‘The dominant androcentric perspective required, however, that women of such strength of spirit were likened to be ‘as men’ who had transcended what were perceived to be the innate limitations of womanhood’. Referring to Rabi’a, Schimmel (‘Women in Mystical Islam’, 151) has written, ‘One should not be misled by the constant use of the word ‘man’ in the mystical literature of the Islamic languages: it merely points to the ideal human being who has reached proximity to God where there is no distinction of sexes; and Rabi’a is the prime model of this proximity’.

<sup>197</sup> H. Beveridge. (trans.) *The Akbar Nama of ‘Abu-I Fazl*, vols. I-III (1902-39; rpt. Delhi, 1993) vol. III, p. 205.

<sup>198</sup> Sharda, p.23-25.

accountable to the imperial 'apparatus'. Ruby Lal's examination of Mughal 'domestic' relations under Babur, Humayun, and Akbar, historicizes and 'politically activates' the *haram* and its imperial females dispelling the myth of its singular objective as a repository for male recreation.<sup>199</sup>

The re-structuring of the imperial household under Akbar relied on physical and social hierarchies established within the *haram*.<sup>200</sup> It was the first time in Mughal history where the standardization and regulations of the female domains made it accountable and intrinsic to imperial policy. Though the *haram* had always existed in concept and as a lived experience, for the first time, hierarchy within the *haram* was physically established. In the Fatehpur Sikri palace complex constructed by Akbar, the female quarters were meticulously designed and planned to place high-ranked females of the *haram* closest to the emperor's quarters creating a 'collective consciousness' in the female quarters of one's place and responsibility to the sovereign and the empire. Lal asserts that though the physicality of Akbar's *haram* was still 'sequestered and inaccessible', its inhabitants were active proponents and participants in sustaining the emperor's visions.

An example of imperial women's obligation and ambitions particularly in its display of religiosity is the women's pilgrimage trip to Hajj in 1578 led by Gulbadan Begum, Akbar's mother. The female-initiated public event with a duration of four years publicly conveyed Akbar's pietistic initiatives where women's agency was used to

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<sup>199</sup> Ruby Lal, p. 142 and 177.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. p.142 and 177.

reinforce the 'Islamic face of the empire.'<sup>201</sup> The Hajj expedition was one example during Akbar's reign of how the domestic sphere and its female 'power relations' exercised within the sacred and secular realms was intrinsic to and created precedents for the empire-building initiatives of the Mughals and imperial females where the merging of domesticity, politics and religion constructed and codified a unique imperial ideology and authority. These precedents certainly informed and sanctioned the public participation of successive imperial women especially Nūr Jahan in her political maneuvers and Jahan Ara Begum's prolific religious and architectural contributions in the Mughal landscape.

The veneration of Sūfi saints was more than an elite practice, and transcended social, religious and gender boundaries in Mughal India. The veneration of popular saints drew together ordinary and elite men and women both Hindu and Muslim, who congregated in the same performative space of a Sūfi *dargah* complex and participated equally in worship and devotion. The 'democratic' dynamics that Sūfism provoked allowed imperial women to rhetorically make their presence felt in the public realm through their associations with and patronage of Sūfism its religious leaders and sites without compromising imperial and Islamic etiquette. The political and financial support of a Sūfi leader and/or a Sūfi *dargah* established a personal connection between the populace and its would-be masters and mistresses. Even when the elite were not present the 'ether' of their 'aura' was palpable.

Ritual and annual veneration of the saints at Sūfi monuments allowed 'metaphysical' engagement and interface for both the imperial elite and their subjects.

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<sup>201</sup> Ruby Lal, p. 176-177.

Though the imperial elites may have worshipped privately at the public Sūfi sites, the ‘aura’ of their ‘semi-divinity’ remained and was invoked during public piety. Kishwar Rizvi uses the contemporary example of the neighboring Safavids and the shrine of Fatima al-Ma’suma (d. 817) at Qum, to describe the social and political ‘aura’ created at shrines through female piety. The Safavid practice suggests a pre-Mughal pattern of political patronage and piety adopted and exercised by the Timurids as part of imperial ideology:

“...Safavid family chose popularly venerated shrines in which to enact their vision of kingship...At the shrines, the Safavids disseminated an aura of sanctity and devotion, especially through the charity of women, or on their behalf...In return, the rulers immortalized themselves and their loved ones...and their spirits forever blessed through religious foundations.”<sup>202</sup>

## **2.2 Galvanizing State to Household: Gendered Pietistic Imperatives**

In addition to public displays of piety, Mughal females seemed to have borne a particular responsibility for announcing the spirituality of the dynasty not only through practice but also through the patronage of sacred and secular monuments. The ‘constructed’ form of the ‘pronounced’ piety is discussed later in chapter three of this

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<sup>202</sup> Kishwar Rizvi, “Gendered Patronage: Women and Benevolence during the Early Safavid Empire,” in *Women , Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2000),145.

work where Jahan Ara Begum's architectural commissions are physical 'enunciations' of her Sūfi piety and spiritual persona.

Jahan Ara Begum, the first surviving daughter of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal was born on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1614 C.E in the auspicious Sūfi pilgrimage city of Ajmer, the final resting place of Sheikh Khawaja Mu'in din Chishti, the Sūfi leader of the Chishtiyāh order. Ajmer was not only Jahan Ara's birthplace but later served as her spiritual '*axis mundi*' and the site of the passionate Sūfi rituals described in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* as well as the framework for the Chishtiyāh anthology *Munis-ul-Arvāh*. Jahan Ara's birth and its location were considered auspicious as her arrival into the world was synchronous with Shah Jahan's victory against the unbeatable Rajput ruler Rana Amar Singh. The valiant and long awaited victory against Rajput factions dates back to Shah Jahan's grandfather, Akbar. Naturally, the royal household regarded Jahan Ara's birth as a pleasant augury and by default the princess' would have gained an endearing place in her parents' affection and later in imperial hierarchy. Jahan Ara's grandfather emperor Jahangīr graced her with the name "Jahan Ara" or "adorners of the world".<sup>203</sup> However, as she grew up and assumed her mother's position in the harem, she came to be designated as the 'Begum Saheb', one of the many 'veils' or labels she would assume during her lifetime to interface the negotiations between the private and public realms of Mughal custom and society.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Qazwini, f. 81a: Also see G. Yazdani's article entitled, "*Jahan Ara*", pub. In J.P.H.S., Vol. II, No.2, p.153.

<sup>204</sup> 'Since Akbar's reign, it had been ordained that the names of the 'inmates' of the seraglio should not be mentioned in public, but that they should be designated by some epithet, derived either from the place of their birth or the country or city in which they may have first been regarded by the monarch with the 'eye of affection'.' See: Ināyat Khān, [ca. 1627-1670] *The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan*, (Delhi ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990) p. 447-448.

Imperial etiquette and the ideals of Islamic modesty for elite women dictated that a 'veil of sanctity' be interposed between the 'common' or public world and the imperial world. For Jahan Ara, this 'veiling' would ensure that the noble princess' name or persona never be profaned or 'revealed' in public and that her public persona be 'cloaked' in the flowery epithet of her name. Chapter one discusses flower imagery as metaphors of Shah Jahan's imperial symbolism and notions of kingship.<sup>205</sup> The court chronicles and Mughal sources are consistent in descriptions of Jahan Ara as beautiful, erudite and a cultured woman of a benevolent disposition inclined to Sūfism and highly respected as 'Lady of the imperial harem' and in Mughal society. Albeit the skewed or exaggerated European traveler accounts<sup>206</sup>, the description of Jahan Ara's character doesn't stray far from 'pious, noble, graceful, modest and beautiful'. The epithet that best describes Jahan Ara's duality is 'the sun of modesty'; she is superior in her illumination as the sun but remains veiled in her modesty.

Jahan Ara wrote her second Sūfi treatise the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* in the twenty-seventh (1640-41) year of her unmarried life. The treatise was preceded by the biographical anthology of the Chishtiyāh order, *Munis al-Arvāh* (1639-40). Upon her mother Mumtaz Mahal's untimely passing in 1631, Jahan Ara at age seventeen inherited and assumed the social and fiscal responsibilities of the imperial harem and soon was assigned the task of the keeper of the imperial seal 'and from that date, the duty of affixing the great seal to the imperial edicts devolved upon her.'<sup>207</sup> A year later, in addition to the social and financial upkeep of the imperial *haram*, Jahan Ara was

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<sup>205</sup> See, chapter one, p. 74 of this work.

<sup>206</sup> Western perceptions of Jahan Ara are discussed in chapter four of this research.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

assigned the additional task of arranging the postponed nuptials for her brothers, Dara Shikoh, Muhammad Shah Shuja and Aurangzeb, respectively.

Royal nuptials of her younger brothers, Murah and Shah Shuja took place from 1632-1634. Jahan Ara presided at the ceremonies in the role of the 'matriarch' that enabled Jahan Ara to fully participate in and witness the joining of man and wife both as life partners and in the intimacy they would share. At the formative age of eighteen, when most married princess' are bearing children or planning their own nuptials, Jahan Ara realized the cruelty of her imperial 'captivity'. The mandate that forbid imperial daughters to marry excluded her from emotional experience of love with a male outside of her familial retinue. The forbidding and cruel aspect of a permanent unmarried status would give any teenager functioning in a patriarchal society pause to reflect on the meaning of her 'impoverished' existence without the textures and visceral experiences of reaching her female potential in procreation, in physical intimacy and in personally cultivating the legacy of her matriarchy within the imperial hierarchy. Jahan Ara's mother's untimely death would provoke thoughts of her own mortality and the importance of leaving a legacy. The politics of the *haram* were centered on dynastic reproduction that not only perpetuated the dynastic line but legitimized the female progenitor.<sup>208</sup> Marital alliances firmly embedded the memory of the elite and their progeny in the imperial annals of history and legitimized successive generations in their sovereignty.

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<sup>208</sup> Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, p.3.

The root or cause of the imperial injunction prohibiting imperial princess' from marrying has not been verified through primary sources however, it remained constant throughout Jahan Ara's life.<sup>209</sup> Regardless of the reasons for the imperial edict, it may have played a pivotal role in giving Jahan Ara the impetus to seek alternative means to ensure empire and legacy. Dynastic reproduction not only ensured legitimacy but fortified female authority and hierarchy in the imperial realm. Imperial females gained their rank and privilege in the imperial *haram* either through marriage and subsequently produced heirs or by default through inheritance or as a birthright. Nūr Jahan, the prescient feminist and wife of emperor Jahangīr, did not produce an heir to the throne. The 'the Empress of India' advocated her authority and privilege through matrimony, political acumen and through the unwavering support of her husband emperor Jahangīr and the imperial retinue she forged during her 'reign'.<sup>210</sup>

Titles and rank gained through marriage outside of the dynastic line, though authentic, may have been vulnerable to contestation and intense scrutiny of the 'outsider'. Imperial ideology and statecraft relied on genealogical lines of power to maintain sovereignty and to argue dynastic legitimacy into perpetuity. Nūr Jahan's assertion of her own authority and not the sovereign's and the promotion of her immediate family and not the Mughal retinue may have been central in the contestations around her authority and actions. Additionally, Nūr Jahan's seemingly 'brazen' and

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<sup>209</sup> The imperial 'injunction' is not corroborated in official Mughal documents, however, its curiosity has compelled several modern writers of Mughal histories to conjecture the edict's point of origin to Akbar's reign and its enforcement during Shah Jahan's reign as a function of the emperor's love for his daughter to remain his 'consort' queen.

<sup>210</sup> Nur Jahan's unprecedented role in socio-political dynamics during Jahangīr's reign has fascinated numerous historians who have analyzed her 'inner' workings in numerous scholarly texts. For an overview of Nur Jahan's framework see: S. Anand, *History of Begum Nurjahan* (New Delhi, 1992); R. Caunter, *Nur Jahan and Jahangir* (Calcutta, 1950); *Journal of the Oriental Institute* (Baroda), 43 (1-2), 1993, 27-35 P.G. Devasher, "Nur Jahan", *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, 12(1), 1975, 21-39; Findly, *Nur Jahan: Empress of Mughal India* (New York, 1993); Irfan Habib, "The Family of Nur Jahan during Jahangīr's Reign," H. Lamb, *Nur Mahal* (New York, 1932).

unprecedented public representation as an imperial female operating outside of Islamic etiquette provoked criticism within and outside of the imperial *haram* and greatly contributed to her rivals' machiavellian attempts to discredit and undermine her authority. Jahan Ara was well represented by her public associations with religious figures and her patronage of major monuments and her lucrative fiscal holdings particularly the international port of Surat. However, Jahan Ara's imperial role and her authority as a 'Begum Saheba', was couched in and sanctioned by her religiosity and noble demeanor and her authority was exercised in socially 'acceptable' ways and artfully negotiated compared to Nūr Jahan. Unlike Nūr Jahan, Jahan Ara operated within the confines of imperial and Islamic ideals advancing the socio-political agenda of the sovereign all the while inconspicuously cultivating her representation in the imperial and spiritual landscape.

Nūr Jahan and Jahan Ara differed vastly in the manner in which they 'envisioned', cultivated and achieved legacy. Nūr Jahan and Jahan Ara shared commonalities in their superior education, their physical beauty and their elevated ranks in imperial hierarchy. Each entered the socio-political arena without the required generational grooming or political readiness and assumed the charge of the 'consort Queen' to emperors whose personal and political ambitions (or lack thereof) would inform Nūr Jahan and Jahan Ara's actions and ideology. As Jahangīr's wife, Nūr Jahan actively campaigned to locate her family members within the imperial hierarchy forging a network of retinues that would support and advocate her authority alongside the

reigning emperor and throughout the Mughal domains.<sup>211</sup> Some of Nūr Jahan's family members were installed in the 'imperial apparatus' in prominent positions in which they held high *mansabs*. However, through Nūr Jahan's marital alliance her family's combined land holdings totaled half of all of the Mughal estates.<sup>212</sup> At the helm of this powerful imperial apparatus was Nūr Jahan, her father, Itimad-ud-Daula and her brother Asaf Khan. The three had entrenched their authority to Jahangīr's and constructed the foundation for their personal legacy outside of the Mughal framework

Though Nūr Jahan's role as the 'power behind Jahangīr's throne' was contested her full participation in Mughal politics coupled with her husband's un-wielding support secured her a place in Mughal hierarchy and created a compelling precedent for Jahan Ara to follow, reject or modify in wielding her own authority and/or representation. Jahan Ara did not construct the support of a variegated familial network or retinue as hers was already in place and was inherited with her title as head of the imperial *haram*. The princess's closest confidant was her brother the heir-apparent, Dara Shikoh and her father the emperor Shah Jahan. Father and brother played a pivotal role in guiding and cultivating Jahan Ara's dual personas: a Sūfi-devout and as a 'consort Queen' with new precedents from Nūr Jahan's 'reign'.

The duality of Jahan Ara's authority facilitated personal objectives for representation and conformed to Shah Jahan's imperial designs and visions for his reign and the Timurid-Mughal legacy. The climate for a 'Timurid Renaissance' was

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<sup>211</sup> See Munis Daniyal Faruqi's unpublished dissertation that explores the role and importance of imperial retinues during the Mughal dynasty and how they sustained the 'powers behind the thrones'.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

motivated by Shah Jahan's vision of kingship where he formally proclaimed himself the second Timur and appropriated (and modified) Timur's regnal title, *Sahib qiran-i sani*,<sup>213</sup> 'the second Lord of the auspicious planetary conjunction' to inscribe on his coins.<sup>214</sup> Further, the repeated attempts to regain ancestral lands, in Balkh created physical links with Shah Jahan's rightful rulership that associated his sovereignty to Herat and Timur. Shah Jahan was not alone in his objective to keep the 'eternal flame'<sup>215</sup> or legacy of the Timurids burning through successive emperors. Enduring legacy through various metaphors and ideology was an imperial imperative from the time the Mughal's great ancestor Timur. Particularly during Babur's reign when Uzbek-Timurid conflicts were reducing blood lines, the details of sustaining legacies was centered on dynastic reproduction and consequently prefaced the importance of sustaining imperial genealogies in successive reigns. Babur's memoirs are filled with extolling women in their reproductive role. Even concubines and mistresses were praised for their reproductive capacity and cast out of the imperial *haram* for failing to do so.<sup>216</sup>

Faced with the charge and challenge of keeping the illustrious past and future intact, Jahan Ara seeks through her piety, guided by her pīr Mullah Shah and the 'subtext' of Sūfi ideology a successful 'union with the Beloved' to 'birth' the Timurid flame. The intensity of Jahan Ara's devotion and Sūfi practice are specific to lighting the lamp of the Timuria and thereby perpetuating and extending the metaphysical genealogy of her ancestor's legacy to her father's sovereignty as a function of her piety. Jahan Ara's illumination of the Timurid lamp will appropriately outlive her historic legacy

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<sup>213</sup> Stephen Dale, "The Legacy of the Timurids", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 3/8, (1998), 46.

<sup>214</sup> Stanley Lane Poole, *The Coins of the Mogol Emperors of Hindustan in the British Museum*, repr. (New Delhi: 1983), 104. See also an interesting painting done for Shah Jahan titled "Timur hands his imperial crown to Babur", in Robert Skelton, *The Indian Heritage* (London, 1982), 41 and plate 52.

<sup>215</sup> See note 2 in this chapter for clarification of Ebba Koch's analysis and explanation of 'divine effulgence'.

<sup>216</sup> Thackston, *Baburnama*, p. 24, 56 and 352 ; Beveridge, *Baburnama*, p. 24 and 49.

and the collective dynastic production of the imperial *haram*. In achieving the apogee of Timurid spirituality, Jahan Ara surpasses Nūr Jahan and the conventional 'keepers' of imperial genealogies in the *haram* and legitimates her spiritual authority and female agency. For the unmarried Jahan Ara, the means to an enduring legacy was impossible through traditional means of dynastic reproduction but is justified in the end where the light of the Timurid-Mughal legacy burns eternally.

### **2.3 Sūfism Its Gendered Dimensions and Jahan Ara's Spiritual 'Enunciations'**

Sūfism, the mystical branch of Islam and its 'gendered' dimensions of ritual and practice have been of considerable interest to Islamic scholars and theologians as a potential 'missing link' between female sexuality and spirituality. Contemporary feminist scholars like Leila Ahmed and Murata Sachiko have acknowledged that the mystical or Sūfi interpretation and practice of Islam is more supportive in its scope for female participation and women's leadership. Others like Annemarie Schimmel and Amina Wadud interpret Sūfism as providing a counter or alternative philosophical strand within Islamic traditions that allows a greater element of feminine expressions of spirituality. Schimmel's seminal work on women and Islam has explored women's role as devotees, spiritual agents and authorities of Islamic mysticism.<sup>217</sup> The assessment does not imply that Sūfism is wholly a separate entity from traditional Islam but as Amina Wadud's analysis of the Quran indicates that Sūfism represents a mystical philosophy embedded in the Qur'an that supports the idea of 'reading' the feminine in the verses as

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<sup>217</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam*, (New York: Continuum Press, 1997).

personifications of merciful, gentleness, beautiful, forbearance as qualities supporting feminine ideals.<sup>218</sup>

Sūfi theosophy is distinguished from traditional Islamic ideology and is manifest with a significant space for what Annemarie Schimmel<sup>219</sup> termed “the female voice” and feminine presence. The ‘feminine’ dimension of Sūfism is not physical female agency but a ‘feminine’ element’ present in both female and males and when invoked through spiritual practice facilitates union with God the ‘Beloved’ and enables enlightenment. Jahan Ara may have considered the alternative site of mystical Islam as an appropriate ‘sphere’ where she could cultivate her female ‘voice’ and render her spirituality more ‘effective’. Throughout the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Rabi’a, the first female mystic is invoked both as an exemplar and as the proponent for equal spiritual access and achievement in Islam’s mystical tradition. In order for Jahan Ara to completely access the inner and what Schimmel regards as the ‘feminine dimension’ of Sūfism, she had to lift her ‘veil of modesty’ and transcend if not ‘annihilate’<sup>220</sup> her mundane persona. The author has classified Jahan Ara’s ‘spiritual transformation’ as a function of her literary ‘confessions’ in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* in which she liberally expresses the intense interiority of her mystical experience. Jahan Ara negotiates her spiritual ascension to enlightenment through her personal narratives in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* in which she negotiates discarding her mundane self for the enlightened self within the intertextual dialogue of her narratives and poetry. Jahan Ara writes:

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<sup>218</sup> Amina Wadud. *Quran and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman’s Perspective* (New York:Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 23.

<sup>219</sup> Schimmel, p. 18.

<sup>220</sup> In Sufi theosophy, the state of *fanaa* or complete annihilation of the mundane self is required on the path to enlightenment.

“Since my eyes have been illuminated by the perfection of my *murshid*<sup>221</sup> I have been flooded with the sea of truth and the fountain of mysticism that will reveal my truth. I have benefited from Mullah Shah’s attributes and gaze and they have become qualities of truth...Oh you whose being has become absolute my hidden secrets have become confirmed in your light of truth.”<sup>222</sup>

Schimmel uses the ‘feminine language’ of the mystical tradition to gain an understanding of the ‘woman-soul’ as the manifestation of God and the medium through which one gains ultimate union with the divine on the Sūfi path.<sup>223</sup> Clarification of the meaning of the ‘feminine element’ in Sūfi ideology and to distinguish it from ‘female’ is required to locate Jahan Ara’s motivations for discipleship. The ‘feminine’ in Sūfi ideology is best described through Jalal al-din’ Rumi’s mathnawi:

‘She is a ray of the Truth, not that (earthly) beloved. The Creator she is, you should say. She is not the creature.’<sup>224</sup>

In Sūfi psyche the ‘feminine’ exists as an ideal which Rumi refers to as a ‘ray of God’. The feminine is not the earthly mortal female but represents the ‘creative feminine’ emanation of the divine through which the Sūfi-devout achieves an understanding of and union with God. In Hindu Vedantic terms, the ‘creative feminine’ is *shakti* or

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<sup>221</sup> *Murshid* is another name for pīr or Sufi Master.

<sup>222</sup> Sharma, p. 79.

<sup>223</sup> See Annemarie Schimmel, *My Soul is a Woman*, for an overview of the female ‘voice’ and feminine language of the Sufi mysticism and philosophical thought.

<sup>224</sup> Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi. *The Mathnawi of Jalal uddin Rumi*, ed. R. A. Nicholson [E.J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, 70.4] (London: Luzac and Co., 1925 [book 1, 2]); 1933 [books 5, 6, 7], book 1 verse 2437.

personification of God's female aspect. Jahan Ara is motivated by the 'creative feminine'<sup>225</sup> described in the Sūfi texts of Rabi'a, Rumi, Attar and others.<sup>226</sup> The necessity of a female element described in the classical Sūfi texts invoked Jahan Ara's participation in the schema of Sūfi theosophy and her Sūfi path to her ultimate ascension.<sup>227</sup> Achieving the 'unity of being' on the path of Sūfism not only illumined and activated Jahan Ara's 'woman-soul' and enabled her spiritual ascension and elevated Sūfi rank but consequently lit the lamp of the Timurid-Mughal legacy in perpetuity.

Medieval female mystics often saw themselves at a disadvantage because not only was mystical experience difficult to communicate, as women they lacked the authority and authoritative language to communicate spiritual truths and the authenticity to legitimate their spiritual agency. According to Fiona Bowie, "Women mystics wrote out of an inner urge to communicate a personal event of great importance." This event was a mystical vision or journey through which the mystics saw themselves in a direct relationship with God. In the introduction of the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara Begum pauses to remark on her sanctioned authority and impetus to write the treatise as dictated by God and his messenger, Prophet Muhammad.

"This *faqira*,<sup>228</sup> only by the assistance and by the favor and approval of God the all-knowing and all-mighty and his beloved messenger Prophet

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<sup>225</sup> Jamal J. Elias. 'Female and Feminine in Islamic Mysticism' in *The Muslim World*, 1989, p. 220.

<sup>226</sup> Jahan Ara's bibliography is on the last page of Munis al-Arvāh, p. 36, Bodelian MS. Fraser 229.

<sup>227</sup> See pg. 19-20 of this work. In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara uses Rabi'a and Attar's concepts of the 'feminine dimension' to advocate and legitimate her own participation and potential in the Sufi order.

<sup>228</sup> The feminine form of *faqir* (Persian), signifying her lowly and poor status and whose humility is fit for a woman dedicated to the path of Sufism. A Sufi disciple often refers to him/herself as a *faqir*, an impoverished one where poverty is a Sufi's pride and s/he is dependent upon God alone.

Muhammad, and with the helping grace of my revered master, Mullah Shah who took my hand, I'm filled with desire to write this treatise and place it on the mantle with the other accounts of the great ones of religion and the revered ones of certainty.<sup>229</sup>

According to Fiona Bowie, the claim that one is compelled by God to write and not through any presumption on the part of the author and this is evidenced in mystic women's writing particularly in Jahan Ara's invocation of Islamic figures throughout the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*.<sup>230</sup> Lacking the authority of a clerical order or male gender, the only justification for female mystics' writing was that of being an instrument of the Creator and feeling the compulsion to relate the intensity of their spiritual experience. Sanctioned by her Creator and his Prophet Muhammad and still in the remembrance of the spiritual states of her mystical journey, Jahan Ara Begum begins and concludes the nineteen pages of the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*. Throughout the treatise Jahan Ara defers to male authority to establish her authenticity as a *pīr-murid*. She cites her Sūfi master, Mullah Shah, Prophet Muhammad and the patriarchal omnipresence of God as guides and inspiration for her devotion who give her the impetus and authority to write the treatise.

Jahan Ara is completely fulfilled spiritually in realizing the fruits of her devotion. However, this enlightenment also provokes literary prowess in the princess. Immediately after she receives the vision of the Holy Prophet among his companions, she composes a quatrain:

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<sup>229</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p.90.

<sup>230</sup> Fiona Bowie, p. 121.

“I prostrated myself in gratitude and this quatrain came out of my mouth: ‘Oh King (Mullah Shah) you are the One, the blessings of your gaze deliver the seekers to God. Whoever you look at reaches his goal. The light of your gaze has become the light of God through you.’”<sup>231</sup>

The *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* begins by praising God and the Prophet Muhammad and his companions as a form of respect and to invoke blessings for the literary work and to thank the ‘patriarchal religious body’ for allowing Jahan Ara to write the text. Jahan Ara honors Attar, Rumi and Mullah Shah, Jahan Ara acknowledges the primacy and authority of female agency within Sūfism by invoking the memory of Rabi’a al-‘Adawiyya (717- 801 C.E), the first and foremost female Sūfi. Sūfi biographical dictionaries often have a section entitled “Women who achieved the status of men” and the Indian saint Farid al-Din Ganj-i Shakar refers to a pious woman as ‘a man sent in the form of a woman.’<sup>232</sup> It is clear from the sources listed in the *Munis al-Arvāh* and *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* that Jahan Ara would have read sections on achievements of women in Sūfi orders as well as Ganj-i Shakar’s writings and thereby motivated her own aspirations for participation in a Sūfi order. Jahan Ara establishes a framework for her own spiritual authority and privileges her gender by asserting Rabi’a’s and further equalizes the genders in their access and achievements on the Sūfi path:

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<sup>231</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyah*, p. 78-79.

<sup>232</sup> ‘Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawi, *Akhbar al-Akhyar*, tr. Iqbal al-Din Ahmed (Karachi: Dar al-Ishat, 1963) 488.

“Mullah Shah has said that about Rabi’a ‘she is not one woman but a hundred men from head to toe. She is entirely drowned in pain<sup>233</sup> like a good Sūfi and her longing and devotion on the path is equal to the piety of 100 men’.”<sup>234</sup>

Jahan Ara simultaneously uses Rabi’a and the male gender to ‘measure’ a woman’s worth not to limit or subordinate the potential of women but to reflect existing constructions of gender hierarchy and the contemporary socio-religious predilections of male to female in seventeenth-century Mughal India. The male and its hierarchy of his ‘gender coding’ is used only as a system of measuring the superiority of the female gender and agency. Jahan Ara uses Mullah Shah’s comments to critique patriarchy and privilege women in their devotion and practice of Sūfi doctrines. However, in subsequent verses she equalizes the genders in their access to the ultimate objective of the Sūfi path: perfection and knowledge of “Self” which ultimately leads to divine union. At the center of Jahan Ara’s justification for pursuing the Sūfi path toward enlightenment and ascension is her gender and its ability and access to God. She writes in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*:

“Whoever is honored by the greatest happiness of knowing and realization is the perfect human (*insbaaneh-kamil*) or the absolute essence of the world (*zaat-e mutluk*) and is superior among all living creatures whether man or woman.

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<sup>233</sup> The concept of *fana* or annihilation of ‘Self’ is necessary to unite with the Creator.

<sup>234</sup> Jahan Ara Begum [1614-1681], ‘*Risalah-i-Sahibiyah* (1643)’, Reprinted in Persian by Dr. Muhammad Aslam. *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, (Lahore: Vol. XVI, No. 4, 1979).

God's grace will favor whoever he likes be it man or woman."<sup>235</sup>

After legitimizing her gender and female agency in Sūfism, Jahan Ara continues to detail her legitimacy and knowledge of Sūfi histories and literature to represent an informed yet passionate devotion to the mystical tradition. As part of the process for her self-authentication, Jahan Ara cites well-known Sūfi treatises and bibliographic sources to legitimize the origins of her inspiration and documentation in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and *Munis-al-Arvāh* and to convey her access to and deep knowledge of Sūfi hagiographies and mystical texts.

“Because of my deep beliefs and convictions, the idea behind this manuscript is to guide you and I hope that the readers and listeners of this manuscript will benefit and understand ideas and thoughts of Chishti in the best way. I have used reliable and respected sources:

'*Akhhār al-akhyār fī asrār al-abrār*' by 'Abd al-Haqq Muhaddis Dihlavī (1552-1642), *Diwan of Baba Farid-ud-Din Masud Ganj-i-Shakar* (1175-1265), *Akhhār-nāmah* by Sheikh Abū al-Fazl Mubārak (1551-1602), *Kalam-i-lam yazal* [the message eternal] by Khwaja Moin' uddin Chishti (1142-1236), *Sakīnat al-awlīyā* and *Safīnat-ul-auliya* by Dara Shikoh (1615-1659)...<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p. 108.

<sup>236</sup> *Munis al-Arvāh*, Bodelian Library, p.10.

The verification and itemization of sources exemplifies her superior knowledge base and level of education so that the uninitiated reader may perceive the princess' intelligence to be commensurate with male saints to authenticate her spiritual authority to the initiated Sūfi pīr or *murid* who would expect a comprehensive understanding of Sūfi ideology, theosophy and history. A portion of the emperors' library was kept in the harem to promote and enrich the education and learning of the imperial women. Jahan Ara's education<sup>237</sup> and her impetus to record is a testament to the Mughal's and specifically Shah Jahan's literary imperatives and are discussed in detail later in this chapter. In *Munis al-Arvāh*, Jahan Ara cites literary sources and their authors to honor and invoke the memory of respected Sūfi leaders whose collective consciousness and invocation sanction Jahan Ara's spiritual authority. The objective of the treatises are two-fold; they serve as a spiritual guide for Sūfi initiates in their mystical path to inner truth and enlightenment and her literary administrations advocate her *pīri-muridi* role.

In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* Jahan Ara claims that the contents of the treatise serve as spiritual 'truths' and if the reader adheres to its message through her *pīri-muridi* spiritual agency, it will confer blessings, knowledge and ensure enlightenment for any Sūfi-devout.

"In the belief that this text is completely correct, readers will have the full blessings of God and benefit from its spiritual knowledge."<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Jahan Ara received her early education from the noblewoman Sati-un-Nisa, sister of Talib Amuli, Jahangīr's court poet-laureate. Sati-un-Nisa's instruction included Arabic and Qur'anic studies, Persian both in prose and poetry. See: Qamar Begum's Ph.D dissertation, "

<sup>238</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p. 92.

This quote is noteworthy as the common medieval Muslim women relied on oral interpretation of sacred and secular text usually through a male intermediary as an *imam* or a community spiritual or respected leader. Jahan Ara's insistence on using text or 'the word' of the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* for spiritual enlightenment privileges her 'voice' over male spiritual agency and locates her 'words' on the same sacred mantle as Muslims consider the sacred word of the holy Qur'an. Locating the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* on the same metaphysical plane as the Qur'an elevates Jahan Ara and the treatise's position in the field of spiritual authority and advocates its authenticity. The *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, like Gulbadan's *Humayun Nama*, is written using simple and engaging narratives. The Sūfi treatise 'speaks' to and 'instructs' the spirituality of both the commoner and the elite, however, within the confines of social etiquette and the limits of Jahan Ara's gender; she is not in the authoritative position of a *pīr*, or a *khalifat* but 'speaks' from that spiritual rank.

The *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* includes Jahan Ara's personal reasons for writing the treatise in the form of an apologetic 'confession'. The princess 'walks' the reader through her reasons for seeking an alternative site of a 'practiced' Islam. The narratives denounce her imperial status and instead serve as a testimony of her 'lowly character' as well as a form of 'redemption' from her 'worldly' excesses as an imperial princess:

"This is a treatise that the abject *faqira*, weak, lowly person and servant of the saints of God, believer in the *faqirs* of the gate of God, Jahan Ara, daughter of Badshah Shah Jahan, may God

pardon her sins and conceal her faults, has written as a compendium of the felicitous circumstances of the protector of saintliness Hazrat Maulana Shah ... who is the master and guide of this abject one and also includes a bit of the disordered circumstances of myself—about becoming a disciple and acquiring the zeal for seeking awareness and taking the protector of saintliness... And the real purpose in writing about my own circumstances was that I wanted that the name of this sinful lowly one and [her] black book be mentioned and written after the sublime name of that Hazrat and the munificent who might forgive this *faqira* who has wasted her life in worldly matters and incite [her] on to the path of seekers, sincere ones and the ones faithful to Hazrat and God. I had also read in some books that *shaikhs* in the past, may God sanctify their secrets, have written about their own circumstances as guidance, I too have followed in their tradition.”<sup>239</sup>

Jahan Ara cites her imperial status that produced her mundane self and ‘wasted her efforts’ on ‘worldly matters’ as complicit in her unenlightened state. Further, Jahan Ara points to her treatise as the means to her ‘redemption’ from this ‘lowly’ state and that her treatise be considered and follows in the tradition of other sheikhs and their treatises. Though Jahan Ara repents her ‘worldly’ existence but doesn’t abandon pursuits of authority through other means. The Sūfi-devout wants her name and her devotion to be considered alongside Mullah Shah’s. The proximity to a Sūfi pīr indicates

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<sup>239</sup> Jahan Ara Begum [1614-1681], ‘Risalah-i-Sahibiyāh (1643)’, Reprinted in Persian by Dr. Muhammad Aslam. *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, (Lahore: Vol. XVI, No. 4, 1979), p. 11.

a high rank devotion and understanding of the pīr's Sūfi ideology by the *murid* or disciple.

Jahan Ara's emotional and ideological framework devolves as she legitimizes her gender and its access and ascension within Sūfism, she authenticates her spiritual authority through her Sūfi sources, she explains her personal and public reasons for her treatise to further substantiate her authority and proceeds to redeem her 'lowly *faqira*' status by using her Sūfi treatises to elevate her authority to the rank of her pīr Mullah Shah and the Sūfi *shaykhs* of the past. In the following quote, Jahan Ara' as the Sūfi-devout stands among God, prophet Muhammad and his companions who have sanctioned her to seek out to write and record her devotional Sūfi narratives. During this spiritually charged moment, Jahan Ara visually experiences the respected and revered 'male' authorities and equals her authority to theirs:

"I was in a peculiar state which was neither sleep nor wakefulness and it completely overpowered me. I saw the Majlis (conclave) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, where the Four Friends<sup>240</sup> noble Companions and great saints were also present. Mullah Shah, was among the latter, and had placed his head on the feet of the Holy Prophet, who graciously remarked, 'Why have you illuminated the Timurid lamp?' When I regained consciousness, my heart beamed with joy on account of these blessings.<sup>241</sup> Even though it is not acceptable for a *faqira* to talk about one-self, since meeting the

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<sup>240</sup> This reference is to the first four Caliphs of Islam following Prophet Muhammad's death: Abu Bakr, Omar, Usmaan and Ali.

<sup>241</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p.85.

revered group in my spiritual reverie last night and being blessed with eternal happiness, I need to include myself among and on the mantle of this blessed group (*zumrah*).”<sup>242</sup>

Through her ‘self-less’ acts of piety, one which is writing the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, the other being her successful devotion on the Sūfi path and subsequent ascension to a state of *pīri-muridi*,<sup>243</sup> Jahan Ara has made herself equal in worth to stand among the ‘mantle of the great ones of religion and the revered ones of certainty’.

The ‘heretical’ nature of this verse and its multiple meanings, particularly when associated with the reigning emperor’s daughter who is the head of the imperial *haram* indicates more than Jahan Ara’s sanctimonious attitudes or delusions of self. Earlier in this paper, Jahan Ara used the male gender and its hierarchy as a system of measurement for evaluating her own authority and gender. Similarly, in the above mentioned quote, Jahan Ara uses the existing constructions of spiritual authority surrounding the exemplary and most revered figures in Islam as a form of respect and not to delimit their place or power in the Islamic past but as a gauge for Sūfis to use in evaluating Jahan Ara’s spiritual claims and rank. As a side note and one that is explored later in this chapter is the transparency of Jahan Ara’s apparent ‘heretic’ claims of authority. On a broader level, Jahan Ara’s authoritative claims to the same spiritual mantle as God and prophet Muhammad indicates the *ulema*’s and the

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid, p.102.

<sup>243</sup> Her pīr Mullah Shah indicates that if he could, he would elevate her status to pīr an even as his representative if the order allowed women to take this position.

Naqshbandi Sūfi order's lack of influence and authority within the climate of orthodoxy generated during Shah Jahan's reign.<sup>244</sup>

Though Jahan Ara's elevated spiritual status as a *pīri-muridi* is self-appointed or vis-à-vis spiritual 'visions', the potential of her elevated rank within the Qadriyāh order is substantiated in the writings of Mullah Shah's seventeenth century biographer and Sūfi disciple Tawakkul Beg where her gender and not her devotion seemingly compromised her ascension and rank:

"She passed through all the normal visions and attained a pure union with God and gained an intuitive perception. Mullah Shah said to her, 'She has attained so extraordinary a development of the mystical knowledge that she is worthy of being my representative if she were not a woman.'"<sup>245</sup>

In this quote, Mullah Shah uses her gender to respectfully deny Jahan Ara the rightful place as a spiritual guide and *pīr*, but acknowledges that her mystical knowledge and devotion is equal to his. The gender politics surrounding Sūfi ascension was not consistent across all Sūfi institutions or at any particular place and time in history. Ibn

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<sup>244</sup> The *ulema* during Shah Jahan's reign jockeyed to gain political and fiscal power within the Mughal courts against prevailing Sufi orders, Jahan Ara's open announcement of her rank may also indicate the ineffectual *ulema* during Shah Jahan's reign. The *ulema*'s lack of influence and place in Mughal hierarchy is a factor in the unprecedented 'gendered' inscriptions on the Agra mosque described in chapter three of this research.

<sup>245</sup> Tawakkul Beg Kulabi, *Nuskah-i Ahwal-i-Shahi* (Persian MS British Museum, 3203, Rotograph (No. 138) p.11-14.

'Arabi (1165-1240 C.E) in his autobiographical work *Sufis of Andalusia* <sup>246</sup> mentions several females who were his spiritual guides including Fatima of Cordoba. In Arabi's writings, spiritual egalitarianism characterizes gendering where male and femaleness is 'accidental' rather than essential to human nature. He claimed that women can be spiritually 'perfected' and that there is 'no spiritual qualification conferred on men which is denied to women'. The thirteenth century Sūfi poet Farid al-Din Attar, included the female mystic Rabi'a al-Adawiya in his memorial to prominent Sūfi saints and begins her 'episode' by justifying the reason for including a woman:

' If anyone says, "Why have you included Rabi'a in the rank of men?" my answer is, that the Prophet himself said, "God does not regard your outward forms," The root of the matter is not form, but intention, as the Prophet said, "Mankind will be raised up according to their intentions."...When a woman becomes a "man" in the path of God, she Man [mankind] and one cannot any more call her a woman.'<sup>247</sup>

Before Jahan Ara reaches her goal in the 'perfect union with the Divine', the contemplation of her identity and not her gender and its 'meaningful' purpose in her life, is a constant theme in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*. She is 'pulled' and 'tugged' by invisible spiritual ropes and yearnings to seek alternative and less 'conventional' sites that would allow her to fully 'realize' her self and her spiritual authority. In a mystical context, the 'longings' and 'yearnings for union with a transcendental 'Beloved' serves as a metaphor for temporal desires and shared intimacies with a mere mortal or earthly

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<sup>246</sup> Ibn al 'Arabī, (1165-1240), *Sufis of Andalusia: the Ruh al-quds' and 'al-Durrat al-fakhirah' of Ibn Arabi*; translated with introduction and notes by R.W. J. Austin; with a forward by Martin Lings. (London: Allen and Unwin Publishers, 1971) pp. 35-39 and 48.

<sup>247</sup> Farid al-Din Attar, [12<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> C.] *Takhkirat al-Auliya* (Memorial of the Saints), trans. A. J. Arberry (Ames, Iowa: Omphaloskepsis Press, 2000), 29.

beloved. The 'incarceration' of Jahan Ara's marital status stymied and/or urged feelings of carnal desire in the young and passionate princess particularly in the imperial *haram* where she was seeped in a culture of social and political alliances and dynastic reproduction through planned or contracted nuptials. Jahan Ara's primary source of reference or pattern of marital bliss against which she measured her female identity was her parent's passionate and mutual affection for each other the testimony of which is eternally visualized in the Taj Mahal.<sup>248</sup> The paradigms for female authority and participation in the imperial *haram* were broadly defined, however, remained in the domestic sphere. During Nūr Jahan's 'reign' the pattern of female participation broadened to the political sphere and further modified during Jahan Ara's era where the spiritual realm was added to the landscape for female representation and authority as the imperial female archetype shifted and evolved.

European travelers to India, sympathetic and intrigued by Jahan Ara's unmarried status perversely construed meaning from her spiritual yearnings speculated that her 'extraordinarily' close and intimate relationship with her brother Dara Shikoh and father Shah Jahan 'fulfilled' her burning desires for carnal love and intimacy.<sup>249</sup> Jahan Ara does testify to a 'higher' love with her brother one not easily comprehensible by those not treading on the 'enlightened' path. The extraordinary nature of their bond is described by Jahan Ara using the poetic language of Sūfi ideology:

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<sup>248</sup> Jahan Ara commissioned the Jami Masjid in Agra (1646) at the same time as the Taj Mahal was nearing completion. One can surmise that Jahan Ara saw the Taj Mahal complex with frequency and may also have assisted her father in its design and construction.

<sup>249</sup> Manucci, I, p. 218-239.

“...the emperor (Shah Jahan) and I have extreme love for Dara Shikoh. I have a spiritual and material attachment to him and we are one soul and spirit (*ruh*) breathed into two forms. We are one life in two bodies.”<sup>250</sup>

The filial piety shared between Jahan Ara and Dara Shikoh transcended common notions of familial ties and operated on an ‘other-worldly’ plane due to sibling’s devotion to mysticism and collective passion for disseminating Sūfi ideology through their writings. The endearing relationship shared between Jahan Ara, Dara Shikoh and Shah Jahan (often noted in Mughal sources) are less about incest and more about European misconceptions and value judgments placed on non-western patterns of familial affection, notions of fealty and social decorum.

Primary sources and official Mughal chronicles do not and would not substantiate European accounts of Jahan Ara Begum’s ‘illicit’ feelings for her father and brother, however, the western perceptions challenge the ‘official’ documents regarding the princess and indulge the western reader’s imagination in projecting ‘constructed’ realities of non-western women. European travelogues and contemporary literature and the perceptions of Jahan Ara are analyzed in detail in chapter four. Jahan Ara as the unmarried, ‘oppressed’ and spiritually devoted princess was the perfect female archetype for colonial western constructions and aberrations of the East. Historical narratives were sanctioned and used as a form of ‘authentic’ sympathy and imaginative engagement with ‘otherness’ allowing readers in the West to draw stereotypical mental maps and biased perceptions of women in the East.

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<sup>250</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p. 96.

In Francois Bernier (1656-68) and Nicolao Manucci's (1653-1708) historical accounts of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb's reigns, the chapter on Mughal women projects doubts regarding Jahan Ara's chastity and religiosity by exoticizing her persona.<sup>251</sup> Each traveler's account perversely magnifies Jahan Ara's 'unusually' close relationship with Shah Jahan who purportedly terminated the princess' hidden lover in a bathing cauldron by lighting a fire underneath. Further, the European narratives allude to her 'un-Islamic' affinities of drinking, dancing and having illicit affairs.<sup>252</sup> Regardless of Jahan Ara's 'constructed' personalities, what is self-evident is that she was 'visible' and enigmatic enough to create intrigue and mystery among the local and international populace.

#### **2.4 Prescriptive vs. Practiced Islam and Divine Union with the 'Beloved'**

The historian, European traveler, and to some extent the author of this research is compelled to 'enrich' the forlorn princess' seemingly 'impoverished' amorous landscape by constructing a fictitious framework around Jahan Ara's persona and circumstances on her behalf even if it is contrived. Jahara Ara also seeks the same as she tried to locate through her Sūfi devotion, an alternative means and realm for representation. In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara describes the impasse of self-realization and the true meaning of her existence as a Sūfi devout and as a princess.

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<sup>251</sup> In Manucci's *Storia Do Mogor*, great details are given about the physical structure of the *haram* but stories of imperial females are generalized accounts, perceived as second if not third hand information relayed to Manucci. See: William Irvine (trans.), *Storia Do Mogor or Mogul India (1653-1708) by Niccolao Manucci Venetian* (London, 1970), vols. I-IV; hereafter cited as *Manucci*.

<sup>252</sup> *Manucci*, I, see pp.218-239. Constable, Archibald (ed.), *Travels in the Mogol Empire AD 1656-1668 by Francois Bernier* (1891; rpt. Delhi, 1968), 11. ( Hereafter cited as *Bernier*)

Jahan Ara expresses her longing and God's need for her to seek an alternative mode of spirituality:

“Since I was twenty years old I have been attached in the corner of my faith to the Chishtiyāh sect and the circle of the Sheikh (Chishti) tugs at my soul...God has created this desire and zeal for me to follow this pull and seek out where it might lead.”<sup>253</sup>

Jahan Ara responds to the 'divine pull' by cultivating and reclaiming her un/conscious personas in a mystical and earthly sphere and within the literary landscape of her two Sūfi treatises. The treatises are 'located' at the nexus of this critical moment in her young life and become the field where she confesses, seeks redemption and spiritually 'ascends'.

In her earlier treatise, *Munis al-Arvāh* , Jahan Ara uses language that indicates that this affinity or pull toward a place or sphere for introspection and self-realization is no longer her choice but a sacred obligation dictated perhaps by God, Timurid initiatives and or 'other-worldly' forces:

“The Beloved has placed a noose on my neck. He pulls me wherever He wishes. If I had any control over these things, I would always choose to be around Him.”<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Alvi

<sup>254</sup> *Munis al-Arvāh* , Persian. Oxford, p. 16. Unpublished translation from Persian under guidance of Ms. Pamela Karimi.

Here the ‘Beloved’ may be Mullah Shah, who she has visited with Dara Shikoh at least four times until 1643.<sup>255</sup> The ‘Beloved’ may also indicate God’s presence and ‘His’ directives in her search for an alternative spirituality and divine union. Sūfism and its existential objective of achieving an ultimate ‘union’<sup>256</sup> with the Beloved<sup>257</sup> fulfilled the princess’ yearnings for conjugal love and ‘earthly’ longings. Jahan Ara fills the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* with ambiguous and passionate declarations of love for her various ‘Beloveds’: Mullah Shah, Prophet Muhammad and God. The princess’ poetic verses are charged with a particular duality and may be read as either thinly veiled amorous objectives of uniting with the earthy beloved and/or with the other-worldly ‘Beloved’.

“My beloved came easily into my arms on the nights of parting without efforts. I was a crazed lover...My yearning has finally rewarded me with you in embrace...Your passion takes me in embrace and caresses me... Every moment I am anointed by your rapture...Oh Shah! You have finished me with one glance. Bravo to you my Beloved, how well you showed me your gaze...Separation

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<sup>255</sup> According to the narratives in *Munis al-Arvāh* and *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* I have estimated the trips Jahan Ara made to Kashmir and with whom. From 1634-53, she made several trips to Kashmir accompanied either by her father or her brother Dara Shikoh. She traveled twice to Kashmir with her father once from Akbarabad to Shahjahanabad and once from Ajmer and four times to Kashmir with Dara Shikoh. The Second trip to Kashmir (1638-40), this trip is particularly relevant as she begins writing *Munis al-Arvāh* followed by *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and in 1638, she has been granted the Agra *Jami masjid* commission (See Inayāt Khan notes in chapter one). In 1640, Jahan Ara arrived in Kashmir, where she finds that both Mullah Shah Badkhshi and his pīr, the famous (Khalife Hazrat) Mian Mir Arif of Lahore are both residing in Kashmir. At this time, Jahan Ara became aware of his fame and first tried to join Mian Mir’s circle but was referred to Mullah Shah. Jahan Ara’s last two visits in 1648 and 1651 are not mentioned in her treatises by are chronicled in Inayāt Khan’s biography of Shah Jahan (see note. 18, p. 458). During her last two visits Jahan Ara ordered the construction of the Mullah Shah *masjid*, *khanaqah*, and *hammam* for her pīr and his disciples in Kashmir.

<sup>256</sup> Sufis believe that while on the path of Sufism to unite with the “Beloved”, at each moment, we reaffirm the ‘inner marriage’ until there is no longer lover or “Beloved” but only Unity of Being. We ultimately die to that which we were and are dissolved into Love as one with the Divine.

<sup>257</sup> For an overview of Sufism and its ideology on the duality of Love both divine and human, read Carl W. Ernst’s, *Teachings of Sufism*, p.82-94. Within Sufism, God is referred to as the true “Beloved” of the human being. The path of Sufism is profoundly relational. As the literature of the path developed, feminine beauty and graces became metaphors for the attraction of the Divine.

is good whose end is union...My pīr, my God, my religion, my refuge, without you there is no one, my Shah, my friend.”<sup>258</sup>

Jahan Ara’s passionate and sincere declarations of love for God and Mullah Shah as inextricable entities allude to the interchangeability of her spiritual focus and her carnal desires. Mullah Shah is her Shah or Lord, then God and her religion. He is her beloved who embraces, caresses and ‘finishes’ her. She is nothing with and without this meta/physical anchor. Further, the themes of love and longing substantiate the European traveler’s claims that the unmarried princess must be desirous of amorous alliances and must have sought them secretly, however, in this case on a transcendental plane.

What is the relationship between gender, spiritual authority, and spiritual transformation in Sūfi ideology that facilitates the cultivation of Jahan Ara’s spiritual persona? The duality in meanings regarding ‘unions’ and ‘beloveds’ in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* even if couched in mystical subtexts certainly gives one pause regarding Jahan Ara’s inner psyche that straddled multiple realms. Gendered language and imagery was often used in Sūfi literature to express the overwhelming human experience of God and may serve as the only sanctioned access to a ‘beloved’ for an unmarried princess. The use of gendered language and imagery in medieval Sūfi religious discourse raises a number of intriguing issues regarding Jahan Ara’s ‘guarded’ and spiritual relationship with her master Mullah Shah and the manner in which she ‘voices’ or frames this *murid* and pīr exchange.

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<sup>258</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p.79.

The contents of the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* is charged with multiple meanings and questions regarding the significance and use of gender imagery in the subtext and in Jahan Ara's psychological framework. How should one interpret the nurturing and at times 'erotic' hierarchical ties of dependence and obligation described using the subservient language and Jahan Ara's her relationship with God, her master Mullah Shah, her brother Dara Shikoh and even her father the emperor Shah Jahan? This chapter continues to explore how complex issues of gender, power, and spiritual hierarchy and authority converge in and are negotiated by Jahan Ara through Sūfi ideology, her treatises, patronage and piety.

Sūfi literature often contains 'subtext' of passionate love (*'ishq*) and sexual unions as a metaphorical aid in describing the master-disciple relationship and the divine-human encounter.<sup>259</sup> Jahan Ara uses the Sūfi language of love to describe her human experience of God. Rumi and Fakhr al-Din 'Iraqi viewed love as a bride walking in a procession toward God.<sup>260</sup> During Sūfi ritual and instruction it is believed that a pīr can arouse the devotion of the *murid* to the same extent as emulating Prophet Muhammad, whom God loved so much that he allowed him to ascend (*miraj*) into his presence. In earlier paragraphs, Jahan Ara describes the intensity of her love for the divine through Mullah Shah as in intermediary to the extent that she envisions herself in the company of the Prophet, his noble companions and saints.<sup>261</sup> In general, Jahan Ara's Sūfi treatises have shed light on one women's negotiation of her innermost

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<sup>259</sup> For an overview of the metaphysical concept of love and divine unions used by Sufi authors, see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 1975), 130-148.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>261</sup> See page 22 of this chapter for the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* quote describing Jahan Ara's revelation.

complexities where her spiritual persona is realized at the intersection of the cosmological and human realms.

## 2.5 Qadriyāh, Chishtiyāh and Naqshbandiyh: Shifting Spirituality Preferences

By 1641, Jahan Ara was in a complete state of obeisance and devotion to the Sūfi Qadriyāh order introduced by her brother Dara Shikoh, also a Sūfi disciple and author of several mystical texts. Jahan Ara was clearly inspired and perhaps provoked by her beloved brother Dara to seek out the Qadriyāh order of Sūfism to satiate her spiritual longings. The introduction was through the Qadri saint Mian Mir who ultimately led her to Mullah Shah Badakhshi (d.1661), her Sūfi pīr, whose life and ideology were the motivating forces for Jahan Ara's spiritual treatise the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*. The Qadriyāh order considered the earliest of the Muslim formal mystic Sūfi orders and based entirely upon the principles of Shari'ah<sup>262</sup> was founded by the Hanbali theologian 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1078-1166) in Baghdad, Iraq. Al-Jilani intended the few rituals he prescribed to extend only to his small circle of followers, but his sons broadened this community into an order and encouraged its spread into North Africa, Central Asia, and especially India.<sup>263</sup>

The Sūfis of the Qadriyāh order laid great stress on the purification of the Self. According to this philosophy cleaning the 'rust' of the mundane world from the 'mirror' of the heart is an essential part of one's spiritual journey and purification. The Sūfis maintain that the human soul is capable of reflecting Divine Light, but due to impurities of the Self accumulated through materiality, power, greed, jealousy, etc., and

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<sup>262</sup> Shar'ah, meaning the 'way' or 'path' refers to the body of Islamic law that broadly covers political, economic and social issues based on Muslim principles of jurisprudence.

<sup>263</sup> For a general overview and history of the Qadiriyya order in India and Pakistan, See: Arthur Buehler, "The Indo-Pak Qadiriyya", *Journal of the History of Sufism*, Special Issue, the Qadiriyya Order]

attachments to worldly desires, it is unable to reflect the truth of the Beloved's <sup>264</sup> illumination and of one self.. When the rust is removed, it begins to reflect clearly. Thus, if the mirror of the heart is clean, the beauty of the Beloved (Allah) reflects in it and one can see this in the personality of the seeker, inwardly and outwardly. For Jahan Ara, the purification required renouncing her imperial persona to the extent where it facilitated entrance into the liminal state of a *pīri-muridi* and 'divine illumination'. She acknowledges this charge and challenge in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*:

"When I realized that the truth for this existence requires *fanaa*<sup>265</sup>, I decided to follow what my pīr requires, to die before death, to not wait for death to extinguish me, die before death to become one with the divine"<sup>266</sup>

Though Jahan Ara's formal study of Qadriyāh philosophy and guidance was under the auspices of Mullah Shah, it was Bibi Jamal Khatun, the sister of Mian Mir and the eighth century mystic Rabi'a who inspired, enjoined and empowered Jahan Ara's commitment to Sūfism based on the female-centeredness in its ideology and belief system. Additionally, the female mystics' offered Jahan Ara new 'lens' through which she considered her unmarried status as exemplary, auspicious and honored in a Sūfi framework. The new 'paradigm' for acquiring and wielding her authority allowed Jahan Ara to consider her 'identity' outside of the genealogical argument without losing legitimacy or validation. The female 'heroines' of Sūfism confirmed Jahan Ara's beliefs that Sūfism provided a female-receptive sphere for gaining and asserting spiritual

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<sup>264</sup> In Sufi poetry and ideology, the 'Beloved' refers to the meta-cosmic aspect of the Divine.

<sup>265</sup> The Sufi philosophical concept of *fanna* or annihilation of the Self while remaining physically alive. Sufi *murids* who have entered this state are said to have no existence outside of their unity with the Divine or Allah.

<sup>266</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p.97-98.

authority. Unlike the imperial *haram* where marital alliances and dynastic production ensured female authority and legacy, Bibi Khatun's resistance to and denial of her marital status vindicated Jahan Ara's unmarried status as 'profitable' for Sūfi practice and for advocating her female authority.<sup>267</sup> Bibi Khatun was married for a period of ten years of which only six years were spent in intimate matrimony as 'bedfellows'. Dara Shikoh writes:

"Altogether six years passed that they were bedfellows. After that, a divine longing and love won the victory over her in respect to married life, and maintaining complete aloofness, she kept herself separate in her room...alone with the remembrance of God."<sup>268</sup>

Bibi Khatun's description of her 'chastity', purity and denial of traditional spousal commitments exponentially increased her ardor for Sūfism and subsequently increased her saintly quotient and authority within the Sūfi milieu. Jahan Ara, steeped in the imperial ethos that regarded a women's procreative role as paramount to sustaining dynastic lines, reveled in Bibi Khatun's singular dedication to Sūfism that rejected the social and imperial institution of marriage as 'obstructive' in receiving spiritual knowledge. Bibi Khatun's chaste and monastic lifestyle appealed to Jahan Ara as it placed concepts of love and intimacy on a higher and metaphysical plane in discourse with the Divine. Bibi Khatun's emphatic dismissal of her marital obligations convinced

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<sup>267</sup> A majority of medieval women in the Islamic world chose celibacy as part of Sufi practice. Celibacy in this perspective seemed to be more 'profitable' for women devoted to Sufism and for those who sought sainthood. Virginitly assured the purity of Mary and was ideological 'currency' used to command respect, honor and legitimacy for the unmarried and pure female saint or Sufi-devotee. Additionally, virginitly was perceived as a 'blank' page that is open and unfettered to receive and advocate spiritual knowledge. See, Manuela Marin, *Writing the Feminine: Women in Arab Sources* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2002), pp.209-210.

<sup>268</sup> Dara Shikoh [1615-1659], *Sakinat al-Awliya*, (The Ship of Saints), ed. Muhammad Jalali Na'ini (Tehran, 1344/1965 (trans.)), p. 132.

and even consoled Jahan Ara that forms of mortal love and intimacy encroached upon the transcendental love and union with the divine and spiritual perfection. Perhaps, Jahan Ara rode on the tails of feminism by rejecting the oppressive, controlling and domineering modes of patriarchy that is parceled in matrimony.

The saintly sister of Mian Mir also had a profound impact on Dara Shikoh where he dedicated a section of his biography on Qadri saints chapter to Bibi Jamal Khatun.<sup>269</sup> He describes her as, “a model of disciplined spirituality and the example of amazing power provided to the saints by God.”<sup>270</sup> Dara Shikoh’s deep admiration for Bibi Khatun’s spiritual devotion and sacrifice privileged female agency in Sūfism and contributed to his active recruitment of Jahan Ara into a Sūfi order. Bibi Jamal is also described by Schimmel as, “one of the outstanding saints of the Qadriyāh order during its formative period in the Punjab.”<sup>271</sup> Jahan Ara pays tribute to Bibi Khatun’s memory in *Munis al-Arvāh*:

“Bibi Khatun was the Rabi’a of her time and the Khadija of her age. She was very busy in meditation and worship. She was a lady who had reached the highest station in the mystical world. She was in a holy position of a perfect saint among the ladies. After passing the many stages in life, she died a natural death at the time decided by God and

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid, p.133.

<sup>270</sup> Muhammad Dara Shikoh, *Sakinat al-awliya’* (The Ship of Saints), ed. Muhammad Jalali Na’ini (Tehran, 1344/1965 (trans.)), pp. 129-31.

<sup>271</sup> See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 433, and *My Soul is a Woman*, p.50.

passed from this mortal world to her eternal abode and gave adornment to the bride chamber of eternity.”<sup>272</sup>

The *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and *Munis’ul-Arvāh* are apparent in Jahan Ara’s leanings to seek an ‘alternative’ site of religious practice. Jahan Ara desired to deeply search Islam for ‘spiritual truths’ through its mysticism or specifically to search outside of the orthodox Islam instituted during her father Shah Jahan’s reign and by the *Naqshbandiyāh* (discussed later in this chapter).<sup>273</sup> Though Shah Jahan did not privilege the *ulema*’s orthodoxy, his imperial policies represented his ‘missionary’ zeal to exalt Islam and forsake all other forms of religions, especially Hinduism.<sup>274</sup> In *Munis al-Arvāh*, Jahan Ara indicates her father’s skepticism regarding Sūfism and how she convinces him of its authenticity particularly in its intrinsic spiritual and historic connection to traditional Islam and its revered religious figures of the past:

“Even though the current emperor who is the father of this weak (*zai fay*), he didn’t know the truth of the importance of his path. Because of this, he was always wondering about it and was floundering. And me the lowly (*faqira*), I constantly told him that Chishti was a Syed but he didn’t believe me until he read the *Akbarnameh*. In the *Akbarnameh*, Abu’l Faz’l wrote about the ideology/path and train of thoughts of Chishti’s ideas. From that day, this meaning that was brighter than the sun, it became clear to Shah Jahan, the shadow of God, that Chishti was an honored member of the

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<sup>272</sup> Alvi, translated from Urdu by Y.Jaffery, p.44.

<sup>273</sup> See pp.135-142 in this work.

<sup>274</sup> To fully understand the extreme ends or the limits of Shah Jahan’s spirituality that wavered between Muslim orthodoxy and a ‘profane’ tradition of mysticism, see K. R. Qanungo’s article ‘Some Side-Lights on The Character and Court Life of Shah Jahan’ in *Journal of Indian History*, 45-52.

family of prophets....his [Chishti's] relation to the Prophet Muhammad is fifteen generations apart."<sup>275</sup>

Emperor Akbar's reign favored the Chishtiyāh order whose roots can be traced to Persia and hence the Mughal's Timurid history and lineage. The Chishtiyāh order of Sūfism founded by Mu'in ud-Din Chishti (d. 1236) had and continues to be one of the most widespread orders in India and Pakistan today. Though Islamic theology and jurisprudence certainly formed the basis of political life and statecraft during Mughal times, the influence of mystical currents and thoughts were an integral part of the social psyche of the imperial line. Jahan Ara indicated her strong desire in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* to join the Chishtiyāh, however, she was not initiated into the order:

"Though I am devoted to the Chishti order, the Chishti sheikhs do not show themselves in public and remain secluded. I am twenty-seven years old and didn't want to lose any more time. I wanted to become a disciple of any order...I was a Chishti disciple in my heart. Now that I joined the Qadiriya, will I achieve enlightenment?"<sup>276</sup>

The spread of Islam in India had been partly due to the exaltation of its mysticism. In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara acknowledged and legitimized the historical origins of Sūfism in the path she pursued by affirming the most esteemed and lauded exemplars from the foundational period of Islam, both men and women. She tries to map her own beginnings as a Qadiri disciple by appealing to the origins of Islam as a historical movement. She was also interested in providing as complete an

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<sup>275</sup> Munis al-Arvāh , Bodelian MS. p. 15-16.

<sup>276</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p. 100.

account of the *awliya* (saints) as possible: she tried her best to furnish birth dates, death dates and the places of tombs of every *wali* (saint). Additionally, Jahan Ara begins her treatise acknowledging and honoring the Chishti saints their alliances and their history by tracing their line back to the line of Prophet Muhammad:

“ Khwaja Moin-ud-Din Chishti...disciple of Khwaja Usman Haruni who was the disciple of Hazrat Haji Shareef Zandni...who was the disciple of Hazrat Ali, who was disciple of Prophet Muhammad. The lives of these great ones are inextricably linked to each other and to the court of Eternity and our Creator. I have extracted with great care from well-known books and treatises, their history and have committed these to writing in this *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*.”<sup>277</sup>

Jahan Ara’s objective for surveying the Chishtiyāh anthology and further linking the Sūfi saints to Ali and Prophet Muhammad is multi-layered. In *Munis al-Arvāh*, Jahan Ara artfully binds the precarious and often heretical association of Sūfism and its manifestation within Islam, giving the former and her own agency spiritual ‘legitimacy’. Jahan Ara’s objectives in *Munis-ul-Arvāh* <sup>278</sup> and the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* is to ensure historical accuracy and to ‘appeal’ to the Muslim ‘heroes’ of the past to affirm associations with Sūfi exemplars: Khawaj Mu’in din Chishti, the patron saint of the house of Akbar and Mullah Shah Badakhshi, her Sūfi own preceptor. Further, to use the Islamic mantle to represent and extol the spiritual value of the Chishtiyāh and Qadriyāh thereby underlining her own authority and legitimacy as a *pīri-muridi*. The significance of the Islamic past for Jahan Ara is functional: it firmly bound and affirmed her

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid, p.110-111.

<sup>278</sup> Qamar Begum, *The Life and Works of Jahan Ara Begum*, p. 67.

status/state as a *pīri-muridi* in the history of traditional Islam. Eminent Persian Sūfis like Rumi, while mentioned, are accorded only half a page devoted mostly to biographical, travel and literary data. The Chishtiyāh anthology affirmed Jahan Ara's awareness of the long tradition in which she and her Timurid/Mughal legacy stood, but their sole purpose was to provide a 'sanctioned' field of inquiry onto which she placed as central exhibit her own elevated state of *pīri-muridi* among present and past spiritual mentors.

Mystical traditions are not specific to eastern belief systems but have roots in ancient Greek culture and spirituality. The word *mysticism* comes from the Greek religion, where "the *mystae* were those initiates of the 'mysteries' who were believed to have received the vision of God, and with it a new and higher life to unite with the divine."<sup>279</sup> Therefore, mysticism can be understood as the immediate and direct experience of the 'real', or the unmediated experience of God or Divinity. It has also been described as a life that aims to unite with God. These definitions underscore the dual nature of mysticism as knowing and as doing. The mystic knows God first hand, and also knows him/herself in that same light of illumination. The realization or revelation of the true 'Self'<sup>280</sup> within God's light is at the core of Jahan Ara's spiritual quest. To know God is to know herself within his grace and light. The 'self' she wants to realize is not the imagined or the assumed identities she has been assigned but the one that the Sūfi path will lead her to in the 'shadows' of God's light. Jahan Ara attempts to achieve this state through the Sūfi concept of *fanaa* or complete annihilation of the self through divine wisdom or through the 'union' with God.

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<sup>279</sup> Beuhler, Arthur. The Naqshbandiyya in Timurid India: The Central Asian Legacy", *Journal of Islamic Studies*. 7:2 (1996), 213.

<sup>280</sup> Here, 'Self' is a broader category of internal and core identity and not as in indication of oneself.

The first 'victim' of *fanaa* or self-annihilation is her imperial identity in place of the *faqira* that she becomes. Throughout the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara refers to herself as *faqira*, the 'poorest' and 'lowly' of all creatures. The modesty of her representation is also indicated in her last literary work on the epitaph of her tombstone: 'Let no man cover my grave save with green grass, for this grass is the fittest mantle for the tomb of the lowly.' Jahan Ara's self-effacement and imperial 'disrobing' yields an unfettered and 'authentic' characteristics of a humble and modest *faqira* and as preparation for Jahan Ara's Sūfi 'rebirth'. Male Sūfis often used gendered imagery to describe the relationship between a Sūfi master and his uninitiated disciple. Masters were said to 'give birth' to a disciple's new, spiritual existence and subsequently would nurse their new progeny to a level of spirituality commensurate to the Sūfi master.<sup>281</sup> Gendered language was also used to describe key Sūfi rituals of initiation. The transmission of a prayer formula (*dhikir*) from master to disciple, for example, is described as the injection of 'seed' or 'semen' into the soil or womb of the disciple.<sup>282</sup> During discipleship, normal codes of behavior were temporarily suspended and disciples were stripped of their previous identities and accustomed gender roles. It was through acts of surrender and subordination that a disciple attained spiritual power and ascension in the Sūfi order. Jahan Ara testifies to this submission in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*:

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<sup>281</sup> Margaret Malamud. 'Gender and Spiritual Self-Fashioning: The Master-Disciple Relationship in Classical Sufism', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 1996 LXIV (1): pp.95-97.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100-101.

“When I realized the truth that for existence, *fanaa* is necessary so I decided to follow this Sūfi mandate: ‘Die before death don’t wait for death to extinguish you. Die before death to become one with the divine.’”<sup>283</sup>

The Chishtiyāh sect was supported and instituted by emperor Akbar during his reign where Salim Chishti served as the ‘patron saint’ of the Mughals. The Chishtiyāhs were not imported during Babur’s invasion of India (r.1526 C.E) nor was it the order a century later that would initiate Jahan Ara and Dara Shikoh for discipleships. The Naqshbandiyāh Sūfi order came to India with Babur along with the Timurid rule and associated spiritual legacies. The Naqshbandiyāh’s orthodoxy, exclusion of women from the order and strict reliance on the *Shari’a* (Islamic law) may reveal the reasons for its dismissal by the pluralism of Akbar and by successive emperors and finally for Jahan Ara and Dara Shikoh favoring the Chishtiyāh and Qadriyāh orders. In addition, understanding the dynamics between the rivaling Sūfi orders and the *ulema* expands and informs our understanding of the particularly ‘nuanced’ religious climate within which the Mughal functioned and within which Jahan Ara negotiated her spiritual preferences and representation.

Timurid rule and its inextricable links to Sūfism can be traced as early as the fourteenth century during Tugluq Timur’s reign (r.1362)<sup>284</sup> who supported the nascent Naqshbandiyāh <sup>285</sup> Sūfi orders in Central Asia to the extent that he was buried next to

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<sup>283</sup> Sharma, Sahibiyāh, p. 90.

<sup>284</sup> Beuhler, Arthur. “The Naqshbandiyya in Timurid India: The Central Asian Legacy”, *Journal of Islamic Studies*. 7:2 (1996) pp. 210.

<sup>285</sup> Sufis were wandering Muslim ascetics spreading Islam among every faction of the populace. Through this method of promulgation they were able to link many groups of Central Asian society, including the nomadic tribes, the artisan guilds of the towns and the peasant population of the villages. Given this broad following and consolidation, it was in the interest of rulers particularly in a climate of rivalry among various factions to secure the support of Sufi *shaykhs* to legitimize and

his *shaykh* Amir Kulal (d. 1371).<sup>286</sup> In fourteenth century Central Asia the Naqshbandiyāh gave organized assistance and religious sanctions toward legitimization of the influential Timurid landlord rulers. In return, the Timurids respected and patronized Sūfis, building them mausoleums and providing them with endowments of land (*waqf*).<sup>287</sup> The reciprocal relationship between the Timurids acquiring legitimacy from the Naqshbandiyāh and the Naqshbandiyāhs securing an elevated socio-political status in their association with the reigning emperor would be the archetypal relationship and pattern of patronage replicated between Akbar, Jahangīr and the Chishtiyāh order and Shah Jahan, Jahan Ara and Dara Shikoh and the Qadriyāh order. The Naqshbandiyāh followed Timurid patronage to India via Babur and continued to provide services as mediators between the people and rulers and between the people and God and to institute and enforce Islamic practices based on *Shari'a*.

The Naqshbandiyāh asserted their eminence among the prevailing Sūfi orders in India through their lineal and spiritual descent from Prophet Muhammad. The order's objectives included vehement orthodoxy in 'purifying' Indian Islam of Turco-Mongol customs and laws that the order considered contrary to the 'true' practice of Islam. Strict rules of *parda* was instituted, dancing, drinking and mixed socializing at court was prohibited. Women were not allowed to become active Sūfi disciples or delegates of the Naqshbandi order and were restricted in their visits to Sūfi shrines.<sup>288</sup> Though the

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sustain their rule and holdings. For an overview of the dynamics between Uzbek rulers and Sufi *shaykhs*, See: Beuhler, Arthur. "The Naqshbandiyya in Timurid India: The Central Asian Legacy", *Journal of Islamic Studies*. 7:2 (1996) pp. 208-228.

<sup>286</sup> See J. M. Rogers, trans., "V.V. Bartol'd's Article O *Pogrebenii Timura* ("The Burial of Timur") in *Journal of Persian Studies*, 12 (1974), 65-87.

<sup>287</sup> Beuhler, Arthur. "The Naqshbandiyya in Timurid India: The Central Asian Legacy", *Journal of Islamic Studies*. 7:2 (1996) pp. 210.

<sup>288</sup> S. Athar Abbas Rizvi in his *Muslim Revival Movements in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (Agra: Agra University, 1965) 179-83 has shown the close relationship of *Naqshbandiyāh* and Timurid

Naqshbandi-Timurid partnership may have bolstered the Islamic identity of the Timurid regime it did very little to honor their Turco-Mongol past and cultural memory. The orthodoxy of the order marginalized women's participation and exercise of authority in the socio-religious arena a female phenomenon dating to Timur's reign and early Timurid women. (See chapter 1). In successive reigns after Babur, the Naqshbandiyāh's orthodoxy attempted to redefine Timurid-Indian identity and impinge on Babur's grandson, Akbar's 'universalist' and pluralistic views of spirituality and Islam.

The most significant attribute to the Naqshbandiyāh's success may have been the tried and true 'causal relationship' between the pīr's spiritual intercession and Timurid military success particularly during Babur's campaigns in Kabul and Delhi.<sup>289</sup> A Sūfi leader's authority, in addition to genealogical factors, was thought to be based on the *shaykh's* ability to affect mundane affairs through intercession on the 'supramundane' plane.<sup>290</sup> When the Mughal Emperor Humayun (r. 1530-9) and his entourage disrespectfully received a Naqshbandiyāh *shaykh* [Ahmad Kasani], the *shaykh* publicly and correctly predicted Humayun's defeat by Sher Shah's armies.<sup>291</sup> The public denouncement of military outcomes by Sūfi agencies heightened, asserted and aligned the *shaykh* temporal powers with the favored emperor's in both the cosmological and earthly realms. Therefore, it was in the interest of the reigning

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dynasty and how the Sufi order instituted an orthodoxy over women through marital alliances between the Naqshbandi Ahraris and the elite women of the Timurid dynasty.

<sup>289</sup> In his memoirs Babur recounts a dream where a *Naqshbandi shaykh*, Ahrar predicted his successful victory taking Samarkand. See Babur, *Babur nama The Memoirs of Babur*, 2 vols. English translation by Annette S. Beveridge, (Delhi: Low Price Publications [1922] 1989), 132.

<sup>290</sup> Beuhler, Arthur. "The Naqshbandiyya in Timurid India: The Central Asian Legacy", *Journal of Islamic Studies*. 7:2 (1996) pp. 213. According to Beuhler, it was common practice of the time to have holy men accompany armies as a kind of 'spiritual artillery' to assist in gaining victory. A *Naqshbandi* successor accompanied Babur when he conquered Kabul and India. Beuhler, p. 212.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid*, p. 213.

sovereign to align his rule with that of a Sūfi *shaykh* and to Sūfi institutions to legitimize and sustain 'semi-divine' notions of kingship.

The Naqshbandiyāh's 'cultural cleansing' of Turco-Mongol folk traditions or 'non-conforming' customs from the practice of Islam and Mughal statecraft significantly contributed to the Sūfi order's rejection by successive Timurid-Indian rulers particularly Shah Jahan, as the objective did not conform to forging hereditary claims to Timur's legacy.<sup>292</sup> The rejection of the Naqshbandiyāh was the 'collateral damage' suffered by the order in Shah Jahan's 'Timurid Renaissance' initiatives that sought meta/physical connections with Timur's legacy. Shah Jahan had already appropriated Timur's title and resurrected the Mughal military campaigns in securing ancestral domains in Balkh. Jahan Ara's exaltation of 'ancestor worship' in illuminating the Timurid lamp through Sūfi theosophy contributed to the emperor's legacy-linking objectives. According to Richard Foltz, of all the Mughal emperors since Babur, Shah Jahan was 'most genuinely obsessed' with reclaiming the 'homeland' and like Jahan Ara, was passionate about keeping the 'flame' of the Timurids 'alive' and burning.<sup>293</sup>

## 2.6 Authenticating Spiritual Enlightenment and Authority

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<sup>292</sup> The Naqshbandi *shaykh*, Ahmad Sirhindi's (d.1624) successors acknowledge not sending letters requesting support from Jahan Ara, Dara Shikoh and Shah Jahan due to their ardent support of the Qadiri *shaykh* (Mullah Shah) in Srinagar. However, the *Naqshbandi* supported Aurangzeb against Dara Shikoh during the war of succession (1653) and remained by his side throughout the military campaign. The Sufi order representatives were sent to Baghdad to 'appeal to the spirit of 'Abd al-Qadi al-Jilani (d. 1166) to abandon support of Dar Shikoh.' These kinds of political and religious gymnastics and wranglings between Sufi orders was a common occurrence that may contributed to Jahan Ara and Dara Shikoh's spiritual leanings. Letters exchanged between Ahmad Sirhindi's descendants to Aurangzeb and his family are discussed in S.A.A Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India : From Sixteenth Century to Modern Century*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1983) 2.482-91. and 2.414 and Arthur Buehler, p. 220.

<sup>293</sup> Foltz, Richard, "The Mughal Occupation of Balkh 1646-1647", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 7:1 (1996), 50.

The treatises do not reveal the definitive reasons for Jahan Ara's burgeoning desire to seek alternative sites of devotion beyond a metaphysical urge. What is illustrated in her emotionally charged narratives is how the princess' spirituality is 'awakened' for the first time and how she revels in her ritual effectiveness through the physical 'performance' of her devotion. Jahan Ara's spiritual 'awakening' underscored for her the ineffectiveness of Islam's prescriptive rituals that had failed to stir her innermost religiosity in the manner Sūfi rituals had achieved. The experience that is emblematic of Jahan Ara's religious stirring is her visit to Chishti's *dargah* in Ajmer. In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* she meticulously detailed the 'physical' path to her spiritual enlightenment at the *dargah* where she exhibits in her narrative the change in her persona as she revels in the aura of her ritual and the medium of her spiritual agency:

"A thousand thanks to Allah and it is a favor from Allah, that on 14<sup>th</sup> Ramazan al-Mubaraq that I had the honor of seeing Chishti's tomb and only one part of the day was left and I went to see the tomb. I put the sacred mud from the graveyard on my yellow face and from my door to the tomb doorway I walked barefoot approaching the sacred tomb while kissing the ground. When I entered the tomb chamber I circled seven times around the grave and I swept the walls of the tomb with my eyelashes. I put the sacred dust from the tomb on my eyes. At that time, in this lowly mortal, a strange idea came to my heart that I cannot describe.

I was in a joyous mood and panicked and didn't know what to say and what to do. In short, first of all I put oil musk on Chishti's grave with my own hand, then I laid a basket of flowers which I had brought on my head, I put this on Chishti's grave. Then I

came back to the marble mosque, 'which my father built', I prayed and then I sat under the shade of the dome, I read Surah Yasin and Fatiha and then gave the rewards of my piety to Chishti's spirit. Until evening I was there, and near the evening, I lit a candle near the tomb, and I opened my fast with the fountain water. This evening was peculiar in that the fulfillment of my heart was a thousand times the illumination of dawn."<sup>294</sup>

Jahan Ara's 'experiential' accounts and the authentication of her ritual and spiritual engagement at Chishti's *dargah* is both instructive in its detailed explanation and emblematic of the 'practiced' vs. 'prescriptive' nature of Islam's mystical tradition for which she yearned. The emotional and nuanced details of her mystical experience 'invigorated' or 'activated' her religiosity in a manner she was unaccustomed to or had never experienced during her perfunctory rituals required of her gender in tradition Islam. The details of Sūfi ritual and the 'instructive' nature of the narrative indicate that at this point in Jahan Ara's discipleship, she has ascended to a *pīri-muridi* unable to assume the formal role of a Sūfi pīr in initiating other disciples personally however, can act as a *khalifa* or delegate where her Sūfi treatises serve as text-based instruction in her stead. The *khalifa*'s instructive role for females is sanctioned by pīrs and is chronicled in Sūfi oral and historical texts.<sup>295</sup>

Though Shah Jahan rejected the orthodoxy of the Naqshbandiyāh he is not consistent in 'cleansing' himself entirely of his 'missionary' zeal to exalt Islam and

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<sup>294</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, pp.81-82.

<sup>295</sup> Kelly Pemberton, "Muslim Women Mystics and Female Spiritual Authority in South Asian Sufism," in *Contesting Rituals, Islam and Practices of Identity-Making*, eds. Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2005), 3-37. Pemberton cites numerous biographies and hagiographic texts of the Sufis including: *Mirat ul-kaunain*, by Maulwi Ghulam Nabi Firdausi; the *Sair ul-aqtab*, by Illah Diya Chishti 'Usmani; Jamali's *Sair ul-'arifin*; and others that describe the spiritual power with which women of Sufi lineages or acting as *khalifahs* were endowed.

forsake other forms of religious belief systems.<sup>296</sup> The climate of Shah Jahan's Islamic orthodoxy underscored Sūfism's counterpoint or complement to the doctrine and dogma of traditional Islam. Paul Heck describes the relationship between Sūfism and Islam as "Sūfism thus sees itself as the completion of Islam, its living embodiment, in contrast to legal formalism and theological scholasticism, but not in opposition to Muslim laws and doctrines."<sup>297</sup> Therefore, Sūfism advocates the 'lived spiritual experience' of Islam and one that provoked Jahan Ara's participation. Mughal histories indicate that Jahan Ara had comprehensive knowledge of the Qur'an and its associated *hadiths*. However, the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* describes Jahan Ara's deep desire to express physically and emotionally her passionate pieties beyond reading the 'word' of the Qur'an and the prescriptions of Islam compared to the 'lived' performances and practiced rituals of Sūfism at *dargahs*. Jahan Ara's detailed description at Chishti's *dargah* indicated her authentic spiritual agency and authority as well as exhibited the pietistic objectives of the sovereign and state.

Other factors that established the authenticity of the princess' self-proclaimed pīr-*muridi* agency within Sūfi frameworks is the practice of *parda* during Sūfi pilgrimages and rituals. The practice of *parda* often linked with the perceived Islamic 'ideal' of modesty suggested for Muslim women as a medium of 'social normativity', particularly for the elite. Some Sūfi women's failure to observe *parda* standards, like indiscriminate mixing with men at ritualized events or inordinate access to male disciples and pīrs and/or an overt public display of 'mystical states' may have linked the woman's persona with a 'mentally disturbed' uncontrolled person or *mastani*, in Sūfi terms.<sup>298</sup> Jahan Ara

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<sup>296</sup> See p. 58 of this chapter that describes an overview of Shah Jahan's orthodoxy.

<sup>297</sup> Paul Heck. 'Sufism—What is it exactly?', *Religion Compass* 1/1 (2007): p.148.

<sup>298</sup> Salvatore, A. *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity*, p.48.

is conscious of the rules of *adab* within Sūfi discipleships and the need to behave modestly and to maintain a degree of aloofness even from her own pīr especially during ritual events and ceremonies. Jahan Ara is formally initiated into the Qadriyāh order by her brother and not directly in the presence of Mullah Shah. Jahan Ara makes several references to ‘keeping a modest distance’ yet in full discourse with her pīr through letters, sending home cooked meals and contemplating Mullah Shah ‘image’ in a portrait given to her by Dara Shikoh.<sup>299</sup> What Jahan Ara restrains physically, she exploits in word through her emotional narratives in the treatise and to fully represent her persona in all of its multiplicity.

To fulfill the expectations of a devout Sūfi disciple, Jahan Ara must ‘disrobe’ her assumed imperial persona and reveal her innermost workings, thoughts and passions without concealment from her pīr.<sup>300</sup> The literary landscape of Jahan Ara’s Sūfi treatise allows her to make transparent her ‘hidden-self’ while remaining within the strictures of social and religious etiquette required of her gender and rank. In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, details of Mulla Shah are conveyed with accuracy and immediacy to establish legitimate contact with her Sūfi master and to ensure authenticity for her own pīr-*muridi* agency. Confirmation of frequent and close contact with pīrs is required of all disciples and is a pattern that conforms to the literary patterns of Sūfi hagiographies<sup>301</sup>:

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<sup>299</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p.102, 104.

<sup>300</sup> Full disclosure was required from the *murshid* as part of the complete surrender to the pīr to facilitate the master’s governance of the disciple’s inner and outer world. See Margaret Malamud’s ‘Gender and Spiritual Self-Fashioning: The Master-Disciple Relationship in Classical Sufism’ in *Journal of American Academy of Religion*, LXIV/1, p. 92.

<sup>301</sup> The spiritual authority of a Sufi delegate is confirmed through the concept of *suhbat*, that translates as ‘company’. By observing the details of his/her pīr, the delegate/*khalifa* or pīr-*muridi* makes an intimate association with the saint and acquires the intimate knowledge of God through the saint. This experience is a form of investiture and allows the disciple to spiritually transform his/her inner and outer aspects. See Kelly Pemberton’s essay ‘Muslim Women Mystics and Female Spiritual Authority in South Asian Sufism’, eds. Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern,

“You often sit on your knees all night and sleep this way sometimes with outstretched legs staring at the moonlight or into the darkness... Sometimes you go without eating and because you have a hot temperament you choose cold food... You look in the distance and tell the novice that *shariat* and *tarikah*<sup>302</sup> are both necessary, yet you stay away from worldly people... You remain pleasant and smiling and cackle and laugh and sometimes you ‘joke’ about the *sunnah*<sup>303</sup> never in a mocking way but to shed light on the source or essence of our lives and our unity with God through Prophet Muhammad. When you perform *wudhu*<sup>304</sup>, you pour your own water and not let your attendant pour.”<sup>305</sup>

Within the Sūfi orders, it is well known that women disciples who have shown exceptional promise, or a high degree of spiritual advancement under the guidance of their pīr, may be invested with the authority to guide others, as *khalifas* ‘delegates’ or *pīri-murids*.<sup>306</sup> Jahan Ara’s testimony of the details and daily rituals of Mullah Shah’s life and her ‘indirect’ knowledge are a ‘translation’ of her pīr’s spiritual descent through spiritual or physical contact. In Sūfi hierarchy, the experiences of bearing witness of the pīr by the disciple is termed ‘ceremonies of investiture’ that transmit not only the

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*Contesting Rituals: Islam and Practices of Identity-Making*, (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2005) 14.

<sup>302</sup> In Islam, there are four stages in the approach to God: *Shariat*: the divine commands (the laws of religion), *Tarikah*: the principles of the mystical orders, *Marifat*: enlightenment in religious and spiritual matters and *Hakikat*: enlightenment in all the mysteries of religion, life and the universe.

<sup>303</sup> *Sunnah* is the title given to the collection of recorded words and actions of the prophet Muhammad.

<sup>304</sup> *Wudhu* is washing parts of the body, in clean water, as a part of the preparation for the daily Muslim prayers.

<sup>305</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p. 90-91.

<sup>306</sup> Malamud, p. 99-100.

authority to pass on the teachings of the pīr but also something called *bij*, or seed, which is a type of spiritual power manifest in the person of the saint.<sup>307</sup>

For Jahan Ara the spiritual transformation in her persona is a function of her writing the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and *Munis al-Arvāh*. The unmarried princess is in an existential Sūfi ‘marriage’ through her literary act. According to Sachiko Murata, the two Sūfi Islamic principles of spiritual existence are negotiated through the marriage of the Pen to the Tablet and it is through this union that the rest of the cosmos was brought into being.<sup>308</sup> The cosmos are brought into being through the realization of the princess’ treatises and this act confirmed and asserted Jahan Ara’s divine union and elevated status and placed her among the beloved disciples of Mullah Shah:

“Mullah Shah has many perfected sages among his disciples... Even though it is not polite to talk about oneself, since I’ve spoken about the others, I need to include myself among the exalted group.”<sup>309</sup>

Jahan Ara observed the strictures of *parda* in the physical sense by limiting her interactions with Mullah Shah though fully revealed the private and sensoral privilege of her proximity to him in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*. The *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and its intertextuality serve as the sanctioned sphere where Jahan Ara simultaneously expressed and restrained her ‘divine madness’ or ecstasy and heightened spiritual state as

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<sup>307</sup> For an overview of Sufi ideology and practice see *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism and Teachings of Sufism*, Ernst, Carl W.

<sup>308</sup> Murata, Sachiko. *The Tao of Islam : a sourcebook on gender relationships in Islamic thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) p. 153-155.

<sup>309</sup> Sharma, Sahibiyāh, p.88.

understood by Sūfis to be a manifestation of divine favor. This dependency successfully negotiated Sūfi and imperial dictates without compromising either and fashioned the Self and her authority as both a Muslim and a legitimate Sūfi *pīri-muridi*.

Jahan Ara documented the history and life of Mullah Shah and the sources she used in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* to legitimize her training and to conform to accepted parameters of the *silsila*<sup>310</sup> tradition with a recognized and respected Sūfi master and not as loose bonds of allegiances or self-acquired knowledge. It is widely believed by most Sūfi orders that by imbibing the teachings of pīrs, or by spending even small amounts of time in their company and thereby gaining knowledge of their ways, an individual may acquire some of the spiritual power and authority associated with them.<sup>311</sup> Through her spiritual ruminations in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and specifically the descriptive narratives of the close encounters with Mullah Shah, Jahan Ara effectively presented herself to believers as having the requisite knowledge, experience and skills to be an authentic *pīri-murid* or *khalifat*.

‘Traditional’ Islam is not dismissed in Jahan Ara’s intensely personal ‘invocations’ in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* but is inextricably linked to its mystical tradition by invoking God or Allah’s blessings and reciting essential *surahs* from the *Qur’an* in Chishti’s tomb chamber, the most auspicious location of the *dargah* complex. The Sūfi-devout authenticates her experience through other details in her narrative. Jahan Ara gives the specific time of her visit and also identified a mosque structure built by her father within

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<sup>310</sup> Each Sufi order (*tariqa*) traces its ancestry to a mystic teacher and, beyond him, through a chain of transmission or *silsila*.

<sup>311</sup> See quotes in Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger, pp.261-262, 265. Flueckiger notes that in the eyes of many believers, having a connection with a pīr is necessary for the work of healing.

the *dargah* complex.<sup>312</sup> Her narratives are within the Sūfi *adab*<sup>313</sup> framework forms of humility and modesty which is the proper etiquette required for a *murid* and is clear in making inextricable connections between Islam for the reader and worshiper while affirming her commitment to the Sūfi path and to her pīr, Mullah Shah.

The manner in which Jahan Ara ‘dialogues’ and ‘interfaced’ with her pīr is dictated by social norms and Islamic ‘ideals’ and imperial etiquette. The strict rules of *parda* and Sūfi *adab* control the limits of Jahan Ara’s public display of emotions during her intense ‘imaginings’ of her master particularly when she contemplated on his image. From the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, an abstract framework is constructed that infers rather than makes transparent the exchange that took place between Jahan Ara and Mullah Shah during her initiation. Though Jahan Ara ‘passes through all the phases to reach mystical knowledge that she is worthy of being his [Mullah Shah] representative,<sup>314</sup> the reader is not made privy to the details of the exchange between the princess and her pīr. In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara’s narratives describe the ‘guarded’ ways in which she ‘received’ instruction from Mullah Shah through an exchange of: letters,

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<sup>312</sup> Shah Jahan pledged to build a congregation mosque in the Chishti *dargah* complex in 1628 but it was completed in 1637-38. See *SJN*, 15 and Muhammad Ali Kanbo, [d. 1674], *‘Amal-i Salih*, Urdu trans. (Lahore: Markazi Urdu, 1974), 1: 182-83, and Catherine Asher, ‘Architecture of Mughal India’, *The New Cambridge History of India*, vol. 1:4, (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1992),176. Jahan Ara does not mention her won patronage of a women-only balcony built contiguous to the inner sanctum. This area is called “Begum Dalan” and is for the exclusive use of women in which their ‘emphatic’ performances are ‘sanctioned’ acts of religiosity.

<sup>313</sup> By the end of the thirteenth century the relationship between masters and disciples had crystallized, and Sufi manuals were prescribing an elaborate code of conduct (*adab*) that should govern those relations. These manuals also describe the training and rituals that mark the passage of the novice from disciple to Sufi-adept. See Margaret Malamud’s article, “Gender and Spiritual Self-Fashioning: The Master-Disciple Relationship in Classical Sufism,” in *Journal of American Academy of Religion*, 1996 LXIV(1):89-117.

<sup>314</sup> Tawakkul Beg, *Nuskha-i Ahwal-i Shahi*, ff.41ab, 42a, 42b, 51ab and Dara Shikoh [1640], *Sakinat-ul Auliya*, ed. Dr. Tara Chand and Saiyid Raza Jalili Naini (Tehran: 1965), 180.

personally prepared food, Mullah Shah's *diwan*, and an investiture scarf. Tawakkul Beg describes the initiation ceremony for women of the Qadriyāh:

'*Bait* for women disciples was allowed in the Qadiri *silsilah*. All the instructions were given either through one of her relatives, father, brother, husband or direct to her when she sat behind the curtains. When a woman, expressed her desire to be enrolled to the *silsilah*, the Shaikh replied 'yes', I accept. This generally was taken as the establishment of formal relationships between the shaikh and the woman desirous of spiritual guidance.'<sup>315</sup>

Tawakkul Beg's description of *bait* for female disciples, confirms that Jahan Ara received 'instructions' regarding the details of Mullah Shah's life from Dara Shikoh and her servants who were in attendance and served as messengers between the princess and her pīr. Jahan Ara may have received her spiritual direction second-hand and privately from a 'phantom' pīr but the participation in the practice of Sūfi rituals were personal and passionate and the comprehension of the experience visceral.

## **2.7 Sufi Shrines: Performative and Experiential Sites of Spirituality and Legitimacy**

Sūfi *dargahs* as 'experiential' performative spaces in the Islamic world have historically been and continue to be more available and accessible to females due to the

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<sup>315</sup> For Jahan Ara's initiation ceremony see: Jahan Ara, *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* (Persian MS.), reprint in Persian, ed., M. Aslam, *Journal of Research Society Pakistan*, vol. xvi, No.4 (Lahore; 1979), 31-38 and Tawakkul Beg, *Nuskha-i Ahwal-i Shahi*, ff. 40b-42b.

lack of formal regulations and the spontaneous nature of ritual expression. The 'transparency' of the ritual and practice at *dargahs* by both men and women is not only accepted but is required of its devotees. The visible and participatory aspect of Sūfi practice provoked and 'awakened' a religiosity in Jahan Ara that enjoined her to test the limits of her spiritual dedication and representation. Compared to mosque-centered Islam where women are noticeable by the virtue of their frequent absence rather than incorporation into the religious body and public ritual, Sūfism and its public practice at *dargahs* favors and encourages female participation.<sup>316</sup> The *dargah* complex's function as a political 'performative' site was formally initiated as part of imperial policy during Akbar's reign until the dynamics in pilgrimages and patronage of *dargahs* began to wane during Aurangzeb's rule.<sup>317</sup> The frequent and auspicious visits to *dargahs* by emperors and their retinue, women both elite and common, Muslims and non-Muslims created a spiritually 'equalizing' space that created a forum for universal representation for the powerful and the beleaguered.

For Jahan Ara and other medieval Muslim women open and frequent visits to Sūfi *dargahs* were considered 'sanctioned' outings that temporarily lifted their 'veils of sanctity' and modesty and allowed a full expression of their religiosity in the public realm. Jahan Ara and the 'reigning' royal females before her, acting as 'players' in Mughal statecraft, publicly announced their piety to serve as spiritual extension of the

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<sup>316</sup> In South and Southeast Asia, many Sufi *dargahs* are internally gender segregated so that females cannot approach the actual burial site of a male saint and vice versa. However, the Chishti's *dargah* at Ajmer allows women to circulate the inner chamber. The extent to which women could participate in ritual aspects of Sufism varies with the order and region. Historically and today, women can and do participate equally in rituals at Ajmer. For an overview of women and Sufism, See: F. Mernissi "Women, Saints and Sanctuaries", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 3 (1977): p. 101-12.

<sup>317</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, See note 79 and page 177 for changes in patronage and imperial dynamics regarding *dargahs*. See D.E. Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire* (Delhi, 1989), 89-91 for an overview of the Akbar-Chishti association.

sovereign and his 'divinely sanctioned rule'. As mentioned earlier in this work, the imperial house relied for their spiritual and political well-being on visible evidence of the piety of Mughal women through the giving of alms or commissioning large sacred and secular monuments.<sup>318</sup> This expectation allowed imperial women to play a primary, yet private role in maintaining and sustaining both traditional and folk-religions of Islam in particular the cults of Sūfi saints, their tombs and *dargahs*. Jahan Ara's 'testimony' of her religious experience and subsequent transformation in her treatises serves as one more argument for the *pīri-muridi* status and self-representation within the Qadriyāh that simultaneously cultivates her spiritual and imperial personas.

The physical and emotional zeal that Jahan Ara expressed through her narratives in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and the Sūfi rituals she performed at Chishti's shrine convey how the innate constructions of religious beliefs in the form of Sūfism may have fulfilled some her most deeply felt social and spiritual needs and how the mystical tradition in general accommodated the Mughal elite and commoners in a way that traditional Islam may not have.<sup>319</sup> Shah Jahan, Jahan Ara and Dara Shikoh made their first acquaintance with Mullah Shah in 1639 during their visit to Kashmir followed by four more visits until the last visit in 1651. During his reign, Shah Jahan communicated

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<sup>318</sup> The few available primary and secondary sources on Mughal women do not list the details of their rituals in acts of piety. Except for the *hajj* led by Gulbadan Begum in 1578, there is not banner statement made by royal females announcing the Islamic 'face' of the state. Mughal sources list imperial female patronage of sacred monuments.

<sup>319</sup> The frequent reliance on Sufism and its associated ideologies by the Mughals is not to imply that traditional and/or 'official' Islam was dismissed in the lives of the imperial elite. Islamic doctrine and dogma was adhered to as a perfunctory act in sending gifts and monies to Mecca and Medina and/or the celebration of Islamic holidays and the recitation of Qur'anic verses during the *khutba* in congregation mosques before prayer. However, the author's objective is to convey that Sufism responded and engaged the most emotional and interior concerns of the imperial elite that 'official' Islam did not. The imperial family needed to publicly promulgate and support Islam in all its multi-faceted representations in order to pay homage to institutional Sufism. An example of this spiritual co-dependency is in Inayāt Khan's, *SJN*, 17, where Mughal historian Shaikh 'Abd al-Hamid Lahori, discovered that the numerical value of the phrases, "Shah Jahan the Warrior King, may God protect and preserve him" and the mystically inspired title, "Shibab al-Din Muhammad, The Second Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction" are equivalent to the numerical value of the Qur'anic verse (Surah 2, verse 30): "Verily I shall install a Caliph on this earth".

through personal and intimate letters over a twelve year period (1639-1651) spiritual and political queries to Mullah Shah in hopes for guidance 'laced' with 'divine wisdom'.<sup>320</sup> In his Sūfi-king dialogue, Shah Jahan privileged Sūfi sheikhs over the *ulema* and in this pattern of advising followed in the footsteps of early Timurid and Mughal sovereigns.

Another occasion where the Sūfi 'channel' for 'spiritual communication' and consolation is sought vis-à-vis Mullah Shah over the orthodox *ulema* is during Jahan Ara's tragic burning incident in 1643-44. As indicated earlier, Jahan Ara's long recovery from her near-fatal wounds was cause for great concern by Shah Jahan who mobilized an intensive spiritual and medical search for her cure and speedy recovery. The emperor overcome with grief for his daughter's condition, '...first tried spiritual means to effect his object, and sought to ensure her recovery through the blessed prayers of pious saints...'<sup>321</sup> Inayāt Khan's biography describes Shah Jahan vigilant search for leaders of Sūfi institutions to confer blessings on the ailing princess. The presence and participation of the *ulema*, however, to invoke blessing for the princess' recovery is either omitted or not sought. The contentious relationship between the *ulema* and the Sūfi saints and particularly against Mullah Shah was prevalent throughout the Mughal dynasty and especially during Shah Jahan's reign, where each campaigned to gain primacy and patronage from reigning emperors.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> The letters exchanged between Shah Jahan and Mullah Shah were reproduced by the Sufi master's biographer Tawakkul Beg in his *Nuskha-i Ahwal-i Shahi*, 1077/1667 (Persian MS.) British Museum Ms. 3203 or Rotograph (No. 138) of B.M manuscript is in the Library of Dept. of History, A.M.U. Aligarh ff. 50b, 51a, 55b.

<sup>321</sup> Inayāt Khan, *SJN*, 309.

<sup>322</sup> Mullah Shah's following reached its heights in 1634. Due to the rise in his popularity a section of the *ulema* operating in Kashmir denounced Mullah Shah for 'heresy and deviation' from Islam because of his poetic compositions on the theme of *Tawhid* (Divine Unity). The contested verse which was presented to Shah Jahan as evidence of his 'apostasy' is the following: 'I am in hand

Shah Jahan privileges Sūfism to alleviate Jahan Ara's medical condition by making his first spiritual appeal to Mullah Shah for his blessings: 'The superficial physicians have failed in their efforts to cure her. Now I appeal to the real physician to pray for her recovery and hope that through your grace she will soon be well.' Mullah Shah replied, 'God is known for His two attributes *jamal* (beauty) and *jalah* (majesty), these are the days of *jalah*. Very shortly they will turn into days of *jamal* because on every side there are prayers for her health.'<sup>323</sup> Shah Jahan's on-going communications and frequent letter exchange with Sūfi sheikhs between him and Mullah Shah are indicative of the intimate and highly textured relationships that may have existed between the elite and Sūfi representatives. Mystical Islam may have fulfilled the daily mundane socio-religious needs of the imperial family that the dogma and doctrine of Islam may have dismissed. Tawakkul Beg's biography of his pīr Mullah Shah is filled with intimate discussions, private meetings and poetry recitations between Shah Jahan and the Sūfi pīr.<sup>324</sup>

The illumination of the flame in the Timurid lamp is a metaphor inextricably woven into the dynastic psyche of the Mughals tracing its origins to the Central Asian

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with God, Why should I care for Mustafa?' The *ulema* signed an official decree seeking a death penalty for Mullah Shah. Dara Shikoh and Jahan Ara intervened requesting the emperor to meet with Mullah Shah to inquire about the intended meaning of the contested verse. Shah Jahan made Mullah Shah's acquaintance and after a long and thoughtful discourse, the emperor made the decree null and void. From this meeting began a twenty-year long mentoring friendship between emperor and saint. See: Fatima Zehra Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India* (Delhi: Jayyed Press, 2005), 346-347, 'A Mazhar in Shah Jahan's Court', *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society*, vol. XXXIV, part I (Jan. 1986): pp. 26-32. See: Tawakkul Beg, *Nuskha-i Ahwal-i Shahi*, ff.27b, 22ab.

<sup>323</sup> Tawakkul Beg, *Nuskha-i Ahwal-i Shahi*, f.50b. According to Tawakkul Beg this letter of Shah Jahan's was sent from Agra. See: Fatima Zehra Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India* (Delhi: Jayyed Press, 2005), 351.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid*, f.50b.

legacy of Timur who charges his lineage with sustaining 'the light of the Timuria'. Though the term has been used liberally in Jahan Ara's *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* particularly at the climactic moment of her 'spiritual awakening' in the *majlis*, it is not specific to the Qadriyāh order or to Sūfi ideology. Phrases such as 'divine' light and other terms of illumination are used in spiritual contexts as metaphors to describe God and his grace or 'other-worldly' intercessors. The Timurids and later Mughals relied on sustaining the eternal and 'lineal flame' which was specific to imperial ideology, practical politics and even pre-Islamic/Timurid ancestor worship. The metaphor is instituted in Shah Jahan's obsessive military expeditions in Balkh where the metaphoric ideology compels him into the task of recapturing the ancestral lands to sustain the Timurid 'flame'. In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* the Timurid flame metaphor and its illumination is repeatedly used to indicate its 'ignition' as a function of Jahan Ara's piety and spiritual authority. As a result, Timurid legacy endures and the 'Islamic face' of the empire is realized in Jahan Ara actions and objectives.

Legitimacy and perpetuity was ensured for the Mughals through Jahan Ara's 'illumination' of the Timurid lamp, however, the place of her unprecedented spiritual stride within Timurid-Mughal context needs a closer examination particularly in light of Shah Jahan's 'Timurid Renaissance' ambitions. The perception of Mughal's right to sovereignty in rested on their lineal descent from Timur. Removed by five generations, Babur was one of a number of Timur's descendants who were struggling to hold on to the splintering remnants of the Timurid Empire in Central Asia at the end of the fifteenth century. Making connections between the Indian Timurids and their ancestors became increasingly important for the Mughals after Babur's death particularly as Humayun and his successors came to accept, to some degree at least, their role as Indian monarchs.

In an imperial world where lineage was nearly everything, the Mughal descendants of Timur could not, ideologically speaking, abandon their 'rightful' claim to Central Asia and their ancestral history<sup>325</sup> no matter how firmly established in India they had become. Abu'l Fazl (1551–1602), the court chronicler calls Akbar the 'glory of the Gurgan'<sup>326</sup> (Timur's) family' (*furugh-i-khandan-i-Gurgani*) and the 'lamp of the tribe of Timur' (*chiragh-i-dudman-i-Sahib-qirani*).<sup>327</sup> The metaphor of the lamp is Akbar personified who 'illuminated' the historical and dynastic path for his Timurid-Mughal tribe to follow. Ebba Koch's explanation for 'divine effulgence' explains the 'metaphysical' concept of the Persian notion of sacred manifestation in the rightful ruler as Akbar incarnate.<sup>328</sup> Further, Abu'l Fazl's elder brother, the poet Faizi (1545–1595), calls Akbar the 'lamp of the court of dominion of Timur's dynasty'.<sup>329</sup>

Echoing Abu'l Fazl, seventy years and three generations later, the chronicler Lahauri calls Shah Jahan 'that pride of the Gurgan dynasty'. Shah Jahan envisioned himself as a 're-incarnation' of Timur, thinking that he had been born, like his ancestor, during the conjunction of Venus and Jupiter (Shah Jahan's horoscope, unfortunately, was off by several months). One of Timur's favored titles was 'Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction' (*Sahib-i-qiran*), inspired Shah Jahan to assume the title of 'Second Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction' (*Sahib-i-qirani Mani*). Official histories and Mughal

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<sup>325</sup> The Mughal obsession with preserving and continuing their genealogy is evidenced by the royal seal of Shah that contained the names of each preceding ancestor until Timur. See Inayāt Khan, *SJN*, 4.

<sup>326</sup> Timur couldn't claim an authentic claim to Chingisid lineage, and wanted desperately to be legitimate in his rule. He accomplishes his political objectives by marrying into a Chingisid family; therefore the '*nisba*' of the 'Gurgan', from the Mongolian *guregan*, which means 'son-in-law'.

<sup>327</sup> Abū al-Fazl ibn Mubārak, 1551-1602, *The Akbarnāma*, translated from the Persian by H. Beveridge. (Calcutta : Asiatic Society, 1897)

<sup>328</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology, Collected Essays*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 164.

<sup>329</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, trans. by H. Blockmann et al. (Calcutta, 1927–1941), I, 3.

chronicles portray Timur as the 'archetypal emperor' who the Mughal emperors used to cultivate their imperial personas and to gauge their socio-religious and political achievements. However, it is during Shah Jahan's reign that the dynastic ambitions and visions of legacy of the Timurid-Mughal are fully achieved in the sacred and secular realms through political gains in Balkh and through Jahan Ara's religiosity in sustaining the memory of Timur's 'divine effulgence'.

Timur's 'vision' for regaining his ancestral lands in Central Asia is marginally fulfilled by Shah Jahan's military expeditions to regain Balkh and by Jahan Ara's own testimony in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* where she and Dara Shikoh reach unprecedented spiritual heights in 'illuminating' the Timurid lamp. Shah Jahan and Jahan Ara are not only cultivating imperial and spiritual identities through Timur and Sūfism (respectively) but campaigned to 'reclaim' and assert their shared Timurid heritage and collective history. Both Shah Jahan and Jahan Ara would have had access to the compilation of Timur's ideology and history through the *Zafar-nama* of Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi, completed in 1424-5 included in the imperial libraries along with other imperial biographies.<sup>330</sup> We know from earlier quotes in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*,<sup>331</sup> that Jahan Ara and Shah Jahan read Emperor Akbar's mystical theories through Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* where other metaphors for 'divine' illuminations could have been located.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Inayāt Khan, *SJN*, Appendix [translated from 'Abd al-Hamid Lahori's *Badshah Nama* ed. Maulvi Kabiruddin and Maulvi Abdur Rahim. Calcutta: Biblioteca Indica, [1867-72], 573.

<sup>331</sup> See page 35.

<sup>332</sup> Akbar's personal minister and spokesman Abul Fazl, justified Akbar's own mystical status by using Shibabud din Suhrawardi Maqtul's *Ishraqi* philosophy (illuminationism) to assert Akbar's illumined man's worldly power and wrote in the *Ai'n-i Akbari* that a just king (Badshah-i 'Adil) is illumined by Divine Light (*farr-i izidi*) and 'kingly luminiscence' (*Kaiwan-Khura*). See Tasadduq Husain, 'The Spiritual Journey of Dara Shukoh', *Social Scientist*, Vol.30, Nos. 7-8, (July-August 2002), 54.

The earliest textual evidence of Shah Jahan's military and political intentions for regaining his ancestral domains is a letter sent by Hasan Kahan Shamlu, the Safavid governor of Herat, in 1640, responding to an earlier letter from Shah Jahan requesting help which outlined his intentions to regain their 'hereditary dominions' (*mulk-i mauruthi*) and the 'cemetery of the great ancestors' (*gurkhana-i ajdad-i 'ezzam*). The imperial imperative for reclaiming Timurid lands became a highly charged political agenda for Shah Jahan that motivated his numerous unsuccessful military campaigns from 1640-1647 in Balkh and Badakhshan in Central Asia ruled by his ancestral enemies, the Uzbeks. The incident that may have sparked Shah Jahan's obsession with Central Asian lands was the attempted siege of Kabul by the Balkh ruler Nazr Muhammad during the Mughal succession struggles in 1629.<sup>333</sup> Mughal chronicles confirm Shah Jahan's primary goal<sup>334</sup> for his retaliation of Nazr Muhammad's siege in 1640:

"From the time of the last Emperor Jahangīr's death, when Nazr Muhammad Khan had vainly attempted to seize Kabul, the mighty soul of the world-subduing monarch had been bent upon the countries of Balkh and Badakhshan, which were properly his hereditary dominions."<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Islam, Riazul. *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations, 1500-1750*, (Tehran, Iranian Culture Foundation, 1970), 99.

<sup>334</sup> Modern scholars including Richard Foltz, M. Athar Ali, Jadunath Sarkar and B.P. Saxena, claim several reasons or 'justifications' for Shah Jahan's invasion of Balkh and Badakhshan in addition to recovering ancestral lands and continuing connections with the Mughals Central Asian Timurid ancestors. Shah Jahan's concern for the well-being of the region's Muslim inhabitants, who in the 1640's were being 'defamed' by Uzbek and Alman tribesmen compelled him to send his son Murad Bakhsh to 'restore the rights of the injured and oppressed and coerce the infidel Uzbek and Almans'. (Inayāt Khan, 335). Another reason attributed for the re-conquest was Mughal imperialism. With most of subcontinent under Mughal control, the most feasible direction for expansion was towards the north-west. Regardless, of the reasons, the quest for physical and psychological connections with the Timurid line was made more secure during Shah Jahan's battles at Balkh and Badakhshan than during any other Mughal emperor's reign.

<sup>335</sup> Inayāt Khan, *Shah Jahan Nama*, tr. A.R. Fuller, ed. W.E. Begley and Z. A. Desai (Delhi, 1990), 335.

## 2.8 Light of the ‘Timuria’: Sustaining Legacy and the Timurid ‘Renaissance’

The 1640 military retaliation waged by Shah Jahan with the help of his sons Dara Shikoh and Murad Bakhsh is noted in Jahan Ara’s *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* in which she expresses her deep sadness and disappointment as Dara Shikoh is dispatched to the battle grounds in Balkh.

“In 1049, my father and I left Kashmir and reached Lahore and the empress [Jahan Ara’s grandmother] who had died. At this time, I had extreme love for Dara Shikoh and the Qadriyya and felt a spiritual and material attachment to him and the order. He [Dara Shikoh] and I are one soul/spirit manifested in two forms. And we are one life in two bodies...I wanted to talk to my brother about my deep love and admiration for the Qadriyaa but father sent Dara Shikoh to Kabul for the battle at Balkh and for a little while an outward separation occurred...When separating I was overcome with disappointment, sadness and restlessness and my brother was greatly saddened and told me to read the ‘*Nafahatul Uns*’ by Moulana Nuruddin Abdorrahman Jami.<sup>336</sup> I kept this book with me always and obtained spiritual benefits from this in my brother’s absence.”<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> For an overview of Jami, See Arberry, A. J. *Classical Persian Literature* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1958) 425-264. *Nafahatul Uns* or ‘Breaths of the Breeze of Friendship’ was written by Moulana Nuruddin Abdorrahman Jami, the 15<sup>th</sup> C. last great poet of classical Persian, was man of surpassing talents born into the flowering of culture under the Timurid rulers at Herat, Afghanistan. Jami was a deeply religious man and joined the Sufi circle of Khaja Saaduddin Kashghari and was a disciple of Bahà’uddin Naqshband, the founder of the Sufi order known as the Naqshbandiya. Jami wrote copiously, and among his prose works are *Nafahatul Uns* (*Breaths of the Breeze of Friendship*) a biography of Sufi Saints. The framework for *Nafahatul Uns* may have been particularly useful to Jahan Ara in her composition of both her treatises and particularly *Munis al-Arvāh* .

<sup>337</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p. 93-94.

The entry in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* historically locates and contextualizes the writing of the treatise in the year 1640 when Jahan Ara returns with Shah Jahan from Kashmir to Lahore<sup>338</sup> newly inspired by her Qadriyāh immersion and initiation. The entry in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* confirms the emperor's biography citing Shah Jahan's military campaign to assert his authority by reclaiming his ancestral domains in Central Asia. More importantly, Jahan Ara's deep disappointment regarding Dara Shikoh's immediate departure to Balkh and its affect on her spiritual and emotional psyche makes the treatise more subjective and personal compared to the objectivity she conveys in her Sūfi anthology, *Munis al-Arvāh*. The narratives in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* are not pure internalized ruminations of Jahan Ara's Sūfi experience and her discipleship but are subjected to her 'lived experience' as a Begum Saheba in her imperial persona Jahan Ara's personas both imperial and spiritual are not mutually exclusive but are interdependent entities that are inextricably woven into the Self that comprises the person of Jahan Ara Begum.

Jahan Ara's digression in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* that discusses Dara Shikoh's departure indicates the collective imperial fealty that Shah Jahan imposed through his initiatives for a 'Timurid Renaissance'. Each member of the family is enlisted in creating the culture of the Timurid past and shouldered feels the responsibility of championing Timur and Shah Jahan's vision of legacy and sustaining Empire. Dara Shikoh aspires to ensure empire through his military victories and Jahan Ara in her passionate piety. The climate that Shah Jahan cultivated in making psychological and physical connections with Timurid ancestors was a spiritual undercurrent for Jahan Ara's

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<sup>338</sup> Inayāt Khan, *SJN*, 261.

motivations for (pre-Mughal and Timurid) ancestor-worship by ‘illuminating’ the Timurid lamp in perpetuity. She writes in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*:

“In the family of Amir Timur only we two brother and sister are honored by this enlightened happiness. In our family no one took the step on the path to seek God or the truth. I was grateful for having received this great fortune and wealth. There was no end to my happiness.”<sup>339</sup>

Shah Jahan’s military achievements surpass his imperial predecessors in gaining territory in Balkh, however, marginal.<sup>340</sup> Forging or perpetuating ties to the Timurid past was not a one-sided Mughal perspective. An eighteenth-century Central Asian historian, ‘Abd al-Rahman Tali, says of Shah Jahan’s 1646 Balkh invasion says that Nazr Muhammad “lost Balkh to the Chagatai” insinuating that the Uzbeks confirmed the link off Timur’s legacy to the Mughals of India. In all instances it was Central Asian roots and a deeply instilled hereditary obsession that ultimately defined the psyche of the Mughal family and compelled them to publicly ‘enunciate’ this association.

The Mughal court, particularly during Shah Jahan’s reign was dedicated to the visual aesthetic experience among all the arts and was particularly fond of the creative process in bookmaking and recording in text and image every detail of his life and when

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<sup>339</sup> Sharma, *Sahibiyāh*, p.104.

<sup>340</sup> Though Shah Jahan had achieved the dynastic ambitions of his predecessor in conquering Balkh, the political and economic gains were nominal and inversely proportional to the revenues spent for the conquest. See. Richard Foltz, “The Mughal Occupation of Balkh 1646-1647”, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 7:1 (1996), 58.

appropriate the imperial household.<sup>341</sup> Regarding this celebration of the written word and its imperial implications, it has been written:

“Long before his accession to the throne, Shah Jahan had become obsessed with his unique place in history. In furtherance of this obsession, the new Emperor ordered that his every deed be set down in elaborate detail.”<sup>342</sup>

Celebrating book culture and specifically the written word in all its dimensions at the Mughal courts was clearly a literary phenomenon during Shah Jahan’s reign but had deeper roots and precedents in Timurid history. Sunil Sharma writes: “Timurid cultural influenced the Mughals and Safavids in complex ways, with many of the earlier artistic and literary practices being developed more fully by their heirs. Especially at the court of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (r.1628-1656), there was a large-scale endeavor to produce written works on historical topics that complemented the numerous architectural projects that were commissioned by the emperor and others.”<sup>343</sup> As her two Sūfi treatises attest, Jahan Ara Begum, was deeply influenced by these aesthetic and imperial objectives particularly as her beloved brother Dara Shikoh was a prolific writer both of poetry and prose. Jahan Ara lives and functions in the ‘parentheses’ of imperial imperatives, particularly the art of writing and recording, and examining one’s life experiences and finally representing the court aesthetic and ideological Mughal ethos in manuscript form.

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<sup>341</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, p. 146.

<sup>342</sup> W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai, “Introduction,” *The Shah Jahan Nama of ‘Inayat Khan*, tr. A.R. Fuller (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), xiii.

<sup>343</sup> Sunil Sharm. ‘Celebrating Writing and Books in Safavid and Mughal Court Poetry’, pp. 1 and 14.

Jahan Ara's life and imperial achievements were not far behind in stature to those of Nūr Jahan and Gulbadan however accidental they may have appeared in their assumption. In June 1631, Jahan Ara's mother the empress Mumtaz Mahal died during childbirth, bestowing all imperial social, political and financial duties to her seventeen-year-old daughter Jahan Ara. As the new 'first lady of the realm or *Begum Saheb*', Jahan Ara became the first imperial daughter to have access and control of the emperor's seal. Shah Jahan increased her monthly allowance to an amount surpassing her mother's and further awarded her all revenues from a major trading port at Surat among other *jagirs*.<sup>344</sup> These endowments leave little to question about the princess' authority and agency in the 'mundane' matters of Mughal life. However, it is also clear from her devotion to Sūfism and its practice that the secular powers bestowed upon the young unmarried princess made her 'captive' to her imperial obligations and statecraft of the empire.

In writing the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara redefines her imperial obligations and impositions and testifies in her treatise the value she placed on Sūfism and its associated ideologies and its role in her spiritual authority. The treatise serves as Jahan Ara's Sūfi manifesto along with her sacred architectural commissions become 'visual testimonies' that establish and document the duality of Jahan Ara's prestige in both the sacred and secular realms. Jahan Ara's self-selected role as a Sūfi *pīri-muridi* afforded her the opportunity to simultaneously transcend and conform to the strictures of imperial *parda* while upholding the virtues of imperial and Islamic etiquette. The ruling Mughal dynasties relied for its spiritual well being on visible evidence of propriety and piety from its imperial women. At the center of the Mughal familial nexus women served

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<sup>344</sup> Lahori, I, Pt. II, p. 51; also II, Pt. I, p. 207.

as bridges connecting disparate lineages and affirming the legitimacy of the prevailing leadership. Participation in public events that demonstrated personal Islamic piety: the distribution of alms and visits to the tombs of saints or the building of mosques, temples and mausolea, formed another crucial element in an elaborate series of Mughal statecraft and its reliance on calculated religious ideology that sought to demonstrate each dynasty's fitness to rule. Though Jahan Ara's contributions in her devotion to Sūfism and her architectural commissions of sacred monuments are in complete compliance to her imperial female obligations in perpetuating the Timurid/Mughal legacy, her efforts are not part of an 'idealized' archetypal female but an individualized initiative in the medium of a Sūfi spiritual authority and agency.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

Beginning with the Mughal's ancestor Timur, the development of a cult of the sovereign associated with historical and contemporary Sūfi saints and scholars became one more argument on behalf of Timur's descendants' right to dominion. In the early modern period, belief among Mughal emperors found expressions within a spectrum of piety that involved deeper commitments to holy persons such as Sūfi *shaykhs* than to details of Islamic theology. Women's activities in maintaining the Sūfi-king relationship were fundamental to the Mughal-Timurid's attempt to construct an enduring and legitimate power in the sacred and secular realms. The genealogical argument also involved women's contributions in passing on Timur's legacy to succeeding generations and required royal females to make public associations with exemplary Sūfi personalities and their religious institutions.

Though Sūfism contributed to the characteristic ‘tone’ of the ‘official’ Islam instituted by the Mughal emperors in sixteenth century India, the veneration of Sūfi saints was more than an elite and imperial practice. Sūfi ideology and ritualized practice transcended social, religious and gender boundaries in Mughal India to create an inclusive and widely represented religious community. Sūfism conformed to the indigenous mystical belief systems of India and therefore became the spiritual ‘glue’ that bonded the disparate subjects under Mughal rule to the ruling elite. Congregations at and pilgrimages to popular Sūfi shrines drew together ordinary men and women both Hindu and Muslim, elite females and males and commoners alike. The universal and equal representation of the populace at Sūfi shrines created a loophole for social and spiritual etiquette. Sūfi sacred spaces were sanctioned public areas for imperial women’s public participation and for spiritual female agency and constructed an ‘aura of sanctity’ around the imperial-sponsored Sūfi monuments. It is within Sūfi framework and its physical landscape that Jahan Ara Begum represented the ‘Islamic face’ of empire and cultivated the duality of her spiritual and imperial personas. The unmarried princess’ state of ‘purity’ increased the quotient of her spiritual authority as a *pīri-muridi* through which she made unprecedented claims to the Timurid-Mughal legacy by giving ‘birth’ to the ‘divine effulgence’ of the reigning sovereign as a function of her piety.

Unlike traditional or ‘official’ Islam, ritual veneration of saints at Sūfi monuments had immediate engagements for both the elite and the populace. Support and commission of a Sūfi *dargah* or monument established a personal and political connection between subjects and their would-be masters and in the case of Jahan Ara their mistress. The meta/physical presence of women is central to Sūfi Islam in a variety of ways: through their presence at *dargahs*, festivals, pilgrimages, and according to Sūfi theosophy as

the physical embodiment of the 'creative feminine' that facilitates a spiritual union with the Divine. The mystical aspect of Islam, in particular is marked by its admiration of the feminine, and of holy women from centuries past to the extent that some became, like Jahan Ara Begum, unofficial delegates of their pīr as *khalifas* or as classified in modern Sūfi nomenclature, a *pīri-muridi*. The liminal state of a *pīri-muridi* is simultaneously a position of master and disciple manifest in one authority. Despite the lack of official sanction, Jahan Ara described her ascension to a *pīri-muridi* rank which legitimated and enlightened her path to light the Timurid 'lamp' of legacy. In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara elaborates the details of her performance and the ritual she practiced at the Chishti *dargah* in Ajmer. The detailed narratives serves as a Sūfi manual and manifesto for devotees and for her pīr to acknowledge the authenticity of her spiritual experience.

Jahan Ara's quest to seek an alternative site for her spirituality was influenced and provoked by Shah Jahan's socially and politically charged 'Timurid-Renaissance' initiatives and Dara Shikoh's persuasions that privileged female agency in Sūfi history and theosophy. To sustain a legitimate Timurid connection was paramount to Shah Jahan's visions of his sovereignty. The emphatic and successive military campaigns to regain ancestral dominions in Balkh and Badakhshan were specific to forging links with the Timurid past by grafting his rule and presence on lands lost by early Timurids. From the year 1628 to 1647, the Mughal chronicles and official histories are filled with the details of the communications and military exchange between Shah Jahan and Nazr Muhammad and Safavid rulers regarding the machinations surrounding the siege of Balkh. Shah Jahan enlisted the participation of his sons Dara Shikoh, Murad Bakhsh and Aurangzeb who were dispatched for a tour of duty in the unforgiving climate and conditions of the Balkh region against an unbeatable foe and where each made

impassioned pleas to their father for permission to leave their posts and return to India.<sup>345</sup> Jahan Ara is equally disheartened by the expeditions in Balkh and notes her disappointment in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*. However, like her brothers and in deference to imperial fealty, the princess assumes the charge of her father's imperial 'vision' as she sought alternative means to 'light' the Timurid legacy as she grafted her own representation into perpetuity.

The Medieval Islamic world, particularly Persia and India, witnessed a remarkable flowering of texts associated with the mystical experience. Some of this literature was deeply imbued with a tradition of academic theology, however, the large majority was steeped in an experiential, devotional and intensely personal interiority and was expressed in ways that historians and scholars have interpreted as 'deeply gendered'. The gender dynamics are evidenced and modeled in the narratives of the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and describe the relationship between Jahan Ara and her pīr Mullah Shah who 'gives birth' to her spiritual persona and 'voice'. Jahan Ara Begum's spiritual 'voice' in Sūfism attempts to bring a more nuanced and polyvocal understanding of both Islam and women's place within it.

The *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* departs from the simplistic medieval and modern tendency to 'translate' Islam as a "male" religion and instead equalized the sexes in their access to mystical Islam's practice into a recognizable pattern to render it familiar, personal and intrinsic to one's path for spiritual union. The treatise allows a view into the details of the ambiguity and sensitivity of the issue of gender in Sūfi hagiography. In order to legitimize her spiritual authority, Jahan Ara cites God, the Prophet Muhammad, Mullah

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid, pp. 372 and 379.

Shah and revered Sūfi authors who exalt female participation and spiritual achievement. In her continuing efforts for legitimacy, Jahan Ara exhibits her concern for historical accuracy in *Munis al-Arvāh* and appeals to Muslim ‘heroes’ of the past as a mask for her overriding goal: not only to affirm ‘abd al-Qadir Jilani as the foremost Sūfi exemplar and the Qadriyāhas the paramount Sūfi brotherhood, but also to underline her own authority vis-à-vis rival claims to Qadiri spirituality. The significance of the Islamic past for Jahan Ara is functional: it affirms her status as a Qadri adept and sanctions her *pīri-muridi* rank.

‘Giants’ of Persian Sūfis like Rumi, Jami, Attar, and others, while mentioned, are accorded only half a page devoted mostly to biographical and literary data. Their inclusion affirms Jahan Ara’s awareness of the long tradition in which she stood, but their sole purpose in the treatise is to provide a backdrop for the stage onto which she places as central exhibit the Qadriyāhand her spiritual authority. The *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* offers a vignette of Jahan Ara Begum’s mystical journey through which she negotiated and re-claimed her official and spiritual identities. The assertion allowed her to ‘stoke the fire’ under the Timurid legacy by lighting the Timurid lamp but also legitimized her public piety as part of imperial ideology and practical politics. Jahan Ara’s personal engagement with Sūfi practice, as documented in *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and *Munis-al-arvah*, attempts to bring a more nuanced and polyvocal understanding of both mystical Islam and women’s place within it. The treatise has not received the scholarly attention it merits considering that the work is a rare personal account of an elite Muslim woman’s spiritual quest that attempts to personify the ambiguities of the feminine in Sūfi hagiography but also provokes questions of how the framework of mystical Islam and its

seemingly 'female-centered' ideology may have enjoined an imperial female to cultivate and empower her dual personas.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **THE 'REIFICATIONS' OF JAHAN ARA BEGUM'S 'PERSONA' AND SELF-REPRESENTATION**

The activities that made Timurid and Mughal women 'visible' and agents of their representation was the promotion and funding of sacred and secular buildings that carried particular meanings in 'self-fashioning' their identity, authority and personal ambition. While direct physical or visual access to the imperial female was for the most part denied, acts of public patronage acquainted the empire's subjects with female authority and in the case of Jahan Ara Begum, the 'passion' of her piety. Jahan Ara Begum's acts of patronage are an index of her status within imperial hierarchies of power and 'reifications' of her official and spiritual personas that 'actively participated' in the socio-political and

religious Mughal landscape. These Mughal ‘enunciations’, according to Ebba Koch, “emerged as forms of communication through a topos of symbols”<sup>346</sup> that the author of this work claims had ‘gendered’ the Mughal landscape. Three overarching themes or dynastic patterns of representation emerge from this study: authority, motivation and visibility as conveyed through the princess’ public and personal commissions: the Agra mosque (1649-50) [Figs. 1 & 2], the first imperial female-sponsored congregation mosque in Mughal history<sup>347</sup> and the Mullah Shah mosque (1650) [Figs. 3 & 4], madrasa and khanaqah in Srinagar, Kashmir, the only female-sponsored Sūfi institution in Mughal history.

This chapter continues the analysis of earlier chapters that focused on Jahan Ara Begum’s literary and spiritual activities to inform and cultivate her dual personas. Jahan Ara Begum’s role in her ‘self-fashioning’ are examined through her major commissions particularly in the details and design of the Agra and Mulla Shah complex. Each structure articulates through its Shahjahani ‘semiotics’, a conforming and distinctive royal image of the unmarried princess one that is also laced with a personalized objective of dynastic legitimacy and enduring legacy. The commissions are examined in conjunction with Jahan Ara Begum’s Sūfi treatises *Risala-i Sahibiyāh* (1640) and *Munis al-Arvāh* (1639) as

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<sup>346</sup> Ebba Koch, Lecture: “The Mughal Hunt”, Harvard University, Dept. of Sanskrit and Indian Studies. April, 2007. See Ebba Koch’s seminal research on Mughal ideology in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001). The essays included in this ‘Mughal Bible’ have been pivotal for the research of this dissertation and as a guiding force in the knowledge of the details and textures of the Timurid-Mughal history and the iconological forces that shaped their enduring legacies in art and architecture. I am grateful and indebted to Ebba Koch for her insights, wisdom and encyclopedic knowledge in guiding my studies and analysis of the Mughals and Jahan Ara Begum in particular.

<sup>347</sup> *Khair al-Manzil* (1561-62), Delhi, a mosque and madrasa complex built by Maham Anga, Akbar’s wet-nurse and co-regent to his rule. The mosque was built in Delhi during Humayun’s exile in Persia and was significant and strategic more as a thoroughfare that linked the city walls with the fort than as a functioning mosque. See, Glenn D. Lowry, “Delhi in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century”, in *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* 0 (1984), p.14.

well as official bio-histories and chronicles. The methodology uses the framework of the gender theory criteria established in earlier chapters and combines it with visual theories in this chapter.

The visual theory relies on the relationship between the subject, Jahan Ara Begum and object, her commissions, as counter-reactions to the subjection of each to an imperially constructed visual field or the patriarchal 'gaze' that dominated Mughal patrimonial socio-political history and its built landscape. The Mughal male gaze, to some extent, controlled royal women's socio-political and religious dimensions and predetermined personas that made them less visible and seemingly subordinate to their reigning male counterparts. Like Jahan Ara Begum's immediate and distant female predecessors, Nūr Jahan and the Timurid women, respectively, her contributions helped narrow the gap of gender politics and the 'asymmetries of power'<sup>348</sup> mediated through her commissions that were commensurate with reigning males in both the secular and sacred contexts. The mediations through Jahan Ara's architectural patronage cultivated new modes of authority and representation for imperial females. The princess' unprecedented female-sponsored works played a significant role in the 'ocular politics'<sup>349</sup> of Mughal imperial ideology as the mosques of Agra and Mullah Shah reclaimed, redefined and wrested control of Jahan Ara's representation from the

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<sup>348</sup> Gulru Necipoglu uses the term 'ocular politics' as an 'instrument' of visual control used by imperial males within the Ottoman, Mughal and Safavid empires to spatially and socially organize royal women's visibility and hierarchy that yielded an 'asymmetry of power' in gender politics. See, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): p. 304.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, p.304.

realm of patrimonial discourse and 'recast' the gaze of her female agency onto a self-determined and personally supervised imperial 'stage'.<sup>350</sup>

### **3.1 Reclaiming and Recasting the Patriarchal Gaze: The Princess' Contributions**

Gulru Necipogulu has critically examined how the imperial gaze controlled and 'supervised' female activities and their overall public and private presence. Necipoglu claims the dynamics of patrimonial control are translated into the architecture of the empires of the Ottomans, Safavids and the Mughals.<sup>351</sup> Necipoglu's analysis is specific to the 'gaze' as determined and supervised by imperial males to inform and shape female agency within the palace walls and a domestic realm however, operating and located within the patriarchal framework. Jahan Ara Begum claims the patrimonial gaze and through her prolific patronage and endowments personally informs the multiple frameworks and 'stages' on which the unmarried princess controlled the perception of her personas and from where she wielded her highly personalized authority. The princess' major commissions are not mere accessories to a patriarchal vision but are in and of themselves assert Jahan Ara's supremacy and ideology in Mughal hierarchy and landscape.

A multi-faceted and aggregate perspective of the vast reaches of Jahan Ara's 'manifestations' that operated in the socio-political and religious landscape

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<sup>350</sup> Ebba Koch's seminal work that explores Mughal art and architecture is a vehicle for promulgating imperial ideology and considers dynastic distinctions among the first six rulers of the Mughal empire that distinguished and 'framed' each emperor's visual field and 'stage' on which he cast his persona. See various sources and bibliography listed in this work.

<sup>351</sup> Gulru Necipoglu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): pp. 304-342.

of Mughal dominions and dynamics are surveyed in this work and include all major and minor projects funded, endowed and supported by Jahan Ara Begum. Like Timurid and Mughal women before Jahan Ara Begum, female commissions offered a 'lithic narrative' in which one can read the subtext of the complex and shifting dynamics in imperial female history between patronage, limits of authority and political and/or popular opinion. In the 'reading' of Timurid-Mughal women's contributions (analyzed in chapter two of this work) what emerges is not an archetypal or 'ideal' female that is emulated from previous role models but is an individualized and an aggregate response informed by socio-political and religious parameters specific to the royal female's historical period and not as an imperial male prerogative.

What distinguished Jahan Ara Begum from her Timurid and Mughal female predecessors was the unprecedented nature of her patronage of the first congregation mosque in the imperial capital of Agra and the mosque and khanaqah complex that she commissioned for her Sūfi master Mullah Shah Badakhshi in Srinagar, Kashmir. The Agra mosque is constructed concurrent to the Taj Mahal and Shah Jahan's new capital, Shahjahanabad, in Delhi (1648-1653). The Mullah Shah mosque in Kashmir is completed in 1650, a year after the Agra mosque and upon the completion of the Shahjahanabad. The timing of Shah Jahan's high-profile projects would explain the 'liberties' Jahan Ara seemingly took and the motivations she had for her own commissions. As the 'consort' queen to the emperor, Jahan Ara was required to exhibit the marriage of state to household in multiple ways. The most popular and conventional agency to promote legacy among high-ranking females was to produce an heir. As an

unmarried princess, dynastic reproduction as a means to galvanize state to household and perpetuate legacy was not an option. Jahan Ara recognized in Shah Jahan's on-going prolific patronage of the arts, particularly the Taj Mahal, the powerful and mediating role that architectural patronage played in the 'construction' of authority and legacy. The timings, location and typology of the princess' works in relation to Shah Jahan's in Agra and Delhi would maximize their visibility and thereby her representation, locate her authority within imperial hierarchy and most importantly convey the sovereign 'couple's' combined munificence and unwavering commitment to their subjects and to empire.

Jahan Ara may have planned her works to be perceived alongside the reigning emperor's intensive 'empire-building' initiatives <sup>352</sup> so as to redirect or 'capture' the patrimonial 'gaze' and/or considerations to her own accomplishments as commensurate with the emperor's. Jahan Ara's activities do not invent a new imperial order but her 'gendered' contributions broadly interpreted and actively promoted the modes and theories of 'divine rule' and imperial ideals. Jahan Ara crossed the gender gap in her patronage of the monumental mosque structure in the imperial capital of Agra and conveyed the epigraphic program on the Mullah Shah mosque in a semiotic or self-referential relationship to the princess' persona and further to her poetic and literary prowess. The feminine honorifics, on the Agra mosque are assertive in

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<sup>352</sup> Ebba Koch's seminal study of Mughal imperial ideology considers Shah Jahan to have outperformed his predecessors in building and exploiting the Mughal arts specifically monuments to preserve and perpetuate the 'imperial ideal' and concepts of self-created 'kingship'. See, E. Koch, "The Hierarchical Principles of Shah-Jahani Painting" in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.130-131. Jahan Ara is not competing with her father for power or representation but consciously making rich and authoritative associations with Shah Jahan's building efforts. The Agra mosque's location across from the imperial fort guarantees its patron's prominence in imperial hierarchy.

announcing Jahan Ara Begum's titlature alongside Shah Jahan and with royal epithets that had intricately 'woven' her physical and spiritual characteristics into the construct of each mosque.

Both Agra and Mullah Shah mosques use the Shahjahani vocabulary, a culmination of dynastic and iconic traditions including references to 'Timurid-inspired' <sup>353</sup> details that 'inscribed' Jahan Ara's legacy and authority into each commission's planning and design. The two sacred structures are indicative of the unmarried princess' proclivities and passion for spiritual matters but more importantly her agency is conveyed through these prominent buildings to evoke and serve as vehicles of perpetuating her own spiritual authority alongside Shah Jahan's self-created imperial image as the *mujaddid*, the "renewer" of faith who will ensure a just and peaceful existence for his subjects through the restoring of the laws of Islam.<sup>354</sup> Toward this end the 'reifications' of the princess' religiosity via her sacred commissions function as the necessary 'spiritual intercessors' to the emperor's divine judgment and eminence. The 'spiritual' performance by the believers is successfully transmitted through the princess' spiritual agency in the vessel of her commissions. The spiritual and imperial 'embrace' between Jahan Ara and the emperor is substantiated and linked by her name that appears

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<sup>353</sup> The herringbone pattern on the three domes in the Agra mosque is unique in this detail among contemporary and classical Mughal architecture but does reach into the Timurid tomb designs found in Khurasan. The broad, pear-shaped, full-bottomed domes offset by a little or marginal neck also links its typology to Khurasan. See Donald Wilber and Lisa Golombek. *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan* (Princeton: New Jersey, 1988) vols. 1 & 2 .The details of the analysis will be discussed in full later in this chapter.

<sup>354</sup> For official chronicles citing Shah Jahan as the *mujaddid*, see Koch, "Shah Jahan and Orpheus" in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, pp. xxvi, xxvii, 111, 227.

alongside Shah Jahan's.<sup>355</sup> The association of the princess with the first major mosque complex in Mughal history is emblazoned on the *pishtaq* [Fig. 5] leading to the main prayer hall and underscores her elevated rank in imperial hierarchies. The *pishtaq* as a ceremonial space is used to 'stage' and project Jahan Ara's privilege, piety and spiritual authority. Her name is written on the upper part of the arch and alongside Shah Jahan's. One would glean both names from the prominent location. In the same manner that Jahan Ara's works are situated contiguous or adjacent to Shah Jahan's, her name and imperial hierarchy are read on the *pishtaq* as commensurate to the emperor's.

Sites of veneration in the public landscape commissioned by the *pardeh-geyam* and imperial mistresses were particularly provocative points of 'contact', curiosity and engagement with their imperial subjects. Where formal architecture in the form of audience halls framed and presented the Mughal emperor to his subjects their female consorts were never seen or made physically available to the public except through their commissions on which their act of benevolence were inscribed. The visible act of patronage of women, whether a public monument or a charitable foundation, also allowed subjects of the empire to gauge the level of influence of the royal patron or patroness and to engage royalty's otherwise impalpable presence through the object or subject of their patronage. The imperial family's social and religious politics were intimately connected to the popular reception of the dynasty's philanthropic projects and specifically through the largesse of imperial females.

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<sup>355</sup> The author has measured the *pishtaq's* linear dimension of the verses that frame the entrance and estimate that the honorifics attributed to Jahan Ara are approximately equal in space and verse to Shah Jahan's on the same *pishtaq*.

Jahan Ara's perceived public persona as 'pious, noble and diplomatic' was fundamental and instrumental in conveying the benevolent rhetoric of imperial ideology of which women were prime agents. The 'benevolent' and spiritual 'face' of empire through Jahan Ara's activities was urgently needed as the necessary 'salve' or the counter-weight to the bellicose climate created by Shah Jahan's repeated military campaigns in Balkh in the 1640's.<sup>356</sup> Similarly, Jahan Ara's benevolence is activated through the promotion of Sūfi institutions to 'neutralize' Shah Jahan's emerging attachment to orthodox Islam that diminished the inclusive political and religious policies of Akbar and Jahangīr.<sup>357</sup> Shah Jahan's unwavering resolve and commitment to the orthodoxy of Islam is hinted in Jahan Ara's *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* where she describes her attempts to convince her father of the legitimacy of Sūfism as intrinsically linked to the origins of Islam.<sup>358</sup> It may follow that her first treatise *Munis al-Arvāh* that traces the history of the Chistiyyāh to Prophet Muhammad may have been a response to her father's orthodoxy and reticence to alternative forms of Islam.

Unlike the commonly held belief of Islam's repressive role in women's lives, its religious belief systems facilitated and not debilitated female patronage where Islamic laws allowed women a measure of financial independence and the ability to share in property. These laws were deeply rooted in Islam. According to the Koran 4:8, "For men is a share of that which parents and near relatives leave;

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<sup>356</sup> John F. Richards. *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.132-133.

<sup>357</sup> Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi. *A History of Sufism in India* (New Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1983) II, 185-193, pp. 223-241. Inayāt Khan, p. 154, 207.

<sup>358</sup> See chapter II, p. 42 of this work.

and for women is a share of that which parents and near relations leave, whether it be little or much it is a determined share.” Therefore, women were guaranteed their share of property, even if it was only half that allowed to men: “A male shall have as much as the share of two females” (Koran 4:12). Muslim women of all social stations have and continue to have the right to own property and enjoyed a degree of economic freedom, however, only imperial women and other upper-class women who were the mothers, wives, sisters, or daughters of the men of the ruling dynasties could accrue wealth continually and assert their power through their patronage or charitable acts.

The centrality of Muslim medieval women, therefore, was in the life of the imperial courts and public domain where they functioned as models of Islamic piety through which they became ‘visible’ and wielded their ‘sanctioned’ and measured authority. Virtually all the subjects of, for example, Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal studies are women who, however obscure their origins may have been, conveyed the pietistic objectives empire as part of its imperial ideology where the sovereign was semi-divine and therefore had divine sanction in his rule. The imperial charge on female agency and role was not accidental or coerced but prescribed as intrinsic to preserving empire and sustaining sovereignty where women as the conveyers and keepers of honor and religiosity were held accountable to the royal imperative and served to some extent as its ‘public’ religious emissaries. It follows, then, that this work will modify and dispel through the religious and imperial activities of Jahan Ara Begum the stereotypical assumption that in traditional Islamic society women were somehow “invisible” and had marginal and accidental roles in the practical politics of the ruling house.

Chapter two of this work details the activities of elite Timurid-Mughal women in both the political and social realms and their individualized approach in representing their authority. Like their royal male counterparts, imperial women had the right to own property and had the power to commission and construct buildings as part of their political, social and spiritual agendas. Having access to financial means and the ability to assert political power contradicts the conclusive findings of the historians cited in chapter two of the invisibility and oppression of elite Muslim women with irrefutable evidence. Adding to the 'visibility' of elite and imperial women are the contributions of Jahan Ara Begum. The analysis of Jahan Ara's sponsorship reveals the extent to which the persona of the princess is/was evident and how she was identified in inscriptions, 'seen' or 'thinly veiled' in social and sacred spaces of her commissions.<sup>359</sup>

The study of high ranking women in the Islamic world has generally focused on the modern and contemporary periods, where ample documentation has made a complete portrait of these women as individuals in terms of gender and class. Very little research has been conducted to define the personalities of influential women in medieval Islam to highlight the specific 'arenas' in which they chose to exercise their authority and patronage. The recent work of Mernissi, Ahmed and others have attempted to deal comprehensively with the social history of women in different periods but have generally failed to say anything

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<sup>359</sup> Select commissions of Nur Jahan are analyzed as functions of the empress' vision of legacy and as points of comparison, departures and precedents for Jahan Ara's commissions.

new about medieval women.<sup>360</sup> It seems the middle period of Islam seems to have been subsumed by the theoretical (often orientalist) underpinnings of early Islam and the abundance of research of later pre/modern periods. As a result, medieval women are viewed or cast into the one of the two frameworks where their personalities and ambitions are forcibly likened to elite women from unrelated historic periods and/or regions and perceived as 'archetypal' or the antithesis of the Muslim female subject. Recently, however, more focused studies have surveyed the architectural and artistic patronage of women in the middle Islamic period.<sup>361</sup> Despite these innovative works, the study of patronage of women in medieval Islam remains very underdeveloped, particularly when compared to similar studies for the Ottoman Empire or medieval Europe.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992). Each author addresses women's issues marginally under the heading of medieval Islam. The most recent collected essays edited by D. Fairchild Ruggles in *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies* (Albany: State University Press, 2000) and Gavin R. G. Hambly in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), are compelling recent surveys of elite women from various medieval Islamic societies and sheds light on an area representation that has been overlooked by earlier historians particularly female representation through patronage.

<sup>361</sup> See D. Fairchild Ruggles' *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, particularly Kishwar Rizvi's article on 'Gendered Patronage: Women and Benevolence during the Early Safavid Empire', Ethel Sara Wolper, 'Princes Safwat al-Dunya wa al-Din and the Production of Sūfi Buildings and Hagiographies in Pre-Ottoman Anatolia', and Leslie Pierce, 'Gender and Sexual Propriety in Ottoman Royal Women's Patronage'. See also, Gavin R. G. Hambly (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, particularly G. Hambly, 'Becoming Visible: Medieval Islamic Women in Historiography and History', Priscilla P. Soucek, 'Timurid Women: A Cultural Perspective', Stephen P. Blake, 'Contributors to the Urban Landscape: Women Builders in Safavid Isfahan and Mughal Shahjahanabad', Gregory C. Kozlowki, 'Private Lives and Public Piety: Women and the Practice of Islam in Mughal India', and Ulku U. Bates "The Architectural Patronage of Ottoman Women." *Asian Art* 6 (Spring 1993): 50-65. The current research has relied on these sources for establishing an appropriate framework to analyze generally the contributions and actions of medieval women in Islamic societies and as a point of departure for constructing the specific methodology for Jahan Ara Begum's life and works.

<sup>362</sup> See Gulru Necipoglu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (London: Reaktion Publishers, 2005) for the prolific patronage of Hurrem Sultan, Suleyman the Magnificent's (r. 1520-1566) queen and later her daughter, Mihrimah Sultan (d. 1578). Necipoglu analyzes the relations between architectural monuments and patrons, taking into account their social rank, gender, and political ambitions as represented in the structure in its design, planning and especially inscriptions.

The current state of research on medieval Muslim women, in which there is an absence of any critical analysis in published work on Jahan Ara Begum will help formulate the questions and shape the discourse for this chapter and thesis. The study asks general and specific questions regarding the status and female patronage of the Timurid and Mughal courts before focusing on the regency and architectural patronage of Jahan Ara Begum. The dynamics of each however, is considered within the context of their powerful but gendered position in an imperial world of men. Chapters I and II maintain Jahan Ara's unprecedented measure of autonomy and rank in wielding power that was commensurate with royal males. This chapter will sustain this belief by maintaining that her elevated status and prodigious architectural patronage were equally linked to the fact that she was the 'consort queen' to Shah Jahan and that her religiosity and affiliation with the Qadriyāh order of Sūfism sanctioned her unprecedented female participation in Shah Jahan's empire-building initiatives, however, projected and controlled by her through the architected 'stages' of her prominent commissions and legacy-enduring objectives.

### **3.2 Asserting Authority in the Haram and in European Writings**

Jahan Ara Begum assumed her mother's role as head of the imperial *haram* in 1631, however, her presence and authority were not confined to the imperial *haram* and extended into and fully participated in the commercial landscape of foreign trade. The Dutch trading companies in particular sought permissions and exemptions from the princess to conduct a more lucrative trade

and often delivered the requests personally.<sup>363</sup> Some anecdotes from contemporary European observers underline the power enjoyed by women of the court and the high regard in which they were held. The following are some excerpts from European travelers regarding Jahan Ara Begum's wealth, status and business acumen. The first is from the French traveler Francois Bernier, who was Emperor Aurangzeb's personal physician:

“...her ascendancy in the court of the Mogol should have been nearly unlimited; that she should always have regulated the humors of her father, and exercised a powerful influence on the most weighty of concerns. This princess accumulated great riches by means of her large allowances, and of the costly presents which flowed in from all quarters, in consideration of numberless negotiations entrusted to her sole management.”<sup>364</sup>

Niccolao Manucci, another European 'witness' to the Jahan Ara Begum's character and vast holdings writes:

“...Begom Saeb [Begam Sahib], the eldest of all...as most lovely, discreet, loving, generous, open-minded and charitable. She was loved by all, and lived in state and magnificence. This princess had

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<sup>363</sup> William Foster, *The English Factories in India (1655-60)*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1921), p.11. According to Rekha Misra, (*Women in Mughal India*, (Allahabad: Shadara Press, 1967), pp.46-47), the Dutch traders or their representatives never had a direct audience with Jahan Ara Begum but interfaced with her Diwan and specifically her maids to obtain the necessary *nishans* or *farmans* to recover debt. or to waive exorbitant taxes. Jahan Ara's nurse Huri Khanam often served as an intermediary to procure the necessary documentation. (See, *English Factories in India*, p.15, 73-74.

<sup>364</sup> Francois, Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656-1668*, (trans.), by A. Constable (New Delhi: Oriental Reprint, 1972), pp. 11-12.

an annual income of three millions of rupees, in addition to the revenues of the port of Surat, assigned for her expenditure on betel. In addition, she had many precious stones...Among all these ladies, the most esteemed and respected was Begam Sahib, because she obtained from her father whatever she liked. ”<sup>365</sup>

In 1664, when Jahan Ara's revenues from Surat were under siege by the Maratha leader Shivaji who conquered and appropriated Surat, the 'humble, modest and charitable' princess rejected modes of leniency and shed the veil of her benevolence when she reprimanded the audacious Shivaji and insisted that his punishment be severe and serve as an example to other rival factions who might practice the same form of insolence in attacking other Mughal holdings. <sup>366</sup> "...Who is this Shivaji who could behave in your Royal presence with such contumacy and insolence? Why did Your Majesty overlook his conduct? If this goes on, many *Bhumia* (petty land-holders) will come here and act rudely. How could the government continue to then? The news will travel to every country that a Hindu displayed such audacious rudeness (with impunity) and all others will begin to be rude." <sup>367</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor, or Mogul India*, (trans.) by William Irvine, 4 vols. (Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1965), vol. I, pp.208-13.

<sup>366</sup> Jaipur Records (Hindi), vol. IV, part VI, pp.14-17; J. N. Sarkar. *Shivaji and His Times*, fourth edition, (Calcutta: S.C. Sarkar Press, 1948) p. 143.

<sup>367</sup> Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 143.

Emperor Aurangzeb took Jahan Ara's council and decided to either kill or imprison Shivaji indefinitely.<sup>368</sup> During this incident, Jahan Ara operates in the political field of patrimony and rises to the 'challenge' where her character is imbued with 'masculine' traits and is evidence of Jahan Ara's keen and active interest in protecting the political, financial and imperial interests of empire even after her father had been deposed and imprisoned by her brother Aurangzeb. Jahan Ara's 'uncharacteristically female' response to Shivaji's infraction and punishment conveys not only the 'masculine' nature of her authority and her political acumen but also the shifting and negotiable roles of imperial women in the socio-economic Mughal landscape. A generation earlier her great-aunt Nūr Jahan committed the transgressions against her gender by being an assertive and willful woman as she made transparent through her own unprecedented authority the asymmetries of power within imperial hierarchy where she tested and transcended the acceptable limits of patriarchal social laws and propriety.

For her 'feminist' assertions and threats to imperial male hegemony, Nūr Jahan is not remembered fondly in both Mughal and European accounts. However, without the bold maneuvers of her aunt, Jahan Ara's own assertions and assumed 'masculinities' would not have been easily sanctioned and finally exalted in the official Mughal memory as well as the limits of her imperial articulations through her commissions. The perception of Jahan Ara Begum's character in oft-repeated official histories, chronicles and European travel writings as modest, pious, beautiful and chaste paints a diametrically opposing picture compared to the tenacious political role Jahan Ara played during the

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid., p. 235

Shivaji incident. The incident is one of many in the princess' life that indicated a richly layered 'reading' and complexity of the princess' multiple positions in imperial hierarchy as an active participant and not a passive female 'vehicle' of transmission.

The anecdotes and events that cite Jahan Ara Begum's financial holdings and political proclivities attest to and index the wealth and power of an elite woman who used the imperial largesse to advocate her position and persona in the socio-political Mughal landscape through major commissions and charitable acts. Elite women were not only lavish patrons of architecture, and therefore agents in the spatial organization of urban centers, and imperial statecraft but were sufficiently esteemed to warrant commemoration after their deaths. The most stunning and enduring example of the latter is the Taj Mahal, built for Jahan Ara's mother, the empress Mumtaz Mahal.<sup>369</sup> Similarly, the empress' agency is used in the service of activating and legitimizing Shah Jahan's concepts of king/god-ship by creating a rhetorical dialogue and relationship between imperialism and God. It would not be over reaching to assume that Jahan Ara's Agra mosque is also in a deliberate dialogue with the Taj Mahal in affirming the centrality of high Islam in the Timurid-Mughal legacy. There are/were innumerable instances of structures built by or in honor of women which are only now becoming recognized as evidence of female participation in the life of the community and as opportunities or 'vehicles' for reigning sovereigns to represent

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<sup>369</sup> Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal: And the River Front Gardens of Agra*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006). This source is the definitive study on the Taj Mahal and offers a detailed historicized analysis of the architecture and its meaning. Koch's study conveys the structure and the complex, to some extent, as a 'reification' of imperial ideology, Mumtaz Mahal's persona and relationship with emperor Shah Jahan and the 'anatomy' of imperial ethos.

their politics. This is particularly prevalent in the patronage by the women of Timur's household as well as the role of Mughal women in the sixteenth century public architecture of Shahjahanabad (Delhi) and Isfahan.<sup>370</sup>

The monuments of the Mughal Empire from early sixteenth century established an enduring presence of stability and became a 'political tool' of monarchy, particularly Shah Jahan, his sovereignty and his objectives for reasserting the link of the Timurid to the Mughal legacy.<sup>371</sup> The sacred monuments in particular reflected the desires of their patrons for an all encompassing empire that conveyed in the design and function of the structures the wide range of religious traditions that existed under Mughal rule in India and celebrated the greatness of the sovereign's pluralism and tolerance.<sup>372</sup> Sacred architecture in particular promoted a cohesive subject under the Mughal's subjective rule. Most of the sacred and secular monuments were patronized by men---by the Mughal emperors themselves, as well as by princes, in-laws, and colleagues of Mughal families. However, many major commissions with sacred functions were also patronized by Mughal women motivated by an imperial charge on their gender and position in imperial hierarchy. The Mughals spiritual affiliations specifically with Sūfi saints created an 'aura of sanctity' around the

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<sup>370</sup> See, Gavin Hambly (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, pp.199-226 and pp.407-428 for a survey of female patronage during Timurid, Safavid and Mughal rule, for Ottoman imperial women, see, G. Necipoglu, *The Age of Sinan, Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) pp.268-292.

<sup>371</sup> See Ebba Koch's seminal research that critically examines the role Mughal art and architecture played in the imperial ideology and practical politics, particularly during Shah Jahan's reign in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>372</sup> See, Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, 'The Influence of the Jesuit Missions on Symbolic Representations of the Mughal Emperors', pp.1-37. The essay visually outlines and surveys the aesthetic, iconographic and spiritual influence of the Jesuit Mission to India in 1580 during emperor Akbar's reign during which the a set of the *Antwerp Polyglot Bible*, were given to the emperor and motivated three generations of cultural 'collisions' between 'Mughal art and European forms of representation,' p. 1.

imperial family and Mughal-sponsored sacred monuments. To effectively and visibly achieve political imperatives, the ruling house assimilated state to household requiring royal women, the 'keepers' of imperial genealogies, to make public associations with exemplary Sūfi personalities through their piety and patronage of religious institutions.

The Timurid and early Mughal patterns of female donative acts were specific to funerary, commemorative monuments and institutions like madrasas<sup>373</sup> and khanaqahs for Islamic studies and practice. During the Mughal era only two female patrons commissioned places for Islamic studies: Akbar's wet-nurse Maham Anaga's Khairu'l-Manazil<sup>374</sup> (1526) in Delhi; and later Jahan Ara Begum's Mullah Shah Mosque (1648-50) that included a khanaqah and details of a 'madrasa-cum-mosque' planning scheme.<sup>375</sup> Women's patronage particularly among the Timurids and later Safavids seems to have found an outlet primarily in the buildings of *khanaqahs* and Sūfi institutions.<sup>376</sup> The author of this work maintains that the pattern of supporting Sūfi figures became predominantly a

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<sup>373</sup> Among the four madrasas that are outlined in Ebba Koch's essay, See 'The Madrasa of Ghaziu'd-Din Khan at Delhi', Margrit Pernau (ed.), *The Delhi College*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp.35-59, only one the Khairu'l-Manazil, in Delhi was built in 1561-2 by Akbar's wet-nurse, Maham Anaga is from the early Mughal period. The essay gives a comprehensive and critical analysis of the Madrasa of Ghaziu'd-Din Khan from the late Mughal period (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> C.) that indexes in its design the 'final flowering' and evolution of the Shahjahani idioms. The design of the Mullah Shah Mosque and khanaqah is located between the madrasas of Khairu'l-Manazil and the later Ghaziu'd-Din Khan and conveys the interim design approach and solutions in maintaining and modifying the Shahjahani and imperial architectural vocabulary.

<sup>374</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of Its History and Development* (München: Prestel, 1991; 2nd ed. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 63, fig. 57 and C. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge [England]; New York, NY, USA : Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.11-13.

<sup>375</sup> Koch, 'Madrasa of Ghaziu'd-Din Khan at Delhi', p. 46. For a lack of a better term to describe this ad-hoc 'invention' in Mughal architecture, I quote my eloquent advisor: Dr. Ebba Koch. The typology of this planning scheme can be traced to Timurid works in the madrasa of Ulugh Beg at Samarkand (1417-20) that follows a four-*iwan* plan. See, Golombek, L. and D. Wilber, eds. 1988. *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) pp. 263-265.

<sup>376</sup> The analysis of the mosque within a madrasa design will be analyzed through the example the

male prerogative where the practice and patronage of Sūfi building became the domain of both the female elite and commoners during the Mughal dynasty.<sup>377</sup> The official mention of female participation and accompaniment during the Mughal ritual of visiting Sūfi shrines is only mentioned in Shah Jahan's official biographies in the context of either receiving blessings or giving thanks. Jahan Ara is mentioned on several occasions of accompanying her father to Chishti's shrine in Ajmer.<sup>378</sup> This fact underscores the centrality of Sūfism in female piety and specifically its importance and prominence in Jahan Ara's imperial and spiritual life.

Sūfism did not require the same kind of knowledge and erudition as jurisprudence and was somewhat more open for women's participation and even leadership. Schimmel for example, proposes that "Sūfism, more than stern orthodoxy offered women a certain amount of possibilities to participate actively in the religious and social life within Islamic cultures."<sup>379</sup> The female-centeredness of Sūfism may help explain the frequency of patronage by early Timurid women of khanaqahs and Sūfi complexes that supported mystical

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<sup>377</sup> See chapter two of this work where the Mughal Sūfi and Emperor relationship is traced back to its Timurid beginnings and how this relationship was sustained by Babur and the *Naqsbandiyyah* Sūfi order and through, Akbar, Jahangīr and Shah Jahan through the *Chishtiyah* Sūfi order as intrinsic to sustaining and legitimizing their sovereignty in India. Architectural and religious (pilgrimages to Sūfi shrines) expressions were dominated by Mughal males until Jahan Ara's patronage of the 'Begum Dalan' or women's portico at Chishti's shrine in Ajmer and the Mullah Shah Badakhshi mosque in Srinagar, Kashmir. See, Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, "The Delhi of the Mughals Prior to Shahjahanabad as Reflected in the Patterns of Imperial Visits", pp.176-79, Simon Digby, 'The Sūfi Shaykh and the Sultan: A Conflict of Claims to Authority in Medieval India', *Iran*, 28 (1990), pp.71-81.

<sup>378</sup> 'Abd al-Hamid Lahauri, *Badshah nama (Padshah nama)*, Persian text eds. M. Kabir al-Din Ahmad and M. "Abd al-Rahim, vol. II (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1867-72), pp. 112, 344-46, 407-10 and Inayāt Khan, *Shah Jahan Nama*, (trans.), A.R. Fuller and (eds.) W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai, (New Delhi: Oxford Unveristy Press, 1990), pp.304, 321. The dates and visits to Ajmer are supported and confirmed by Jahan Ara's Sūfi treatises, Munis al-Arvāh and Risala-i-Sahibiyāh.

<sup>379</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: the University of N.C. Press, 1975), p.432.

Muslim traditions centuries later this pattern is appropriated by the spiritual and donative acts of the Mughal princess Jahan Ara Begum. Sūfi structures were not intended for jurist but for Sūfis, an identification and legitimization that may have sat more comfortably with female patronage than with structures supporting the orthodoxy of Islam where women's religiosity is measured by her absence in a mosque and not presence and participation. Perhaps, by supporting Sūfi institutions that sanctioned women's 'visibility' in the sacred realm both in prescription and practice, early Timurid women like Jahan Ara's support for the Qadriyāh order are 'staging' and controlling their representation both in an official and spiritual realm *for* and not *by* the male gaze. The growing distaste for 'extreme' forms of mystical devotions by the prominent leaders of the Naqshbandiyāh Sūfi order who were at the forefront of Sunni revivalism during Shah Jahan's reign <sup>380</sup> may have motivated Jahan Ara's leanings to support the teachings of the Qadriyāh order and simultaneously wield her authority in personal and spiritual matters.

In a study specifically dealing with education in medieval Mamluk Cairo, Jonathan Berkey concludes that 'formal Sūfism and the broader forms of Muslim mysticism may have been an important route by which women could acquire immediate and respectful standing in the religio-academic world.'<sup>381</sup> Besides 'framing the gaze' for the male perception of female identity and agency there may have been a more utilitarian objective for the frequency and ardor that

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<sup>380</sup> Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, pp.185-193 and Arthur Buehler, 'The Naqshbandiyya in Timurid India: The Central Asian Legacy', (1996). *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 7(2): 208-228.

<sup>381</sup> Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 162-181.

female patronage exhibited for Sūfi complexes. The emphasis on the personal path to the Divine, the prominence of emotional and ecstatic practice and perhaps even the ‘forced’ celibacy, as in Jahan Ara Begum’s case, may have enjoined some women to center Sūfism in their practice and others to do the same and to sponsor Sūfi institutions. The promotion through architecture served as the *axis mundi* or point of transmission and communication that spiritually motivated medieval Muslim women throughout the Islamic world. These dynamics were particularly relevant and specific to Jahan Ara whose spiritual quest toward Sūfism and away from high Islam, as she states in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, could also have served as the counter-weight to the Sunni revivalist movements in the 1640s.

### **3.3 Nūr Jahan’s Prolific Precedents of Patronage and ‘Extensions’ of the Imperial Haram**

The most prominent example of that the marriage between Mughal statecraft to its household was Nūr Jahan’s patronage that extended broadly into a variety of the arts in the seventeenth century Mughal landscape. Select commissions of Nūr Jahan including the Patthar mosque (1623) [figs. 6, 7& 8] in Srinagar are analyzed in this work to the limits of serving as precedents and points of departure for understanding Jahan Ara’s commissions of the same typology specifically the Mullah Shah Badakhshi complex. Nūr Jahan, the last wife of the fourth Mughal emperor, Jahangīr (r. 1605-27), funded and designed to some extent buildings and gardens in north India and Kashmir and participated in developing new themes including female figures as royal insinuations in

miniature paintings.<sup>382</sup> Nūr Jahan established the precedent of these new themes in her matronage but also worked out of a context where commissions by royal women had a long and enduring history in the Timurid-Mughal lineage. Nūr Jahan and Jahan Ara's patronage of major monuments is not only a donative act but their strategic location and sumptuous nature makes each patroness understood by her subjects as undertaken by high-ranking women as agents of empire and the sovereign. Chapter II of this work describes the unprecedented strides taken by Nūr Jahan in her representation both physically and as a political 'apparatus of empire' during her reign as empress.

Nūr Jahan's donative acts include the commissions and maintenance of several pleasure gardens in imperial capitals as well as in the valley of Kashmir and should be considered along with her monuments as another physical manifestation of her vast 'reach' and projection of her presence and power within the Mughal domains as well as appropriate precedents for Jahan Ara Begum's patterns of patronage. Pleasure gardens or *chahar baghs* trace their roots to the Mongols who developed an idealized and proportionally perfected garden setting to assuage the unforgiving lifestyle of their nomadic culture and also adopted the Persian *bagh* to 'stage' their royal power.<sup>383</sup> The perceptions of gardens and their association with power was formalized starting from Babur's reign where the *chahar baghs* are perceived as royal encampments particularly as Babur opted

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<sup>382</sup> Ellison Banks Findly, "The Pleasure of Women: Nur Jahan and Mughal Painting," *Asian Art*, "Patronage by women in Islamic Art" issue, 6.2. (Spring 1993): pp. 66-86.

<sup>383</sup> Ralph Pinder Wilson, *The Persian Garden: Bagh and Chahar Bagh* (Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium), Vol. IV, pp.76-77.

to spend most of his time in his gardens outside of his military campaigns.<sup>384</sup> Ebba Koch notes the systematic use of nature as integral to Mughal ideology and specific to the rule of Hindustan: “Nature is related to rule and dynastic self representation. The Mughal *padshah*...claims nature as his own by making a permanent imprint on it with artistic means, with architectural features, sculptures and inscriptions...Thus, the claim on nature aligns itself with an ongoing Mughal project, from Babur to Shah Jahan, to become as rulers part of the culture of India.”<sup>385</sup> Akbar’s reign is noted for his expansion schemes for India that included planning gardens around his monuments and to some extent as visual ‘accessories’ for facilitating a uniform reading of the imperial topos of symbols. It is the uniform reading of the Mughal architectural idiom that has the greatest impact on sustaining, perpetuating and legitimizing legacy. Jahan Ara’s works both at Agra and in Srinagar liberally and sometimes perfunctorily dip into this aesthetic reservoir more to make imperial associations and less to make the structure stylistically unique.

Jahangīr actively promoted the *chahar bagh* scheme through his prolific patronage of gardens<sup>386</sup> in imperial cities and in his beloved and ‘mystical’

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<sup>384</sup> In 17<sup>th</sup> C. Europe, gardens symbolized the monarch’s power, a trend with climaxed in the 1660’s in the gardens of Versailles. In discussing how the “growth of the King’s power can be charted by the growing number of acres added to the gardens and parks,” Howard Adams has written: “The sequence of the development of the gardens at Versailles is intimately related to the emerging power of the King, his concept of the monarchy, and his love affairs. All three influences were at times entangled in the expansion and use of the gardens to further the King’s policies or to celebrate an amorous conquest.” See, William Howard Adams, *The French Garden* (New York: Braziller, Inc., 1979), p. 84. The themes of power and love are consistent with the objectives of the Mughal emperors and patronage of palace or riverfront gardens.

<sup>385</sup> Ebba Koch, ‘My Garden is a Hindustan: The Mughal Padshah’s Realization of a Political Metaphor’ in *Middle East Garden Traditions: Unity and Diversity* ed. Michael Conan (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 2007), pp. 161-162.

<sup>386</sup> Elizabeth Moynihan, *Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1979), p. 123.

Kashmir. One of the emperor's ruminations on Kashmir's context and sacred 'aura' elucidates the 'other-worldly' context of the Vale and its appropriate 'climate' for mystical leanings:

“Kashmir is a garden of eternal spring...a delightful flower-bed, and a heart-expanding heritage for dervishes. Its pleasant meads and enchanting cascades are beyond all description.”<sup>387</sup>

The references to eternity and mystical figures/activities convey not only Jahangīr's personal persuasions for Kashmir but represent each Mughal emperor's proclivity and reasons for the frequent visits to the Vale to gain both spiritual and physical solace from the demands of their administrative and imperial duties and perhaps from the orthodoxy of Islam and the *ulema*. For the Indo-Persian Mughals the frequent journeys to Kashmir, to some extent are similar in their objective to William Wordsworth's epic ballad, 'The Return to Tintern Abbey' where the provocative pull of nostalgia and the sublime landscape transposes the poet to a place where one could evade historical realities and bathe in the restorative aura of one's 'pure' past.<sup>388</sup> That Wordsworth characterizes the gender of nature as female is beyond the scope of this paper but it is worth noting the procreative metaphor and its application to Nūr Jahan and Jahan Ara 'planting' through their patronage of both gardens and monuments in Kashmir to 'root' and cultivate their representations among the

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<sup>387</sup> Henry Beveridge, ed., *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir*, trans. Alexander Rogers (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1909). Vol. II, p. 143.

<sup>388</sup> William Wordsworth (1770-1850), ed. Michael Mason, *Lyrical Ballads* (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2007).

largely male contributions, and to employ the *chahar bagh* scheme to advance their socio-political agendas.

The lives of imperial women in the confines of the palaces oscillated between the courtyards, *harem* walls, gardens, hunting pavilions and finally were emancipated in the sublime and 'picturesque' provinces of the pleasure gardens as Nūr Jahan turned the court's gaze to Kashmir.<sup>389</sup> According to Ellison Findly, by relocating or 'extending the boundaries' of the *zenana*'s 'pursuits of pleasure' to Kashmir, imperial women assumed a more central, equal and transparent role commensurate to imperial males in their participation of courtly pleasures that also made them more visible. Hunting as a form of imperial recreation privileged and was centered on imperial men where women functioned as accessories or 'captive' audiences to ultimate show of male 'heroism'.<sup>390</sup> Findly notes that the increased participation and representation in nature of women cultivated the perception that the 'preferred place of women in the design of mountain gardens and the special arrangements made for women's accommodations in the gardens...made it clear that women were not only significant but perhaps the main beneficiaries of these trips.'<sup>391</sup> The mountain garden type was employed in the design of Shalimar garden in Kashmir in 1616 on Dal Lake and articulated in its hierarchical design what Findly has stated as the women's 'preferred place'

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<sup>389</sup> Ellison B. Findly, "Nur Jahan and the Idea of Kashmir", unpublished article, p. 2.

<sup>390</sup> Gulbadan has noted in her biography of Humayun that hunting and horseback riding was popular among women and may have been revived during Jahangīr's reign for women to partake. In the *Jahangirnama*, Nur Jahan's marksmanship is extolled by the emperor. "She hit two of them with on short and the other two with two shorts, and in the twinkling of an eye the four lions were deprived of life with six shots. Until now such marksmanship had not been seen...", See, *The Jahangirnama, Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, trans. Edited and annotated by Wheeler M. Thackston, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 219.

<sup>391</sup> Findly, "Nur Jahan and the Idea of Kashmir", p. 2.

conveyed in the design of the gardens as mediators between the emperor who is the 'renewer' who cultivates his subjects and shields the *zenana* garden's prominence as indicative of the shifting parameters and perceptions of power during Nūr Jahan's and subsequently Jahan Ara Begum's ascendancy.

Emperor Jahangīr commissioned three garden zones: public, emperor's, and the *zenana* garden. The *zenana* garden later improved by Shah Jahan is distinguished by the use of black limestone on its façade and appropriately called the 'Black Pavilion' and as the female zone "provides the climax...and [draws] the whole of the garden to its heart."<sup>392</sup> The water at Shalimar was exceptional and noted in the comments of the French traveler, Vicomte Robert d'Humieres:

"...a kiosk with black marble columns, in the middle of a square basin. From three sides of the square fell three cascades, whose sheets of mobile crystal were illumined by lamps set behind them in recesses...We were surrounded by the splashing, by the efficient coolness of the heavenly water, the glory of the consoling water, the feast and the apotheosis of water."<sup>393</sup>

The aura of Shalimar gardens described as an 'otherworldly' realm with heavenly attributes certainly calls attention to Nūr Jahan's objectives to cultivate a 'preferred and place for women' that privileges their unparalleled representation

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<sup>392</sup> Sylvia Crow and Sheila Haywood, *The Gardens of Mughal India* (Delhi, London: Vikas Publishing House, 1973), pp.96, 100.

<sup>393</sup> Vicomte Robert d'Humieres (1868-1915) trans. by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, *Through Isle and Empire* (New York: Doubleday Press, 1905), pp. 214-215.

through and in garden designs and simultaneously elevates their rank to beyond the temporal limits. The isolated context of Kashmir and its remote location from imperial centers of power and scrutiny sanctioned Nūr Jahan's and subsequently Jahan Ara's bold self-promotion, recreational pursuits of personal and spiritual fulfillment in the open and without restrictions. Kashmir as a spiritual Sūfi center provided the princess an alternative spiritual venue particularly when she was summarily dismissed by the Chishtiyāh leader, Mian Mir.<sup>394</sup> Additionally, Nūr Jahan's trips and long journeys to Kashmir trail blazed the same pattern of participation for Jahan Ara's frequent and extended trips to Kashmir with Shah Jahan and her brother Dara Shikoh. Beyond military campaigns, moving court to capital, hunting trips and short trips to neighboring shrines all under the guardianship of male principals, women did not undertake long and arduous pilgrimages to garden retreats particularly to locations that were least represented by a Mughal administration/force. Nūr Jahan's frequent and extended trips with Jahangīr 'normalized' travel to Kashmir and motivated imperial women like Jahan Ara to follow suit.<sup>395</sup> Nūr Jahan's unprecedented 'gendered' contributions of gardens and her mere physical presence bolstered similar pattern of patronage for Jahan Ara Begum through which she would enunciate her authority. In Kashmir, and specifically at the Mullah Shah complex, Jahan Ara's authority is reframed and the 'gaze' redirected as the perceptions of her authority shift and are reified in a spiritual realm and beyond the limits of the imperial *haram*.

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<sup>394</sup> See chapter II, p. 38 of this work for details of Jahan Ara Begum's meeting with the Sūfi master Mian Mir in Lahore.

<sup>395</sup> According to 'Inayāt Khan's *Shah Jahan Nama* and Jahan Ara's two Sūfi treatises, the princess made eight trips to Kashmir between 1637 and 1654. Each trip was accompanied by her entourage and either Shah Jahan or Dara Shikoh.

### 3.4 Gardens as a Loci and ‘Diagram’ for Mughal Control and Prestige

Gardens as a loci and ‘diagram’ for Mughal control date back to emperor Babur’s reign and are used in the sixteenth century as metaphorical ‘seats for governance’ for male power that Nūr Jahan appropriated to enunciate and charter her authority and representation. Similarly, the garden precedent was used by Jahan Ara Begum for self-representation and as a ‘masculine’ mode of power. The Zahara Bagh [figs. 9-12] bequeathed to Jahan Ara, the design of the garden uses the Mughal riverfront typology that instantly enlists the princess’ membership into the Mughal enterprise and further grafts her to Timurid-Mughal legacy. The Zahara Bagh <sup>396</sup> in Agra is situated on the Yamna river between the Ram Bagh and the tomb garden of Afzal Khan known as the ‘Chini-ka Rauza’ (Chinese Tomb) [fig. 13] and whose unusual herringbone pattern<sup>397</sup> and the shallow dome proportions are copied on the dome of Jahan Ara’s Agra mosque.<sup>398</sup> The Zahara Bagh is framed between two monumental octagonal towers that employ Shahjahani idioms in their design details <sup>399</sup> and sits in the historical parentheses of and is informed by men of power: Emperor Babur’s commission of the Nur-I Afshan Bagh and the Persian Afzal Khan, Jahangīr and Shah Jahan’s finance minister. Shah Jahan’s court poet Abu Talib Kalīm (d. 1651) includes in his panegyrical praise for the garden that once belonged to Mumtaz Mahal and the almost palpable ‘gendered’ and restorative powers of the

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<sup>396</sup> The garden has historically been called ‘Zahra’, ‘Zehra’ or ‘Zahara Bagh’, and whose etymological references are the definitive ‘sources’ that date it to Babur’s reign. See Ebba Koch’s article on the garden that convincingly determines its name to be ‘Zahara Bagh’, “The Zahara Bagh at Agra”, *The Environmental design; Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Center*. Vol. 2, 1986b, pp.30-7.

<sup>397</sup> Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, pp. 43-45.

<sup>398</sup> Afzal Khan’s death in 1639 would place the Chini Ka Rauza at an earlier date to the Agra mosque (1648) and the tomb’s details may have influenced the mosque’s design. Jahan Ara’s personal garden would certainly locate her person within proximity to the tomb building and its construction may have been completed by artisans who may have worked on the Taj Mahal (1638-40 and subsequently the Agra mosque).

<sup>399</sup> See Ebba Koch, ‘The Zahara Bagh at Agra’, pp. 32-34.

garden as virtual personifications of Jahan Ara's physical and emotional characteristics.

“A boat trip will remove the sorrow from your heart, pass by the garden of Jahanara! In this paradise is such a heart attracting palace that the eye gets anxious to behold it...in front is the river and each of its waves (like) a curling lock (of a beautiful maiden) brings about joy...That very paradise which she had brought to boom, she gave to her own world adorning child.”<sup>400</sup>

The tender words used to praise Jahan Ara and her mother is the 'salve' for those who tread in the 'bed' of each woman's goodness in the Zahara Bagh. They are each exalted for their purity and held in the emperor's highest esteem and their representation is both powerful and just. Nūr Jahan's quest for expanding female borders and more visible representation through her patronage of gardens motivated Jahan Ara's renovation, design and maintenance of Zahara Bagh in the imperial capital of Agra, however, comfortably ensconced between the future of the Mughal legacy and the Timurid past.

The 'Amal-i-Salih describes several gardens in Kashmir that were gifted to Jahan Ara by her father. The construction and details of the gardens are subsumed in the conceit of the prose, however, the poetics intricately weave Jahan Ara's persona and characteristics in the description:

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<sup>400</sup> As quoted in Ebba Koch's, "The Zahara Bagh at Agra", pp.35-36.

“Then there are three gardens, each of which, like its owner the Begum Sahib [Princess Jahanara], adorns the page of the soul. One is that built by Jawahir Khan Khwaja-Sara. At present it has been transferred to Her Highness, the queen of angelic demeanor [Jahanara] and is called, after her name, Jahanara. Second is the Nurafshan, built by Nur Mahal on the banks of the Bahat. From the time of his late majesty until now that it has become the property of that second Mary, there have been few like it on earth for elegance of the extent of its grassy avenue and amplitude of spirit and comfort of pleasurable residences. The third is the Safa Garden, built on a rise overlooking the Safapur tank, seven *kos* from the city. In decoration and artifice, in expanse of space and abundance of light and purity it is of such a degree that, even if the incomparable Lake Dal were not there and the lotus flower were absent, you would certainly say that the likes of this peerless lake does not exist in paradise, much less on the face of the earth.”<sup>401</sup>

Praises for Bagh-i Safapur are included in Inayāt’s Khan’s *Shah Jahan Nama* and employ poetic metaphors to embed and liken Jahan Ara Begum’s character to the natural attributes of the garden:

“...and also the Bagh-i-Safa by the lake of Safapur, the waters of which are so transparently clear that one can see down to the

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<sup>401</sup> Muhammad-Salih Kambo, *Amal-i Salih, or Shah Jahanama*, ed. G. Yazdani, Calcutta, 1912-39, II. Pp.34-37. As translated by Wheeler Thackston, ‘Mughal Gardens in Persian Poetry’ in *Mughal Gardens, Sources, Places, Representations and Prospects*, eds. James L. Wescoat Jr. and Joachim Wischke-Bulmahn (Washington D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996), p.254.

bottom notwithstanding their dept. In fact, Safapur is one of the acknowledged beauties of Kashmir; for all the pleasure grounds in the vicinity of the city, this is conspicuous for its noble prospect, commanding situation, and singularly lovely lake. ”<sup>402</sup>

The garden perceived as the princess is conspicuous for her noble prospect, her peerless beauty and her commanding situation as the head of the imperial *haram* and the keeper of the imperial seal. Above all, the truth in the object of nature is the transparency in the princess that confirms her purity and beauty. Inayāt Khan’s literary conceit in the description of Safapur is self-evident but the prevalent perceptions of the princess’ ‘official’ and ‘spiritual’ character cannot be denied as they are suffused in the Mughal landscape through multiple means: substantiated by historical records, panegyric poetry, monumental projects and through Shah Jahan’s imperial decrees that convey the high esteem he holds Jahan Ara both as a daughter and his imperial partner. Shah Jahan serves the subjects of his empire as the physical renewer as the *mujaddid* and Jahan Ara is the spiritual maintainer and together they are all things to all people. Not only is the description of Safapur ‘other-worldly’ but the ritual performances in which Jahan Ara and Shah Jahan collectively participate at Safapur cultivates an aura of imperial and spiritual authority and perceptions of imperial power as ‘semi-divine’:

“On 26<sup>th</sup> Muharram 1050 A.H. Shah Jahan visited Bagh-e-Safapur.

Jahan Ara built this on the high piece of land. The flowing canal is a

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<sup>402</sup> Inayāt Khan, *The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan*, trans. eds. W.E. Begley and Z. A. Desai (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.127.

natural design element within the garden. A three-storey building is located at the banks of the lake and each building has a waterfall and fountains. There is also lush greenery and perfume plants which appeals to the heart and creates happiness in the soul of the visitor. His Majesty sat on the crescent shaped boat and his daughter; Begum Sahib performed the ceremonies of offering and scattering. On the surface of the water candles illuminated the world. His Majesty stayed there for three days and spent his time in joy and mirth".<sup>403</sup>

"On 18<sup>th</sup> Shaban 1061 A.H., His Majesty reached Safapur by boat. Begum Sahib presented gifts to him and in the night lamps were illuminated in his honor".<sup>404</sup>

According to Inayāt Khan, Safapur and another garden Sahibabad was not only a site for the mystical machinations of the princess and her father, but served as an imperial staging post between the contested ancestral Balkh territories and Lahore for Shah Jahan's court and infantry:

"When the imperial standards reached Sahibabad, Shad Khan who had been on a mission to Balkh, arrived at court and had the honor of making his obeisance."<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Lahori's *Badshah Nama*, vol. II, p. 195.

<sup>404</sup> Waris, *Padshah Nama*, pp.166-167. *Amal-i-Salih*, vol. III, p. 97 is faithful to this recording but with a different date: 17<sup>th</sup> Rajab, 1061 A. H.

<sup>405</sup> Inayāt Khan, p. 273.

Considering the numerous unsuccessful military campaigns sponsored by Shah Jahan to Balkh, Sahibabad as Jahan Ara's 'proxy' served, as the site where the infantry would 'restore' itself before were conveyed to the sovereign en route to his capital. Sahibabad as a place for rest and safety is noted in a letter written to Jahan Ara by her nephew Prince Muhammad Akbar where he describes the bad weather conditions and his need to stay in her garden at Sahibabad [fig. 14].<sup>406</sup> The princess' garden became significant place for imperial standards to halt after the honorary stops in Babur and Jahangīr's gardens.<sup>407</sup>

In addition to the garden at Safapur in Kashmir, Jahan Ara received the *sarkar* of Sahibabad (formerly known as Achhwal) from Emperor Shah Jahan in September 1634.<sup>408</sup> The name of the estate is appropriately named after Jahan Ara Begum who is not only referred to in official recordings as 'Begum Saheba' but whose holdings are derivations of this title. The princess owned a trading ship, called the 'Sahabi',<sup>409</sup> her highly personalized Sūfi treatise is titled 'Risala i-Sahibiyah' and her Sahibabad garden prominently situated in the emperor's capital at Chandni Chowk.<sup>410</sup> Like her father, she has located and 'scaled' her authority within the imperial hierarchies and to the limits of the Mughal domains. The 'gendered' dimension of Sahibabad as the princess' official holding and her

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<sup>406</sup> Qabil Khan. *Adab-i- Alamgiri, Aurangzeb Emperor of Hindustan 1618-1707* (Lahore: Idarah-I Tahqiqat-I Pakistan, 1973), section four. There are four letters from Prince Muhammad Akbar to Jahan Ara. One of which describes the garden and one is an effusive response from Jahan Ara delighted that her garden was comforting to her nephew and his entourage.

<sup>407</sup> Inayāt Khan, *Shah Jahanama*, p.394-395. Bagh-i-Wafa is noted to have been founded by emperor Babur and is compared to Bagh-i-Safa in its exquisite gardens, aromas and plantings.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid, p. 137.

<sup>409</sup> Waris, *Padsha Nama*, Persian MS. Folio 286, Salarjung Museum library, Hyderabad.

<sup>410</sup> The Sahibabad garden is no longer extant but was designed and built by Jahan Ara Begum for the exclusive use by the ladies of the imperial *haram*.

physical representation is self-evident in the estate's name, peerless aesthetic values and the metaphors used to describe its features:

“It possesses a spring on singular coldness and purity which was constructed by His Majesty's command; and without exaggeration, no traveler has ever met with one so brilliantly foaming and sparkling. The spring at Asafabad and this one, from their transparent luster and brightness, may be metaphorically described as the two eyes of the face of the earth; and if there be room for drawing a distinction between them, the difference would be about as much as that between the right eye and the left.”<sup>411</sup>

Though Jahan Ara Begum was unmarried, the emperor made certain that she benefited from the same pattern of royal gift-giving, endowments and yearly allowances as, Nūr Jahan and other high-ranking royal females, however, during the thirty-five years of Shah Jahan's reign, she may have surpassed her predecessor's fiscal holdings.<sup>412</sup> The disposal of the financial resources went in part for enhancing life in the royal women's well-appointed accommodations and a large part was used towards acts of patronage to spiritually, socially and fiscally

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<sup>411</sup> Inayāt Khan, *Shah Jahanama*, p. 137.

<sup>412</sup> The lucrative territory and port of Surat was given to Jahan Ara by Shah Jahan upon her recovery from her burns in 1644. See, Lahori, *Badshan Nama*, vol. II, p. 39; Kamboh, *Amal-i-Salih*, vol. II, p. 346; Inayāt Khan, *Shah Jahan Nama*, p. 318. The annual revenue from the taxes of the territory and the revenue of the international port and its increased activity during Shah Jahan's reign yielded fourteen *lakhs*. The estate at Panipat was also bestowed upon Jahan Ara upon completion of Shahjahanabad. The revenue from this estate yielded over two *lakhs*. The sum of the revenue from these territories alone was a considerable salary even for an imperial female. At the height of Shah Jahan's reign, (1650), the sum total salary paid to the highest nobles at his court was from a pool of twenty *lakhs*. See, *Shah Jahan Nama*, p. 446.

benefit their royal purse as well as ensure public well-being.<sup>413</sup> The imperial obligation that required women to visibly profess their piety and the benevolence of the state also reflected an Islamic tradition in which “the wife has often been the agent through whom prayer and goods have been distributed to the poor,”<sup>414</sup>

Nūr Jahan is noted by chroniclers such as Muhammad Hadi and Mutamad Khan, to have been exceptionally liberal in her generosity and to have, for example, dowered five hundred orphan girls during her lifetime.<sup>415</sup> Nūr Jahan’s patronage extended to buildings and like Mughal women of rank that preceded her and Jahan Ara who followed her, she used her resources to commission major monuments that were innovative and trend-setting: the tomb of her father in Agra (1628), the Patthar mosque (1623) in Srinagar, the tomb of emperor Jahangīr (1628) in Lahore, her own tomb (1632) in Lahore, and many gardens on the plains and in the mountains.<sup>416</sup>

### **3.5 Comparative Commissions and ‘Optical Politics’: Jahan Ara vs. Nur Jahan**

Nūr Jahan’s prolific patronage should have assigned her a more forgiving and gentile assessment in contemporary sources both local and international. To

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<sup>413</sup> Kamboh and Waris include a description of the luxurious finishes and sumptuous details of Jahan Ara’s apartments in the Red Fort in Shahjahanabad. The details include gold inlay work, carved marble screens, encrustations in walls and ceilings of glass, mirrors and semi-precious jewels. See, Kamboh, *Amal-i-Salih*, III, pp. 32-36 and Waris, *Padshah Nama*, Persian Manuscript Collection 6556. British Museum, London, folio 406. (passage translation by Dr. S. Sharma).

<sup>414</sup> J. I. Smith, “Experience of Muslim Women”, p. 107.

<sup>415</sup> H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, trans. and ed., *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period* (London, 1875; rpt., New York: AMS Press, 1966), 6:399, 405.

<sup>416</sup> See Vincent A. Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 180; Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Islamic Period)*, (Jan-Feb. 1983): 57-66; Catherine B. Asher, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 1:4, *Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 127-33.

critically survey Nūr Jahan's character as a function of her commissions and how this imbued the reception of her works by the populace and recorded in official records is beyond the scope of this research, however, in the instance where the type and location of a few of her commission intersect in typology and function with Jahan Ara's commission, a comparative analysis is made. This methodology qualifies and establishes a pattern of patronage and critically analyzes the object of each female's projection of her own subject and/or representation in the Mughal landscape. Nūr Jahan's Patthar mosque (1623) [fig. 6-8] located nearby Jahan Ara's Mullah Shah Mosque (1650) [figs. 15 & 16] are each emblematic examples of their patron when compared and locate shared commonalities and differences in the structures as well as departures in Mughal ideology and distinct visions of legacy among the two royal females.

Several 'devotional' and commemorative commissions in the latter part of Nūr Jahan's life represent a personal, 'precious' and private quality, however, her earlier trend-setting patronage of a caravanserai was not for private or even local consumption and instead was perceived and utilized by an international and exclusively male mercantile population. Nūr Jahan's caravanserai was located on a Mughal roadway between Agra and Lahore. Jahangīr had called for wells and rest houses to be made for travelers along the major roads under Mughal sovereignty, and one of Nūr Jahan's contributions was the Serai Nur Mahal in Jullundur district of Punjab, furnished with temporary housing for travelers and their animals as well as a mosque for spiritual fulfillment. The project started in 1618-19 and its completion in 1620-21 was received with royal pomp and circumstance by both Nūr Jahan and Jahangīr to announce their support and

consideration for their subjects and especially for the visitors who may serve as surrogate 'emissaries' announcing the Mughal's goodwill and benevolence to their host countries .<sup>417</sup>

The monumental scale of the Serai Nur Mahal along with another feature on the 'traveler's lodge' are the dedicatory inscriptions which leave no doubt that the complex is the product of Nūr Jahan's patronage effected within the context of the ruling Mughal family. These inscriptions serve as physical enunciations of the empress and afford her the prestige and charitable persona she warrants and projects. The inscriptions as examples of self-representation stand in contrast to the few inscriptional and representational milieus seen for Mughal women in donative arts. Though elite Mughal female patronage was encouraged and supported by indigenous patterns of Hindu and Brahmin female donative acts, Ellison Findly notes that Indian women's prominence was conveyed through the 'details' of their commissions unlike Nūr Jahan's dominance in the bold inscriptions on Serai Nur Mahal that locates her in imperial hierarchy as the patron and not male kin.<sup>418</sup> It is precisely within Nūr Jahan's 'effected' framework that Jahan Ara's dedicatory inscriptions on the *pishtaq* of the Agra mosque operate and to some extent were bold but 'sanctioned' praises of the princess. In addition to the Serai and Agra mosque's unprecedented 'gendered' inscriptions and self-representation, the entry gate to the complex (as the Agra *pishtaq* and the mosque) are small but beautifully detailed,<sup>419</sup> and was thought to be an

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<sup>417</sup> *Tuzuk* 2: 192-93.

<sup>418</sup> Ellison Banks Findly, "Women's Wealth and Styles of Giving," in *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 112.

<sup>419</sup> C. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, 128-29.

exemplary work of architecture during Jahangīr's reign.<sup>420</sup> Francisco Pelsaert, a senior factor for the Dutch East India Company, noted while in India in the 1620s, 'She [Nūr Jahan] erects very expensive buildings in all directions---*sarais*, or halting-places for travelers and merchants, and pleasure-gardens and palaces such as no one has ever made before—intending thereby to establish an enduring reputation."<sup>421</sup>

The Serai Nur Mahal established a precedent for Jahan Ara's patronage of the exclusive caravanserai, *hammam*, royal garden for women, and a main thoroughfare lined with fountains in Shahjahanabad's Chandni Chowk, the center of commerce and the main marketplace for Shah Jahan's new capital in (1638-1649). In addition to representing her identity in the commercial realms, Jahan Ara also provided the weary international travelers a place to bathe and commissioned a garden in which the royal family and the mercantile elite would admire the lush vegetation and floral abundance in her garden called the 'Sahibabad' like its cousin in Kashmir. The garden's name is composed of 'Sahiba', an honorific title that Jahan Ara was given and one that clearly 'gendered' her commissions on land through the two gardens, on sea by her

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<sup>420</sup> The overall details and design of the western gateway of the Serai Nur Mahal, can be likened to Jahan Ara's 'contested' patronage of the Chaharburji gateway connecting the old bazaar Anarkali to the outer precincts of Lahore, Pakistan. The monumental scale and Mughal-inspired decorative motifs includes a fragmentary inscription on the eastern gateway indicating that the garden and gateway was built in A.H. 1056 i.e. 1646. According to this inscription it was built by 'Sahib-e-Zebinda' (one endowed with elegance), 'Begum Dauran' (the lady of Ages) and was bestowed upon 'Mian Bai Fakhrunnisa' (the pride of Ladies). Mian Bai was one of Jahan Ara's female attendants who risked her life to save Jahan Ara during her burning incident of 1644. C. Asher claims 'Miyān Bai' may have been a high-ranking attendant who commissioned a mosque in Ajmer. See, *Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.217.

<sup>421</sup> Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, 50.

trading ship called the 'Sahiba' and also in the literary landscape through her Sūfi treatise called the 'Risala-i-Sahibiyāh'.

Jahan Ara repeated the royal act of what she had accomplished in the former Mughal capital of Agra through her congregation mosque,<sup>422</sup> where she located herself in the imperial hierarchy by physically situating her enduring commissions and thereby her authority and agency into the 'abode of Shah Jahan'.<sup>423</sup> The princess' 'mark' is discerned on the urban landscape of the new Mughal capital of Shahjahanabad emulates her father's objectives for inscribing his own memory on Mughal history by creating a stage on which he would control and cultivate his visions of imperial ideology and notions of kingship. It is in this 'theater' that Jahan Ara is a 'player' and wields her own authority that is commensurate to the reigning sovereign. Similarly, the 'consecrated' ground<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> Jahan Ara's Agra mosque was completed in 1650 and soon after she commissioned the water canal, caravanserai, *hammam* and garden in Chandni Chowk. The rushed and consecutive nature of her capital commissions indicates her personal motivations to not only be included in but to control the imperial gaze as a function of her imperial authority. Shahjahanabad becomes increasingly dotted with other 'gendered' patronage following Jahan Ara's example in Agra. Several of Shah Jahan's wives built the Akbarabadi Mosque, the Fatehpuri Begum Mosque and Sirhindi Begum Mosque from 1650-52 in rapid succession located in and around Chandni Chowk. The mosques were not built within the walls of the Delhi fort but interspersed in the commercial landscape. See, Sayyid Ahmed, *Atthar al-Sanadid*, (1846), p. 133-146 and J. D. Beglar, *Delhi* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1874), p.114.

<sup>423</sup> Shahjahanabad literally means the 'abode of Shah Jahan' and was built complete with fortified walls enclosing the imperial palace. The design of the new capital supported Shah Jahan's imperial notions of ritual and ceremony and allowed for strategic framing of the imperial gaze which facilitated a more public and adequate observation of court ceremonies and processions. See, Stephen Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India 1639-1739* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 36-44.

<sup>424</sup> In general, Delhi can be considered political 'heirophany' as it served as the physical center for imperial rule that pre-dates the Mughals and can be traced as far back as the Sultanate (1206) and as far forward as the location for the British imperial domination. Various Mughal emperors had short and interrupted moments occupying Delhi as a 'Dar al-Mulk'. The longest period of occupation was by emperor Humayun when he established his Dinpannah in 1533. For the most part and for a variety of reasons, the Mughal seats of power were situated in Agra, Lahore or Fatehpur Sikri. As part of his 'Timurid Renaissance' and invoking the memory of his heritage, Shah Jahan builds Shahjahanabad and 'reclaims' the rightful rule of Hindustan or *pa-i takht Hindustan* for the Timurid-Mughals of his past and for his sovereignty. See, Ebba Koch, *Mughal*

and the 'details' of Shah Jahan's imperial designs is completed by Jahan Ara's caravanserai, *hammam*, the water channels and fountains, the centralizing element for the planning of Chandni Chowk thoroughfare.

The orchestrated 'gaze' of the centralized approach to the bazaar, lined on axis [fig. 16a] with the flowing fountains and flowering trees connected the Red Fort at the Lahore Gate and its Mughal 'apparatus' to commerce and trade on one end and to the Lahore Gate leading to the outer limits of the city and beyond Shahjahanabad on the other end. The 'reifications' of Shah Jahan's perceptions of kingship as reigning supreme over both the spiritual and earthly realms is completed by the road perpendicular to the Chowk road that creates a sight line or trajectory that leads to Shah Jahan's congregation mosque and completed the parenthetical relationship of imperial ideology. This ceremonial progression through Chandni Chowk toward Shah Jahan's 'symbols' of sovereignty facilitated the visitor's comprehensive 'reading' of imperial framework and ideology and located in this consideration Jahan Ara Begum's authority and imperial representation.

'Optical politics' <sup>425</sup> played a primary role in Nūr Jahan's patterns of patronage and the 'enunciation' of her female authority in the Serai Nur Mahal as it was conveyed through the inscriptions, the monumental scale, the high profile location and function of the commission. These features were trend-setting and

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*Art and Imperial Ideology*, for her seminal study and detailed description of the patterns of sacred and political visits made by Mughal emperors to Delhi prior to Shahjahanabad, p. 163-182.

<sup>425</sup> For the usage of this term see G. Necipoglu-Kafadar, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces", pp. 303-4.

established a precedent for female patronage by manipulating a basic protocol of architectural patronage associated with imperial men. A *serai* was one such complex that was a publicly frequented and male-dominated site that extended Nūr Jahan's and later Jahan Ara's 'stage' in her *serai* and *hammam* in Chandni Chowk that exercised her female authority and agency and featured a nuanced and polyvocal presence in the Mughal landscape. Nūr Jahan's employment of indigenous and Persianate motifs on her Serai are employed in Jahan Ara Begum's commission of the Agra Mosque twenty years later identifies and locates her authority and agency in Shah Jahan's Mughal enterprise and adds yet another diverse and shifted pattern of female patronage. At the nexus of the imperial vision and Jahan Ara Begum's assertion is a unique donor's persona, her ambitions and how she 'documented' her role in the cultural matrix and the shifting socio-political and religious climate of her time.

In Nūr Jahan's Serai Nur Mahal, an epigraphic precedent was established that would be later used by Jahan Ara on the *pishtaq* of the Agra Mosque. Her 'self-representation' is in the inscriptions on her commission boldly announced and represented her female agency and authority. The modes and patterns of 'public participation' and archetypal 'constructions' are modeled on Nūr Jahan's patronage but modified by Jahan Ara Begum, and frame her persona as 'noble, graceful and pious' as indicated on the inscriptions of her Agra mosque commission. The major commissions of each royal female can be considered the physical 'enunciations' of her social and political power functioned as independent agents and also conveyed their 'public' profile and notable presence, however, remaining loyal to imperial and social etiquette. Both Nūr

Jahan and Jahan Ara are the first two royal women in Mughal history who are named on the inscriptions of their own major and highly visible public commissions as well as associated with the particular commission in contemporary texts.

Another intriguing aspect of the Serai Nur Mahal and point of convergence with Jahan Ara's commission in Srinagar is the manner in which its aesthetics sits at the nexus of cultural convergence. Like Jahan Ara's Mullah Shah Mosque in Srinagar, the sculptural program and decorative motifs from 'divergent' sacred visual heritages are applied in a beautiful syncretic blend on the façade of the *serai* gate [fig.16b]. In the caravanserai, Islamic skill in repeated and interconnected arabesque pattern (geometric and organic, linear and planar) is harmoniously blended with the figural representation that is a hallmark of Hindu art.<sup>426</sup> The Hindu-Muslim blend seen in the sculptural motifs on the façade extend Akbar's tradition of visually enunciating his spiritual pluralism and in doing so places Nūr Jahan's monuments and self-representation as fully consonant with imperial male patronage and the ruling milieu.

The division of labor in Mughal patronage of public commissions between royal females and their male counterparts emphasizes Jahan Ara's, unlike Nūr Jahan's self-promotion role, as a patron and intercessor that negotiated the temporal and spiritual world of Islam and its mystical ideology and further perpetuated the associated popular and folk traditions by commissioning sites of

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<sup>426</sup> Findly, Ellison, "Women's Wealth and Styles of Giving: Perspectives from Buddhist, Jain, and Mughal Sites" in *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, ed., D.Fairchild Ruggles (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p.110-111.

reverence and worship for each tradition. These indigenous cultural and religious belief systems in Mughal India were specific to and centered on the cults of holy persons, their tombs or shrines and were loosely based on orthodox and popular forms of devotion. The innate constructions of religious beliefs in the form of Sūfism, addressed some of the most deeply felt needs of both the Mughal elite and commoners that traditional Islam may not have addressed. In some cases the ruling elite manipulated popular beliefs to create an aura of sanctity that was appropriated by the patron or patroness of the particular monument. However, in Jahan Ara's case, acts of patronage directly uphold Islamic and Mughal traditions: orthodox, mystical and imperial. Jahan Ara Begum's commissions of the congregation mosque in Agra and the collegiate mosque for Mullah Shah in Srinagar, Kashmir duly attest to her authority in maintaining both popular and orthodox forms of devotion in Islam while negotiating a spiritual venue of her own. Each commission, particularly its design elements, enunciates the princess' distinct 'voice', authority and reflects how she personally sees herself and wants to be seen in the cultural and political matrix of the time.

### **3.6 Agra Mosque (1648): 'An Orchestrated Gaze' on an Imperial Stage**

This paper examines the congregation mosque in the Mughal capital of Agra (1648) and the collegiate mosque of Mullah Shah Badakhshi in the hills of Srinagar, Kashmir (1649-50) two highly objectified commissions as 'translations' or visual articulations of the dual personas of the Mughal princess Jahanara Begum (1614-1681), daughter of emperor Shah Jahan (c. 1592-1666). The study explores the multiplicity of Jahan Ara's character through these commissions as functions of the unmarried princess' imperial obligations as first lady of the *haram*, as well as her devotion to Sūfism and her spiritual ascension

to the rank of a 'pīri-muridi'<sup>427</sup> documented in her auto/biographical treatise *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* (1640).<sup>428</sup> Further, the study considers how Jahan Ara Begum's spiritual ascension within the Qadriyāh order may have empowered and sanctioned the bold representations of her imperial and spiritual authorities and encouraged her prominent patronage in the seventeenth century socio-religious milieu of Mughal India not as a 'veiled' spectator but as a female patron whose contributions were commensurate with high-ranking imperial males.

In 1637, Dara Shikoh introduced his pīr Mullah Shah Badakhshi to his sister. Jahan Ara spent six months in Kashmir under Mullah Shah's constant tutelage. Accompanied by the emperor, Jahan Ara reluctantly and with a 'spiritually heavy heart' left the aura of Mullah Shah in Kashmir and returned to Agra, the Mughal capital. Upon her return to Agra in 1637, Jahan Ara completed the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* followed by *Munis-al-Arvāh*,<sup>429</sup> and assumed the patronage of the congregation mosque in Agra in 1638.

In addition to completing the Taj Mahal, there were other pressing capital improvement projects in the city of Agra. 'Inayāt Khan reports in his *Shah Jahan Nama* that in 1637, Shah Jahan had ordered the construction of a large area or

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<sup>427</sup> The contemporary Sūfi term *pīri-muridi* or master-disciple is used to describe the spiritual state between a disciple and Master. It is used for women who have ascended to spiritual state equivalent to their Master but are unable to assume his duties because of their gender. For an overview on usage of the term, See: Kelly Pemberton's essay, "Muslim Women Mystics and Female Spiritual Authority in South Asian Sūfism", in *Contesting Rituals: Islam and Practices of Identity-Making*, eds. Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2005), p.3-37.

<sup>428</sup> Jahan Ara Begum. *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* (*Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*), Persian MS, Raza Library Rampur Transcript Copy.

<sup>429</sup> Jahan Ara Begum. *Munis' al-Arwah* (*Munis' al-Arwah*) (Persian MS copy. Original in British Library. 44086).

forecourt, bazaar and a congregation mosque in front of the Agra fort at the Delhi gate.<sup>430</sup> The purpose of these improvements was to alleviate the congestion caused by poor circulation and to create a more formal and ceremonial approach to the Agra Fort gate and subsequently the imperial palace. In order to manage the irregularity and chaos of the urban landscape and develop a regal and ceremonial approach to his administrative and residential quarters, emperor Shah Jahan ordered the construction of an octagonal Tirpolia bazaar in the 'Baghdadi style' [fig. 17-18] to control the circulation in front of the Agra Fort. Shah Jahan desired an additional space for congregation and proposed a 'stately metropolitan mosque'.<sup>431</sup> Still in the reverie of her mystical wisdom and spiritual achievements, Jahan Ara 'begged that this [new proposed] sacred place of worship might be erected out of her personal funds and under her auspices.'<sup>432</sup>

Abdul Hamid Lahori, the Mughal court chronicler records this event:

“Begum Jahan Ara who earnestly sought after the rewards of the next world requested permission to endow a *Jami Masjid*. To build a mosque is a virtuous act and people built a mosque from their personal allowances in order to gain everlasting fame, reputation and reward in the life to come.”<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> W.E. Begley and Z.A.Desai,eds. Trans. *The Shah Jahan Nama of 'Inayat Khan* (Delhi: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1990) p. 205-206.

<sup>431</sup> *ibid*, p.206.

<sup>432</sup> *ibid*, p.206.

<sup>433</sup> Lahori, 'Abd al-Hamid. *Badshah Nama*. Persian, Vol. I, Part II, p.252 also, See *Shah Jahan Nama* (Pers.) ed. G. Yazdani, *Bibliotheca Indica*, 3 vols. Calcutta, 1912-1939. This compendium has not be translated into English but has an Urdu translation by Nazir Hasan Zaidi, *Shahjahannama*, pp.188-89 where a passage confirms the one quoted from Inayāt Khan's history. The following English translation of the passage is published by J. A. Hodgson, "A Memoir on the Length of the Illahee Guz, or Imperial Land Measure of Hindostan," *J.R.A.S.*, 7 (1843), pp.57-58 : "As this great city, to wit, Akbarabad, which in regard to population and buildings not having its equal upon the face of the earth, has bazaars and streets of very small

Jahan Ara's request to endow a mosque was accepted and Shah Jahan, authorized the financial ministers of the princess' household to undertake the work and issued a *farman*.<sup>434</sup>

Though Jahan Ara had assumed the role of Begum Saheba in 1631, for ten years she made no contributions to the built Mughal landscape but successfully performed the perfunctory duties of her imperial position.<sup>435</sup> In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara makes references to being 'trapped and lost' in her imperial role by its 'worldly obligations' and finally has 'clarity' and freedom in her life's choices through her participation in the *silsila* of the Qadriyāh order and subsequently through her spiritual ascension. Jahan Ara completed the two Sūfi treatises by 1642. From 1642 to 1650 marks the period of the princess' numerous commissions in the Mughal landscape and includes bathhouse,

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breadths, the *Jilau Khana* (meaning the king's court-yard) is also inadequate and narrow in its extent: Wherefore, by the great concourse of people, and the troops of the officers at the times of the levee by passing and repassing, especially on the Id days and other rejoicing occasions, much inconvenience and injury was experienced by them. Further, a *Jamah Masjid*, corresponding with the number of people assembling, was not built; it therefore occurred to his Majesty's and the princess' mind that this narrowness and deficiency should be removed and supplied." The *Shahjahannama* excerpt makes it clear that Jahan Ara Begum endowed the mosque herself and not her father as is noted in various publications. The only question that remains is the seventeen year lapse from when Jahan Ara obtains permission to build the mosque under her auspices in 1638 and the start of the mosque in 1643 and its completion in 1648. Some explanations for the delay during the years 1638-1644 might include financial and labor resources that were exhausted for the completion of the Taj Mahal as well as on-going capital projects in the Agra Fort including the Moti mosque (completed 1653), the rechanneling of imperial resources to Shah Jahan's new capital in Shahjahanabad in which Jahan Ara participated (Chandni Chowk: Sahibabad garden, serai, hammam and water fountains in the bazaar) and the completion of Shah Jahan's mosque in Ajmer in the Dargah complex. To add to these heady times was Jahan Ara's burning incident and recovery between 1644-1645 (see chapter 2 of this work for details of this event).

<sup>434</sup> A *farman* was a legal imperial document or decree issued by the emperor or keeper of the imperial seal.

<sup>435</sup> The 'Begum Dalan'i porch for women in Ajmer was built in 1637.

bazaars and gardens in Agra, Delhi, Ajmer and Kashmir totaling nineteen imperial projects.

According to the *naskhi* inscriptions on the *pihtaq* entry to the prayer hall, the mosque of Agra was built over a period of five years and completed in 1648 and cost five lakh rupees. The construction of the collegiate mosque and *khanaqah* complex for Jahan Ara's Sūfi pīr, Mullah Shah Badakhshi in Srinagar, Kashmir began upon completion of the Agra mosque and was completed in 1650. The mosque's construction is concurrent with the completion of the Taj Mahal in 1643 and the Delhi mosque in Shah Jahan's new capital at Shahjahanabad. The 'hidden/revealed' symmetries of power and patronage between Jahan Ara's commission at Agra and the emperor's quest for making his capital more 'befitting' his sovereignty certainly locate the princess' elevated rank in imperial hierarchy and also explain some of the 'unprecedented' details in its design. The specific design details of the Agra mosque would not qualify as extraordinary, particularly as it sits in the parentheses of the most notorious architectural expressions of Mughal grandeur under Shah Jahan's reign: the Taj Mahal and the Delhi mosque. The two monuments do convincingly serve what Ebba Koch has often described in her methodology for researching Mughals where 'imperial art and architecture is a powerful historical source that emerges as a form of communication through a topos of symbols', <sup>436</sup> and further participate in what Gulru Necipoglu has described as the 'staging' to frame the

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<sup>436</sup> Ebba Koch, "The Mughal Hunt", Harvard University, Dept. of Sanskrit and Indian Studies. April, 2007.

'optical politics'<sup>437</sup> on and within which the imperial ideology is 'performed'. The Agra and Mullah Shah mosques are both 'players' if not master thespians in portraying through a meticulous 'mime' what is not 'uttered' or written in the personal and public annals of Mughal history as they participate in conveying the uniform expression of Mughal identity through the use of Shahjahani idioms. The two commissions activate the optical and practical politics of Shah Jahan's imperial vision and advocate Jahan Ara Begum's embedded imperial authority.

Jahan Ara 'speaks' with her architectural proxies and provides another source for investigation and for historicizing her commissions and analyzing her personal and the Mughal's public imperial ideology. The structures themselves are not for the most part significant in their design and details but they established bold precedents in female patronage and expanded the typology for female-sponsored commissions. Each mosque applies the 'visual' quotes of the prevalent imperial vocabulary and therefore functions appropriately in the 'semiotics' of contemporary and classical Mughal sponsored architecture. The mosque's most distinguishing features are the select borrowing of classical Shahjahani vocabulary and the incorporation of modified Timurid/Persianate features making the monument's details 'nuanced' and personalized in its overall design. Historians have often described the overall appearance of Jahan Ara's mosque as sober, solemn, modest and humble. The same historians and court chroniclers have also used the same adjectives to describe Jahan Ara Begum's characteristics. Assessments made of the Agra mosque design were concurrent with the completion of the Taj Mahal. Which monument in the world when

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<sup>437</sup> See n. 43 in this work.

compared to the tomb mausoleum would not be considered 'sober' and whose persona could exceed the magnanimous personality of Shah Jahan? Certainly not Jahan Ara's modest and humble open-air tombstone on which the inscriptions that describe the princess as humble, lowly and modest double as architectural metaphors for most of her commissions. Jahan Ara's modesty and focus on the inner and spiritual well-being counter-balances Shah Jahan's bombastic assertions of Self as *the* personification of empire. The architectural and imperial mediations of Shah Jahan as the semi-divine 'mujaddid' and Jahan Ara as the 'faqira'<sup>438</sup> are the perfect counter-weights to the representations of each and create a balanced, just and harmonious sovereignty. Jahan Ara's commissions at Agra, Srinagar, Delhi and Ajmer are individually analyzed and within the context of Shah Jahan's commissions.<sup>439</sup>

The significance of the city of Agra to serve as the center of Mughal power pre-dates both the Muslim and Hindu rulers who used the city for their seat of government from 12<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Agra has mythical dimensions as it is mentioned in the Hindu epic Mahabharatha (5<sup>th</sup> C. BCE) when the city is called 'Agrabana'<sup>440</sup> or paradise and then later Ptolemy (2<sup>nd</sup> C. C.E) marked it on his world map with paradisiacal notations.<sup>441</sup> Agra's 'perfumed', paradisiacal and

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<sup>438</sup> See Chapter I and II for treatise quotes in which refers to herself as a 'faqira' who has renounced worldly attachments including her imperial persona in order to dedicate her humble self to the path of Sūfism.

<sup>439</sup> In the case of the Mullah Shah mosque, the proximity of the commission is not to Shah Jahan's works but to Akbar's, however Shahjahani attributes on the Mullah Shah structure directly link the work to the reigning emperor.

<sup>440</sup> Agrabana is the 'paradise lost' due to the bloody conflict within the Bharatha Dynasty. See, R.C. Dutt, *The Mahabharatha* (trans.), book XI: Karna-Badha, pp.562-563.

<sup>441</sup> Caludius Ptolemaeus' 2<sup>nd</sup> C. map had been illustrated and copied during the 17<sup>th</sup> C. See Calaudius Ptolemaeus, *Geographia Universale dela Terra* (Padua: Galignani P & F press, 1621), tabula IX.

mythical proportions was further substantiated by the transplanted 'memories' of the Timurid past through the numerous 'Khorasani'<sup>442</sup> symmetrically composed riverfront gardens flanking each side of the sacred Yumna river. One of the riverfront gardens, Zahara Bagh or Bagh-i-Jahanara,<sup>443</sup> that had belonged to the empress Mumtaz Mahal was subsequently given to Jahan Ara Begum upon her mother's death and was eulogized by Shah Jahan's court poet Abu Talib Kalīm in his panegyric poem or *mathnawi* dedicated to the city of Agra.<sup>444</sup>

"What a city! A perfumed garden, newly in flower...Its  
buildings have grown tall like cypress trees."<sup>445</sup>

One wonders if the reference to 'cypress trees' serves both as Quranic references to paradise and foreshadowing the 'demise' of the capital city of Agra as not part of an earthly life but an 'afterlife' of Shah Jahan's defunct capital. Shortly after Kalīm's poem is written (1638), Shah Jahan begins the planning stages of his new capital, Shahjahanabad in Delhi. Along with Kalīm's praise for the city of Agra he describes the planning and design of the Bagh-i-Jahanara, the transference of the garden from mother to daughter as well as Mumtaz Mahal's imperial rank to Jahan Ara. Kalīm continues his effusive narrative of the garden by objectifying the details of the garden and using them as metaphors that describe Mumtaz Mahal's persona and further likens them to Jahan Ara's character.

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<sup>442</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of Agra's riverfront garden history, origins and styles and references to the Khorasani style see Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), p. 23.

<sup>443</sup> Ebba Koch critically analyzes and confirms that the Zahara Bagh had belonged to Mumtaz Mahal and later was given to Jahan Ara Begum. See, "The Zahara Bagh (Bagh-i-Jahanara)" in *Design Research Center*, 2 (1986): 30-37.

<sup>444</sup> *Diwan-i Abu Talib Kalim Kashani*, Pers. Edn. P. Baiza'i (Teheran, 1336 sh./1957), pp.346-351.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid, p.346, verse 24, as quoted in Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 23. Abu Talib Kalīm, poem in praise of Akbarabad (Agra).

“Mumtaz Mahal, the exalted lady, she was chaste like an angel and had the temperament of Bilqis (the queen of Sheba). She was pure in her heart like Mary...She (Jahan Ara) is thus close to the heart of the Shah of elevated station as dear reminder of that exalted lady (Mumtaz Mahal). May this second Mary (Jahan Ara) always brighten the *harem* of the emperor of the world.”<sup>446</sup>

By 1628, during Shah Jahan’s reign, Agra had become a locus for ‘sages, saints and scholars’<sup>447</sup> as well as a major trade route for both local and international trade. Regardless of the spiritual and commercially lucrative details of Agra, the city’s cramped urban spaces did not serve the emperor’s ‘imperial vision’ of ceremonial display and Mughal grandeur to legitimately institute new and formal concepts of sovereignty and imperial ideology.

Agra as the ‘primordial garden residence’<sup>448</sup> is also the Mughal dynasty’s ‘imperial datum’ in which the seeds of conquest were planted during Babur’s reign and took ‘root’ by Shah Jahan’s and who would in 1648 ‘reap’ what he and his Mughal predecessors had sown from his new ‘staging’ ground in Shahjahanabad. Jahan Ara Begum’s addition of the Agra mosque is not accidental in the patriarchal Mughal datum as it signals in its monumentality, unprecedented nature and the ‘semantics’ of the Shahjahani iconography the

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<sup>446</sup> As quoted in Ebba Koch’s article (see note 58). Kalīm (n.59), p. 346, line 8; p. 350, lines 6, 8, 9, 12, 20-23, p. 351, lines 1, 2, 4. Unpublished translation by Dr. Yunus Jaffery, Daryaganj, Delhi, India.

<sup>447</sup> Abdul Aziz quoted in Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 23. Abdul Aziz, ‘History of the Reign of Shah Jahan’, *Journal of Indian History*, 6 (1928): 129.

<sup>448</sup> Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 23.

presence of another prominent imperial, one who is female. Jahan Ara is not the only prominent imperial female associated with monumental architecture in Agra. Mumtaz Mahal's memory via the Taj Mahal will be linked in perpetuity within the 'primordial garden' of Agra but its 'creator' or *musavvir* will always be Shah Jahan whose empress served as the agent of inspiration for the tomb mausoleum. The most compelling difference between the Taj Mahal and the Agra mosque is the extent to which they 'participate' in the imperial vision. Where the ceremonial, formal and 'privileged' spaces around the Taj Mahal ritually embedded the memory and the monument in an 'other-worldly' sphere, the location and function of the Agra mosque placed it in the pulsating heart of the city as public rituals of Islamic secular and religious life were enacted in the nearby *kinaari* (silver) bazaar, baths, sarais and gardens and Jahan Ara fully and publicly 'participated' through her proxy and her representation.

The multiple facets of Agra and its environs and the dynamics created by merchants, mendicants, poets and pundits seems a fitting context that informs and represents Jahan Ara Begum's spiritual and imperial personas and frames her first monumental commission of the congregation mosque with a similar multivalent 'aura' in its architectural expression. Though Mumtaz Mahal's patronage of the Zahra Bagh certainly leaves a 'gendered' mark on its landscape, Jahan Ara's representation via the first congregation mosque in an imperial capital conveys the shifting perceptions, powers and privileges of royal females as commensurate and even surpassing those of imperial males. The new congregation mosque in Shahjahanabad was constructed and completed in parallel with Jahan Ara's congregation mosque in Agra. Whether it was

coincidental or deliberate is not documented, however, what was and continues to be perceived are/were the 'hidden symmetries' of power shared between an emperor and his daughter.

The location of the Agra mosque, in front of the principal gate of the Agra Fort is in concert with Shah Jahan's Delhi mosque situated in front of the Delhi Fort, however, far more imposing in scale than the smaller Agra mosque. The pattern of establishing visual and physical connections of each mosque to their respective *axis mundi* (imperial forts) and to the sovereign and subsequently to each other collectively locates and equates the hierarchy of each patron to one another and to their place in the empire. More importantly, these perceived and metaphysical connections between the apex of imperial power to each representative congregation mosque places the patroness of the Agra mosque, Jahan Ara Begum on par to the emperor, Shah Jahan. In the case of the Agra mosque, these perceptions are not accidental but a visual enunciation of the inner workings of imperial ideology and by the deliberate 'marrying' of Mughal statecraft to its domestic agent, Jahan Ara, first lady of the *haram*.

Royal female's religiosity as exemplified by their patronage of sacred commissions created places of 'contact' through which the ruling house established personal and immediate connections between the populace and its would-be masters and in Jahan Ara's case its mistresses. Lahori, in his documentation of the Agra mosque offers his own opinion regarding the princess' objectives for building the mosque. He writes, '...she enjoyed the same position

in her father's empire as Raz'ia<sup>449</sup> like a *Malikah-Zaman* during her father Iltutmish's reign...' <sup>450</sup> Lahori's associations of Jahan Ara with an exemplary female figure of India's history reveals the respect and high regard ascribed to the princess by her father and his subjects.

The Agra mosque is located in the *kinaari* or silver bazaar in the historic and commercially active district of *Roshan Mohalla*. The mosque is based on a standard Mughal archetype appropriated from the Sultanate architecture of Delhi,<sup>451</sup> namely that of an oblong massive prayer hall formed of vaulted bays or rooms arranged in a row with a dominant central *pishtaq* surmounted by three domes [fig. 2]. The mosque complex hovers over the bustling market place on its twelve foot high platform reached by a centralized and arched staircase [figs. 19-21]. One enters the courtyard of the mosque on axis to the ninety-foot high *pishtaq* framing the main arch. The *pishtaq* arch is flanked by two smaller arched openings on either side. The three domes are distinguished by their rhythmical chevron pattern of white marble inlay and red sandstone [fig. 22]. On the northern and southern sides of the courtyard are *dalans* (arcaded cloisters) with double aisles of three bays each following the standard pattern of imperial Mughal congregational mosques [fig. 23-25].<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> Queen Razia daughter of the Sultan of Delhi Iltutmish took over as ruler of India after her father's demise. Her rule was unprecedented as she was the only female Muslim ruler of South Asia.

<sup>450</sup> Lahori, 'Abd al-Hamid. *Badshah Nama*. Persian, Vol. I, Part II, p.252-3.

<sup>451</sup> Koch, E. *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of Its History and Development (1526-1858)* (Munich: Prestal Verlag, 1991), p.54.

<sup>452</sup> Asher, Catherine. *The New Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 190.

Agra mosque's main east gateway was demolished by the British during the Mutiny of 1857 to prevent an offensive by locals who might use the mosque's rampart walls to mount guns to shoot toward Agra Fort's Delhi gate.<sup>453</sup> The main gateway was never rebuilt depriving the mosque of the grand entrance and approach that visually connected the mosque to the Agra fort and ushered the high-ranking nobility and imperials from the imperial fort through the 'Tripolia'<sup>454</sup> bazaar spilling onto the congregation mosque's main staircase approach. The mosque was completely enclosed and raised on plinth and is indicated by the remains at the eastern end and confirmed by archaeological reports from Carlley who indicated:

“...there was a walled enclosure called the Tripolia, which formerly constituted a screen between the Masjid and the Fort, but is now

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<sup>453</sup> R. Nath. *History of Mughal Architecture*. (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2005) Vol. IV Part I, p.445. Nath claims that the eastern gateway of Agra mosque played a part in Aurangzeb's offensive strategy during the War of Succession (1658) when he seized the Agra Fort after his victory at Samugarh and positioned a gun on the eastern gate of the mosque that faced the Delhi Gate of the Agra fort and had fired this gun toward the gun positioned on the Agra Fort and destroyed it. (*Futuhāt-i-Alamgiri* of Ishwardas Nagar (tr. T. Ahmed) (Delhi, 1978), p.37)). Nath cites that the Commissioner of Agra, John Lawrence and 'Jan Batta' restored the mosque to the Muslim community in 1858 and in gratitude for this noble act their names were read in a *khutba* in the mosque. Inayāt Khan's *Shah Jahan Nama*, however, cites Aurangzeb's stopping/staging place in Agra after the battle at Samugarh in the garden of 'Nur Manzil' called Dehra Bagh for the duration of ten days. See, Inayāt Khan, p. 552. This entry also cites a visit from Jahan Ara Begum to Dehra Bagh on June 12, 1658 where she presents her brother with royal gifts from the emperor, including 'famed sword known as 'Alamgir, or "Seizer of the Universe" and urged him to present himself to emperor Shah Jahan. Koch notes Aurangzeb's resting place after the decisive battle to be Dara Shikoh's haveli (*manzil*) on June 28 1658. Occupying his rival's mansion would make more fitting for Aurangzeb as legitimizing his victory than lesser known place like Dehra Bagh. The author is not clear if Dehra Bagh and Dara Shikoh's haveli may be one of the same or contiguous to one another. See, Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 72.

<sup>454</sup> The term 'Tripolia' refers to the three archways leading to the bazaar. The three archway scheme was prevalent in Rajput and Gujarati palace architecture. See, Anderton, Frances. (1989). 'Learning from Jaipur', *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-). Vol. 42, No. 4 (Summer, 1989), pp. 15-24.

used as a market. This Tripolia is now about to be cut through by the Rajpootana State Railway.”<sup>455</sup>

The design details of the (demolished 1857) eastern gateway and the complex overall of the Agra mosque makes references to contemporary imperial mosque complexes and followed a similar pattern in its overall layout and construction to the Moti mosque in Agra Fort and the Delhi mosque in Shah Jahan’s new capital. The construction of Moti and Delhi mosques [figs. 26& 27] were concurrent with the Agra mosque and took place between 1644-1654. The Agra mosque employs modified and embellished versions of the contemporary mosque designs to fully integrate its form into the scheme of Mughal Agra and Delhi and to convey the princess’ patronage as a constituent element in the prevailing imperial hierarchy. Overall, the extraordinary aspect of Jahan Ara’s mosque commissions at Agra and Srinagar is not her individualized approach to the details of her commissions but the objectification of Jahan Ara’s identity and her appropriation of prevailing modes and patterns of patriarchy that conforms to imperial ideology through which she asserts her authority. The object of the commissions becomes the point of engagement, representation and authority.

The earliest illustration of Agra mosque’s east entrance is depicted on a cloth map of Agra [fig. 29] made for the Maharaja of Jaipur and dated to the 1720s.<sup>456</sup> The map indicates on the eastern end of the complex a ‘Buland

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<sup>455</sup> J. D. Beglar. *Delhi...Agra* by A.C. L Carlleyle under the superintendence of Major General A. Cunningham (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendant of Government Printing, 1874), Archaeological survey of India. Report, 1871/72 v. 4, p. 170.

<sup>456</sup> Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum Jaipur, cat. no. 126; painted on cloth, 294 x 272 cm. Photographed in Ebba Koch’s *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 22. The following works are located in

Darwaza'-type approach by a steep staircase and through a high central *pishtaq* flanked by engaged slender towers that extend to the parapet wall over the arch and frame a row of small *chattris* crowning the *iwan* arch that may have been vaulted in the characteristically Timurid-Mughal tradition. The precedent for the ceremonial gateway to the mosque courtyard is evident in the steep approach to the Akbar's abandoned capital at Fatehpur Sikri (1571-85) that harmoniously conveys an amalgamation of the Gujarati-Tansoxania-Khurasan <sup>457</sup> details in its complex in nearby Agra, Sikandra. Though the mosque's patronage is attributed to Jahan Ara Begum, court chronicler Lahori records 'the King (Shah Jahan) issued a *farman* or order that contained specific instructions for the details and dimensions of the mosque, that its length be 130 *Badshahi* yards; three domes on the *qiblah* side and fifty-three arches internally on the three sides of the *sahn* (central courtyard) which should be 80 x 80 yards'. <sup>458</sup>

An unprecedented feature on the central *pishtaq* of the Agra mosque is the subject and highly 'gendered' Persian inscriptions framing the entrance to the

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the British Museum, India Office Collection and depict the earliest conditions of the Agra Mosque: pencil and ink drawing of the Jami Masjid at Agra by Sir James Abbott (1807-1896) in 1826. Inscribed on the front is: 'Jumma Masjid - Agra - 1826' (shelfmark WD3408), an aquatint painting of the Agra Masjid dated between 1835-40 attributed to an anonymous artist in the 'Agra Style' (Add. Or. 306) partially shows the ramparts and ceremonial approach to the mosque courtyard, photo 35 (78 and 79) which marginally indicate the prototypical Timurid-Mughal entrance gateway.

<sup>457</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture*, p. 56. Akbar's capital at Fatehpur Sikri to some extent serves as a 'design datum' where in the synthetic blend of Gujarati-Sultanate, Mughal and Timurid/Khurasan details, the emperor represents his past heritage, present political prowess and the powerful precedents for the future ambitions of the Mughal legacy. Each successive emperor and empress, particularly Jahan Ara Begum and Nur Jahan since Akbar, appropriated these iconic and archetypal details to enlist and graft their own identities of power simultaneously to the Timurid-Mughal past and future. The architectural synthesis at Fatehpur Sikri is not only a collection of cultural identities but also locates and frames traditional and mystical Islam in its own architectural typology. The 'smorgasbord' of aesthetic delights at Fatehpur Sikri are used in both mosques at Agra and in Srinagar particularly the '*bangla*' detail inspired by Salim Chishti's tomb as well as the free standing kiosk of the 'astrologer's seat' that pre-dates the role the *bangla* profile played in the *jharoka* of Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

<sup>458</sup> Lahori, 'Abd al-Hamid. *Badshah Nama*. Persian, Vol. I Part II, pp.252-3.

*mihrab* and the manner in which they metaphorically and physically weave Jahan Ara Begum's person into the details of the mosque. Further, Agra mosque's inscriptional program on the *pishtaq* and its intertextuality rightfully locates and references the monument and its patron within Shah Jahan's imperial hierarchy and is consonant with the emperor's contemporary mosque commissions at Ajmer (1637) [fig. 30], the Moti (1653) and Delhi (1656) [fig. 28] mosques and their highly personal and courtly panegyric Persian praises instead of the standard Qur'anic passages written in Arabic framing mosque structures. The inscriptions give the mosque's date and cost of construction and the patroness who bore the expense. The portal inscription designates:

“ It [mosque] was built by order of the high in dignity, who is as elevated as the firmament on which it sits, screened with curtains bright as the sun, possessing a glorious palace, veiled with chastity, the most revered of the ladies of the age, the pride of her gender, the princess of the realm, the possessor of the worldly crown, the chosen of the people of the world, the most honored of the issue of the head of the Faithful, Jahan Ara Begum.”<sup>459</sup>

The laudatory praise for Jahan Ara Begum's characteristics are woven into architectural metaphors, “...her nobility is as high as the firmament of the mosque, screened with curtains to veil her chastity...” to describe her character,

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<sup>459</sup> Latif, Muhammad. *Agra, Historical and Descriptive*. (Calcutta, 1896), pp.186-88.

virtues and dual personas as a 'princess of the realm and as the head of the Faithful' and finally using the mosque as a personification of Jahan Ara Begum herself. That the princess' name was not merely inscribed but profusely eulogized on the first public congregation mosque in Mughal history and in the capital city and seat of government may indicate the ineffectual *ulema* during Shah Jahan's reign and the sanctioned liberties he extended to his beloved daughter. In addition to the weaker hold or influence of Islamic orthodoxy on the inscriptional program of the Agra mosque, one can also surmise that the envisioned function of the mosque was less for prayer and more for congregation<sup>460</sup> or collection of the populace to participate in the emperor's imperial conceit and ideology through Jahan Ara Begum's proxy.

Through the unconventional inscriptional program on the Agra mosque, the visual theory operates on the relationship between the subject, Jahan Ara Begum and the object, the Agra mosque, as counter-reactions to the subjection of each to an imperial, socio-political and spiritually constructed visual field or the imperial 'gaze' dictated by Shah Jahan's ideology that dominated his reign. In the *pishtaq's* inscriptional program the patriarchal 'gaze', to some extent simultaneously controls and liberates Jahan Ara's socio-political and religious dimensions through the effusive rhetoric of the Persian inscriptions and their

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<sup>460</sup> In both 'Inayāt Khan and Kanbo's biographies, the reason cited for building the Agra mosque is not to fulfill requirements for religious practice but to satisfy Shah Jahan's urban and 'imperial' design needs to extend the presence of his seat of government at Agra Fort, to provide a more ceremonial connection or gateway to his court (*jilau khana*) in the Agra Fort, to provide a place for nobles to assemble on Muslim holidays and to mitigate personal injury to the greater local and international population of Agra as they traverse the congested area in front of the Delhi Gate of Agra Fort, to contain and order the chaos at the political, commercial and social nexus of Agra and finally for Jahan Ara Begum to gain religious merit since the patron, date, cost and duration of construction are boldly written on the *pishtaq*. See, note 89 in this chapter and 'Inayāt Khan, *Shah Jahan Nama*, pp. 205-206.

relationship to contemporary emperor-sponsored mosques and represents her persona and elevated imperial and spiritual authority more 'visibly' and as commensurate to Shah Jahan's.

The inscriptions on Shah Jahan's mosques at Ajmer<sup>461</sup> and the Moti mosque,<sup>462</sup> are for the most part similar to the Agra mosque in that they describe Shah Jahan as the world ruler and use the paradisaical and sacred imagery where the mosque serves as the *axis mundi* of the Muslim world or the second '*K'abah*' and is considered in conjunction with Shah Jahan's earthly *Bait'al-M'amur* to describe the mosque's eminence and to build an other-worldly aura at the performative site. Both the Moti and Ajmer mosques are smaller in size to the Agra mosque but are constructed entirely of white marble.<sup>463</sup> The Persian eulogies [fig. 31]praising Shah Jahan are inconspicuously and similarly located in the Moti and Ajmer mosques in *nasta'liq* and *nashki* (respectively) under the deep overhanging eaves of the *chhajja* and over the multiple arches giving entry to the main prayer hall. The political implications of the select inscriptions in all of the Shah Jahan's mosques clearly privilege the emperor and his power over the religious function of the structure indicating the ineffectual *ulema* whose weak control at the inception of Shah Jahan's reign is conveyed in the unprecedented banner representation of Jahan Ara Begum's attributes on the Agra mosque's

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<sup>461</sup> Akbar Ali Tirmizi, 'Persian Inscriptions at Ajmer', in Desai, Z.A. (ed.), *Archaeological Survey of India: Epigraphia Indica: Arabic and Persian Supplement*, 1959-60, Calcutta, 1962. pp.62-66.

<sup>462</sup> See, Nath. *History of Mughal Architecture*, vol. IV part I, pp.433-438 and pp.468-469.

<sup>463</sup> Ebba Koch describes the symbolic implications of using white marble in imperial buildings versus the red sandstone (used in the Agra mosque). In addition to the reflective quality of white marble that provokes thoughts of an 'other-worldly' mystical realm and the duality of existence in Sūfi ideology, Koch states, "The colour white had strong associations with purity, goodness and spirituality in the Islamic tradition, too, and a white tomb reflected the spirituality and faith of the person buried in it...The pure whiteness of the mausoleum [Taj Mahal], demonstrates its most elevated rank and symbolizes spiritual qualities in the highest terms." See, Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, pp.216-217.

*pishtaq*.<sup>464</sup> The inscriptions on the *pishtaq* of the Agra mosque include the added detail of integrating the architectural details of the mosque to Jahan Ara's physical characteristics. The Persian eulogies, boldly praise Jahan Ara Begum's virtues both imperial and spiritual, without making frequent references to the *K'abah* or to paradisaical contexts. Instead, the princess is eulogized as an earth-bound spiritual authority alongside her father who functions in his role as the *khalifah* of God.<sup>465</sup>

### **3.7 Imperial Precedents and Patterns in Mosque Design: Ajmeri (1637), Moti (1648-55), Taj Mahal (1648)**

The Islamic dimensions of the Agra mosque and its patron are significant when compared to the Ajmeri, Moti and Delhi mosques. The inscriptions on the earliest of Shah Jahan's mosques at Ajmer (1637) in the *dargah* of Muin'ud-Din Chishti makes frequent and repetitive mention of the Ka'bah and its historical environs, however, there are no surahs, passages or verses quoted and/or copied directly from the Qur'an.<sup>466</sup> The sixty-six cartouche panels [fig. 31] convey thirty-three Persian verses in the poetic *mathnawi* form of an eulogy extolling Shah Jahan's spiritual and imperial qualities and where the emperor is

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<sup>464</sup> Begley critically analyzes the increase in length of the 'effusive praise of the monuments [Moti, Agra and Delhi] and how the 'explicit references' to the mosque and its details privilege Islam in the emperor's later commissions instead of praises for Shah Jahan's 'lofty' details.

<sup>465</sup> Nath, R. *History of Mughal Architecture*, pp.454-55. Though Nath gives a complete translation of the *pishtaq* inscriptions, the author has translated the Persian text and modified Nath's translation. For the most part, the crux of the meaning and the objectives of the verses remain the same in each translation. The inscriptions privilege the princess imperial and spiritual position, persona and patronage, however, within the parenthetical relationship of patriarchy and God. This pattern is followed in her Sūfi treatises in which Jahan Ara advocates her spiritual authority as a *pīri-murid* through the sanction and will of God, prophet Muhammad and the emperor Shah Jahan. See chapter 2 of this work. Other translations consulted include: Muhammad Latif, *Agra, Historical and Descriptive*, (Calcutta, 1896), pp.186-188 and Wayne E. Begley, 'The Symbolic Role of Calligraphy on Three Imperial Mosque of Shah Jahan', in Joanna G. Williams (ed.), *Kaladarsana* (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1981) pp. 8-9.

<sup>466</sup> The back wall of the mosque has five niches in which the basic creeds of Islam are inscribed gold letters.

metaphorically described as the 'Ka'bah' that will be housed in the mosque of his commission.<sup>467</sup> The precedent for using the mosque as an embodiment of Shah Jahan is established in this early commission in Ajmer whose typology is used in later mosque commissions by Shah Jahan and Jahan Ara Begum in her Agra mosque as previously described.

The inscriptional program on the Moti mosque are only on the exterior façade and similarly praise Shah Jahan as a patron and his rule as 'divine kingship' in the 159' length of the sanctuary frieze without one quoted passage from the Qur'an. Like the Moti mosque, the Delhi mosque has a running frieze of ten panels over the arches of the sanctuary facade where Qur'anic quotes are sporadically integrated with the panegyric praises of the emperor and the details of his commission and its metaphorical allusions to Paradise.<sup>468</sup> Though the verses around the *mihrab* arch are two Qur'anic verses taken from Sura 39 (*al-Zumar*) or 'The Troops' (verse 53) and the other verse from Sura 9 (*al-Tauba*), or "The Repentance" (verse 108) each with a thinly veiled objective of advocating both forgiveness of all sins and the other (respectively) the pious intentions of the patron of the mosque.<sup>469</sup> The spandrels of the *mihrab* arch include the two of the many names for God as both the 'Forgiver' and the 'Guide'.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> The verse reads: 'The emperor of faith sits in the mosque; may the Ka'bah (i.e. Shah Jahan) occupy the mosque forever.' See, Akbar Ali Tirmizi, 'Persian Inscriptions at Ajmer', in Desai, Z.A. (ed.), *Archaeological Survey of India: Epigraphia Indica: Arabic and Persian Supplement*, 1959-60, Calcutta, 1962. pp.64-65, line 24.

<sup>468</sup> Nath, R. *History of Mughal Architecture*, vol. IV, part I, pp.481-487.

<sup>469</sup> Wayne Begley. 'The Symbolic Role of Calligraphy on Three Imperial Mosques of Shah Jahan', p.11.

<sup>470</sup> The themes of forgiveness and guidance are chosen to adorn the mosque and may have historical and religious implications to Shah Jahan's reign during the completion of his new mosque in Shahjahanabad in 1656. Shah Jahan's show of repentance and religiosity in the selection of these verses may stem from his progressive Sunni orthodoxy that began to manifest the emperor's outlook near the completion of the Delhi mosque. During Shah Jahan's 10<sup>th</sup> regnal

The Agra mosque's Persian inscriptions and panegyric praises for the princess certainly acknowledged the imperial secular nod of influence from the inscriptional programs on the Ajmeri, Moti and Delhi mosques. However, the mosque and its patron exhibit a 'hidden and revealed' inscriptional symmetry to the Taj Mahal and reaches the limits of imperial socio-political associations by locating the Agra mosque and Jahan Ara Begum alongside the imperial and spiritual hierarchy of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal both on earth and in the hereafter. Among the Shah Jahan's sacred commissions, the inscriptional program on the Taj Mahal and the subsidiary structures in its complex stands out in its copious use of Qur'anic verses inscribed on the surfaces totaling twenty five including fourteen complete surahs and <sup>471</sup> Similar to the inscriptions on the *pishtaq* and *mihrab* arch of the Agra mosque the fluid and elegant script is inscribed in black on white marble. The calligrapher Amanat Khan who had worked on the Chini-ka Rauza tomb mausoleum in 1632 and on the Taj Mahal may have also worked on the Agra mosque in 1643 upon completion of the Taj Mahal. <sup>472</sup> The commonalities between the Agra mosque and the Taj Mahal are most significant in the choice of installing complete surahs above and around the polished marble *mihrab* arch in the Agra mosque and its dialogical relationship with Jahan Ara's Sūfi treatises and the same *al-Shams* surah is inscribed in the

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year, he replaced the solar calendar with the Islamic lunar calendar. See, 'Inayāt Khan's, *Shah Jahan Nama*, p. xix. Ebba Koch analyzes the affect of Shah Jahan's orthodoxy on Mughal paintings. See, Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, pp. 37, 111 and 129.

<sup>471</sup> Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, pp.224-229.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid, p. 225. According to Ebba Koch, Amanat Khan was the only calligrapher/artist who authored his work on the Taj Mahal prominently on the south arch of the tomb chamber along with other locations in complex, see p. 99-100. Amanat Khan's mark of authorship on the 'Throne of God' indicates the high esteem in which he was held by Shah Jahan. It is likely that as a trusted and highly regarded calligrapher, Amanat Khan would be entrusted with the inscriptional program for the Agra mosque.

mosque of the Taj Mahal which is the only other sacred imperial monument among the contemporary mosques at Ajmer, Delhi and Moti mosques on which complete surahs were inscribed.

Encircling the largest of the *mihrab* arch in the Agra mosque [figs. 32-34], surah 91 or *al-Shams* “The Sun” is inscribed in fifteen verses in its entirety in *naskhi* script. The surah’s title is highly ‘gendered’ in that the Arabic *al-Shams* or the word for sun is in the feminine form unlike *al-Qamar*, the moon which is in the masculine form and therefore provokes the female agency of the princess. Further, Jahan Ara Begum is described in the Persian inscriptions on the *pishtaq* as the personification of the sun whose ‘effulgence’, an attribute usually assigned to emperors, bestows blessings on those who believe:

“...This Holy house of God is built for the believers...Its sight is pleasing to the eye and bestows divine light to those who believe... It is built by the order of Jahan Ara Begum...Luminous like the Sun...”<sup>473</sup>

The subject of the sun as divine light in *al-Shams* exposes ignorance and guides the believer to a pure soul and enlightenment. Prophet Muhammad is considered by Muslims to be this divine source. In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara’s ‘experiential’ accounts and the authentication of her ritual and spiritual engagement at Chishti’s *dargah* is both instructive for readers/worshippers in its detailed explanation and emblematic of the ‘practiced’ vs. ‘prescriptive’ nature of

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<sup>473</sup> Unpublished translation by Dr. Sunil Sharma.

Islam's mystical tradition that she wishes to convey to the believer to facilitate enlightenment.<sup>474</sup> The details of the Sūfi ritual and the 'instructive' nature of the narrative also indicates that at this point in Jahan Ara's discipleship, she has ascended to a *pīri-muridi* rank and though she is unable to assume the formal role of a Sūfi pīr in initiating other disciples personally however, can act as a *khalifa*, delegate or 'Messenger' of the faith. In the context of her patronage, the inscriptions on the *pishtaḡ* and in lieu of the *al-Shams* Surah, Jahan Ara Begum is the Divine source of illumination<sup>475</sup> and the guide for believers to perfect their souls.

The planning, design and construction of the *mihhrabs* in the Agra and Taj Mahal mosque are nearly identical [fig. 35]. The polygonal *mihhrab* niches and arches of each are finished in polished marble and framed by Timurid rope mouldings that terminate into engaged colonnettes.<sup>476</sup> Further, each *mihhrab* arch includes a marble *minbar* or pulpit with three steps to the right of the niche in memory of Prophet Muhammad's sermons delivered in the first mosque in Medina. The Agra *minbar* [figs. 36-37] is highly ornate in its architectural rendering of the sanctuary elevation of the mosque that is carved in low relief onto the back of the top step that culminates into a floriated pattern of three arches corresponding to mosque domes below. The replication 'drawing' is

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<sup>474</sup> See chapter II of this work p. 52 for a detailed description of Jahan Ara's ritual accounts at Chishti's shrine complex.

<sup>475</sup> Chapter II of this work critically analyzes Jahan Ara Begum as the 'illuminator' of the Timurid lamp. This is one more reference to the Sun subject and metaphor. See, Chapter II, p. 2 for quote from her Sūfi treatise *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* in which she acknowledges her piety as a function of her ability to light the lamp of the Timuria.

<sup>476</sup> Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 190. Ebba Koch's descriptive language and architectural vocabulary is consulted and used to describe the details of the Shahjahani and Mughal iconography.

slightly compressed at the sides of the elevation but retains the structure's proportions.

At the Agra and Taj Mahal mosque the red sandstone floor in front of the *mihrab* and throughout the prayer hall is divided into individual 'prayer mats' through the use of black inlay stone that demarcates the prayer space under a multi-cusped arch [fig. 38, 39]. The flooring changes to marble with black stone inlay in the *zenana* gallery in the northern end of the prayer hall. The popular "Throne Verse" Surah 2 is inscribed in a rectangular cartouche directly above the *mihrab* and is most legible compared to the other inscriptions in the Agra mosque. The Surah's readability may have been deliberate in that Muslims attain the greatest virtue by reading this Surah with frequency. The Surah 2 also mentions God's name with frequency and where the sun is likened to Jahan Ara's person in Persian inscriptions and *al-Shams*, "...The emperor who is the Lord of the Universe...King of Seven Realms..." may be glorifying Shah Jahan both on the *pishtaq* and by association on the *mihrab* Surah as God's 'personification' or shadow on earth. Though the "Throne Verse" Surah is not included in the Taj Mahal complex or mosque,<sup>477</sup> the theme of a paradisiacal setting is inferred from the multitude of inscriptions that invoke thoughts of paradise and Judgment Day and could provoke a Muslim to perceive the Taj Mahal complex and its 'ethereal' setting as God's Throne on Judgment Day.

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<sup>477</sup> W. Begley in his critical examination of the role of Islamic calligraphy on Shah Jahan's mosques states that the 'Throne Verse' is included in the mosque at the Taj Mahal. See, 'The Symbolic Role of Calligraphy on Three Imperial Mosques of Shah Jahan', p. 11. Ebba Koch's recent and on-going seminal study of the Taj Mahal and its inscriptions makes the most definitive argument against Begley's assertion of the 'Throne Verse' inscribed in the Taj Mahal mosque and firmly assigns Surah *al-Shams* in the Taj Mahal mosque. See, Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 190.

Regardless, how one would arrive at the perceptions of the 'Throne Verse' the implication is abundantly clear in the planning, details and iconography of the Taj Mahal and its complex. Like the Surah *al-Shams* the invocation of the 'Throne Verse' at the Taj Mahal or the Agra mosque are the socio-religious and political ties that bind Mumtaz Mahal and Jahan Ara Begum to their monuments and to each other.

The Agra mosque is a 'stripped down' version of the contemporary mosques built by Shah Jahan particularly the Taj Mahal mosque. The overall planning of the Agra mosque has been discussed earlier in this chapter and follows a standard oblong massive prayer hall formed of vaulted bays or rooms arranged in a row with a dominant *pishtaq* on axis to the *mihrab* surmounted by three chevron patterned squat domes. The courtyard approach to the sanctuary is enclosed presently on two sides by arcades of multi-cusped arches. Two types of arches are employed in the mosque: the multi-cusped/lobed arch on the arcades and the more streamlined and 'tectonic' wide 'Iranian' arch articulated by a twisted Timurid rope detail springs from a *guldasta* vase [fig. 40]. The existing arcades whose arches are supported on typical Shahjahani baluster columns [fig. 41] on then north and south sides are compositionally centered on the formalized gateway [fig. 42,43] entrances that are reached by a thirteen foot high staircase leading from the *kinaari* market shops which are built into the plinth platform of the mosque.<sup>478</sup> The main eastern gateway was destroyed during the Mutiny of 1857 by the British and may have been equal in size to the north and south

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<sup>478</sup> Built into the 'plinth platform' are storefronts and storage cells that function as the foundation for the structure. This structural detail can be seen most visibly and functionally on Humayun's tomb and as a decorative detail on the Taj Mahal structure as blind arches.

gateways and had replicated the existing arcade details with more formalized decorative details at the main entry.<sup>479</sup> The arcades' 'crowning achievements' include the typical Shahjahani low overhanging *chhajja* [fig. 44] that are supported by unadorned brackets. Above the *chhajja* are rhythmically arranged *chattris* each centered on the baluster column below that march down the length of the arcade. Each *chattri* is a mini-prototype of the larger that caps each of the six engaged towers on the perimeter wall of the mosque and sustains the harmonious balance of the complex on the interior and exterior elevations. The *chattri* detail also successfully transitions the corners of the courtyard where the fifteen foot tall arcades meet the thirty foot towers.<sup>480</sup>

Like Jahan Ara Begum's distant and recent female predecessors, the Timurids and Nūr Jahan, respectively, the Agra mosque further narrows the gap of gender politics and the 'asymmetries of power'<sup>481</sup> and played a significant role in Shahjahani 'ocular politics'<sup>482</sup> that articulated Jahan Ara's authority as commensurate with the emperor's in both the secular and spiritual realms. Further, the princess' agency is not conveyed in a perfunctory manner or as a veneer that 'varnishes' male imperial imperatives and is solely an agent that is

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<sup>479</sup> Lahauri reports in his *Badshah-Namah* that there were 53 arches on all three sides of the Agra mosque: 18 each on North and South sides and 14 on the East side plus the 3 *iwan* gateways = 53 arches total. Existing conditions of the eastern end of the complex include a modern addition of platforms and railings which were built over the foundations of the eastern gateway making it difficult to confirm Lahauri's citation.

<sup>480</sup> The 1:2 ratio of the arcade elevation to the sanctuary wall conveys a disproportionate scale and leaves questions as to whether the north and south arcades may have been a later restoration or addition (?)

<sup>481</sup> Gulru Necipoglu uses the term 'ocular politics' as an 'instrument' of visual control used by imperial males within the Ottoman, Mughal and Safavid empires to spatially and socially organize royal women's visibility and hierarchy that yielded an 'asymmetry of power' in gender politics. See, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): p. 304.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*, p.304.

used to marry state to household through rituals of public piety. Jahan Ara Begum's spiritual authority is active, legitimated by her pīr Mullah Shah,<sup>483</sup> the emperor Shah Jahan and God, and fully participates in the Timurid-Mughal spiritual landscape. Her piety is substantiated by her deep devotion to Sūfism and the recording of that experience and commitment in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* and *Munis al-Arvāh* and specifically from her Agra mosque commission and its significant show of religiosity in its inscriptional program compared to contemporary mosque commissions.

Regardless of Jahan Ara Begum's spiritual objective for her representation, Shah Jahan's public praise for his daughter on the main entry point leading to the prayer hall indicates the deep respect and high esteem he had shown for Mumtaz Mahal in life and through the Taj Mahal. Like her mother, Jahan Ara Begum is an exemplar among women both in the imperial and spiritual realms. The physical link between Mumtaz Mahal and Jahan Ara has previously been explored not only in the Qur'anic inscriptions but also in the specific design details and iconography that is employed at the Taj Mahal mosque and gateway and its appropriation on the Agra mosque. The overall design, details, inscriptions and use of Shahjahani iconography elevates the mosque's stature and its patron's authority and rightfully locates both into the emperor's prevailing imperial hierarchy political, architectural and spiritual. The Agra mosque, situated diagonally across from the Agra Fort and its Delhi gate was envisioned by Shah Jahan to be serve as an extension of his imperial

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<sup>483</sup> See Chapter II, p. 30 of this work. Mullah Shah's biographer Tawakul Beg quotes Mullah Shah's assessment of Jahan Ara Begum's spiritual ascension within the Qadriyāh order.

presence outside the rampart walls of his fort. To some extent the Agra mosque exceeded the emperor's projections of establishing a physical and ideological 'annex' of his power in the adjacent Fort. Instead, the mosque complex, its inscriptions and its visual and iconographic details represent an inherent equanimity among the powers that he seemingly shared with his 'consort' queen, Jahan Ara Begum.

Appropriation of other imperial forms that communicate as 'topos' of the Shahjahani built landscape and enlist Agra mosque's participation in Shah Jahan's grand scheme to employ and project the court arts and ritual as 'instruments of [his all-encompassing] imperial rule'<sup>484</sup> and as 'immediate expression of the ruler'<sup>485</sup> include the overall form and iconographic details of the great gateway entrance [fig. 45] to the funerary gardens of the Taj Mahal and the planning scheme from the Taj Mahal mosque. Similar to the Agra and Taj Mahal mosque and gateway, the monumental *pishtaq* is constructed using red sandstone with white marble trim.<sup>486</sup> The entry arch on all three structures are unadorned except for the Timurid rope detail and lacks the engrailed details found at the later Delhi mosque [fig. 46].<sup>487</sup> The entry arch is a wider Timurid/Iranian prototype and echoes the profile of the great dome above only

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<sup>484</sup> Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 83.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid*, p. 83.

<sup>486</sup> Ebba Koch analyzes the symbolism associated with the use of white marble and red sandstone. The use of red sandstone dates to the Sanskrit texts that recommended the use of white stones for Brahmin buildings and red for the warrior castes. The integrated or exclusive use of the two stone in Mughal structures, particularly Shahjahani commissions, build-up on the historical perceptions of the material to foment the 'hierarchically graded color dualism' that substantiates imperial ideology as 'semi-divine' all things to all people. See, Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 215.

<sup>487</sup> The multi-cusped arch was employed in Mughal palace or secular architecture and was used exclusively on the arches for the arcades at both the Taj Mahal and Agra mosques. The interior arches of the mosque structures use the more tectonic and streamlined Timurid arch.

the Agra and Taj Mahal mosque<sup>488</sup> and is inscribed on all three in a rectangular frame of marble with Persian and Qur'anic verses (respectively) at the Agra and Taj Mahal gateway but left unadorned on the Taj Mahal mosque. The spandrels of the Agra arch are left unadorned but filled on the Taj Mahal mosque and gateway with *pietra dura* floral and vine motifs.<sup>489</sup> The *pishtaq* at each structure is flanked (of varying sizes) by the typical chevron-patterned engaged column that terminates (at Agra) into an elongated *chattri*. The deeply recessed *pishtaq* vault has the unadorned outline of the *qalib kari* [figs. 47,48] netting carved into the surface is similar in its construction to the Taj Mahal mosque *pishtaq* vault, mausoleum and gateway, however, not equal in embellishments.<sup>490</sup>

In its interior, the Agra mosque follows the precedent established by the Taj Mahal mosque of the three domed bays with each of the main halls covered by a dome and what Ebba Koch calls the 'all-permeating tripartite scheme of the Taj Mahal complex...'<sup>491</sup> and what she quotes the chronicler Lahauri states as the 'masjid...sih chashma', where the wide dimensions [fig. 49,50] of the airy bays or *chashmas* of the Agra mosque allow for larger prayer rooms that flow uninterrupted and visually connect the spaces across the prayer hall and to each end of the *zenana* galleries [figs. 51,52]. The nave or the central hall is widest among the five aisles leading to the *qibla* wall. The twelve foot base of the

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<sup>488</sup> In Mughal architecture the dome was used specifically on mosques and tombs and sometimes on shrine structures. See, E. Koch. *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 128.

<sup>489</sup> The overall unadorned and 'tectonic' character of the Agra mosque may reflect the projection of Jahan Ara Begum's humility and modesty as required of a 'Sūfi-devout' and generally of a mosque. The paucity in embellishment may also indicate the lack of funds, labor and time available during the construction of the Agra mosque. The construction and completion of the Taj Mahal (1638), Moti Mosque (1650) and Shahjahanabad (1648) overlap in their timing to the Agra mosque's (1648) completion.

<sup>490</sup> Ebba Koch. *The Complete Taj Mahal*, pp.184-185.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid, p.186 and Lahauri, 'Abd-ul-Hamid *Padshahnana*, ed. By M. Kabir-ud-Dina Ahmad and M. 'Abd al-Rahim (Calcutta, 1866-72), vol. 2, pp.326-7, (trans. in Koch book, pp. 256-57).

monumental piers [figs. 53,54] carry the arches that support the domical vaults [fig. 55] that use the *qalib kari* netting motif to adorn the tall surface.<sup>492</sup> Similar design motifs are carved into the underside of the thick arches that span across the wide aisles and are trimmed with the twisted rope moulding that terminates in a modified baluster column [fig. 56]. The scale of the soaring, thick piers spanning the prayer hall is mitigated by the rectangular panels carved into the wide surfaces in low relief that harmoniously continues on the interior the architectonic and modular qualities of the exterior sanctuary wall. Like the Taj Mahal mosque, each of the three domes rests on four arches and four squinches at the corners that contain a small area of *muqarnas*.

The Agra mosque is trimmed at the parapet wall of the *pishtaq* with a magnified floral pattern [figs. 57, 58] that is also profusely applied on Akbar's tomb complex at Sikandra (1612-13) [fig. 58a].<sup>493</sup> The repeating and intertwining floral/vine scroll pattern is composed of red, black, yellow and white marble stone inlay. The repeating intertwined module appears to be a highly abstracted vase with a *guldasta* or flower arrangement that bursts out and hangs to each side of the central blossom.<sup>494</sup> This transition between the floral band and the Persian inscriptions below on the *pishtaq* is mediated by a twisted Timurid rope trim that has alternating red, black and white bands of stone inlay. The floral motif on the

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<sup>492</sup> It is unclear if there might have been more ornate patterns of iconography within the *qalib kari* designs or at their terminus. Several layers of paint have almost obliterated the low relief of the *qalib kari* itself.

<sup>493</sup> Ebba Koch has determined that the gate of Akbar's tomb 'prefigures the great gate at the Taj Mahal'. See, Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, p. 126, fig. 169. It is therefore not a leap to assume that the floral motifs from Akbar's tomb complex would also be used in embellishing the Taj Mahal complex and further, the Agra mosque complex.

<sup>494</sup> Ebba Koch has defined the *purna-ghata* or *purna-kalasha* 'as an auspicious symbol in Hindu and Buddhist architecture, in the form of a pot that has overflowing foliage. See, E. Koch. *The Complete Taj Mahal*, pp. 172 (fig.240), 222, 262.

parapet wall, in its multiple varieties was a highly politicized icon both in Mughal literature and in the Shahjahani arts during the emperor's reign and became intrinsic to his imperial ideology and propaganda.<sup>495</sup> The floral trim is applied on both the Taj Mahal gateway and its mosque on the upper portion of the parapet wall and encircling the upper frame of the structure, metaphorically 'framing' the consciousness of the viewer with the presence of Shah Jahan's divine kingship in form.

The similarities in design details are also apparent at the six engaged five-sided towers [figs. 58,60,61] that 'anchor' the Agra mosque complex above, below and within the chaos of the *kinaari* bazaar and visibly 'represent' Jahan Ara Begum's public piety. Tall tower structures are commonly associated with palace fortifications complete with ramparts and crenellations. At the Agra mosque, the forts are the 'beacons' of communications that double as symbolic minarets and hover over the city to mark a place of Muslim place of prayer. The towers also have a dialectical relationship with the Agra fort [fig.67], situated diagonally across from the Agra mosque and are identical in their design details at the *chattri* form.<sup>496</sup> The towers connect the two imperial complexes to each other and further strengthen the 'optical politics' argument that integrates Jahan Ara Begum's authority into Shah Jahan's patrimonial gaze. The remaining

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<sup>495</sup> The theme of flowers as symbols of Shah Jahan's kingship, court and family who nurtured his imperial 'garden'/subjects in his role as the *mujaddid* (renewer). This phenomenon has been explored in this work as it applied to Jahan Ara Begum. See, Chapter I, p. 74 where Jahan Ara is the personification of the 'noble palm-tree of the orchard of magnificence and excellent fruit of the plant of grandeur'.

<sup>496</sup> The Agra mosque tower *chattri* domes are striated unlike the smooth domed surface of the Taj Mahal gateway and mosque.

structure of the Agra mosque is clad entirely in red sandstone except for white marble *mihrab* and *jali* windows at the *zenana* gallery.

The Agra mosque façade elements on the sanctuary wall are modified versions of the wall treatment found at Taj Mahal gateway and mosque. The low relief carving of blind arches and rectangular frames [fig. 59] recall the *chini khana* motifs prevalent in both Shahjahani and Mughal architecture, however, without the deep niches or vessels. In place of the decorative designs and intensive carvings found at both the Taj Mahal gateway and mosque, the Agra mosque sanctuary elevation relies on delineating the precision of its proportions through the hard outlining of the low-reliefs on the surface of the wall. Similar surface treatment is extended to the exterior walls that face the bazaar [figs.60,61] . The deeply carved recesses, niches including the articulated gateway entrances as well as the textured treatment of the *jali* openings 'humanize' the otherwise overwhelming imperial presence of the three storey structure soaring above and asserting its patroness among the ramshackle storefronts lining the bazaar alley. The Agra complex's alternating rhythms of open and close surfaces on the periphery walls successfully avoids turning its back on the commercial hub which sustained the mosque complex through its revenues. The most engaging aspect of the mosque for the visitor/believer is that the overall aloof and modest character of the Agra mosque complex projected the humility of its Sūfi-devout patron and provided a sober sanctuary from the commercial activities outside as well as a respite from the constant aesthetic stirrings of the spectator's perceptions effected through the opulent and competing details of the monuments nearby, particularly the Taj Mahal.

Traditionally, the primary arch leading to a mosque's prayer hall or centrally composed *iwan* on axis to the *mihrab* niche is adorned with *Qur'anic* verses similar to conventional mosques. It is a unique and compelling feature in the Agra mosque that has no equal among other Mughal mosques in India particularly commissions among imperial women. Only two imperial females commissioned mosques prior to Jahan Ara Begum. Emperor Jahangir's (r.1605-1627) mother, Maryam al-Zamani, commissioned the Begum Shahi Masjid in Lahore, Pakistan in 1611 and the modest Patthar mosque in Srinagar, Kashmir built in 1620 by the 'prescient feminist' Nur Jahan, wife of emperor Jahangir. In their epigraphical program, each mosque follows the standard formula for mosques in employing *Qur'anic* verses without grandiose Persian praises or metaphorical acknowledgements of the patroness.

A personalized feature of the Agra mosque that distinguishes it as well as references its design details to other Mughal mosques is the unique application of the chevron pattern on the domes. The highly stylized chevron pattern applied to the domes is unprecedented among Mughal or pre-Mughal structures in India and produces the effect of Timurid tile-work found on domes in Iran. Lahori calls the chevron pattern, *tarh-i mauj*, or 'wave design' of white marble and red sandstone.<sup>497</sup> The chevron pattern is used liberally on Mughal buildings but only on engaged columns or framing dado designs [fig. 62] on wall panels, however, never on domes. The chevron pattern is applied to the domes in the Agra

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<sup>497</sup> Lahori, 'Abd al-Hamid. *Badshah Nama*. Persian, Vol. I, Part II, p.336.

mosque has been modified from its angular zigzag construction to a lyrical and fluid interpretation of the standard chevron. Other examples of the zigzag dome pattern was found in provincial areas of the Timurid domains and was usually constructed in decorative brick lay including herringbone and diamond patterns.

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Agra mosques' chevron pattern and shallow dome feature is found on the Chini ka Rauza [fig.13] tomb mausoleum located on the east bank of the Jumna in Agra and is the only structure with this highly 'individualized' detail.<sup>499</sup> The tomb mausoleum is attributed to Afzal Khan who died in 1639 in Lahore. The highly educated noble Afzal Khan from Shiraz was the finance minister to Shah Jahan and a 'favorite noble' of the emperor's.<sup>500</sup> The tomb mausoleum is located adjacent to Zahara Bagh, the garden bequeathed to Jahan Ara Begum after her mother's death and one that the princess modified and maintained possibly between the years 1638-1644.<sup>501</sup> Visits to the garden would have given Jahan Ara ample and frequent opportunity to gaze upon the unusual yet eye-catching zigzag patterning detail embellished in glazed tile on the dome of the tomb

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<sup>498</sup> Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilbur. *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), vol.I, p.109.

<sup>499</sup> A later zig-zag patterned domed structure is the Dai Anga mausoleum (1671) [Fig.63] built for Shah Jahan's wet-nurse in Lahore during Aurangzeb's reign.

<sup>500</sup> Khan, Shah Nawaz. *Ma'athir al-Umara'*, vol. 1, Pers. English trans. Henry Beveridge and Baini Prashad, (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1911-52) pp. 149-153.

<sup>501</sup> Jahan Ara Begum's patronage and political participation in Agra (and Delhi) was most active during the period 1638-1648 as the city served as Shah Jahan seat of government and commercial hub. This is also the time period during which the construction of the Taj Mahal is completed and the Agra mosque is built and completed (1648) and when both Sūfi treatises are completed (1639-1640) by Jahan Ara Begum and Abu Talib Kalīm (d. 1651) wrote a *mathnawi* extolling the topography, gardens (including Zahara Bagh) and environs of Agra. Additionally, Ebba Koch has analyzed the design details on the towers of Zahara Bagh and has dated the double-storey *chattri* and engrailed arches and wall piers to a post-Jahangīri building period. See, Ebba Koch, "The Zahara Bagh at Agra", *The Environmental design; Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Center*. Vol. 2, 1986b, p.34.

mausoleum.<sup>502</sup> The construction of Chini ka Rauza after 1639 coincided with the completion of the Taj Mahal, the Baghdadi octagonal forecourt (1638) (*jilaukhana*)<sup>503</sup> situated between the Agra fort and the Agra mosque. The artistic exchange and overlap between the Agra Fort improvements, Taj Mahal, Chini ka Rauza and the Agra mosque is substantiated by Afzal Khan's familial link with Amanat Khan, his brother who was the master calligrapher of the Taj Mahal, Chini ka Rauza and comparing the elegant *naskhi* script of Agra mosque's *pishtaq*, the author conjectures that here too Amanat Khan may have left his mark.

A highly 'gendered' feature and contemporary function of the Agra mosque is in the *zenana* prayer hall on the north and south wings of the sanctuary. These prayer halls are not used by the women for daily or Friday congregation prayers. The marble screened rooms are reserved for the exclusive use of women on Thursday evenings for devotional Sūfi rituals Ūrs. During the ceremony, women light incense, make an effigy with flowers around the incense and read from the *Qur'an*. At the end of the *Qur'anic* reading the women say a prayer for Jahan Ara or 'Fatima Begum'<sup>504</sup> their patron saint and the patron of the mosque. They dip their palms in henna and leave the mark of their spiritual devotion on the *qibla* wall of the room [fig. 64]. Jahan Ara's spiritual

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<sup>502</sup> The tomb's unadorned arches lacking foliations, short domes, imposing *iwan* entrances, herringbone brick patterns, yielding in a somewhat hard outlining of the overall structure, however, employing the Mughal system of mechanical precision in proportioning evokes a Timurid typology than the prevailing Shahjahani idiom. See Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilbur. *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), vol. I, pp. 91-136 for distinguishing Timurid features vs. Mughal.

<sup>503</sup> 'Inayāt Khan, *Shah Jahan Nama*, p.205.

<sup>504</sup> Fatima is the name given to Jahan Ara Begum upon her initiation into the Sūfi Qadriyah orer. See, Tawakkul Beg Kulabi, *Nuskha-I Ahwali Sahih*. British Library Or. 3202, 1667 p. 54.

memory and persona are evoked and memorialized in the performative site of her patronage through ritualized practice of Sūfism. Whether this ritual practice performed by women in the mosque is specific to the twentieth and/or twenty-first centuries and not earlier is not clear. However, what is significant is that compared to mosque-centered Islam where women are noticeable by the virtue of their frequent absence rather than incorporation into the religious body and public ritual, these contemporary women like their 'sister' Jahan Ara, found in the auxiliary space of the Agra mosque through their ritualized practice that every Thursday their physical presence was significant, accepted and spiritually acknowledged.

A similar spiritual practice can be observed among women on Thursday evenings at the thirteenth century *dargah* or shrine of Sheikh Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti in Ajmer. Jahan Ara Begum commissioned the addition of a white marble pillared porch in front of and next to the entrance to the existing tomb chamber. It is known by the commemorative name, 'Begumi Dalan' or Empress' porch/balcony and was built in 1637 [fig.65] at the same time as Shah Jahan's mosque on its adjacent side. It is an exclusive women-only area where female worshippers gather to pray while rocking back and forth and read the Qur'an while facing the tomb. Prior to entering the 'Begum Dalan'i each woman performs the ritualized practice of what Jahan Ara preached in *Munis al-Ārvah*<sup>505</sup> As Jahan Ara passionately recorded in her treatise and as Sūfi dictates require, the author of this work observed the seventeenth century 'reenactments' and

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<sup>505</sup> See translation, in Chapter II, p. 51 of this work.

'whisperings' of the princess in twentieth century woman as they entered the *dargha* applied mud from the graveyard to their face, entered the tomb precinct by kissing the threshold, carried fresh flower petals in a basket on their heads, circled the tomb chamber seven times, placed the flower petals on the raised sarcophagus, wiped the 'sacred' dust of the tomb chamber over their eyes, entered the "Begum Dalan'i" (1638) or women's porch, and read the surah Fatihā and Yasīn, and finally lighted a candle in the tomb forecourt before breaking fast with the water from the courtyard fountain.

The *jali* openings [figs. 65, 65a,b] around the pillared area are filled with pieces of orange cloth tied within the openings. These ties that bind and invest the worship to the 'Begum Dalan'i' in perpetuity have an added function of requesting a wish or offering a specialized prayer or making a promise from the female believer. Like the Agra mosque's *zenana* gallery and women's Thursday gatherings, the women at Chishti's *dargah* are accommodated in the gendered space of their Sūfi sister and patron, Fatima Jahan Ara Begum. The princess' spiritual memory, is invoked, honored, blessed and 'represented' by the ritualized practice of women in both the Agra mosque and the 'Begum Dalan' in Ajmer. The 'Begum Dalan' situated adjacent to Shah Jahan's mosque is in the same dialectical relationship as the Agra mosque is to the Agra Fort. Shah Jahan's mosque is filled with men and the 'Begum Dalan' accommodates women at the site. The spiritually 'perfected' representations of the two imperial halves are in a harmonious and all-encompassing dialogue both spiritually and architecturally in Ajmer and continue to convey their charitable munificence, however, 'gendered'.

The intense public display and participation of Muslim women at these Sūfi sites gives some insights to Jahan Ara's persuasions of piety and yet also raises some questions. Did Jahan Ara, in the climate of Islamic orthodoxy instituted during her father's reign and later by her brother, Emperor Aurangzeb's strict adherence to the *Shari'a*,<sup>506</sup> seek a less prescriptive and more practiced Islam found in the rituals of Sūfism? Perhaps, the princess similar to the Muslim women observed at the Sūfi shrine in Ajmer and Agra, recognized an Islam in its mystical branch that acknowledges women's ability to exercise spiritual authority because of its embedded female-centered ideology. However, the reasons for the affinities to Sūfism may be more social and related to gender politics than specific to one's spirituality. As mentioned earlier, the innate constructions of religious beliefs in the form of Sūfism may have addressed some of the most deeply felt social and spiritual needs of Muslims that traditional Islam did/does not.

### **3.8 Mullah Shah Badakhshi Complex (1650), Srinagar, Kashmir**

The seventeenth century historian 'Inayāt Khan recorded in his *Shah Jahan Nama* the emperor's visit to Kashmir to visit a mosque recently completed by his daughter Jahan Ara Begum on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1651. He writes:

“Shah Jahan paid a visit to the mosque that had been recently built for that asylum of learning, Mullah Shah

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<sup>506</sup> Richards, John F. *The New Cambridge History of India: The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.176-9.

Badakhshi. Constructed in an exquisite artistic style, the mosque cost 40,000 rupees, with the requested funds having been provided by Princess Jahan Ara Begum. It was surrounded by large buildings serving as habitations for the poor, which were constructed at a further outlay of 20,000 rupees. On this occasion, Mullah Shah Badakhshi enjoyed the pleasure of His Majesty's society; and the attendants of Her Royal Highness presented him a very valuable diamond on behalf of her noble self."<sup>507</sup>

The activities of Mughal males in the valley of Kashmir from emperor Babur's conquest of India in 1526 through Shah Jahan is well documented in official histories that convey both social and political dimensions. It isn't until Dara Shikoh's intensely personal involvement with mystical traditions both Hindu and Islamic that the history books document religious reasons for the Mughal sojourns to Kashmir. Chapter I and II of this work have described in detail the spiritual and sponsored patronage of Dara Shikoh and Jahan Ara Begum for their Sūfi master Mullah Shah Badakhshi [fig. 66] during their frequent trips to Srinagar during the period 1634-1656. Despite its seemingly geographical isolation, Kashmir was historically hallowed ground for both Buddhism and Hinduism with material culture dating to seventh century C.E. The tolerant and pluralistic religious environment of Kashmir has continually attracted and accommodated various spiritual affinities. The Silk Road traffic as well as the proximity to the Sūfi

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<sup>507</sup> W.E. Begley and Z.A.Desai, Eds. Trans. *The Shah Jahan Nama of 'Inayat Khan* (Delhi: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1990) p. 205-6.

breeding grounds (Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan) made the cultural 'collisions' not invasive but dynamically creative. The arts of Kashmir convey the syncretic blend of the various cultural strands of the region and the seamless assimilations from each tradition. If nothing else, the dramatic and 'ephemeral' landscape of the Vale alone provokes spiritual inclinations and motivates a borrowing from the multiple modes of religiosity.

Analyzed earlier in this work, Jahan Ara Begum's fervor for Sūfism was clearly fueled by Dara Shikoh's passion for the mystical 'solution' to the orthodoxy problem found in Islam and other faith-based traditions. Added to this 'unconventional' and possibly unbecoming approach to Islam was the pressure of the *ulema* and other adherents of Sunni orthodoxy that made it challenging for an heir-apparent and his sister to have open discussions about their personalized approach to their spirituality. Kashmir's isolation and inherent religious pluralism provided the appropriate context and venue for the siblings, Sūfi leaders to indulge in mystical pursuits. This chapter has previously described Nūr Jahan's donative their 'reach' into Kashmir to project her presence and power through the Persian *chahar bagh* which was used by her male imperial counterparts as a 'stage' for exercising royal power. This paper has used Nūr Jahan's agency and particularly her patronage to establish precedents as modes of representation and power that were pursued by Jahan Ara Begum, however, in their modified forms. In Kashmir, Jahan Ara's patronage and spiritual proclivities lie in the parentheses of Nūr Jahan's distant precedent of the Muslim Patthar mosque (1623) and the contemporary commission built by her brother Dara Shikoh of a

Sūfi spiritual retreat and library called 'Pari Mahal' (1640) [fig. 68,69] for their Sūfi preceptor Mullah Shah Badakhshi.

The Mullah Shah Badakhshi mosque and khanaqah complex appropriates typical Shahjahani planning and design details from Dara Shikoh and Nūr Jahan's commissions and is informed generally by the numerous Mughal-sponsored garden pavilions. The socio-political link that was forged through Jahan Ara's commissions to her authority in the imperial capitals of Agra and Delhi was further galvanized in Kashmir, however, less as a function of the princess' imperial authority and more through her spiritual agency as a *pīri-murid*.<sup>508</sup> Similar to the Agra mosque the princess' contributions in Kashmir promote her imperial and spiritual personas. However, the eclectic nature of the Mullah Shah complex both in typology, function and the departures from a formalized Shahjahani vocabulary, indicate Jahan Ara's singular representation as independent from and not reliant upon her father's benefaction.

Jahan Ara's authority and place in imperial hierarchy as commensurate with other 'consecrated' Mughal 'reifications' dotting the Kashmiri landscape [fig.70] clearly associate her with her predecessor both male and female but at the Mullah Shah mosque Jahan Ara 'voices' her spiritual prominence and asserts her *pīri-muridi* role. In Srinagar, Jahan Ara doesn't follow the prescribed precedents of imperials before her but 'chases' and cultivates her own legacy. To some extent, the Mullah Shah complex design and details does participate in

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<sup>508</sup> The spiritual and ideological Sūfi concepts surrounding the elevated state of a *pīri-muridi* are discussed at length in Chapter I of this work.

the imperial topos of symbols and/or the prevailing Mughal 'lithic' lexicon in Kashmir.

The Mughal emperors had never occupied Kashmir forcefully, however, their prestige and power was visibly and in great numbers represented through their garden commissions and pavilions as well as their frequent retreats to the Vale. Where the political wrangling and commercial enterprises of the Mughals informed their representation in the urban landscape of India, Kashmir witnessed the 'mystical warrior aesthete' who effortlessly acculturated to the ephemeral and poetic landscape that was historically seeped in Buddhist and Hindu mystical currents. Srinagar is made up two Sanskrit names: *Sri*, a Hindu goddess and *nagar* meaning city. Regardless of the 'gendered' nature of Srinagar, only two Mughal females, Nūr Jahan and Jahan Ara Begum have firmly grafted their memory on Srinagar's soil through their patronage of sacred monuments and garden pavilions. Jahan Ara's representation through her commissions has a vast reach in and around Srinagar in the north with the Mullah Shah mosque complex, western end with garden pavilion at Safapur and garden and palace in lower Srinagar (south) with Sahibabad (Achawal). The multiple sites of patronage are situated near other imperial patronage specifically those of Nūr Jahan and Dara Shikoh and encircles the area around Dal Lake.

The Mullah Shah Badakhshi mosque complex is located on Hari Parbat Hill [fig. 74] under the gaze of the Fort built by Emperor Akbar (r.1556-1605) in

1590 to house the military and its arsenal.<sup>509</sup> Situated in this 'dialogue' with the emperor's Hari Parbat Fort, the Mullah Shah complex parallels the relationship (not proximity) between the Agra mosque and its Fort complex.<sup>510</sup> It is worth noting that though Dara Shikoh built Pari Mahal for Mullah Shah it is miles away across Dal Lake from the mosque complex on Hari Parbat Hill that his sister built for the same Sūfi master. If Pari Mahal was built for Mullah Shah Badakhshi and each served the purpose for the study or research of Sūfism and its sciences, one would expect the structures to be in proximity particularly as Sūfi pīrs were not accustomed to extended travel or public exposure. Is it over-reaching to conjecture that Jahan Ara sought the same pattern of legitimacy for her authority as she had attained in Agra and Delhi by situating her commissions alongside and within the sightlines of the emperor's architectural epicenter of power? Primary sources don't indicate reasons for choosing the existing site of the Mullah Shah Badakhshi complex, however, it sits in the parentheses of Akbar's Fort above and Nūr Jahan's Patthar mosque below and loosely participates in the dialects of Mughal supremacy, through the royal reifications.

Regardless of the reasons for the existing site of the Mullah Shah complex, the structures draws upon an even more tempered articulation of the

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<sup>509</sup> Persian inscription on the Kathi Darwaz leading to Hari Parbat Hill complex cites Akbar as setting the foundation of the Fort and paying one *crore* and ten *lakh* rupees from his treasury. The inscription notes the fort was built in Akbar's forty-fourth year after his accession and 1006 years after Prophet Muhammad arriving at approximately 1590 C.E.

<sup>510</sup> The author conjectures the choice for this site for the Sūfi complex may be due to its proximity to Hari Parbat Hill but most likely it is situated away from most major Mughal commissions even her brother's at Pari Mahal to advocate the independence in representation that Jahan Ara may have sought. The complex is situated among several Sūfi shrines the most important of which is the Hazratbal mosque/shrine that is known to house Prophet Muhammad's hair. In addition, the Maqdoom Sahib Sūfi shrine situated 20 feet directly uphill from the Mullah Shah mosque is the tomb/mausoleum of shaykh Sultan. Sixty percent of the mosque's visitors are women even though they are not allowed in the inner sanctum of the tomb.

Shahjahani idioms developed in the Agra mosque and enunciates a private and personalized 'enunciation' of Jahan Ara Begum's spiritual persona and authority. The French traveler Bernier visited the mosque in Srinagar in 1651 and praised the simple austerity of dark limestone courtyard mosque with a single-aisled, five-bay scheme that is used in the planning of the main sanctuary as well as the lateral wings around the courtyard of the mosque.<sup>511</sup> Similar to the Patthar mosque, the Mullah Shah mosque's overall plan is compact in its organization and exhibits a Mughal 'provincial' style that is uniform in its application of standard Shahjahani attributes including baluster columns, superimposed wide keel (Iranian) and multi-cusped arches, floral motifs and the strict symmetry applied to the design of the plan and elevation. The complex includes a mosque with residential cells in the attic space [figs. 71-76], a khanaqah, madrasa and *hammam*. The madrasa as a building type according to Ebba Koch, '...did not play a great role in Mughal architecture, nor in the earlier architecture of the Delhi sultans.'<sup>512</sup> The khanaqah that served as a Sūfi hostel for students is built below the mosque [fig. 73] on the entire length of the south and east sides and along with the madrasa is another structure not frequently built in India. Khanaqahs were popular forms of female patronage among royal Timurid women<sup>513</sup> and though Jahan Ara did not actively follow these precedents, Mullah Shah who

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<sup>511</sup> Tavernier, J.B. *Travels in India by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Baron of Aubonne*, trans. V. Ball, 2 vols. (London: 1925), p. 187-189.

<sup>512</sup> Ebba Koch, 'The Madrasa of Ghaziu'd-Din Khan at Delhi', in *The Delhi College*, ed. Margrit Pernau (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p39. See Koch's footnote no. 16 for a comprehensive list of sources that make references to madrasas in India but do not critically or comprehensively analyze them. Koch states that though there were a lack of free-standing madrasa structures many were integrated into mosque complexes. See, p. 41.

<sup>513</sup> See Chapter I, pp. 21-25 regarding the patronage of khanaqahs among Timurid women. The only extant khanaqah in Kashmir is the Shah Hamadan mosque and khanaqah, however, the precedent for khanaqahs has existed in Kashmir and Baltistan. See, Klimburg, Max. 2005. "Traditional Art and Architecture in Baltistan." In *Karakoram: Hidden Treasures in the Northern Areas of Pakistan*. (Stephano Bianca, ed.) Torino: Umberto Allemandi & C. for The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 149-164.

came from Badakhshan (present-day Afghanistan) would have been familiar with the typology and its function. Chapter II of this work describes the links that both Shah Jahan and Jahan Ara Begum sought to politically, socially and spiritually link the Mughals with the Timurids. The patronage of a Sūfi center with a traditional khanaqah makes cultural and socio-religious attempts to forge ties to the legacy of the Timurids and broadly defines the princess' search and support for an alternative Islamic venue.

The planning of the mosque complex takes its cue from the nearby Patthar mosque built by Nūr Jahan in 1623. The Patthar mosque [figs.78-81] is situated on the left bank of the Jhelum river directly opposite the fourteenth century Shah Hamadan mosque and khanaqah.<sup>514</sup> The name of the structure as a 'stone' mosque distinguishes it from the prevalent Kashmiri wooden architecture and can be read as the Mughal's projection of enduring presence and 'power' and that a distinguished presence of high Islam is firmly 'anchored' in place. The longitudinal plan spans nine bays and three aisles that are parallel to the *qibla* wall. The 'Cistercian' stark simplicity of the mosque is conveyed through the soaring heights of the vaulted keel-arched ceilings supported on massive cruciform pillars or the twelve-sided Mughal columns and the visible tectonics of the structure. The structure both inside and outside is graceful in its understated elegance and emphasis on its utilitarian objective. However, unlike most Mughal mosque with a forecourt enclosed by porticos, there are no places to congregate for dialogue or instruction. The structure falls short in its representation as a

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<sup>514</sup> Patrose, Prataap, and Rita Sampat. 1985. Khanaqah of Shah Hamadan. In MIMAR 16: Architecture in Development. Singapore: Concept Media Ltd.

formal mosque or even a Mughal one. It is successful as an iconic representation of Nūr Jahan's independence that was cultivating legacy on her own terms.

Embellishments of the Patthar mosque's hallowed interior is achieved through and limited to the dynamics of its proportions. The percolating light entering the nine arches bounces off of the shallow niches on the walls and the *muqarna* squinches at the corners of the dome to column transitions. The sober colors of the dark grey limestone base transition into a beige lime plaster finish over a brick core and connote the strong but modest will of the Believers. The *mihrab* is unadorned except for the deep and richly carved open lotus flower motif on the underside of dome in front of the niche that appears in duplicate on the underside of the entrance *pishtaq* arch. On the exterior entrance elevation [fig.79] the centralized *pishtaq* is privileged by a monumental keel arch that is inscribed in a rectangle frame with slender engaged baluster columns that project nine feet from the façade wall. Each module of the eight entrances on the east elevation wall is composed of a rectangle frame that encloses a keel arch within which is a superimposed engrailed arch. The building stands on a plinth that is decorated by a band of repeating inverted lotus flower palmette. The exterior of the west elevation [fig. 81] facing the commercial street has the identical nine arches with shallow niches with blind arches and storefronts against the wall. The west elevation turns it back on the streetscape except for the three foot projection of the rectangular *mihrab* block that articulates the interior niche. Due to its proximity to the Jhelum River, the Patthar mosque attempts in its design and

planning to conform to the Mughal riverfront plan [fig. 80, 84 ].<sup>515</sup> The elevation drawing indicates steps leading down to the river indicating an approach by boat on the Jhelum River.

At the Mullah Shah complex the Shahjahani details of the Patthar mosque are applied to communicate and forge the imperial links of each female patron to one another, to their sacred commissions and to locate their imperial hierarchy and authority. Within this uniform expression of Mughal identity through the topos of symbols, the Mullah Shah complex distinguishes Jahan Ara Begum's imperial identity from Nūr Jahan's and unique among imperial men and women.<sup>516</sup> Similar to the Patthar mosque and the Agra mosque complex, the Mullah Shah mosque is inward and outward facing in its organization and embellishment where its distinguishing features are articulated on both the exterior and interior of the complex and the orientation of the mosque takes advantage of and limited by the site's unique geographic hillside features [figs. 85-88]. The Mullah Shah complex employs the same white limestone to face the interior and exterior of the complex. The darker gray base is the foundation that

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<sup>515</sup> An 1870 embroidered shawl, decorated with a map of Srinagar, Kashmir shows a detailed aerial view of the city environs particularly along the Jhelum River. Along with several riverfront gardens, and possibly a haloed Maharaja Ranbir Singh ruler of Kashmir from 1857 to 1885, there appears to be a long causeway (between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> bridges from the east) that breaks up into stepping stones through a garden passage that leads from the river to a mosque-style building, possible the Patthar mosque. See, 'Kashmir Shawl Embroidered with a Map of Srinagar', c.1870 Victoria and Albert Museum, No.: IS 31-1970. Given by Mrs Estelle Fuller.

<sup>516</sup> Several contradictory secondary sources (none that have been supported by primary or official histories) indicate that upon completion of the Patthar mosque in 1623, either when Nur Jahan was asked or had asked about the final cost of the mosque was told or replied that it cost less than or equal to one of her jeweled slippers. This 'fictionalized' account supposes that the reason the Patthar mosque had been virtually abandoned or used outside of its religious function is due to this degrading comment by Nur Jahan. The mosque had been renovated in the 1980's and is currently being used for prayers and community gatherings.

supports an upper brick wall faced on the interior with white lime plaster [fig. 88] and on the exterior with limestone.

The Mullah Shah façade elevation uses the wide Persian keel arch [fig. 87] and the wall of the sanctuary are punctuated by multi-cusped arches inscribed in a rectangular frame within. The *pishtaq* arch at the sanctuary is the Persian arch that frames a multi-cusped arch, an unusual combination of palace and mosque details. The Persian arch at the *pishtaq* has an unusual feature of a 'hood' that extends out from the apex of the arch and the 'hood's' apex is truncated by an open cartouche overhead. The 'hood' detail is seen nowhere else in the complex. Extending the *pishtaq* arch in a three-dimensional manner through the 'hood' clearly emphasized the sanctuary wall and the *mihrab* niche directly behind the arch. The emphasis of the arch through the 'hood' detail may have been curtailed to make haste in completing the construction of the structure. The reason for the unusual projection at the *pishtaq* arch is unclear but certainly contributes to the 'eclectic' nature of the complex as a whole.

Decorative motifs and niches are carved in low relief and are concentrated on the exterior of the complex structures. The Shahjahani motifs on the Mullah Shah structure are modified versions of more elaborate motifs found on the Agra mosque and include engaged baluster colonettes [fig. 89] that frame the entry and *pishtaq* arch, the length of the plinth platform trimmed with a repetitive inverted lotus flower motif [fig.90], open engrailed cartouche motif surround the main archway [fig. 91], lotus flower buds on the spandrels of each of main arches

on all four interior and exterior elevations of the mosque [figs. 92-94]. The lotus flower motifs distinguish each arch as a main entrance, *pishtaq* arch, arch leading to the *jharoka* balcony or the arch through which the *mihrab* projection emerges.<sup>517</sup> The challenges of building on an uneven terrain is most visible in the random assignment of the varying sizes of the arches on the east elevation at the entrance and the sanctuary wall parallel to the *qibla* wall. The outermost arches flanking the centralized main arch are the smallest among the five. The next inner two arches increase in size by eleven inches. The variation in sizes continues in the sizing of the blind arches [fig.95] on the exterior of the north, south and west elevations.

Overall, the mosque structure, its courtyard and bays are compact without generous proportions for congregation and formal prayers or sermons. The overall dimensions of the Mullah Shah mosque (21 m. x 24 m.) structure is approximately one-fourth the size of the Agra mosque (92 m. x 88 m.). The building is more a precious icon or symbol of piety than a performative space as a mosque. Clearly the 'mosque' structure is more representative than functional in its planning, design and details. The structure is less a formal mosque and more a madrasa in the 'guise' of a mosque within a complex of cells that serve as a *khanaqah* domicile and a collegiate mosque. Though the structure is equipped with the required *mihrab* niche with a *shahada* inscribed above, many details of the structure do not conform to Shahjahani mosque designs. No symbolic or functional minaret or tower exists to anchor or articulate the building's edges as is typical in the Agra mosque. No ablution fountain or pool is evident in the

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<sup>517</sup> The interior central arch on the north elevation is distinguished by the lotus motif on its spandrels, however, the significant function of the arch is not apparent. The motif may have been added to sustain the overall symmetry of the structure and of the interior and exterior elevations.

courtyard, however, a *hammam* did function at one time and is located at a distance from the structure and possibly served the residents of the complex. The *musallah* is only one row in length and does not turn and continue without interruption into the north and south arcades but terminates into rooms on either end of the *qibla* wall.<sup>518</sup> The three bays in front of the *qibla* wall are compressed and could not accommodate more than fifteen individuals at one time. The spaces demarcated along each wing of the corridors are semi-private spaces with private attic rooms ventilated by *jali* openings [fig. 96]. The inscriptions over the threshold of the entrance [fig. 97] of the mosque are not Qur'anic verses but engaging secular invitations to enter the structure: "Oh, the Opener of gates has come. Whoever enter it will be safe."<sup>519</sup>

The unconventional 'mosque' plan and design for the Mullah Shah structure is more typical of Timurid madrasas, shrines and *khanaqahs* than Shahjahani mosques and may have been a Mullah Shah import rather than an indigenous response. The complex is officially recorded as a mosque in Mughal histories and chronicles.<sup>520</sup> The architectural, social and religious confluence of traditional Islam with madrasas and Sūfi activities via *khanaqahs* was more commonplace during the Timurid period than the Mughal.<sup>521</sup> Several examples of madrasas and Sūfi shrines from the Timurid period convey a pattern of two-

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<sup>518</sup> A precedent for

<sup>519</sup> Non-published translation by Dr. Yunus Jaffery, Dec. 18, 2006, Darya Ganj, New Delhi, India. According to the Archaeological Survey India records, (A.S.R. , 1906-07, reported by R.S. Fonia, Director), an inscription over the *hammam* structure notes the patron of the 'masjid' and *hammam* as Dara Shikoh and the date of completion as 1649. This is also quoted in Ram Chandra Kak, *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*, (Kashmir: Verinag Publishers, 1933), p. 91. It is possible that Dara Shikoh commissioned the *hammam* as part of Jahan Ara's commission of the complex.

<sup>520</sup> 'Inayāt Khan. *Shah Jahan Nama*, p.458. The entry describes Shah Jahan's visit to Srinagar on 23 June 1651 and repeatedly calls the commission a 'mosque' in Srinagar as Jahan Ara Begum's commission for Mulla Shah Badakhshani, for which she paid 40,000 rupees and an additional 20,000 rupees for the structures to house the poor surrounding the 'mosque'.

<sup>521</sup> Golombek and Wilbur. *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), vol. I, p.46.

*iwan*<sup>522</sup> planning that is evident, though simplified, in the Mullah Shah ‘mosque’ structure and supports the concept of the structure as more likely a Sūfi institution with tomb/mausoleum accommodations for Mullah Shah’s final resting place.<sup>523</sup> Ebba Koch’s analysis of the Ghaziu’d-Din Khan madrasa in Delhi [fig. 98] supports the mosque with madrasa and tomb concept: ‘...massive gate block with a *pishtaq* that opens into a courtyard surrounded by ranges of two-storied cells and arcades... the inner open space was later filled up and used as a base of the mausoleum...’<sup>524</sup> Koch’s critical survey of the Delhi madrasa describes the confluence of two Shahjahani concepts: the palace and mosque/madrasa design composite. The classical four-*iwan* madrasa plan of Khurasan and Central Asia (Samarkand and Bukhara) is reformulated in both the Delhi madrasa and the Mullah Shah complex to accommodate the multiple functions of its patron and her pīr and metaphorically represent the complexity of Jahan Ara Begum’s imperial and spiritual personas in form. The combination of plans may have been deliberate to delude the gaze of those who contested Sūfism as a legitimate Islamic strand and/or who might have tried to suppress the perpetuation of ‘heretical’ studies.

Similar to the Delhi madrasa and Timurid typologies, the Mullah Shah structure is symmetrically planned along two bilateral axes. The north and south

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<sup>522</sup> One local precedent in Delhi of a two-*iwan* plan mosque/madrasa as well as a female commission is the Khairu’l-Manazil (1561) in Delhi, built by Maham Anaga, Akbar’s wet-nurse. See

<sup>523</sup> Golombek and Wilbur, vol. I, Cats. #s: 4,7,30,35,75,84 and 94. The shrine complexes are particularly compelling in the duality of their function as both commemorative and collegiate sites. Ebba Koch calls out the madrasa of Ulugh Beg at Samarkand (1417-20), Shir Dor (1619-36) and Tilla Kari (1646-60) as forerunners for South Asian mosques/madrasas. See, Ebba Koch, ‘The Madrasa of Ghaziud’-Din Khan at Delhi’, in *The Delhi College*, p. 40.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

elevations mirror each other both in plan and elevation and include semi-private oblong study rooms with domed and flat ceilings to accommodate small group meetings and/or intimate discussions rather than large spaces for congregation and assembly. The north and south elevations are centrally planned on 3.5 meter multi-cusped arch opening with lotus motifs on the spandrels. The 2.2 meter multi-cusped semi-blind arches flanking the central arch have a 1 meter rectangular opening with a small a *jali-ed* keel arch above. A series of underground tunnels seem to be excavated under the Mullah Shah structure to provide two levels of dormitory 'cells' for students/disciples and quite possibly a burial ground situated under the *mihrab* niche on the western elevation.<sup>525</sup>

A centralized arched opening on the south elevation [fig.100] of the Mullah Shah mosque is another feature of the complex that confirms its departure from typical mosque designs and assigns a madrasa typology. The opening and orientation of the arch allows the Shahjahani feature of the *jharoka* balcony (currently brick-filled) to emerge from the main structure toward the majestic view of the Srinagar valley below. Ebba Koch's seminal and extensive study of the *jharoka* balcony as an instrumental Mughal architectural device to convey Shah Jahan's concepts of semi-divine kingship<sup>526</sup> is similarly cultivating the 'lens' of Jahan Ara's 'optical politics' that inform and enunciate her imperial and spiritual authority. The balcony is supported by simplified and orthogonal Shahjahani

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<sup>525</sup> Many of the entrances to the underground chambers have been blocked or filled with bricks and inaccessible for a detailed survey. However, one is able to trace the foundation lines and retaining walls to estimate the length and depth of the cavernous spaces. Locals from the area around the Mullah Shah complex indicated the presence of an underground tunnel connecting the complex to the Maqdoom Sahib shrine located on a terrace above the Mullah Shah complex. I was unable to locate this tunnel or verify if it exists.

<sup>526</sup> Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, pp.104-105, 133-137.

brackets [fig. 101] that terminate into an abstract lotus flower/bud and indicate in this block-like motif, the less than 'organic' or fluid quality of the building profile. An assembly or congregation of disciples residing in the khanaqah and/or studying in the madrasa may have gathered in front of the *jharoka* balcony as Mullah Shah, Jahan Ara Begum and Dara Shikoh stood 'enthroned' on the raised platform hosting their audience and taking in the ephemeral/mystical landscape.

Jahan Ara recognized the value and use of the *jharoka* in an imperial context and employed it among her commissions at Sahibabad (Achibal/Achwal).<sup>527</sup> The *jharoka* detail facilitates the implementation of the waterfront garden scheme at the south elevation. The water and monument concept had realized its full potential in the Taj Mahal however, relied on the Jumna River to extend the mausoleum's presence, vistas and access. The Mullah Shah land-locked site takes advantage of the Shahjahani 'waterfront' scheme via the garden-palace scheme and spatially extends the compressed courtyard of the building through its balcony toward the Srinagar valley below and beyond. However, instead of associating the imperial authority (Shah Jahan) as a renewer or *mujaddid* or 'the spring of the flower garden of justice and generosity', Jahan Ara Begum as the Sūfi-devout renews, sustains and perpetuates the 'Light of the Timuria' as previously discussed in this work. Even in Jahan Ara's absence, the *jharoka* at the Mullah Shah south elevation connotes her imperial presence presiding over the rituals of Sūfi practice and devotion.

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<sup>527</sup> Kanbo, II: pp.34-35. Jahan Ara's commissions do not remain at Sahibabad but some of the foundation walls of the pavilions are noticeable under the overgrown landscape.

The monumental stone lotus finial [figs. 102,103] surmounted on the dome over the *mihrab* on the west elevation is notable as possibly the only surviving example of its kind in Kashmir and possibly India.<sup>528</sup> The lotus motif is a clear cultural borrowing from the regional Hindu and Buddhist iconographic traditions of Kashmir. Most Shahjahani mosques are crowned with a sheath of open lotus-petals surrounding the vertical shaft of the *kalasa*-finials as seen on the Agra mosque dome. In the context of the Sūfi Mullah Shah mosque/madrassa and khanaqah, the crowning closed lotus flower has been reformulated along with the previously discussed design details and punctuates the Shahjahani 'quotes' of the structure with an individualized representation of its patron and a personally nuanced response to the imperial topos of conventional symbols. Like the closed lotus flower motif placed in an unaccustomed setting has cultivated a new identity and spiritual meaning, so too has Jahan Ara Begum. Sūfi ideology is centered on revealing the 'hidden' truth by reaching enlightenment by spiritually uniting with the Creator. The closed lotus flower may represent the existing challenges toward enlightenment that requires the unraveling of layers to reveal the inner hidden truth.

The threshold inscription at the entrance of the Mullah Shah complex assures the devotee of 'opening the gates' to their hearts and inner-Self just as the closed yet burgeoning blossom of the lotus over the *mihrab* dome conveys fulfillment in the hidden center. The underside of the dome may have had an open lotus flower motif similar to the Patthar mosque *mihrab* ceiling. The open

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<sup>528</sup> The elevated mound on the central *pishtaq* dome at the entrance indicates that there might have been originally a finial or crowning detail.

flower motif at the Mullah Shah structure would be appropriately placed under the monumental closed lotus flower conveying a syncretic blend of Sūfi and high Islamic ideologies: the open lotus flower indicates the opening of the righteous Path just as the *mihrab* niche advocates the Islamic eschatological opening to Paradise. Though the means to ‘other-worldly’ rewards for the devout whether Buddhist, Muslim or Sūfi differ in their construct, they are justified in the end. Though Jahan Ara never formally rejects traditional Islam, she indicates in her treatises her search for alternative spiritual venues and performative sites to convey her piety. The various features associated with the *mihrab* are used to make her search emphatic and the means transparent.

### **3.9 Icons of Ideology and Imperial Authority: The Bangla Roof and Jharoka**

A unique feature on the *qibla* wall of the ‘mosque’ structure and one that clearly departs from the mosque Shahjahani vocabulary is the projection and profile of an architectural feature emerging from the *mihrab* niche [figs. 104-105]. The overall shape, profile and architectural details of the form and the square vaulted ceiling are derived from wooden canopies over the tombs of Sūfi shaykhs. The embellished, adorned and anointed canopies can be seen in the 13<sup>th</sup>- 14<sup>th</sup> century tombs of Moin-ud-din Chishti at Ajmer and Nizam ud-Din Awliya in Delhi. The overall shape and details complete with four finials clearly reference the rectangular vaulted roofs that flank the curved ‘bangla’ roofed pavilion called ‘Bangla of Jahan Ara’ [fig. 105a] in the Agra Fort. The function of the pavilion has been defined as the princess’ apartments, however, served no ceremonial purpose but to objectify Jahan Ara’s elevated status and to sustain the

symmetry of the Bangla-i Darshan.<sup>529</sup> The Bangla Jahan Ara clearly completes the composition of the bank of buildings that include the Aramgarh and the Bangla-i Darshan where Shah Jahan appeared every morning and where he issued his decrees and *farmans*. Shah Jahan's daily appearance makes clear connections of his person to the architecture from which he is seen. The integrative convention during Shah Jahan's reign of linking ritual to architecture, and to the sovereign and his ideology was a deliberate and systematic way of ensuring a comprehensive and fully formed understanding of Shah Jahan's notions of kingship and its preservation into perpetuity. That Jahan Ara's is 'symmetrically' linked through her apartments makes her a 'player' in what Ebba Koch terms as Shah Jahan's 'personal ideology of power'<sup>530</sup> and elevates her authority as equal but separate from the emperor's. The architectural dynamics of the Bangla-i Darshan to its twin Bangla Jahan Ara privileges the princess' presence in her absence and participates through her pavilion Shah Jahan's daily imperial ritual and links her authority to the emperor's and within imperial hierarchy

Jahan Ara's absence similarly, is her presence 'enthroned' under the Bangla's roof. The 'personification' of each Bangla, its symmetry and identical design details make imperial hierarchical associations where Shah Jahan and the princess' status are in perfect balance. Where the *jharoka* balcony is associated with Shah Jahan's kingship, the square vaulted roof is associated with Jahan Ara Begum's spiritual authority.<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Ebba Koch. *The Complete Taj Mahal*, pp.68-9.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid*, p. xxvii.

<sup>531</sup> Another architectural precedent for the square domed pavilion roof is the mausoleum of Akbar at Sikandra (1613). According to Lahauri, Akbar had made the most improvements to Anguri Bagh in the Agra Fort. It is very likely that he introduced the square domed roof pavilion into the Mughal architectural vocabulary. See, Fig. 58a.

A tomb/mausoleum that has the greatest resemblance on its exterior to the *mihrab* feature on the Mullah Shah and re-establishes Jahan Ara's link to Nūr Jahan's precedents in patronage is the empress' lavish I'timad-ud Daula tomb/mausoleum garden built between 1622 and 1628 for her father in Agra [fig. 106,107]. The square vaulted pavilion that emerges from the center of the one storey I'timad-ud Daula structure exhibits the same design details as the Mullah Shah *mihrab* projection on the west elevation. Each has a square vaulted roof with multi-lobed finials on either end of the dome that tack down the open lotus flower sculptural relief. The dome has a slight overhang over a recessed base. The next level projects from the base and is embellished with the same interlaced motif of an inverted and upright compressed lotus flower. The same motif at a smaller scale is applied encircling the plinth platform on the Mullah Shah structure. Though the *chajja* supported by elaborate brackets on the I'tamad-ud Daula are not included in the Mullah Shah projection its 'broken baluster' columns frame three multi-cusped blind arches similar to the half-*jali*ed/blind arches on the I'tamad-ud Daula pavilion.

The design details of the Shaikh Chilli madrasa and tomb complex [fig. 209] at Thanesar (1650) on the road between Delhi and Lahore, imperially, spiritually and physically links Jahan Ara Begum's patronage and piety to her brother Dara Shikoh and equates her imperial authority to the heir-apparent as the Agra mosque had in its dialectical relationship to the Agra Fort to Shah Jahan's sovereignty. The parallels in Dara Shikoh and Jahan Ara's patronage are further synchronized not only in time (1650), space, and concepts but also in

the dedication of their commissions to a Sūfi shaykh.<sup>532</sup> The shared features of the design and planning among the two madrasa/khanaqah complexes are uncanny and beyond the scope of this work. The two identical free-standing square vaulted tomb structures at the Chillie site, however, share a strong resemblance to the Mullah Shah *mihrab* projection.

The tomb's main lower panel at Chille contains three arches carved in low relief over which an over hanging eave extends without brackets. The elevation above the *chajja* steps into two levels and terminates into the square domed pavilion roof that is surmounted with a sheath of open lotus petals tacked with two flower finials on either end. In the same manner as the Shahjahani details on Jahan Ara's commissions at Agra and Srinagar participate in the narrative of Mughal ideology and legacy, the distinctive architectural features of Mullah Shah and other Sūfi sites, especially at Chillie, serve especially well as dialectical images for conveying the multiple facets of Jahan Ara Begum, her devotion to Sūfism and Dara Shikoh expressed in her personalized lexicon and made obvious in its ubiquity in the Mughal mystical landscape.

The strategic location and articulation of the 'shrine tomb pavilion' feature superimposed on the Mullah Shah *mihrab* deliberately projects or 'unveils' the

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<sup>532</sup> Thanesar was one of the spiritual centers of the Chistiyāh order where several shaykhs had purportedly advised Dara Shikoh. There is disagreement among scholars as to the correct name of the shaykh to whom the complex is dedicated. However, official Mughal chronicles locate a person affiliated with the Thanesar site and who had direct and extended contact with Dara Shikoh. See, Subhash Parihar, 'A Little-Known Mughal College in India: The Madrasa of Shaykh Chillie at Thanesar', *Muqarnas*, Vol. 9, (1992), pp. 175-185. Abdul Karim Thanesari was appointed Dara Shikoh's diwan and later his wakil during Shah Jahan's reign. See, Abd al-Hamid Lahawri. *Badshah Namah*, ed. Kabir al-Din Ahmad and Abd al-Rahim, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1867-68), 2: 130 and 606.

pious princess' 'divinely' bestowed spiritual virtues and rank to the acceptable limits of Islamic propriety. The madrasa/khاناqah as a mosque in a remote location removed from the scrutiny and orthodoxy of the *ulema* sanctions the representation. Drawing on the typology of Sūfi shrines and tombs located at performative sites of pilgrimage and prayer, the distinct 'motif' evokes for the viewer and disciple the physical and spiritual memory of historical Sūfi saints and associates these perceptions with the spiritual authority of Mullah Shah and his sponsor, Jahan Ara Begum. By placing the canopy on axis through the *mihrab* niche the 'aura of sanctity' is not limited to the Sūfi sphere but makes metaphysical associations with the *axis mundi* of traditional Islam, its beloved prophet Muhammad and God. The superimposition of the canopy motif in front of the *mihrab* also indicates spiritual hierarchies among traditional and mystical Islam. An entrance located on the western end of the complex visually and physically privileges the embellished and pronounced Sūfi canopy projection on the exterior of the 'mosque' over the largely hidden and unadorned *mihrab* niche [fig. 110] on the interior of the *qibla* wall. Jahan Ara Begum's person and her patronage stands at the nexus and locus of the syncretism of Islam and its contested mystical strand and benefits from the 'aura of sanctity' at the site as an extension of her spiritual devotion and authority.

The Persian inscriptions on the south elevation [figs. 111,113-115] of the Mullah Shah 'mosque' are equally unprecedented in their content as the Persian encomiums are on the *pishtaq* of the Agra mosque. At Mullah Shah, each of the four blind arches on the south elevation has a framed panel or cartouche over the multi-cusped arch with poetic verses that invoke devotion and the

metaphysical union with the Beloved. The arched opening between the four blind arches leads to the *jharoka* balcony and creates a parenthetical relationship of the inscriptions to the individual emerging from the arched opening onto the balcony extending beyond the limits of the structure's boundaries. The style and ending of each verse (Pers. *Omad*: 'he has come' or 'arrived'), indicates Shah Jahan's court poet Abu Talib Kalīm's (d.1651) composition.<sup>533</sup> A complete translation of the verses is not possible due to the ruinous state of the panels and missing sections. The following verses that are mostly intact were pieced together and deciphered and translated:

“The guide for the lost heart has come (Pers. *omad*). The conquest of the hearts is all in His hands. The Beloved, to fill the goblet has come (Pers. *omad*). This is the second Mecca. For circumambulation the enlightened King has come (Pers. *omad*). The chronogram from God has come (Pers. *omad*).”

Persian poetry instead of pure Qur'anic inscriptions may have been chosen for the mosque-cum-madrassa/khanaqah to possibly delude and distract the suspicions of the orthodox *ulema* who regarded Sūfism with deep suspicion. The poet's or patron's respect for and knowledge of *'ilm* indicated in the verses may have superficially satisfied the suspicions of the orthodox mind. All but one of the entries is in the *takhmis* or 'fiver' style. Using this technique, poets often

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<sup>533</sup> Analysis and discussion of the Persian inscriptions on the exterior of Mullah Shah Mosque with Dr. Sunil Sharma in Dec.'06, Cambridge, MA.

placed three of their own stanzas in front of each original *hadith* two-stanza line, creating a new five-stanza verse.

In the verses a guide has come to lead the lost hearts at the second Mecca where circumambulation takes place. These verses not only associate the Mullah Shah structure with Mecca and instruct disciples to duplicate the ritualized practice of circumambulation but they provoke thoughts of Prophet Muhammad as the Messenger, leader and guide for the devout. The artful references to the goblet and wine are metaphorical borrowings from Persian poetry<sup>534</sup> where through which Sūfism makes collaborative ties with traditional Islam to ensure salvation. According to 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani-spiritual founder of the Qadiriyyāh order, the Prophet was sent to mankind in order: 'To tear the veil of sorrow, to make the difficult easy, to push away the temptation of the hearts, to console the sadness of the spirit, to polish the mirror of the souls, to illuminate the darkness of the hearts, to make rich those who are poor in heart and to loosen the fetters of the souls'.<sup>535</sup>

When viewed from this perspective, the ability of the pīr and the princess to share in the Prophetic light takes on the air of theological imperative rather

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<sup>534</sup> Images of wine, fire and music are central to the "Khurasani" Sūfi tradition that the Chishtis of South Asia share with others in the wider Persian-speaking world in Afghanistan, Central Asia and Anatolia. However, the beloved, as the *Saqi* or handsome wine-pourer, offers not a routine cup of wine, but the royal goblet of Jamshed, the mythic Persian king whose magical goblet, when filled to the brim, reflected in its liquid face the entire world full of secrets. See, Scott Kugle, 'Qawwali Between Written Poem and Sung Lyric, Or . . . How a Ghazal Lives', *The Muslim World*, Volume 97, Issue 4, p 571-610.

<sup>535</sup> Annemarie Schimmel. *Muhammad is His Messenger: the Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p.135.

than simply ecstatic rhetoric. Jahan Ara had noted in her *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* that due to her spiritual ascension she should be perceived on the same mantle as the Prophet and other religious leaders.<sup>536</sup> From the earliest centuries of Islam, the Prophet has been depicted as the *siraj munir*, the shining lamp sent to humanity as a guide to the divine. As Annemarie Schimmel notes, Muslim theologians, as early as the eighth century, taught that 'through him the Divine Light could shine in the world, and through him mankind was guided to the origin of this Light'.<sup>537</sup>

The purpose of the 'fiver' classical technique, common in Islamic religious poetry, was to intensify, but not change, the original message of the work<sup>538</sup> and to make it easily readable by individuals whose knowledge of the Arabic language was limited, particularly in Kashmir, possibly even to mere knowledge of the alphabet and the basic concepts associated with vowelings. It is a collection that could be easily recited even by *tariqa* adherents who had a limited understanding of written Arabic, while actual meanings could be glossed by the presiding shaykh or pīr, Mullah Shah. This was a text possibly aimed for popular consumption, presenting Qadiriyyāh ideas in a simple and straightforward manner suitable for adepts with limited theological or mystical training. The literary device of grafting poetry with *hadith* on the Mullah Shah structure allowed a seamless appropriation of religious authority through secular means and allowed

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<sup>536</sup> See Chapter II, p. 21 of this work.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, p.184.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, p.183.

Jahan Ara Begum to represent her persona through traditional Islam's 'bullhorn' but in a nuanced Sūfi 'voice'.

Jahan Ara Begum and Mullah Shah may have chosen Kalīm's poetry primarily to distinguish the Sūfi center from traditional collegiate Islam where the verses serve as an appropriate medium to express the complexities of Sūfi thought and ideology particularly the duality of existence through simple terms to engage and invite disciples. Jahan Ara's choice also indicates the deliberate associations she made of traditional Islam to her own poetry and piety. In the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*, Jahan Ara concludes her Sūfi narrative with self-authored Sūfi poetry that expresses the duality of Mullah Shah's identity:

Panel: "The guide for the lost heart has come.

*Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*: "You, Mullah Shah, who have come, are the guide to my heart"

Panel: "The conquest of the hearts is all in His hands. The Beloved, to fill the goblet has come".

*Risala-i-Sahibiyāh*: "Oh, Mullah Shah, you are the Beloved who conquers and fills the hearts like empty goblets"

Banner representations of poetry on the exterior of the Mullah Shah mosque not only announce the presence of an exalted Sūfi pīr instead of an *ulema* orthodoxy but the inscriptions are testaments of Jahan Ara Begum's Sūfi piety, spiritual authority and literary prowess. The princess' sponsorship of

extensive hospice accommodations on the site underlines Jahan Ara's benevolence and humanitarian impulses that would solicit favorable opinion of the reigning sovereign and his legacy. Inscribing Persian poetry instead of Arabic verses from the *Qur'an* is a deliberate linking of Timurid traditions to Jahan Ara's patronage. During the Timurid era, the tendency to introduce Persian poetry appears to increase throughout the period, and it became widespread under the Safavids usually written in large *thuluth* script within well-defined borders and placed within view. Some inscriptions had 'veiled' meanings but the 'inner-message' was directly communicated by the poetic language.<sup>539</sup>

The Sūfi-devout was as humble in life as she was in death (d.1681) as conveyed on her final resting place. Jahan Ara's last architectural contribution was the design and inscriptions for her own tombstone [fig. 116a] located in the *dargah* of Nizam-ud-Din Awliya in Delhi. Though the cenotaph and tomb precinct is made entirely of white marble and enclosed in *jali-ed* screens, the simplicity of the open air tomb departs from her parent's lavish mausoleum in Agra and distinguishes her character and spiritual devotion from the Mughals that preceded her. Further, the inscriptions composed by the princess instructs those who will inter her remains and insists on her Sūfi 'lowly' status as a chevron of her spiritual achievements: 'Let nothing cover my tomb save the green grass, for grass suffices well as a covering for the grave of the lowly.'<sup>540</sup> The verses not only eulogize Jahan Ara's spiritual qualities and humility but are in conforming dialogue with the architecture in which she and her verses are contained.

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<sup>539</sup> Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilbur. *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), Vol.I, p. 210.

<sup>540</sup> Hasan, Z. *A Guide to Nizam-ud Din*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India 10 (Calcutta 1922), p. 16.

### **3.9.1 The Personalized ‘Details’ of Jahan Ara Begum’s Persona: Chahar Burj (1646) Lahore, Pakistan**

The analysis has largely considered Jahan Ara Begum’s mediation of authority and promotion of personal legacy through her patronage of sacred and secular sites in the imperially-significant cities of Agra, Ajmer and Kashmir in seventeenth century Mughal India. By default, Mughal commissions were crafted to politicize space and objectify legacy-building initiatives that supported imperial ideology and statecraft. Jahan Ara’s official commissions: congregation mosque at Agra and the Mullah Shah mosque in Srinagar clearly participated in projecting the ‘official’ persona of the princess while the princess’ smaller, intimate commissions of the Begum Dalan and the Nur-i-Ahat at Ajmer project and reveal the princess’ private and spiritual character and the connections she forged with women of her past, present and future as her contributions continued to operate in the Mughal machine. To further convey the details of the princess’ life we can add the Chauburji [fig. 119,120] gateway and garden complex built in 1646 in Lahore, Pakistan.

Unlike the Jahan Ara’s major monuments to both traditional and mystical Islam, the Chauburji in Lahore ‘speaks’ of a non-imperial woman from the Mughal past and possibly links Jahan Ara’s pattern of charitable acts with those of Timurid women from her ancestral roots. The analysis has critically examined Jahan Ara’s commissions and located the use of Shahjahani idioms and iconography that enlists and indexes the structures within the rubric of imperially-sponsored works. The Chauburj, however, is an example of a commissioned that mediated and conveyed the princess’ intimate inner workings and ‘enunciates’ less of the

official imperial ideology and more of the details of the princess' life, her emotional landscape and personal choices.

Like the Agra and Mullah Shah mosques and the Begeum Dalan, the Chauburj participates in orchestrating a 'gaze' and connection with the male-sponsored commissions nearby. The structure known as 'Chauburji' is located one mile south of and on axis to the Lahore Fort on Multan Road. A fragmentary inscription on the eastern gateway remains and indicates that the garden and gateway was built in 1646. According to this inscription [figs. 121,122] it was built by 'Sahib-e-Zebinda' (one endowed with elegance), 'Begum Dauran' (the lady of the Age) and was bestowed upon 'Mian Bai Fakhrunnisa' (the pride of the Ladies of the court). Mian Bai may have been one of Jahan Ara's female attendants who risked her life to save Jahan Ara during the burning incident of 1644. C. Asher in her survey of Mughal monuments cites a female called 'Miyan Bai' who may have been a high-ranking attendant and had commissioned a mosque in Ajmer in 1643 that is loosely modeled on Shah Jahan's mosque. Inayat Khan in his *Shahjahanama*, describes the heroic efforts of Jahan Ara's female attendants as they tried to douse the flames on the princess by using their bodies. Two days later, all three of the attendants had died from their fatal burn wounds.

The 'Lady of the Age' honorific had been assigned to only one Mughal female at the time of Chauburji's construction. The appellation is used with frequency in official histories and inscriptions and monuments to respectfully signify the head of the imperial harem and the keeper of the royal seal, Jahan Ara Begum. Historians have erroneously indicated Zebunissa, daughter of Emperor

Aurangzeb as the 'lady of the age' and the rightful patron of the complex. The fundamental reason for assigning Chauburji as Jahan Ara's commission is that it would have been challenging if not impossible for her niece Zebunissa, a mere six years old in 1646 to sponsor the Chauburji commission.

The name Chauburji has been derived from the four octagonal minarets [fig. 123] located at the four corners of the gateway structure and are reminiscent of the minarets found in Akbar's tomb, Jahangir's tomb, the Taj Mahal, the Khirki mosque and even engaged within the outer walls of Jahan Ara's Agra mosque. The decorative motifs and 'sober' arches are clear borrowings from the Wazir Khan mosque of 1637 [fig. 124] located nearby in Wazir Khan Chowk. The gate and garden connect the old bazaar of Anarkali to the outer precincts of Lahore and also locate the main access road leading to the Lahore Fort. The style of the gateway departs from the prevailing Shahjahani idioms and visual vocabulary that are employed in Jahan Ara's Agra mosque, the new capital of Shahjahanabad and in the improvements being made in 1646 to other significant Mughal sites in and around Lahore.

The Chauburji can be classified as a provincial Mughal style that is more Persianate in its overall design due to its blue and green glazed tile decorative panels, brick construction and the wide Persianate arches. The *Ayat-ul-Kursi* Qur'anic verse is inscribed in blue script and fired on porcelain tile on the western side of the gateway in a band that encircles the structure and continues to the other side. Above the main entrance arch are Persian verses that read: "This garden, in the design of paradise has been founded, (the next line is missing),

..The garden has been bestowed on Mian Bai, By the bounty and benevolence of Zebinda Begum, the lady of the age.”

Like the Begum Dalani portico and enclosure in Ajmer, the Chauburji is a testament to Jahan Ara’s benevolence manifest as both magnanimous and immediate. The structure is at once public and private. It stands at the nexus of the major roads entering Lahore from the outlying regions of Punjab and Sindh and ushers traffic toward the iconic presence of imperial power, the Lahore Fort. It is also specific, small and endearing in its dedication to one female attendant as a monumental gesture of gratitude from her princess.

### **3.9.2 Conclusion**

In the mid-seventeenth century, the accidental ‘empress’, Jahan Ara Begum ‘reified’ her spiritual and imperial authority through the patronage of major monuments and gardens, writings of Sūfi hagiography and a biographical treatise and acts of devotion at Sūfi sites. That the imprints of Jahan Ara’s authority are most visible on the principal urban and official centers of the Mughal empire: its two capitals at Agra and Delhi and two important spiritual and ephemeral centers: at Ajmer and Srinagar indicates her active participation in the practical socio-political aspects of the Mughal empire and the import she assigned to sustaining Timurid-Mughal legacy.

The architectural historian, Ebba Koch has maintained that the objective of visually recording, both in text and in monuments was instrumental for Shah

Jahan in conveying and advocating a Mughal imperial ideology serving as testaments of his reign and as memorials to his legacy:

“The reign of Shah Jahan emerges at a time when the visual arts were most consistently and most systematically explored as a means to represent the ruler and his state for a wider public and of providing a lasting memorial to his fame.<sup>541</sup> The emperor did not want to leave historiography to the historians, and the same was certainly true of its illustrations.”<sup>542</sup>

Jahan Ara’s prolific commissions throughout the empire clearly take their overall design and ideological cues from Shah Jahan’s advocating and recording his legacy through built form and ensuring it was read into perpetuity as a mirror to their inner workings. The details, design and function of Jahan Ara’s architecture can be read as a ‘collection’ of imperial symbols that link her imperial hierarchy not only to Shah Jahan but broadly defines it through other notable imperials both male and female. The Agra mosque fully participates in Shahjahani idioms but the Mullah Shah complex exhibits syncretic exchanges between high Islam and Sūfism and with iconic borrowings from Buddhism. The patronage of a Sūfi institution in the climate of Shah Jahan’s orthodoxy boldly advocates her support and piety for Sūfism and further, to Dara Shikoh through his Pari Mahal complex in Srinagar and the Chillie Shrine and madrasa in Thanesar. Nūr Jahan’s precedents clearly paved the way for Jahan Ara’s patronage but also allowed the

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<sup>541</sup> “Introduction,” *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford, 2001), xxvii.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, p.132.

princess to reclaim female patronage from promoting self-interest to ensuring legacy. Jahan Ara's tactful subordination of Nūr Jahan's previously ostentatious projects conveyed the functional and utilitarian aspect of her works that galvanized the princess' charitable and benevolent character.

Jahan Ara's deep devotion to Sūfism and folk traditions enhanced her reputation among the populace and allowed her to reclaim Timurid heritage and perpetuate as a function of her religiosity or by 'lighting the Lamp of the Timuria'. Though Jahan Ara's vision and personal wealth sustained and empowered her widespread network of monuments that far surpassed the limited undertakings of her predecessors, her endowments were made possible by Shah Jahan's generosity and as a result of the high esteem in which he held his daughter her construction projects were expedited. Additionally, the princess 'gendered' the literary landscape through her two Sūfi treatises and poetry. Jahan Ara Begum's literary and architectural contributions offer a field of analysis of her two personas – a spiritual authority in an elevated state of *pīri-muridi* and an imperial authority as the Begum Saheba – as functions of her piety.

The physical sites of the princess' visits and patronage mentioned in each of her treatises map and locate the princess' spiritual and imperial ambitions and her collective responsibilities to the sovereign and the Timurid-Mughal legacy and historicize her writings. Her sacred commissions in Agra, Srinagar and Ajmer were part of a consistent building objective through which the princess had hoped to 'construct' her spiritual persona that would convey her philanthropy, humanity and authority and thereby the sovereign's. Though precedents for

Jahan Ara's patronage are navigated through Nūr Jahan's contributions, the princess' visions of legacy were distinct in their objectives and functions and unmatched by that of any former Mughal female. Unlike Nūr Jahan's ostentatious architecture and self-centered objectives for her commissions, Jahan Ara's works in their stark simplicity and modesty spoke not only of the princess' humble attributes but emphasized the functional aspects of the architecture rather than a design specific objective. This approach emphasized Jahan Ara's humanitarian dispensation of charity to enhance the reputation of the royal family and contribute to the greater glory of Shah Jahan's reign, particularly since dynastic reproduction was not an option for the unmarried princess.

That Jahan Ara makes marginal architectural contributions ('Begum Dalan'i at Ajmer and garden renovations) to the Mughal landscape prior to completing her two Sūfi treatises in 1640, indicates the pivotal role mystical Islam played in facilitating the unmarried princess' broader participation in the socio-religious milieu of Mughal India while enabling hereditary claims to Timur's legacy. The urgency to make visible the empire's pietistic and benevolent face also resulted from Shah Jahan's repeated and failed attempts to reclaim his ancestral homelands in Balkh during which the loss of life was exponential. Jahan Ara's 'urgency' from 1644-1650 to contribute charitable projects may also be a form of retribution to give thanks to the populace who collectively participated in her recovery from her near-fatal burning wounds in 1644-1645.<sup>543</sup> The major commissions in Agra and Srinagar along with Jahan Ara's nineteen other

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<sup>543</sup> See Chapter I, pp. 59-62 of this work that describes Shah Jahan's emphatic search for a remedy to Jahan Ara's wounds. The emperor enlists and motivates the public in ensuring her recovery through prayers and well-wishes. He publicly and effortlessly distributes alms, charity and gold coins for this purpose.

commissions are visible in the sacred and politically significant Mughal landscape, not as veiled spectators representing private female devotion but fully participating in the empire-building objectives of Timurid-Mughal imperial ideology, historical memory, and enduring legacy. Jahan Ara's motivation for legacy inspired other imperial females to follow her example through their own major commissions. Between 1650 and 1652 three female-sponsored congregation mosques were commissioned in Shah Jahan's new capital of Shahjahanabad in or nearby Chandni Chowk by his wives and one by his granddaughter. Akbarabadi Begum Masjid (1650, no longer extant), Fatehpuri Masjid (1650), Sirhindi Begum Masjid (1650, mostly extinct) and the Zinat-ul-Masjid (1710) built by Aurangzeb's daughter located outside of the Chandni Chowk.

The *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* affords a vignette of an imperial woman's mystical journey through which she negotiated and legitimized her official identities and re-claimed her Timurid heritage. The dual assertions enabled Jahan Ara to sustain the Timurid legacy by "lighting the lamp" of the Timuria and to profess her piety as part of imperial ideology and practical politics. Jahan Ara's engagement with Sūfi practice attempts to bring a more nuanced and polyvalent understanding of mystical Islam, and women's place within it. The analysis of the *Risala-i-Sahibiyāh* personifies through Jahan Ara's agency the ambiguities of the feminine in Sūfi hagiography and provokes questions of how the framework of mystical Islam and its seemingly "female-centered" ideology may have enjoined an imperial female to cultivate, empower, and legitimize her dual persona while

exploiting protocols of patronage within the boundaries of Islamic paradigms and a world of patriarchy.

The mosque at Agra, the historical capital of the Mughals, uses in its design the official imperial Shahjahani idiom developed by her grandfather emperor Akbar. The nuanced details of the mosque incorporate a successful synthesis of Timurid, Persianate and Indian elements. In perpetuating the aesthetic imperial ideology of the Mughals, Jahanara asserts her imperial persona as Begam Sahib, the first lady of the court and crosses gender boundaries in comparison to the type of commissions undertaken by her Timurid/Indian female predecessors. The patronage of the Agra mosque is not only a donative act understandable in the seventeenth century spiritual landscape as an instance of a princess' piety but can be seen as an act of donation commensurate with similar acts by high-ranking imperial men and therefore aligning her 'unique' self-representation as fully consonant in the rank of the ruling milieu.

The Mullah Shah 'mosque-cum-madrassa/khanaqah in Srinagar, situated in a rural context displays an original aesthetic dialogue between Islamic and regional Hindu and Buddhist architecture of Kashmir and is more reflective of Jahan Ara's Sūfi affiliations and *pīr-muridi* persona than gender politics. Each commission enunciates the princess' personal and political objectives in the construction of empire and of Self while simultaneously advancing the lineage and heritage of dynastic rulership led by her male kin. Among Nūr Jahan's and Jahan Ara's commissions, signs of the high status of the donors are evident as expressions for self-representation and visually enunciate the monument as personal

promotion through the donative traditions established in earlier Timurid and Mughal generations. Nūr Jahan's and Jahan Ara's matronage conforms to the earlier models of Timurid and South Asian donative acts. The commissions of earlier Timurid imperial females established precedents for later Timurid-Mughal female patronage of major commissions that marked a physical place of personal promotion in the donative tradition while 'chasing' legacy.

The treatise conveys Jahan Ara's personal engagement with Sūfi practice. Though in her imperial persona, Jahan Ara functions as Shah Jahan's 'consort queen', she uses the feminine form of the word *faqira* to signify her spiritual vocation as a common and lowly Sūfi devout. Jahan Ara clearly regarded Chishti as the supreme Sūfi saint of India. At the same time she also remembers her living Sūfi master, Mulla Shah, thus illustrating the easy coexistence of dual initiations. Her pilgrimage to Ajmer was timed to coincide with Chishti's death anniversary and at his tomb she performed the customary rituals that are still carried out at Sūfi *dargahs*. The treatise affords an interesting glimpse into the practice of Sūfi piety among the royal class as physical and present and not practiced through emotional ideology. The emotional and impassioned account at the Ajmer *dargah* by Jahan Ara, both in its content and by its uniqueness, draws attention to the difficulty of eliciting the role of women in the practice of Sūfism and Islam through historical documentation alone without details and the historical context of their spirituality.

## THESIS CONCLUSIONS:

The sum of the thesis' objectives are to index Jahan Ara Begum's life within Timurid-Mughal female historiographies (Chapter I), meeting imperial obligations of visible piety through Sufism (Chapter II) and further showing the 'benevolent' and pietistic face of the sovereign through sacred and charitable commissions (Chapter III) through female agency. What each chapter conveys through Jahan Ara Begum's agency and negotiations is that the history of the Timurid-Mughal women was most probably an element of society not often recognized for the uncertainty they represented and that their ambiguous and multiple roles and level of accountability were not analyzed due to a lack of primary source material to render them active participants in the royal house or as part of sustaining the sovereign. Emperor's histories are silent on the matters of women except where domestic duties are concerned and then only marginally mentioned. Jahan Ara Begum's two Sufi treatises: *Risala-i-Sahibiyah* and *Munis-al-Arvah* have served this research in substantiating the details of royal women's accountability and crucial contributions for maintaining the emperor and empire.

The *Shahjahanama* is the first of its kind as an emperor's biography that not only mentions Jahan Ara's activities but details them with a level of accuracy. The authenticity of the biography is substantiated by the princess' own writings and patronage as well as in the writings of her brother Dara Shikoh and the biographer of her Sufi pir, Tawakul Beg. Most primary Mughal sources besides Gulbadan Begum's

*Humayun Nama*, have certainly allowed general outlines of biographical sketches of royal females but are devoid of personal details that might suggest the inner workings, personal passions or personalities of these imperial women authors and/or how the attributes that are listed may have been a crucial component of court ideology, statecraft and self-representation through political acts or royal commissions. Jahan Ara's role at the nexus of religion and female authority reveals the manner in which religious belief systems are 'reclaimed', reformulated and even 'neutralized' in the patriarchy to facilitate one royal female in sanctioning her representation as a new female archetype that has not been considered in earlier historiographies and in the case of Nur Jahan, not considered kindly. A closer study of imperial Muslim women's personal lives and conditions is vital in understanding the connections between their personas and the monarchy and in making them not just visible but intrinsic to the imperial designs of Mughal courts and not simply the eroticized, vacuous, power-monger portrayals of early modern historiography.

Jahan Ara's Sūfi treatises provide new source material from which to reevaluate and enrich the existing canon on Mughal history where religiosity is not only an imperial obligation but used to sanction and elevate an unmarried princess' imperial and spiritual authority. The contents of the treatises in an emboldened female 'voice' forces a revision of the marginalized, anecdotal, poetic and abstract accounts of Muslim medieval women in Mughal sources and by modern historians. The biographical sketches of imperial females has been relegated an area of study that is classified as 'specialized or minor' or dismissed altogether as trivial and non-conforming to historical accounts in male biographies and therefore, considered outside of its proper historical context. It is clear from Jahan Ara's narratives that we not only learn about her own

conflicts and negotiations to search for an alternative practice and ideology of Islam but also gain insight and are privy to the emperor's religious contradictions. Royal women's private lives were just that, however, they were privileged by their access and immediacy to the emperor and his inner and outer turmoil. To gain an understanding of the mighty rulers as less than absolute, humanizes their personas and creates a more nuanced understanding of their kingship. Each Mughal emperor's memory has been sustained through his detailed biography but they are official recordings and in the case of Shah Jahan, the details are meticulously crafted by him to convey an image of emperor and empire that may not be synonymous with the reality of his lived experience and or the fine textures of his persona and character. The vehicle of Jahan Ara's person and writings allow a deeper and more compelling understanding of the emperor, empire and his 'consort queen'.

Timurid-Mughal imperial ideology and statecraft were designed to fortify the sovereign's political omnipresence by 'marrying' state to household and further state to God through female agency. Jahan Ara's spring board to her representation was an imperative and an imperial charge. Unlike Nur Jahan who dismisses spiritual accolades from her ambitions and crosses the gender lines into 'masculine' frameworks in her pursuit of power. Jahan Ara, living concurrent to her aunt Nur Jahan, seemingly remains within the restrictions of her gender though the princess artfully expands, modifies and exploits these strictures to meet the requirements of imperial etiquette and social norms. Further through Jahan Ara's treatises and contributions we learn that though the ruling house required public 'professions' of the empire's religiosity and sanctity through female acts of piety, patronage and support for Sūfi saints and their institution, in the princess' case it was not a perfunctory act. Jahan Ara's participation in forging the 'vision' of imperial

legacy made the contributions of the *haram* accountable and broadened her responsibilities beyond the charge of dynastic reproduction and as a 'keeper' of imperial genealogies. Jahan Ara's active participation as a 'spiritual agent' of the state modified and reclaimed the charge on her gender to reproduce and sustain dynastic lines. The calculated triangulation of the imperial female-Sūfi-Emperor relationship, with the sovereign at the pinnacle, ensured legitimacy of the reigning emperor and sustained pre-Mughal and Timurid patterns of Sūfi-Sovereign alliances and preserved the patriarch Timur's cultural and historic legacy.

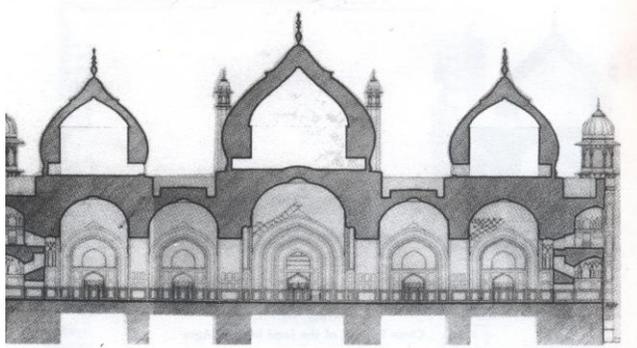
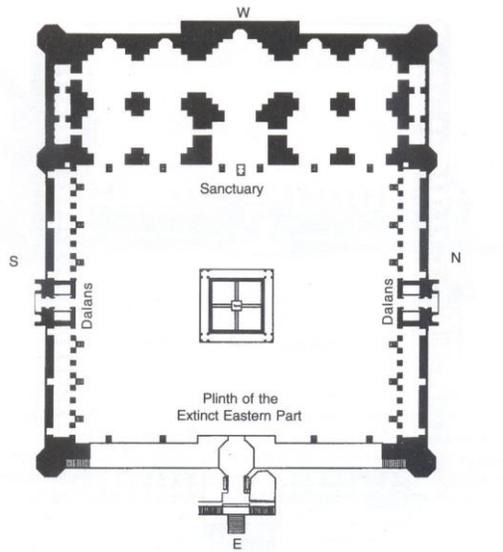
Jahan Ara's choices of her representation and her contributions were intricately woven with and complemented the initiatives of Shah Jahan. The princess' quest to seek an alternative site for her spirituality was influenced and provoked by Shah Jahan's socially and politically charged 'Timurid-Renaissance' initiatives and Dara Shikoh's persuasions that privileged female agency in Sūfi history and theosophy. To sustain a legitimate Timurid connection was paramount to Shah Jahan's visions of his sovereignty. Jahan Ara is conscious of this making these links when in the *Risala-i-Sahibiyah* she conveys the success of her religiosity within the Qadriyah order: "In the family of Amir Timur only we two brother and sister are honored by this enlightened happiness. In our family no one took the step on the path to seek God or the truth." The Sufi princess and her spiritual success enables her to make links with the Mughal past and make claims to unprecedented achievements in the temporal and other-worldly realms. This achievement sustains the imperial Persian titlature of *Shahanshah*, King of Kings within all realms and to all people.

The 'populist' dimension of Jahan Ara's sacred patronage supported both traditional Islam and its mystical branch and suggests that she understood the powerful mediating role of architectural patronage in 'constructing' and projecting a charitable and favorable public opinion for her authority and that of the sovereign's. She gains this pattern of promotion from her father the emperor whose imperial ideology is tightly woven into and promoted through his architectural ambitions. All of Jahan Ara's major and minor commissions are built in proximity to and within the sight lines of a Mughal emperor. The dynamics that result from viewing the princess' works in conjunction with the monuments of imperial males both present and past is deliberate and designed to perceive and locate Jahan Ara's imperial hierarchy alongside the emperor's. This duality of perceiving the mistress and master simultaneously as one and as complementary halves that ensure a harmonious and just rule is the construct of power that is predicated on the details of Shah Jahan's imperial ideology and notions of kingship.

Some questions that have not been answered in this work but are considerations for future research in this area are: To what extent did Jahan Ara Begum participate in the practical social, religious and imperial politics of her day as her own agent or as the agent of the emperor and her imperial retinue? Within this query are the questions of patronage. Was the planning and design of the Agra and Mullah Shah mosque and its details entirely in the hands of imperial artisans who had worked on Shah Jahan's monuments or did the princess actively monitor and participate in the design decisions of the buildings? What role did Dara Shikoh play in Jahan Ara's political and spiritual authority and were they also serving him as the heir apparent and thwarting the efforts of their youngest brother Aurangzeb? Jahan Ara is given unprecedented leeway in her diplomacy and actions. The contentious relationship between Aurangzeb and Dara

Shikoh and Shah Jahan was abundantly clear. Was Jahan Ara used by patriarchal bureaucracy or was she acting on her own behalf to ensure that the exchange of power would privilege Dara Shikoh? These and other questions regarding the women of Mughal history can only be answered when their histories are complete and not compromised and more primary source material emerges to fully explore their lives and contributions.

**FIGURES**



Figs. 1 and 2: Plan and Section Elevation of Agra mosque (1648)



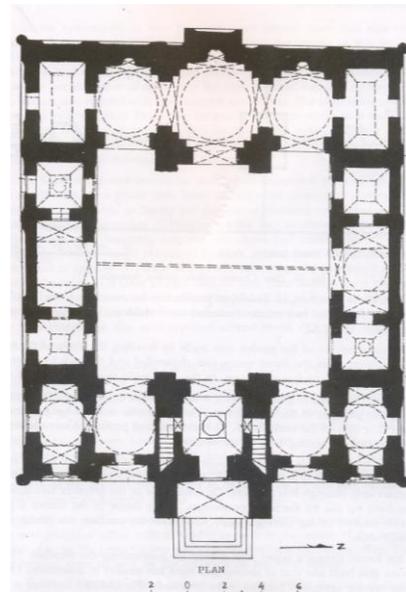
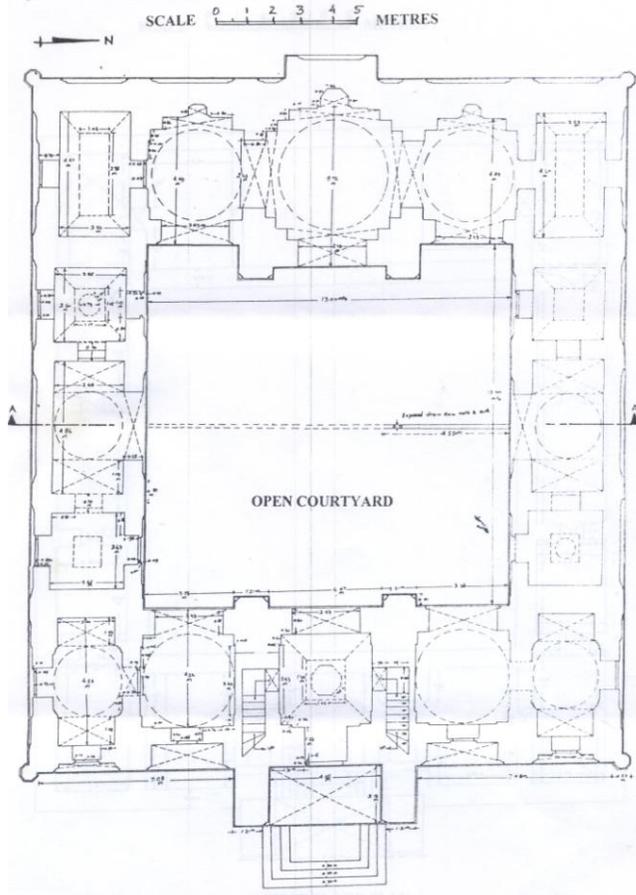


Fig. 3: Mullah Shah Mosque Plans: Schematic and Dimensioned Plans

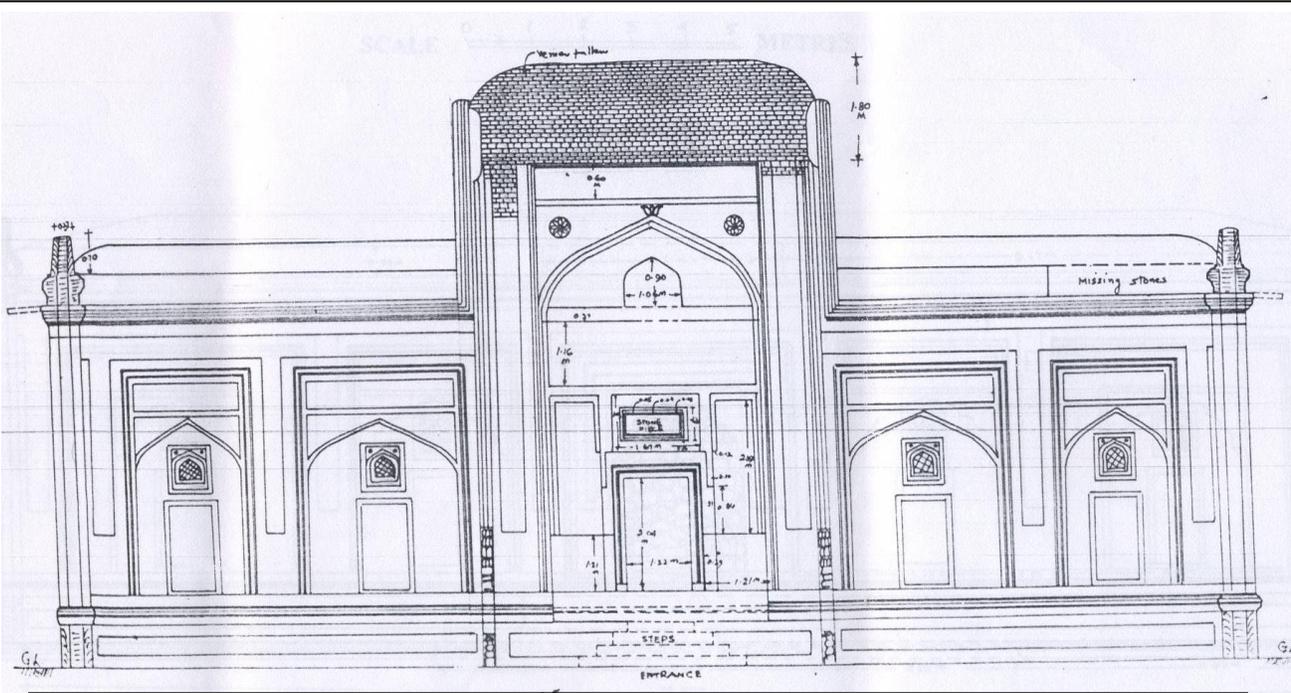


Fig. 4: East Elevation @ Entrance of Mullah Shah Mosque

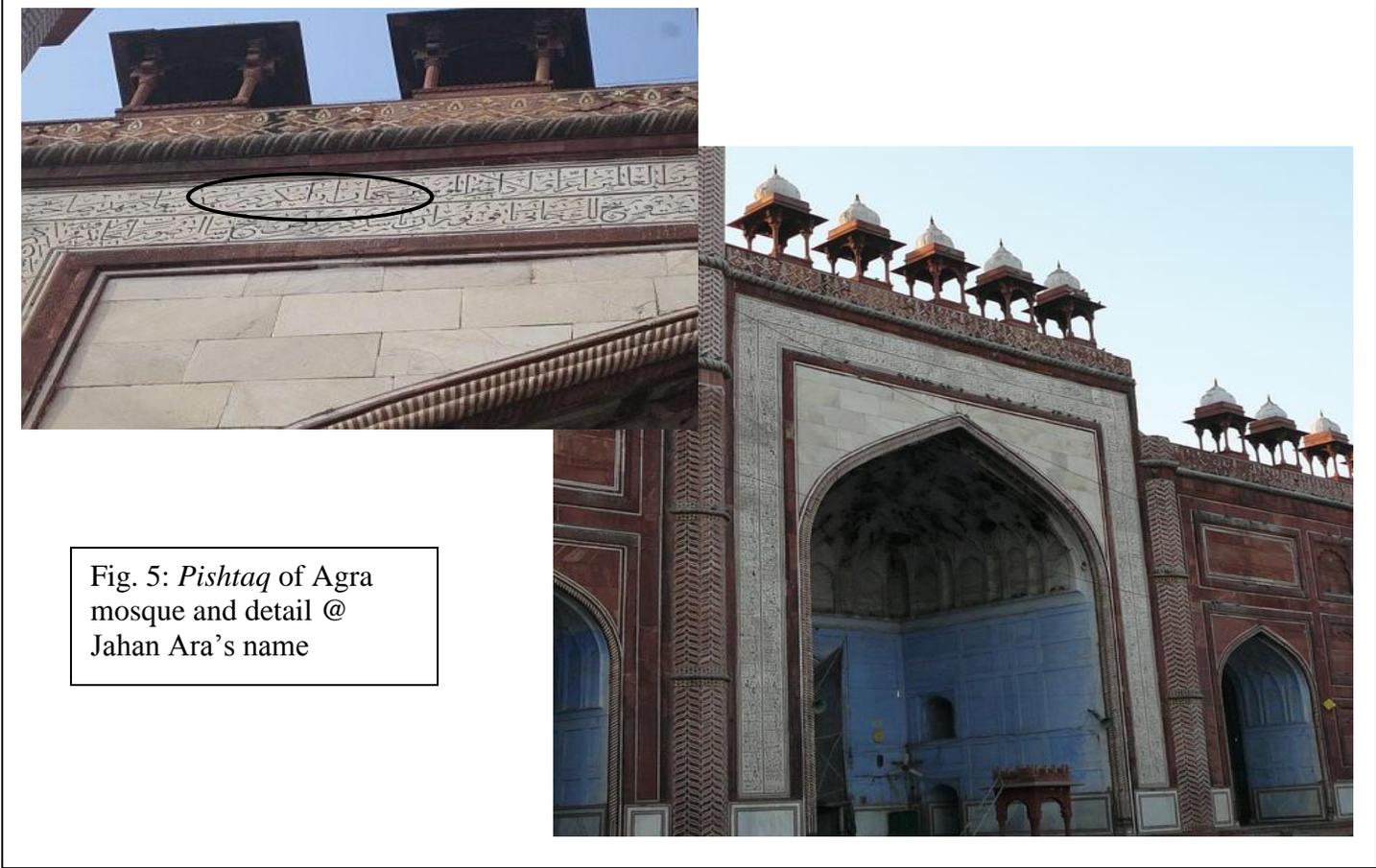
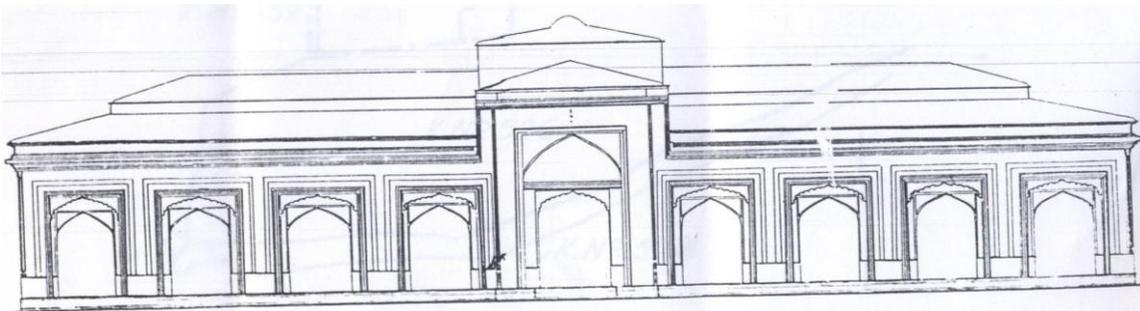
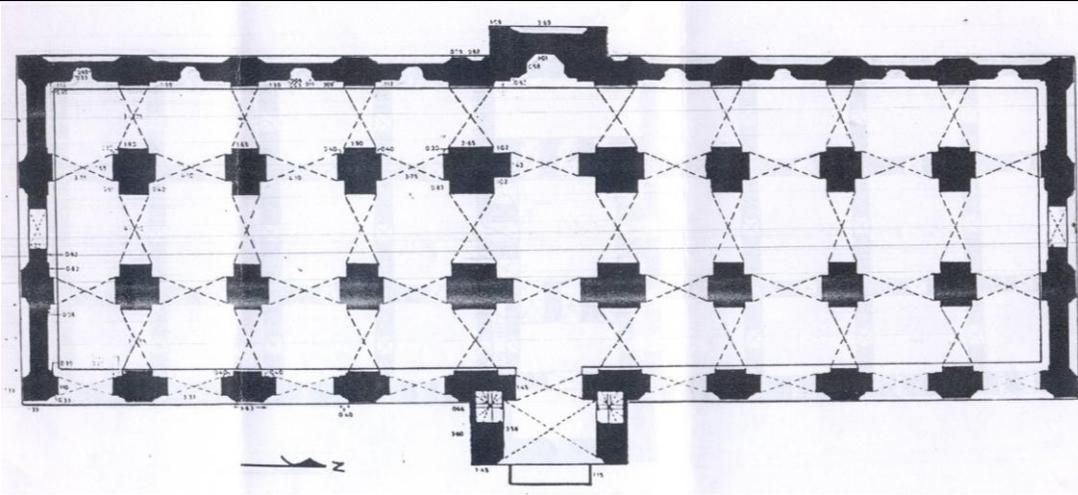


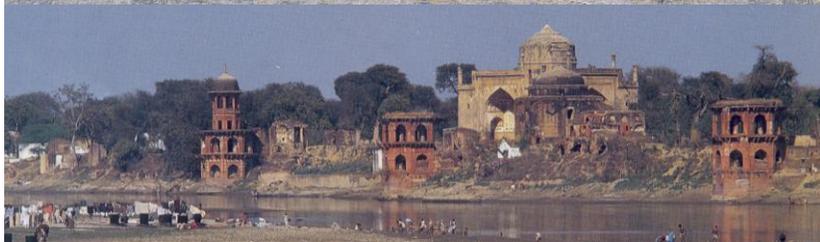
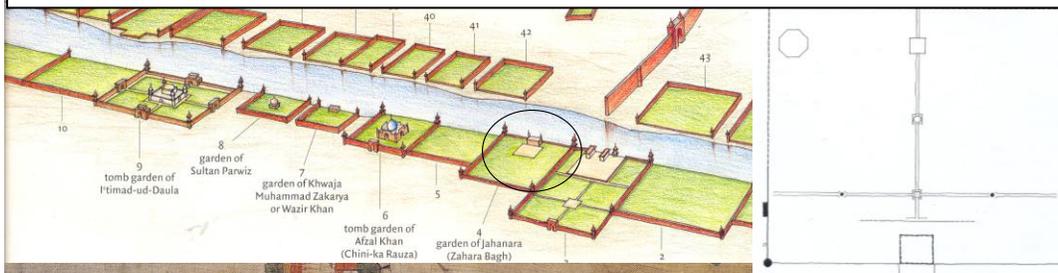
Fig. 5: *Pishtaq* of Agra mosque and detail @ Jahan Ara's name



Figs. 6 &7: Patthar Mosque Plan and East Elevation



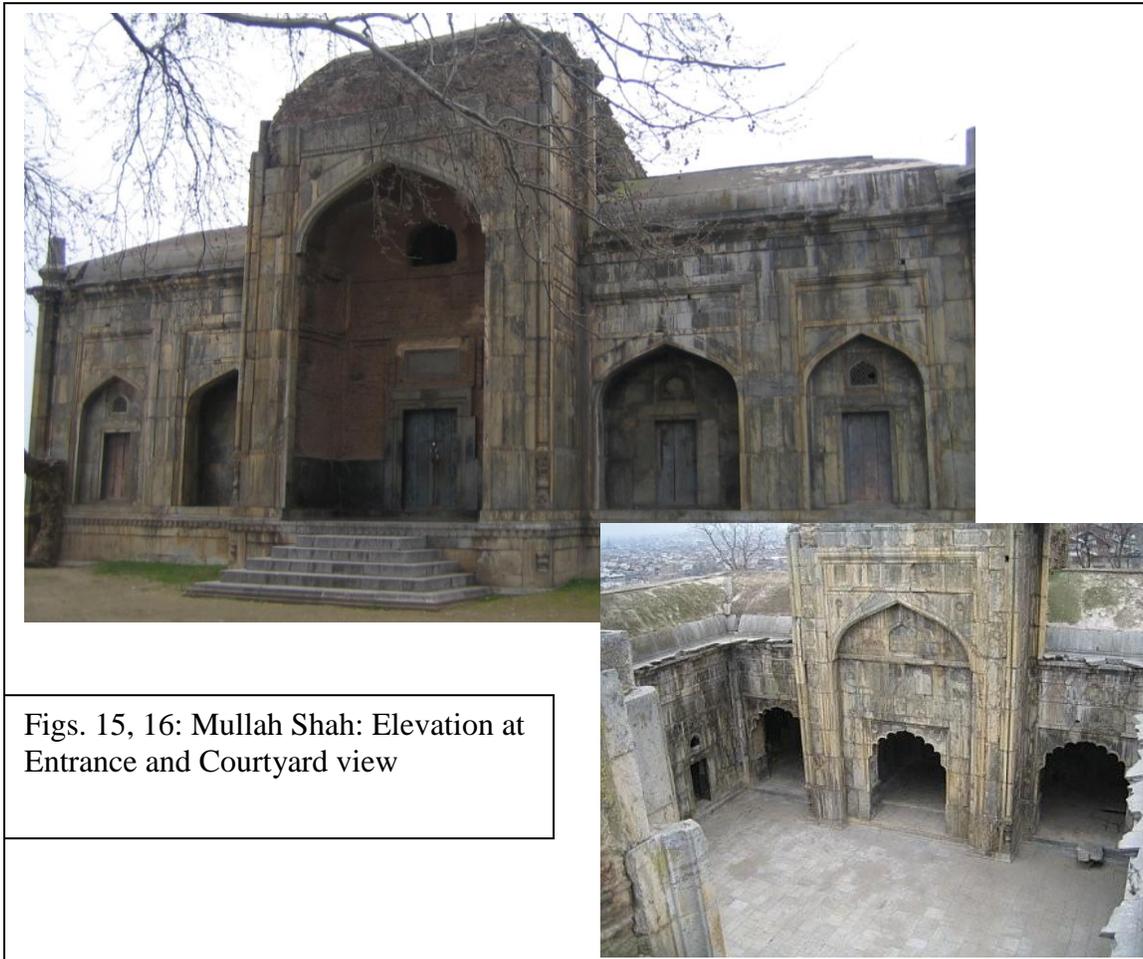
Fig. 8: Patthar Mosque Elevation Perspective



Figs. 9-12: Schematic drawing of aerial view of waterfront gardens in Agra, schematic drawing of Zahara Bagh, cloth map of waterfront gardens in Agra, waterfront garden elevation photo



بصاحبة الزمانی بیگم صاحبه : مخلص عقیدت کیش ، بعد ادای  
 مراسم کورنش و تسلیم و امضای مراتب تعظیم و تکریم ، بعرض عالی  
 می رساند که چون اخلاص سرشت ، پانزدهم شهر حال ، بمنزل ابیاله  
 رسید ، آنقدر نزول باران رحمت الهی ، با باد تند واقع شد که شرح آن  
 متعذر است ، چنانچه آب باران در دایره تا بزوال رسید ، نهایتش ، چون باغ  
 سرکار قدسیه متصل خیمه بود ، بسبب کثرت گل ولای و وفور آب که  
 تا دور در مقرر خیمه جا گرفته بود ، در عمارت باغ مذکور ، مثل کنجشک  
 آشیانه گرفت و در ظل ظلیل عظمی آن صاحب مهربان ، آسایش گزین  
 گردید و شکر عنایات عالیه بجا آورد و هر چند اجازت درآمد باغ را ، از  
 جناب عالی حاصل نکرده بود ، لیکن از آنجا که عدم دخول آن مکان ،  
 باوجود چنین شدت باران و طغیانی آب ، مستلزم گرانی خاطر مبارک تصور  
 نموده ، بلا توقف داخل باغ شد و این معنی را باعث رضامندی و خرسندی  
 مزاج و باج پنداشت - بعد دو مقام کوچ کرد و روانه مقصد گردید -



Figs. 15, 16: Mullah Shah: Elevation at Entrance and Courtyard view

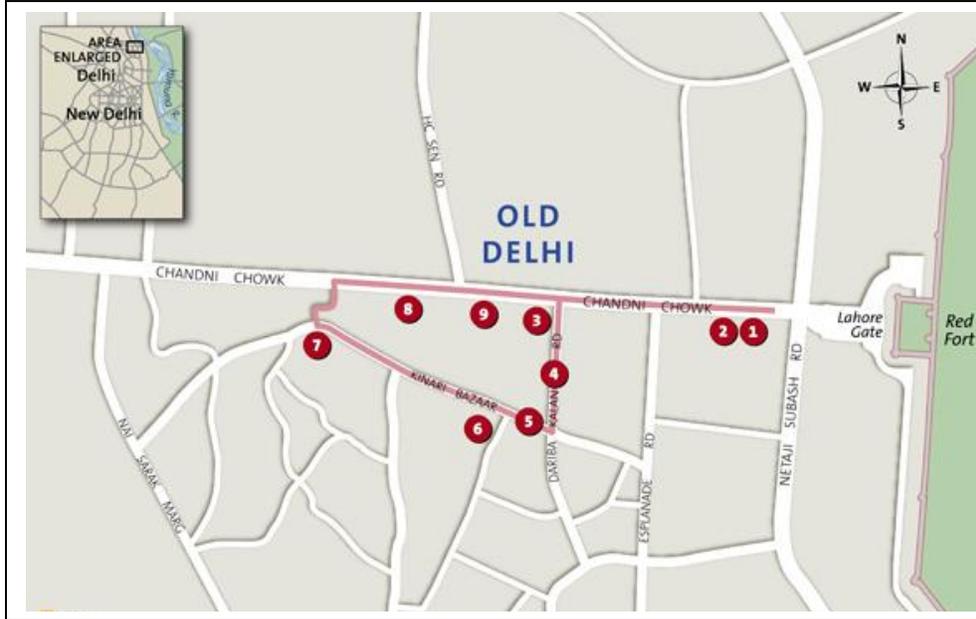
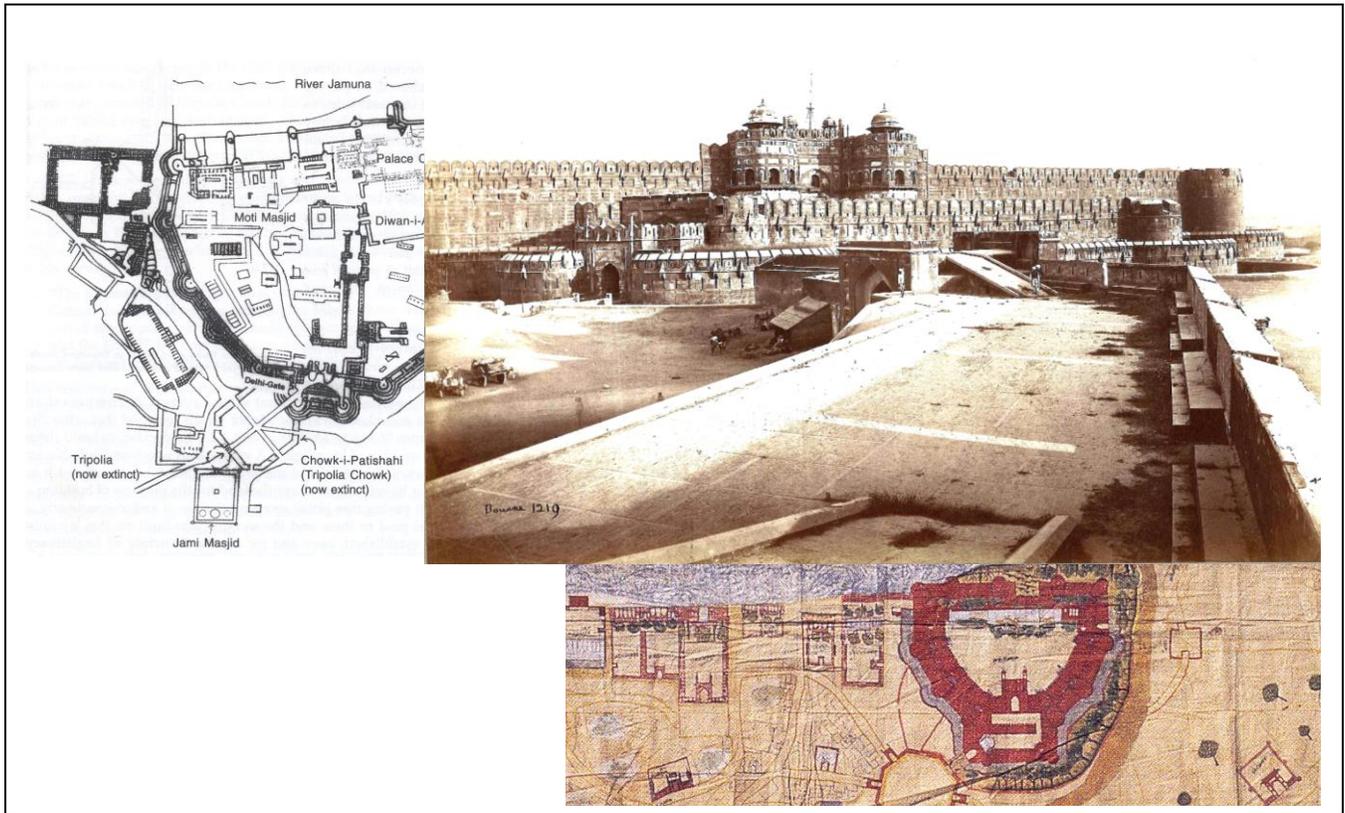


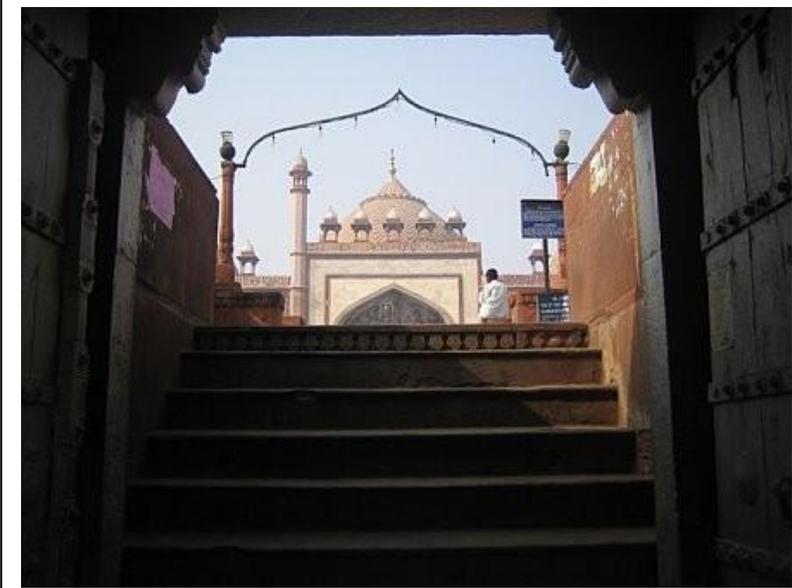
Fig. 16a. City Plan of Lahore Fort and connection to Chandni Chowk



Fig. 16b Serai Nur Mahal, (1618-19) Jalandhar



Figs.17,18: Agra Fort Plan and partial wall photo of Tripolia/Baghdadi forecourt enclosure



Figs.19-21: Views of entrance to Agra Mosque pishtaq, view looking back toward bazaar, detail view of multi-cusp arch at entrance to stairway

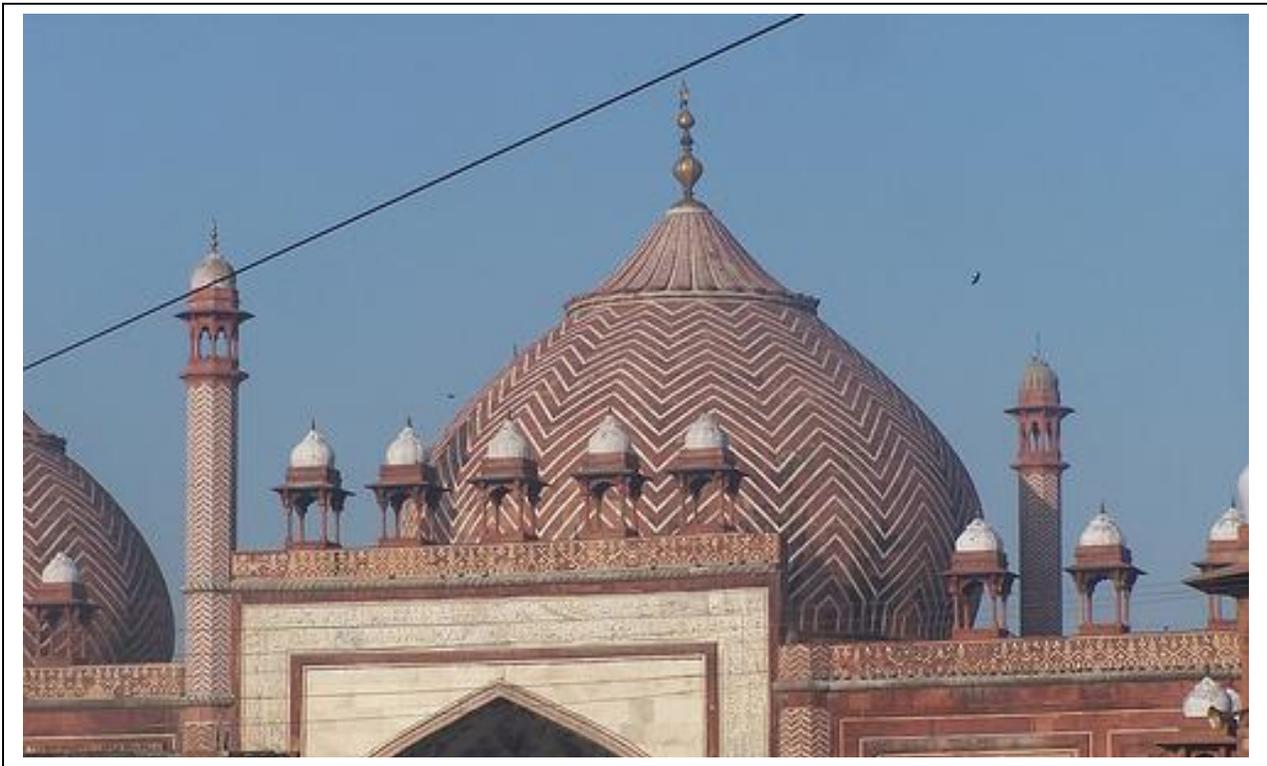
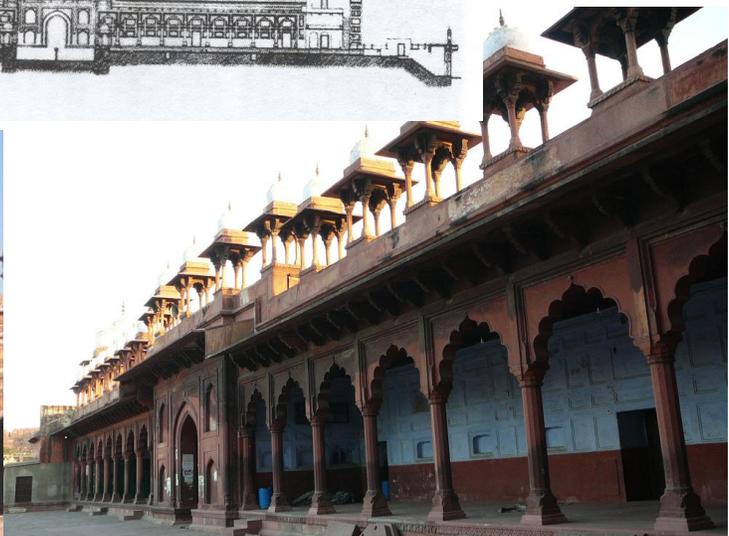
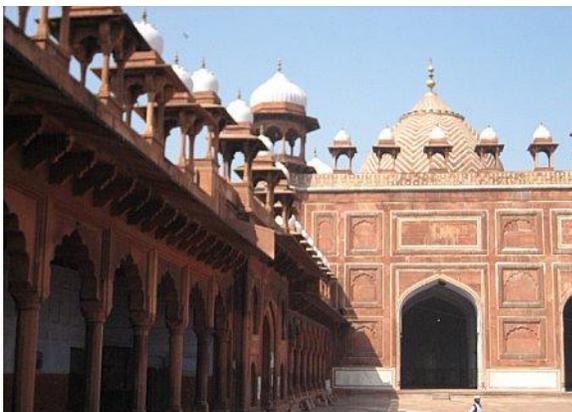
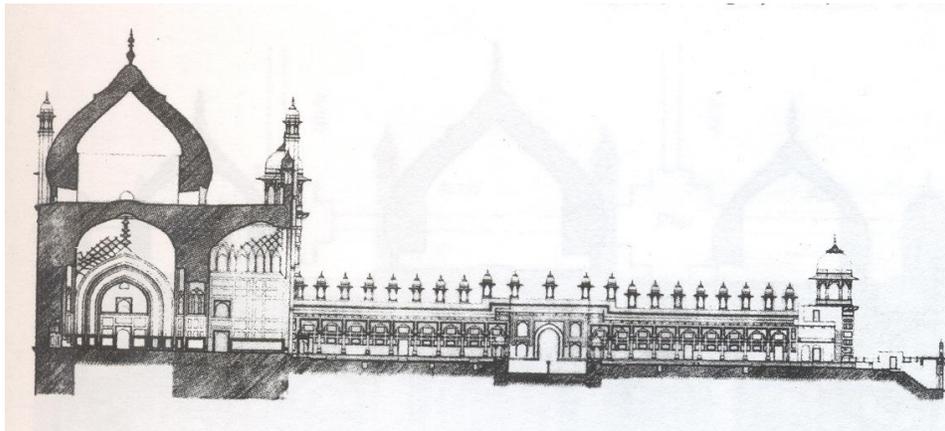
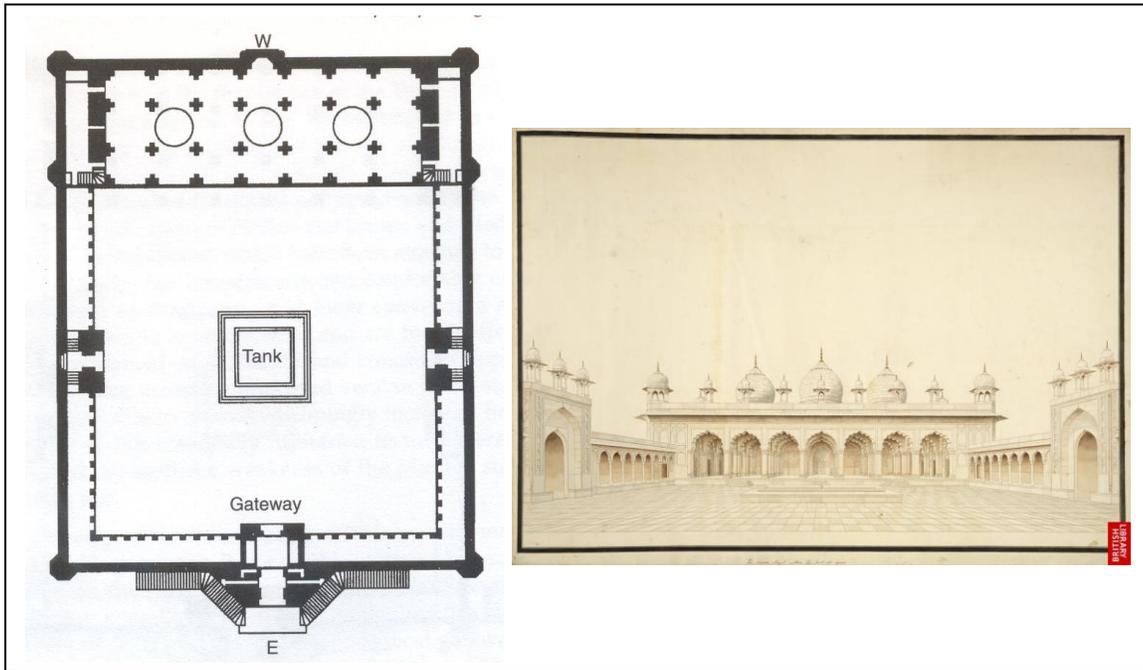


Fig. 22: Detail view of chevron patterned domes of Agra mosque



Figs. 23-25: Agra mosque section elevation of dalan, view of north and south dalans



Figs. 26, 27: Moti Mosque Plan and Elevation at interior courtyard



Fig. 28: Delhi mosque elevation at pishtaq leading to mihrab

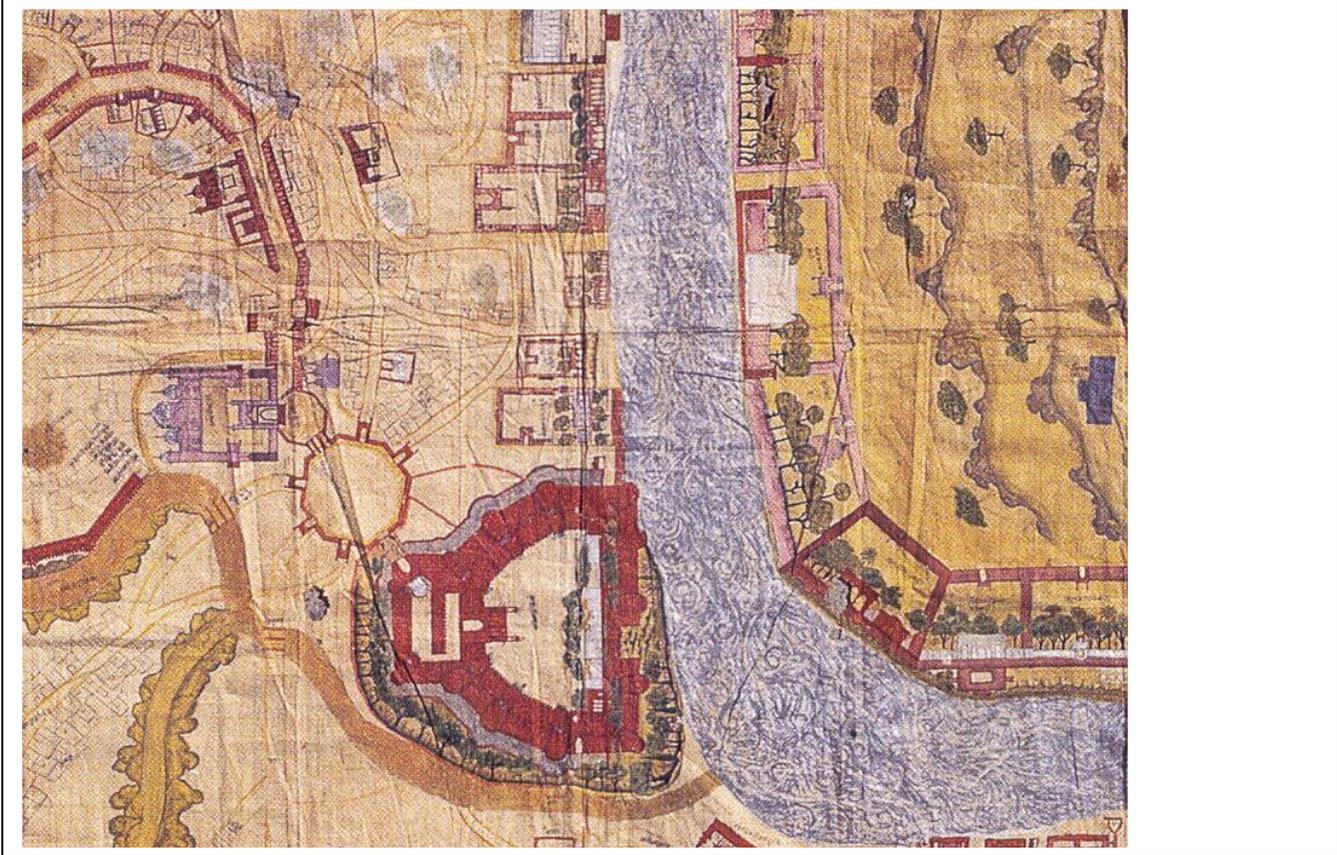


Fig. 29: Detail of Cloth Map of Agra Fort (1720)

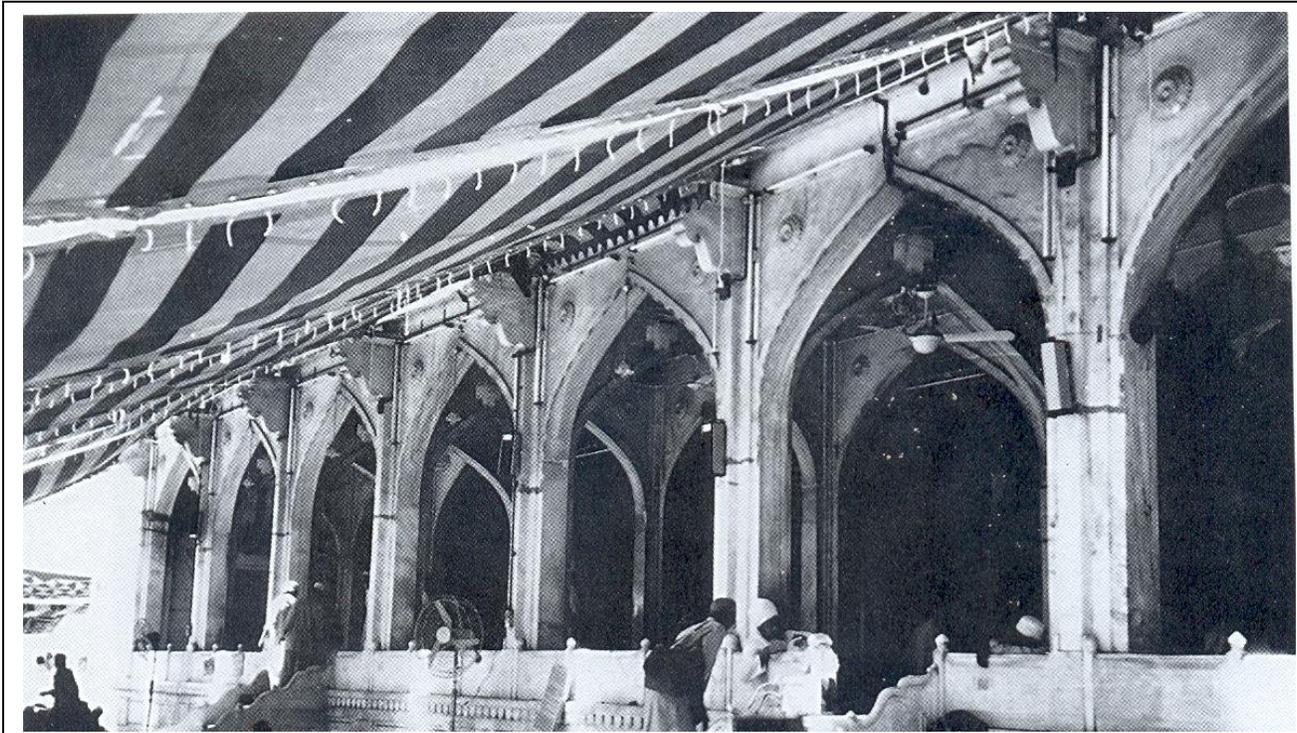
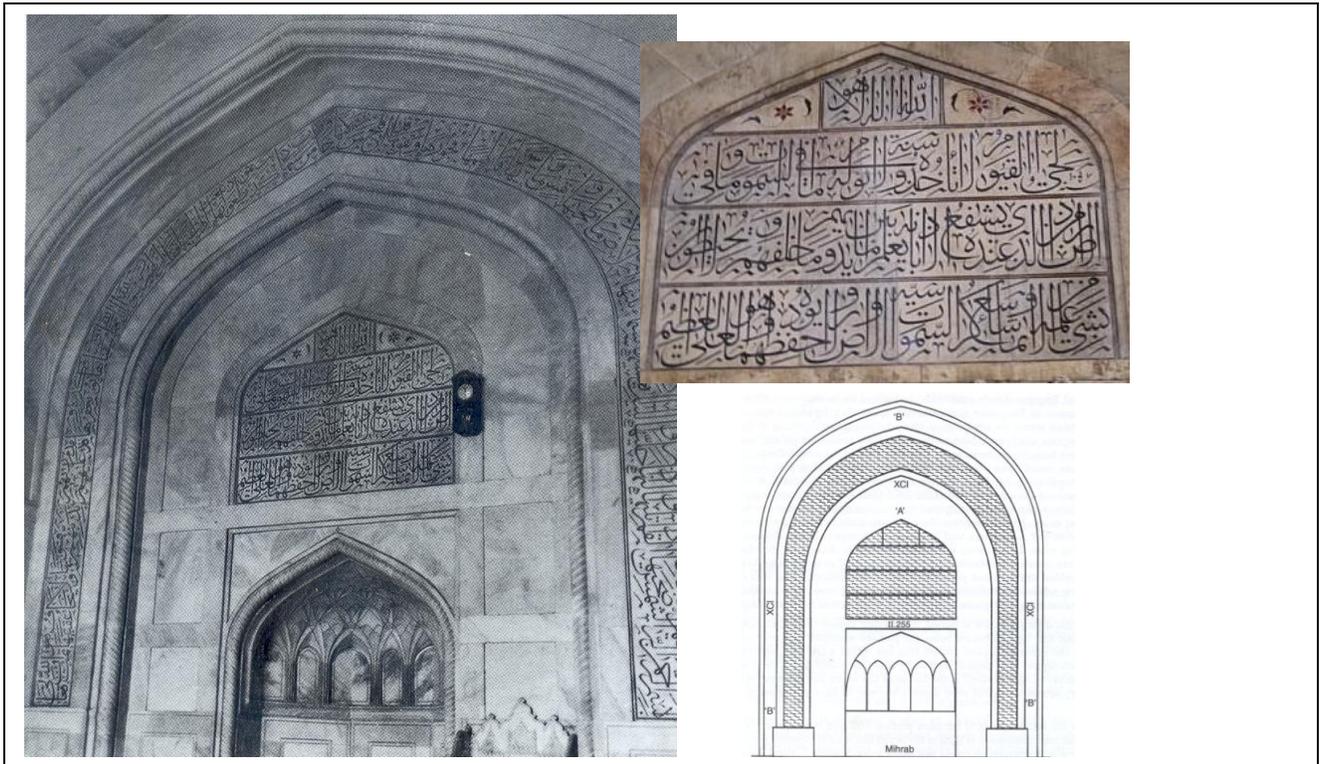


Fig. 30: Ajmer Mosque: Front Elevation



Figs. 32-34: Agra Mosque: mihrab arch and schematic diagram of superimposed arches at mihrab

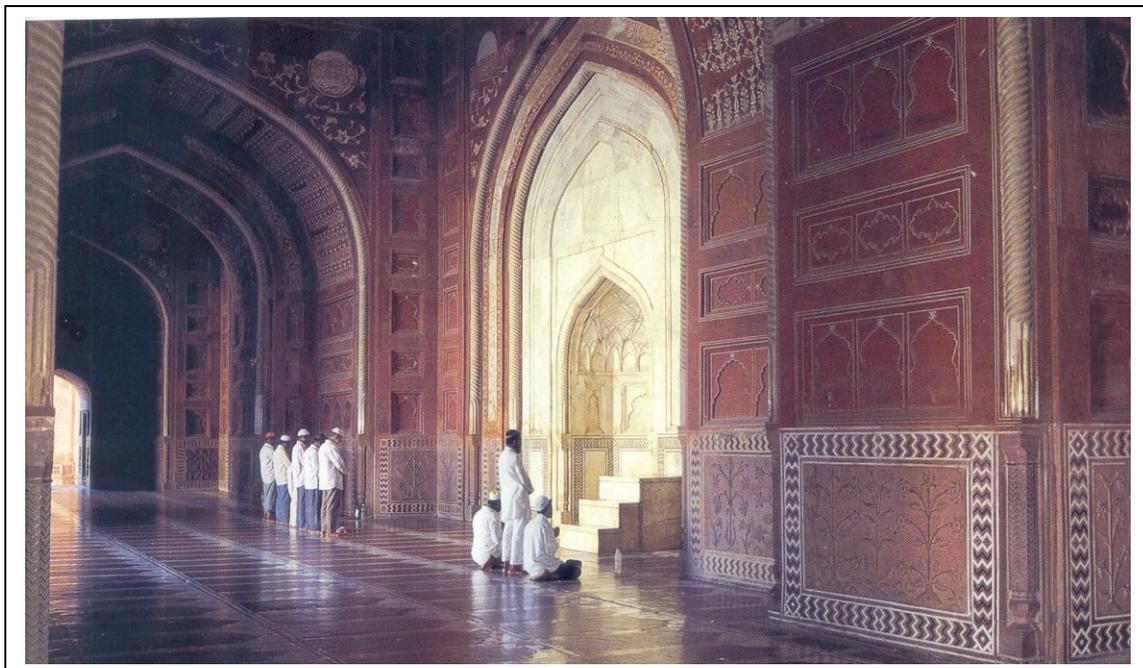
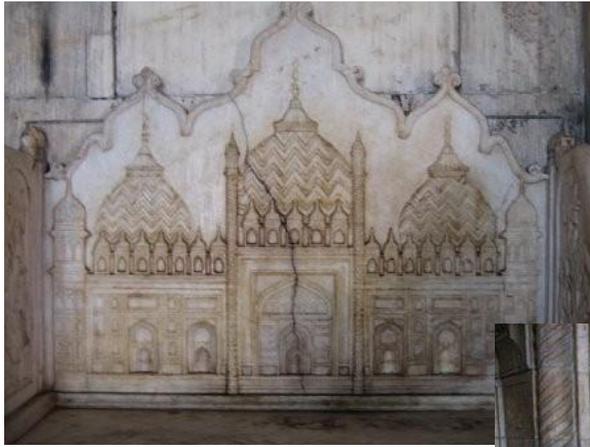


Fig. 35: Taj Mahal Mosque: interior view at mihrab showing prayer mat outlines



Figs. 36-37: Agra Mosque: minbar and detail of mosque elevation in marble



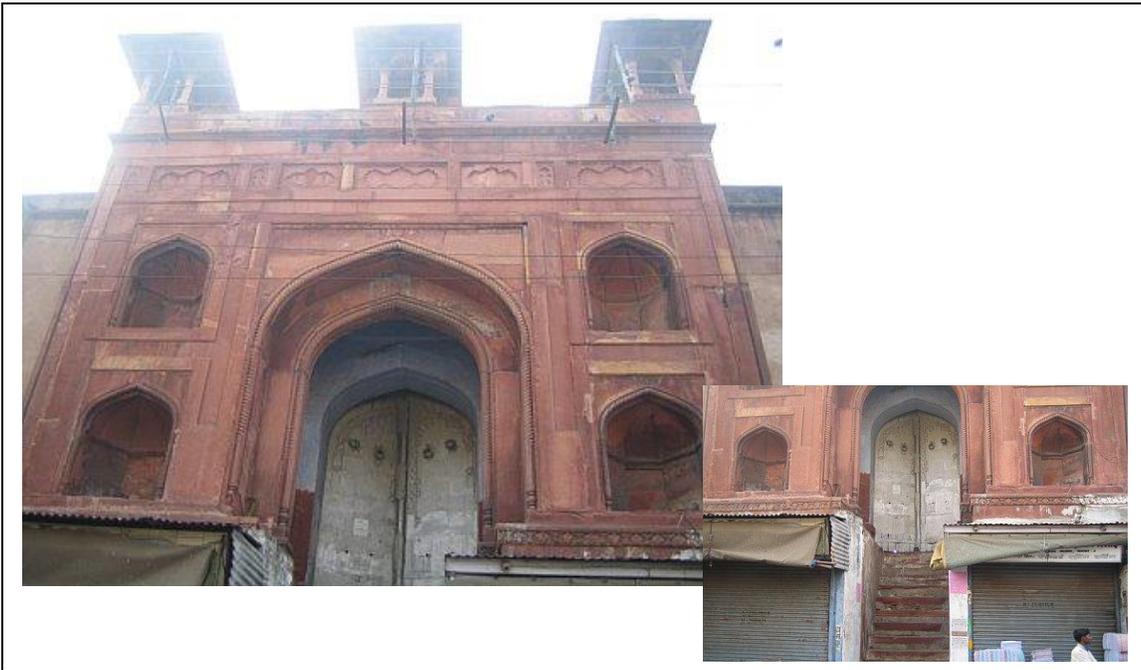
Figs. 38, 39: Taj Mahal mosque: Detail view of red sandstone prayer mat sections



Fig. 40: Agra mosque: detail of pishtaq arch with engaged guldasta vase at the base



Fig. 41: Shahjahani 'broken' baluster column



Figs. 42,43: North gateway at exterior elevation from street bazaar

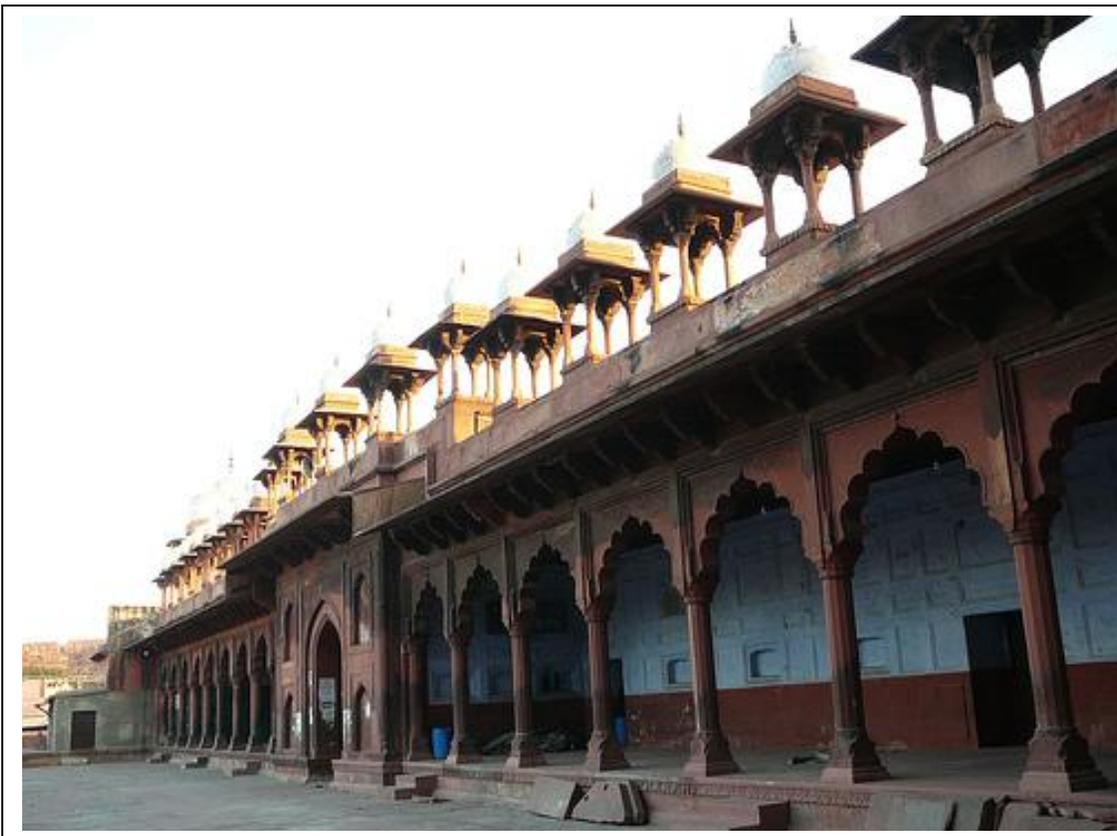


Fig. 44: South dalan chattri and chajja details

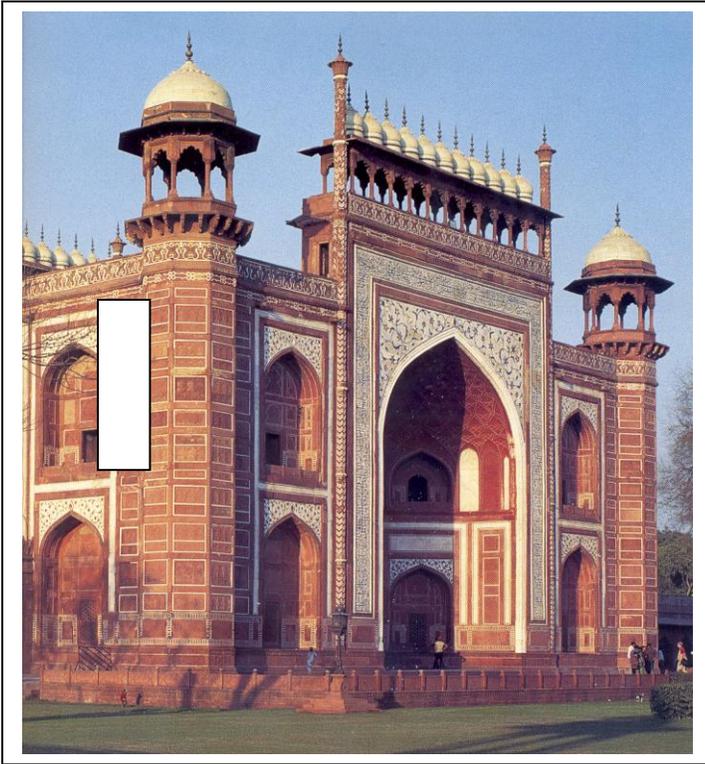


Fig. 45: Taj Mahal main gateway entrance

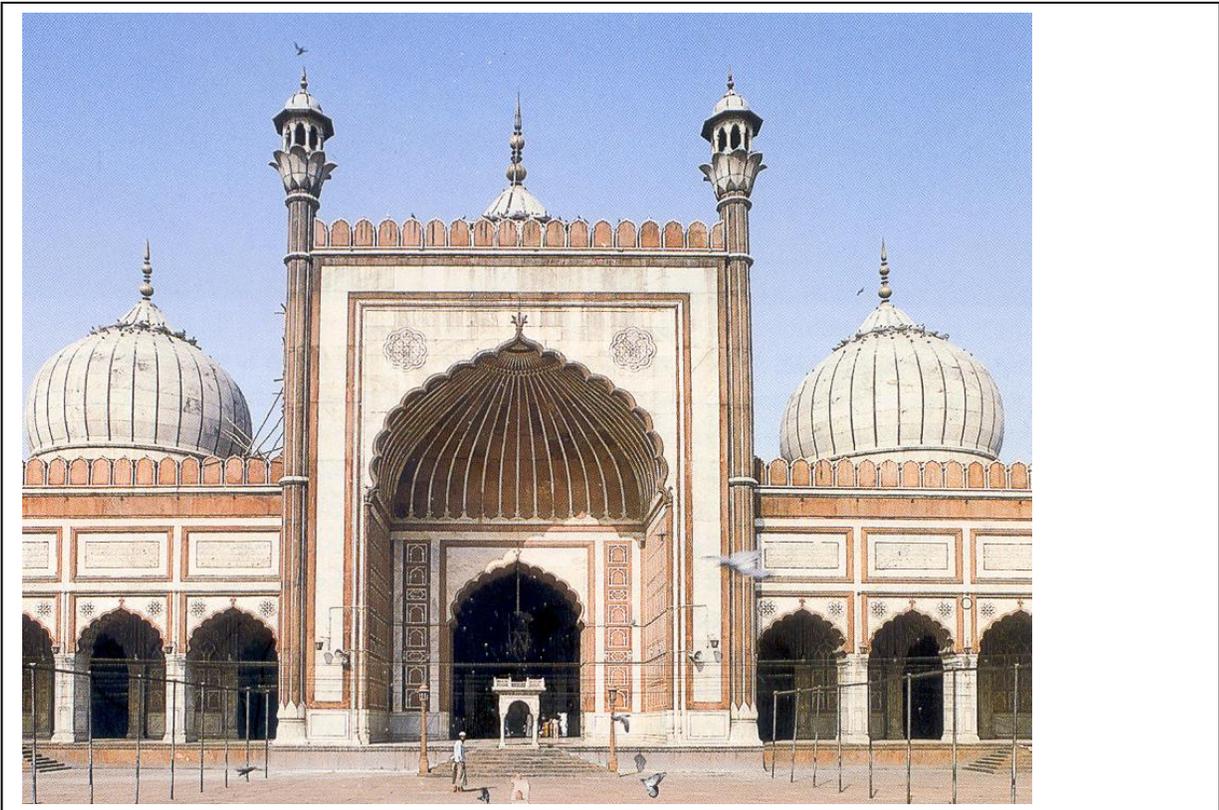
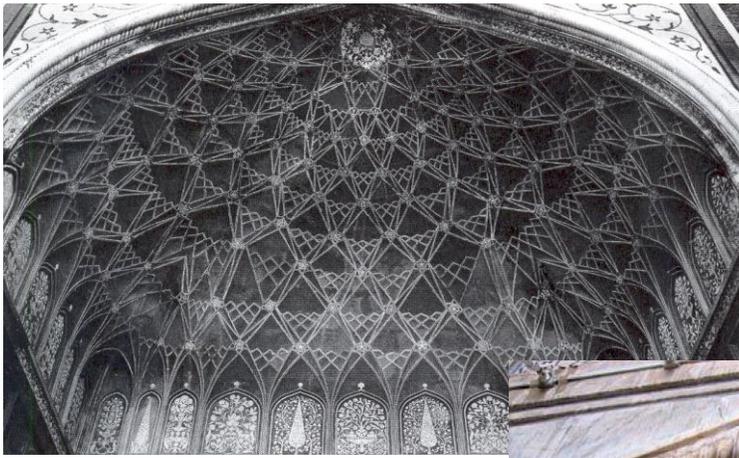
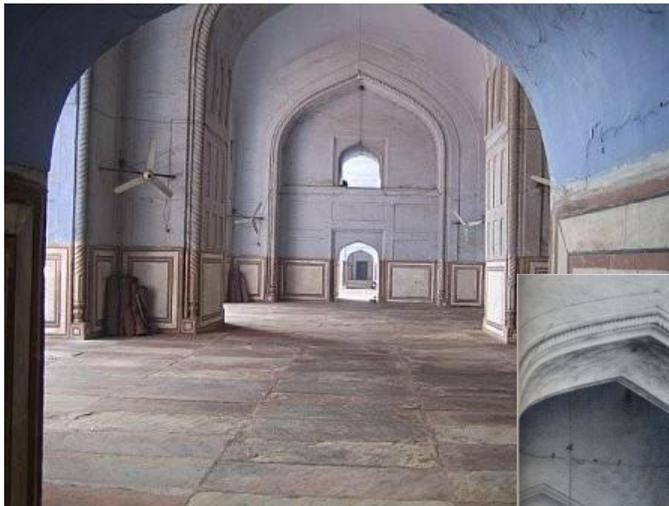
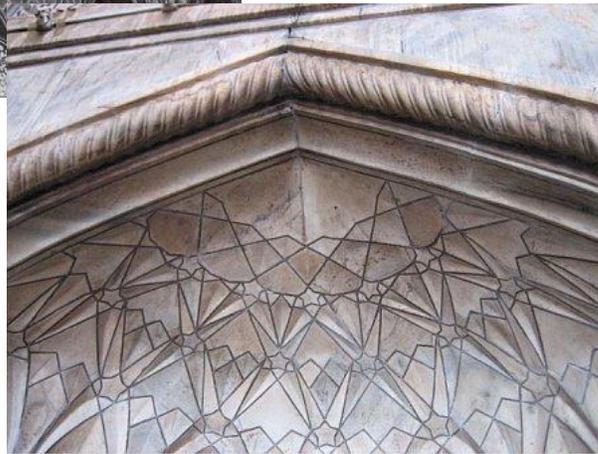


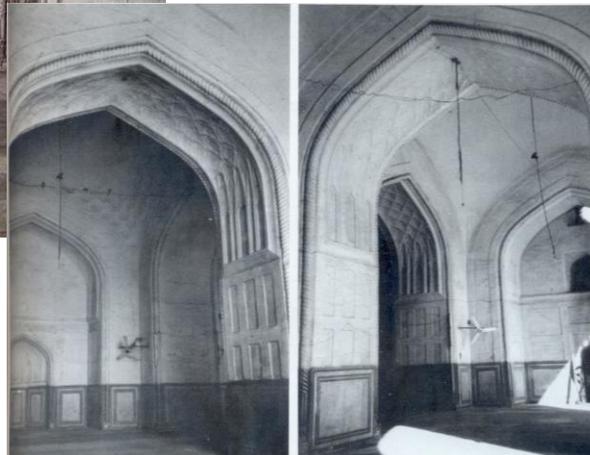
Fig. 46: Delhi mosque pishtaq arch

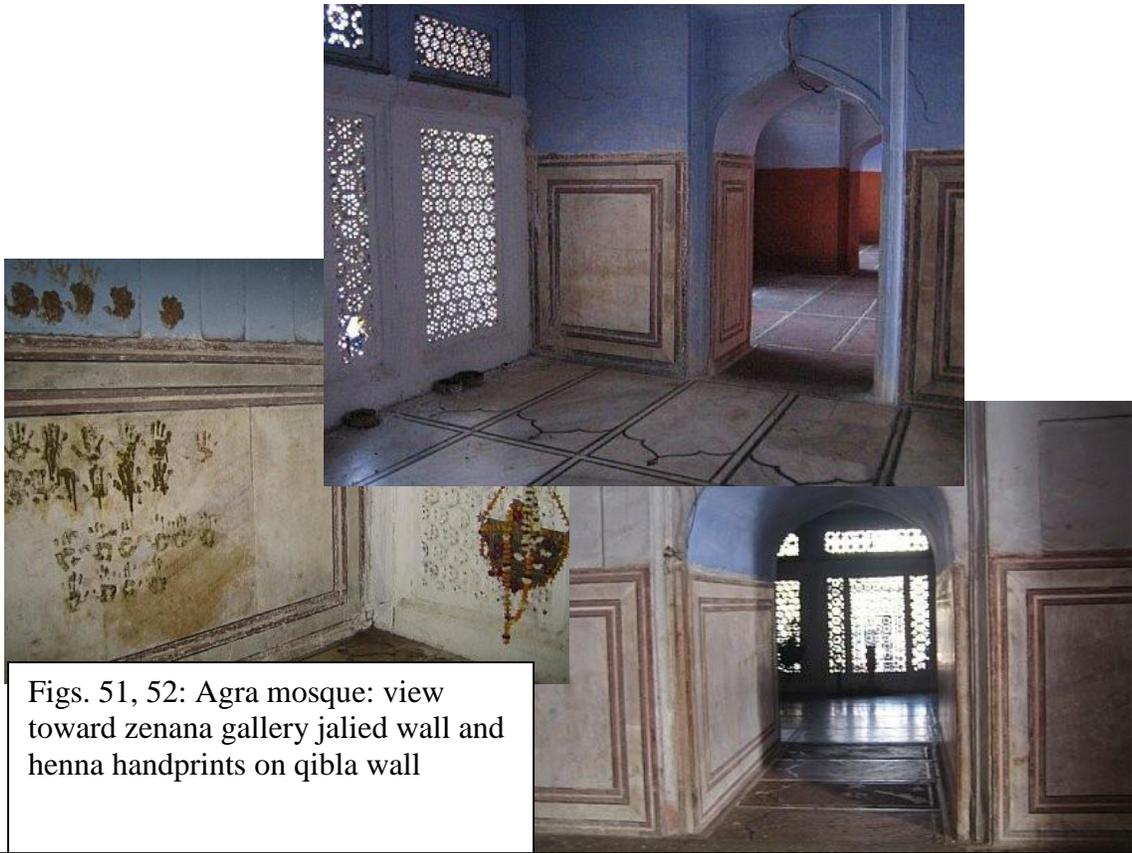


Figs. 47, 48: Qalib kari netting detail at Taj Mahal and Agra mosques



Figs. 49, 50: Agra mosque: interior view of wide bays looking across musallah (prayer hall)





Figs. 51, 52: Agra mosque: view toward zenana gallery jalied wall and henna handprints on qibla wall

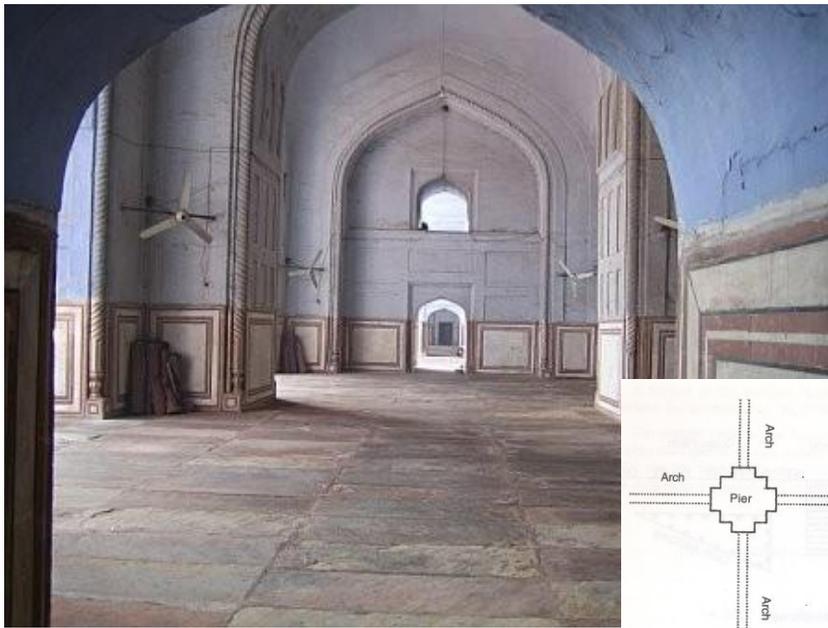
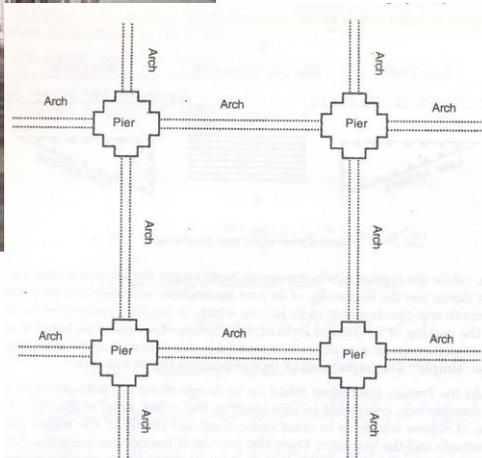


Fig. 53, 54: Agra Mosque: view of monumental piers in musallah and schematic drawing of plan of piers



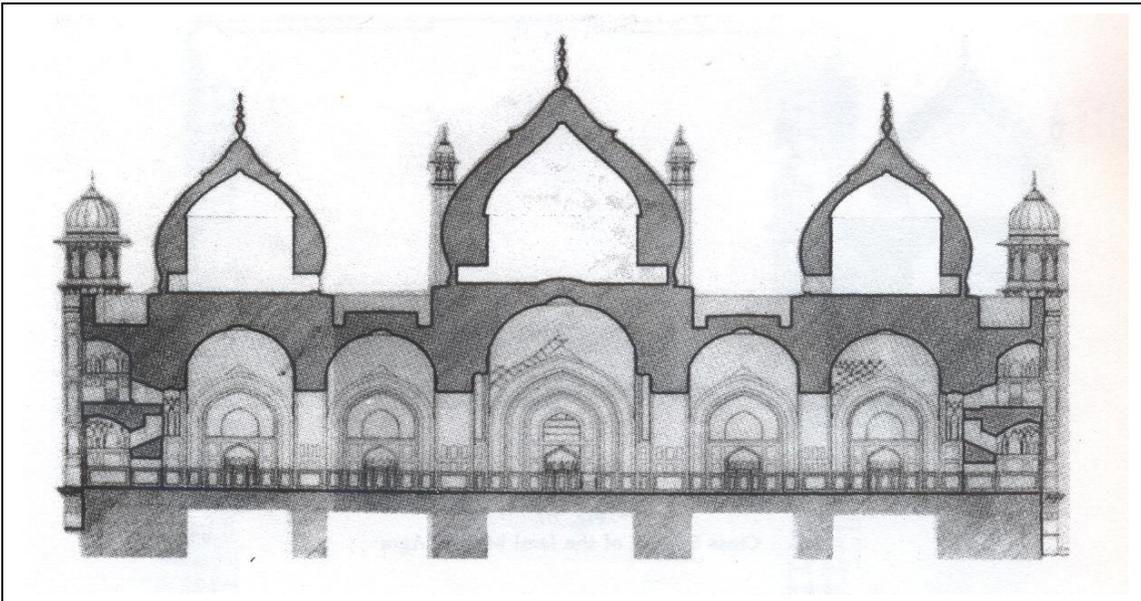


Fig. 55: Agra mosque: section elevation of domical vaults over prayer hall and mihrab



Fig. 56: Agra mosque: wide interior arch with twisted rope terminating in baluster column



Fig. 57: Agra mosque: exterior musallah wall with floral pattern at parapet wall

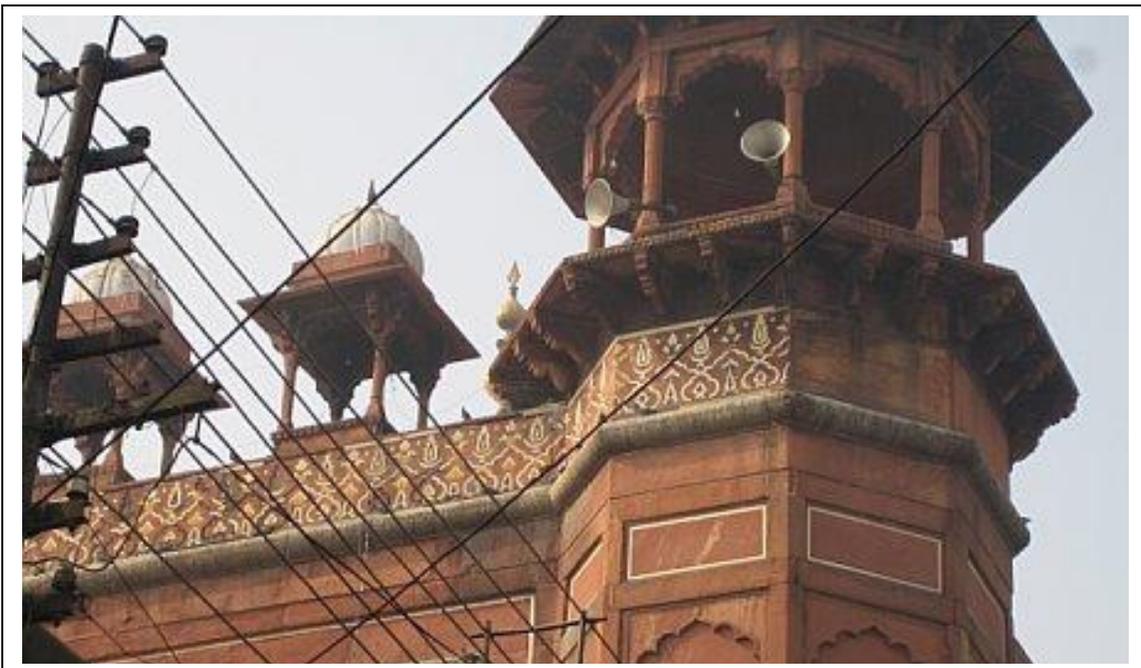


Fig. 58: Agra mosque: one of six engaged five-sided towers topped with chattris

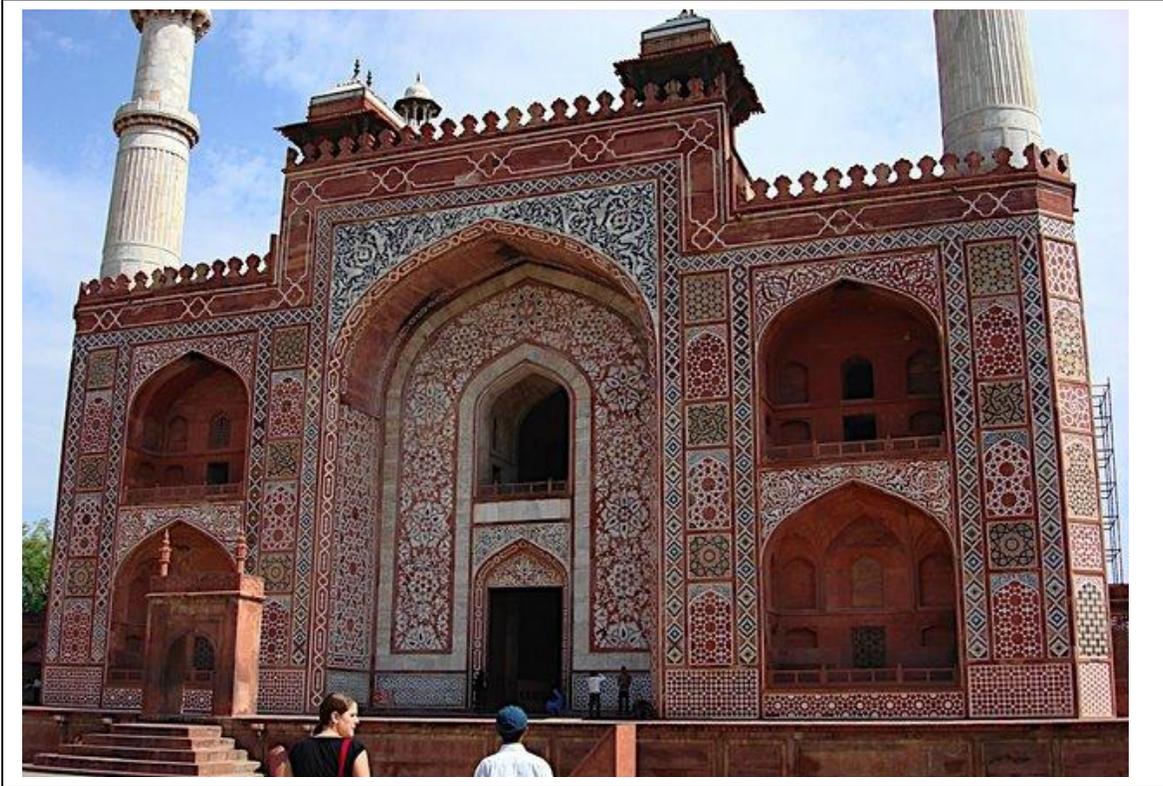
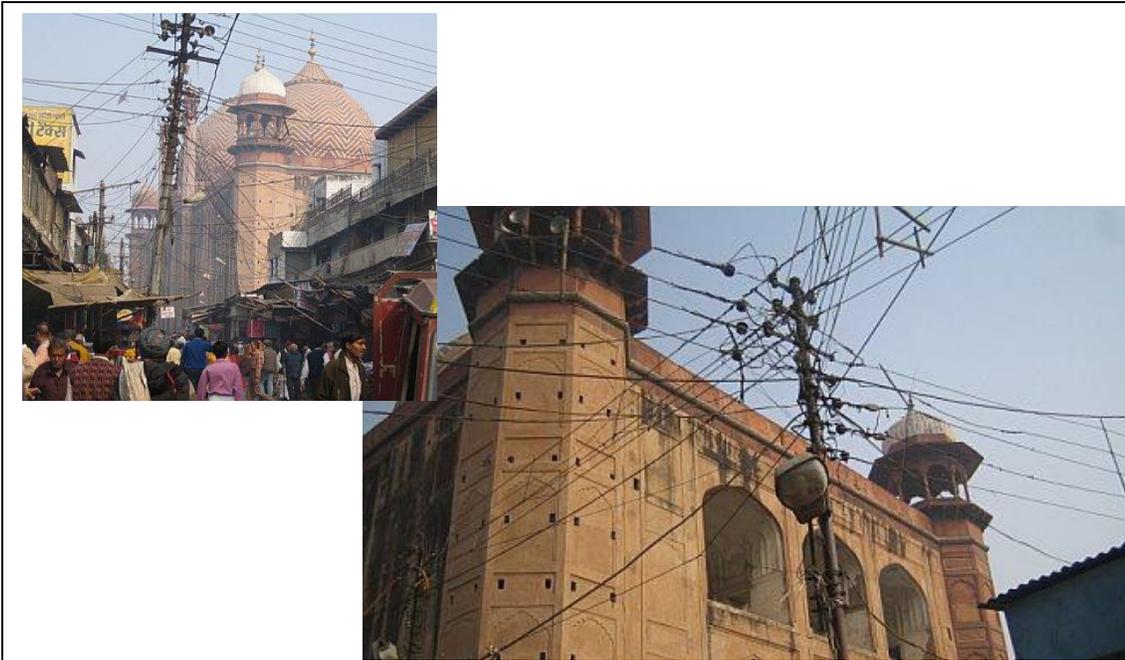


Fig. 58a, Akbar's tomb at Sikandra with magnified floral/geometric patterns



Figs. 60, 61: Agra mosque view from bazaar street and exterior wall details with vaulted rooms

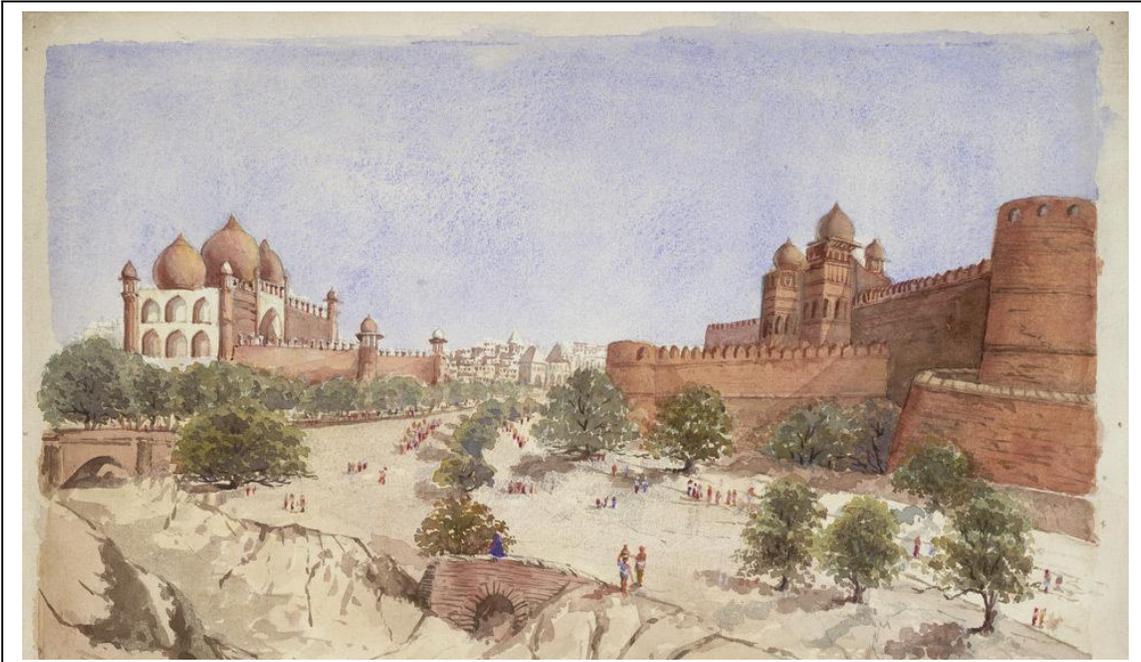


Fig. 67: Drawing (1840) of Agra Fort and Agra mosque with eastern rampart wall intact. British Library

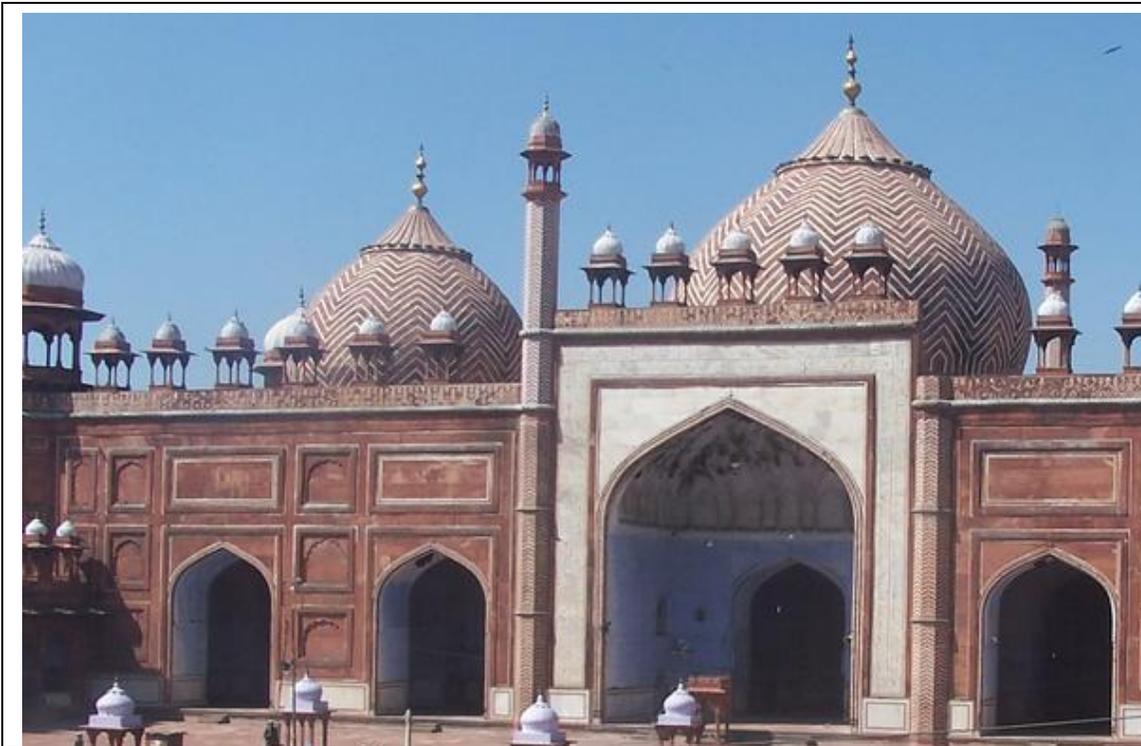


Fig. 59: Agra mosque: blind arches and rectangular niches @ sanctuary elevation

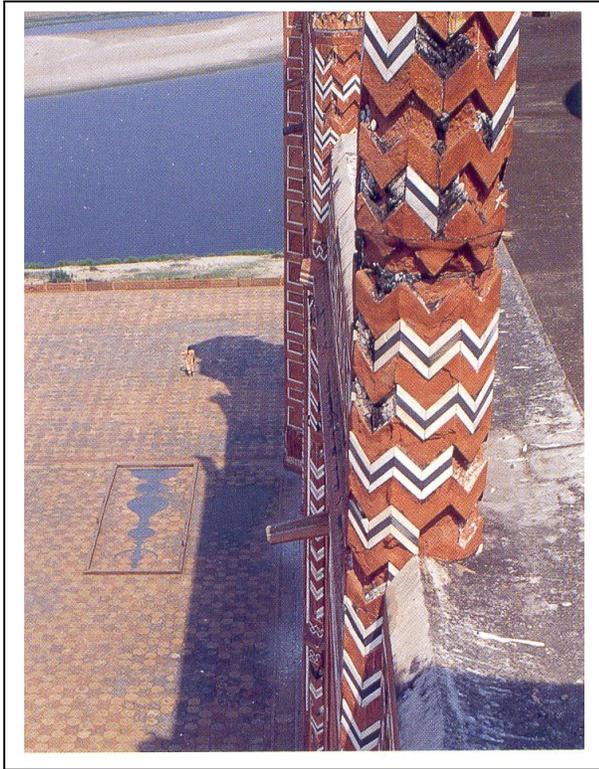


Fig. 62: Taj Mahal mosque: wave pattern detail on engaged column at parapet wall

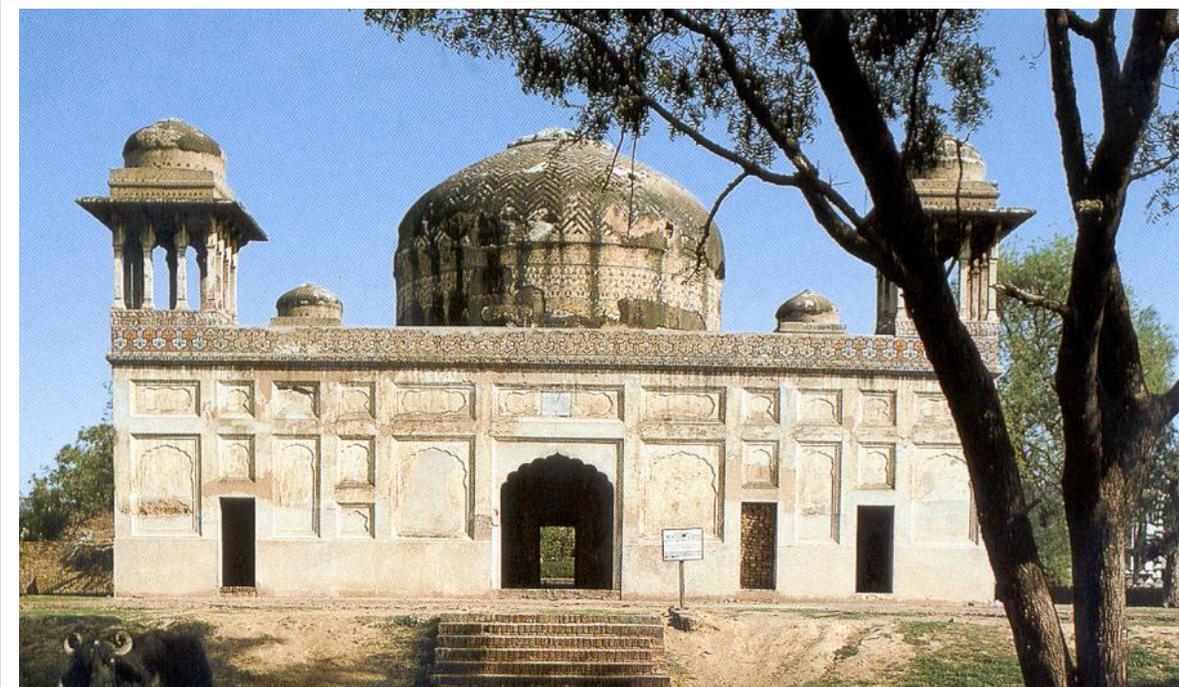


Fig. 63: Dai Anga mausoleum, elevation (1671)



Fig. 64: Agra mosque: zenana gallery, henna hand prints on qibla wall from Thursday Urs ceremony



Fig. 65: Ajmer Chishti Dargah: Begum Dalani entry porch and 'Nur Ahat' women's only enclosure on western end



Fig. 65a: Ajmer Chishti Dargah:  
Begum Dalani

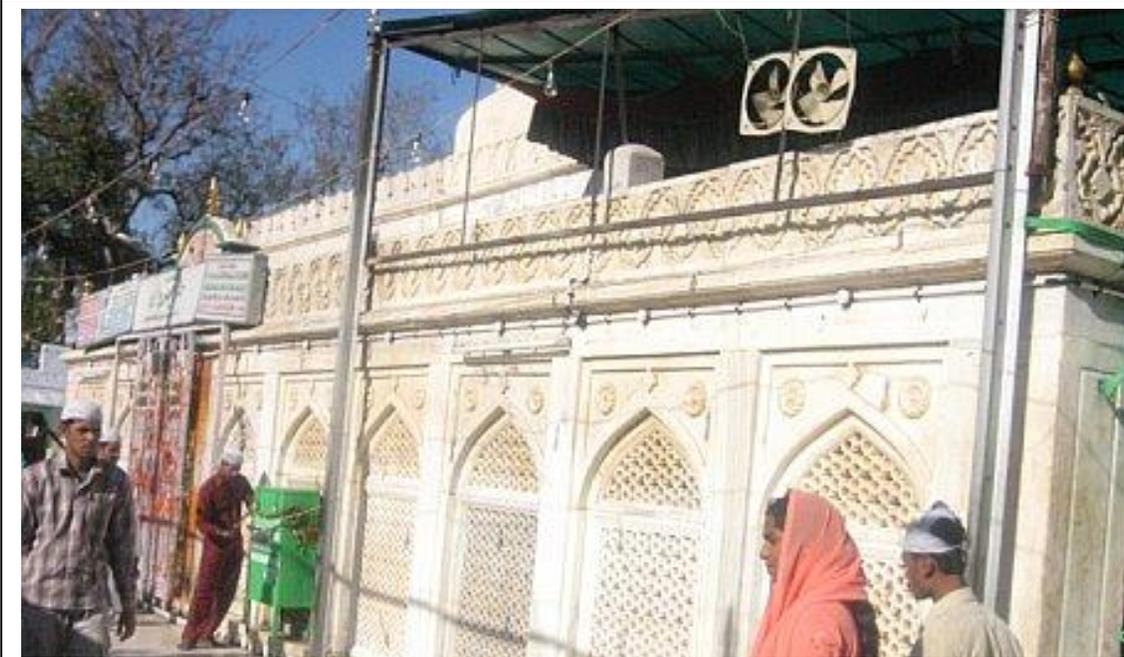
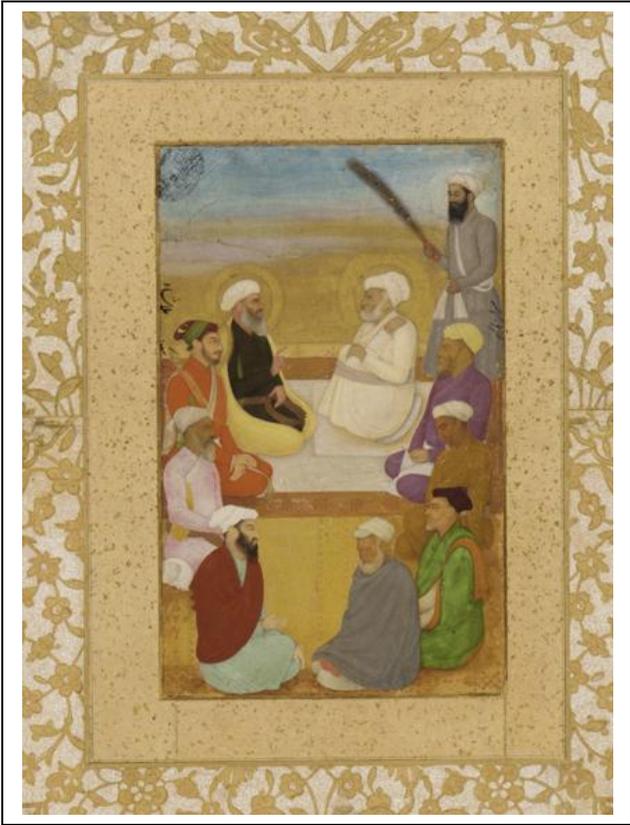
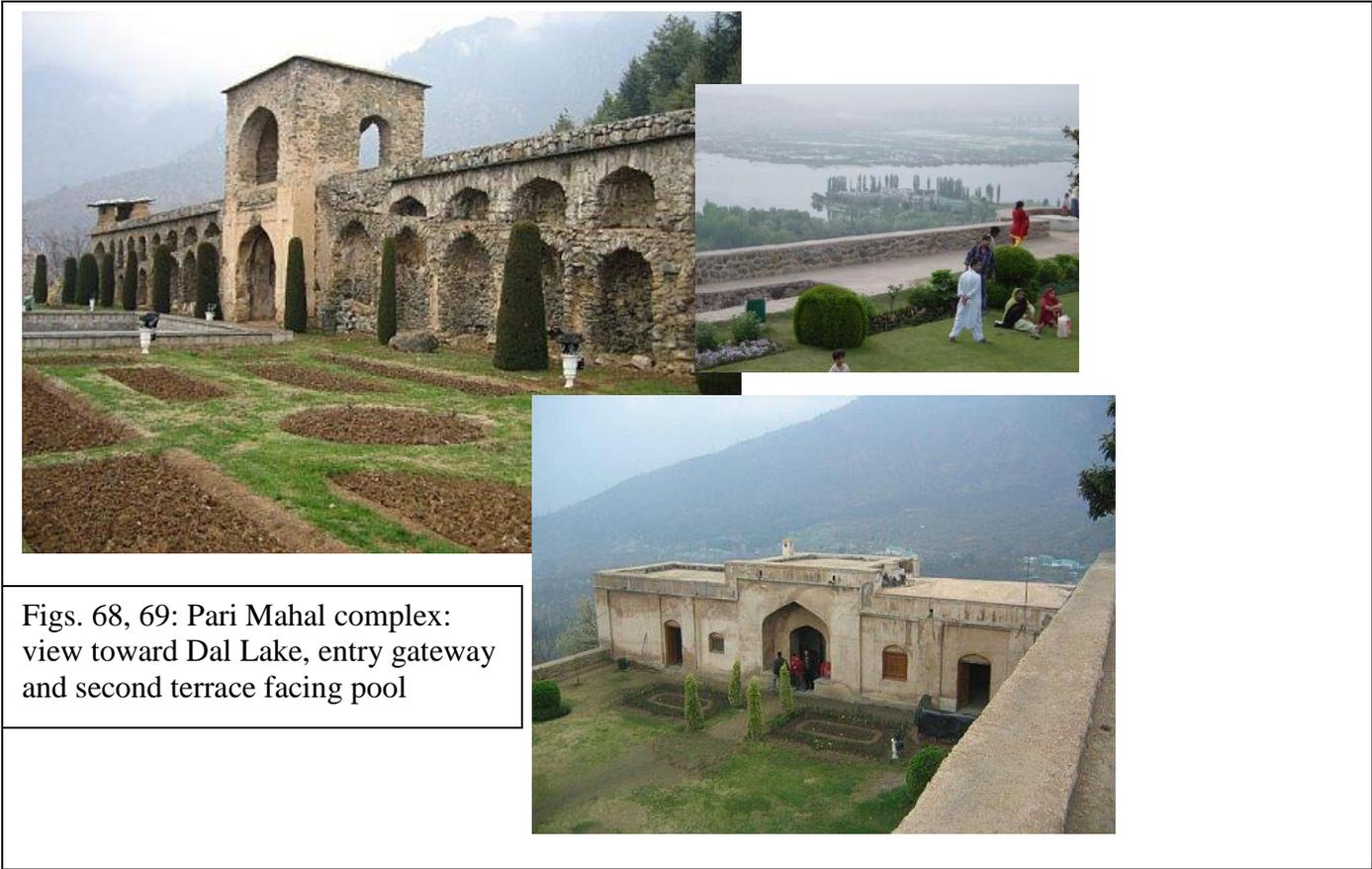


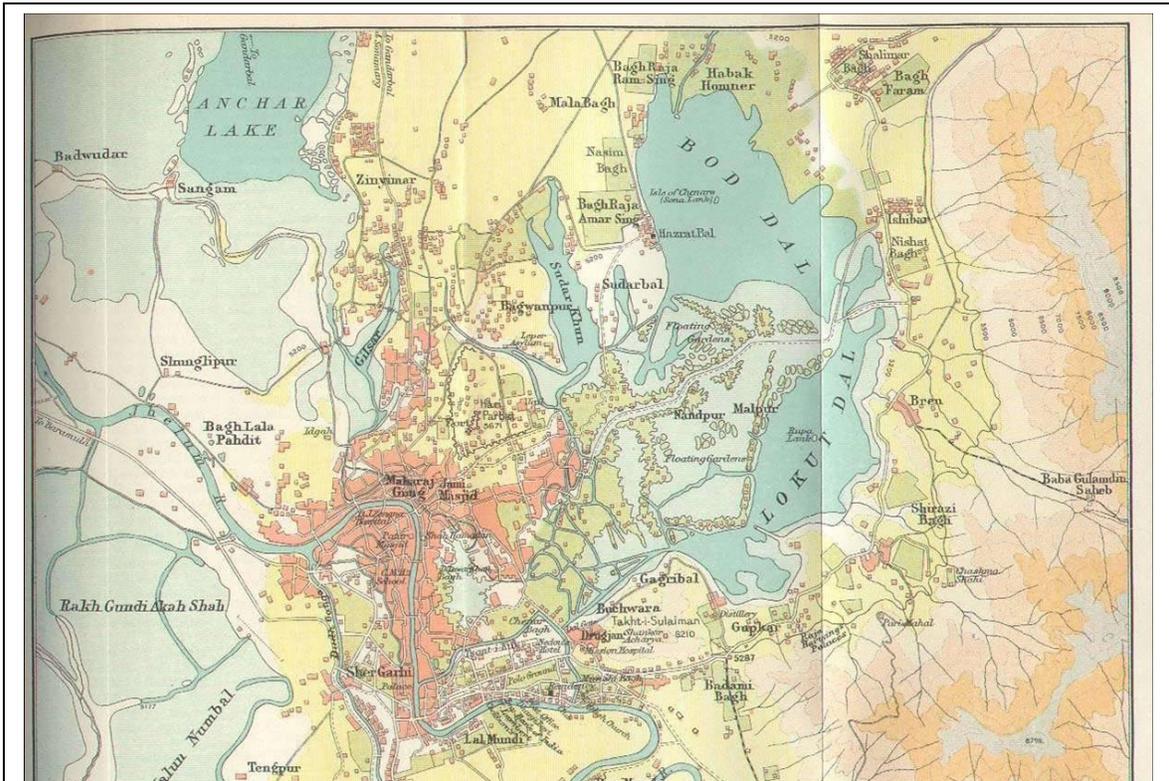
Fig. 65b Ahat-i-Nur jalied women's only enclosure: Ajmer dargah



**Fig. 66: Dara Shikoh with Mian Mir and Mullah Shah and other holy men, c. 1635, miniature**



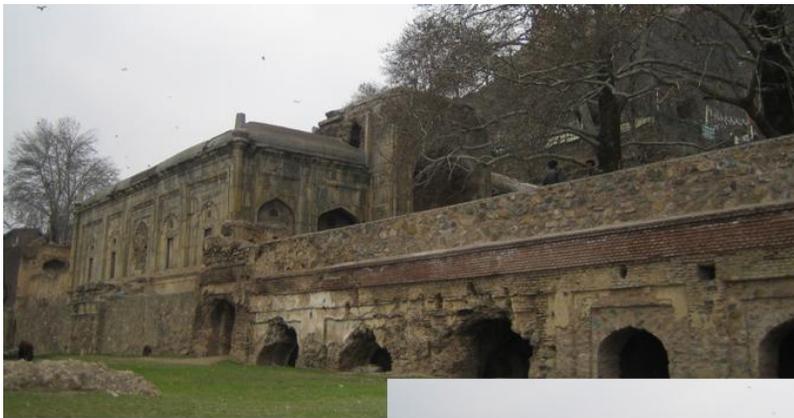
**Figs. 68, 69: Pari Mahal complex:  
view toward Dal Lake, entry gateway  
and second terrace facing pool**



**Fig.70: Map of Srinagar, 1890**



**Fig. 74: Hari Parbat Hill Fort with Mullah Shah complex below**



Figs.71,72 : Mullah Shah Badakhshi khanaqah extension @ north elevation



**Fig.73: Mullah Shah Badakhshi khanaqah extension @ east elevation with underground and living cells**

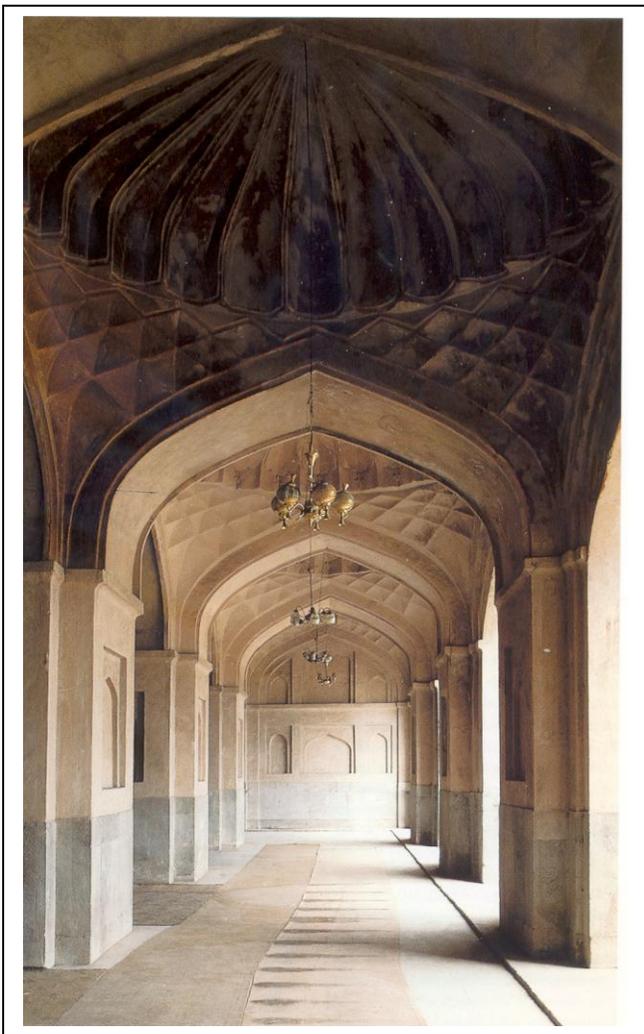
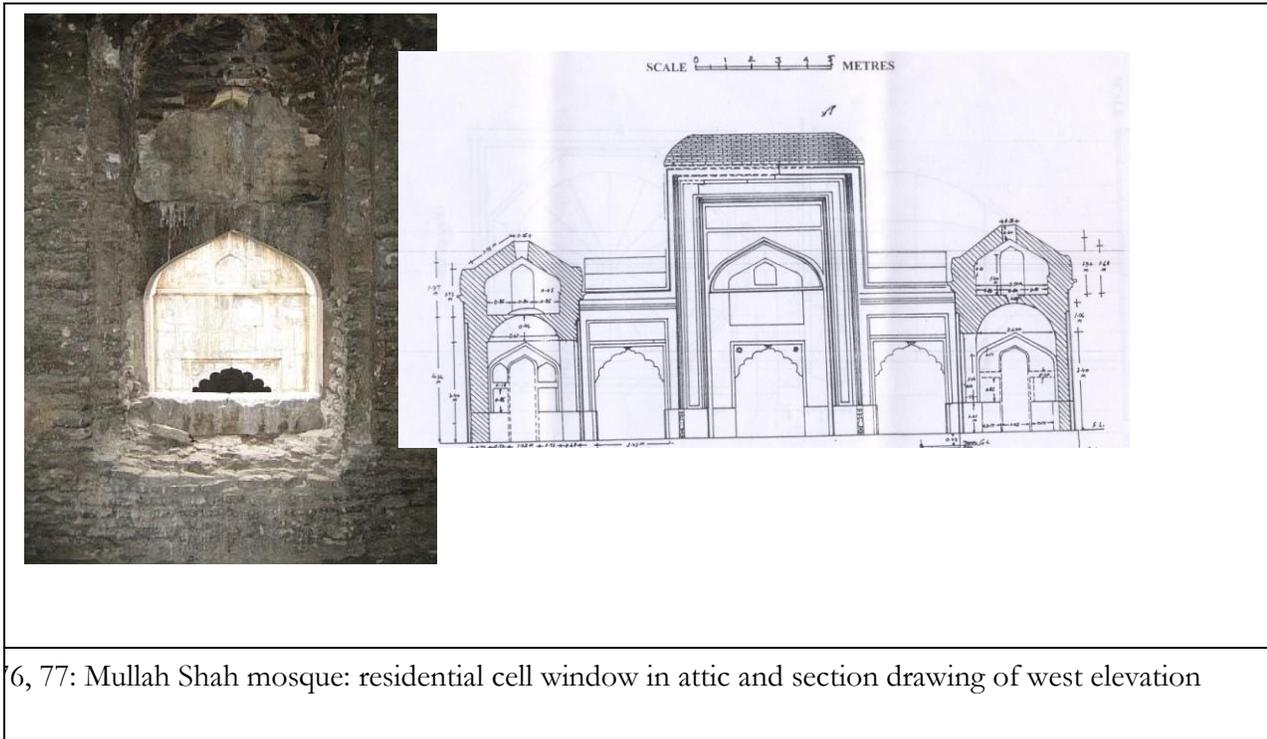
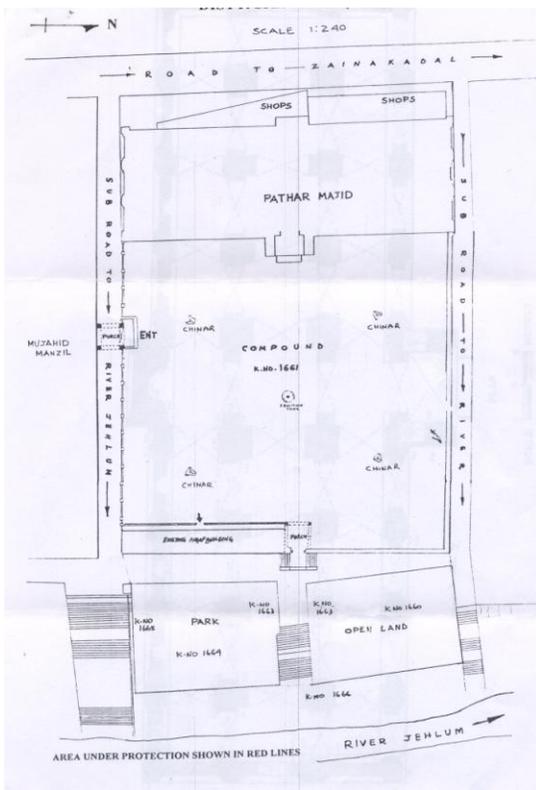


Fig. 78: Patthar Mosque (1620): Interior view at musallah



**Fig. 79: Patthar Mosque: west elevation at entrance pishtaq**



**Fig. 80: Patthar Mosque: Site plan with steps leading to Jhelum river**



**Fig. 81: Patthar Mosque: Exterior elevation at eastern end of bazaar street with mihrab projection**



Fig. 82: Late 19th C. shawl with map of Srinagar  
 Fig. 83: Detail of Hari Parbat Fort in the center with surrounding rampart walls  
 Fig. 84: Detail of Patthar mosque at Jhelum River

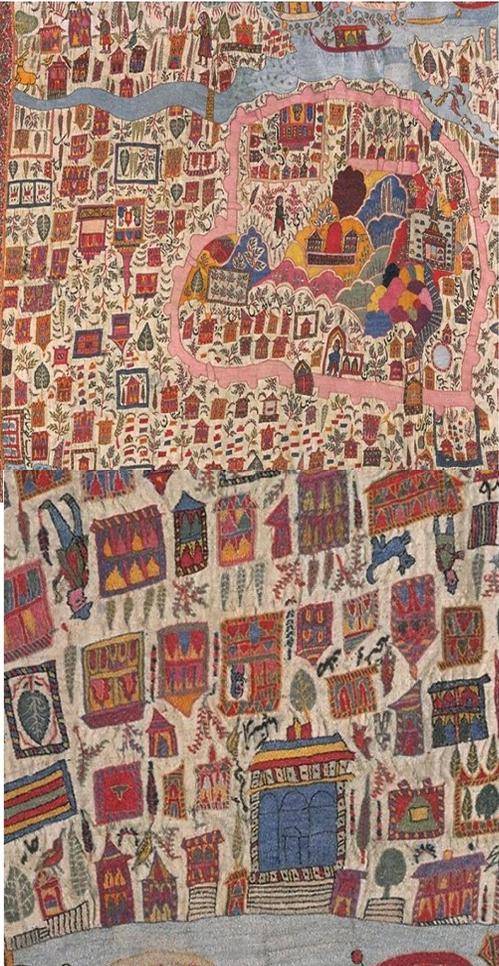


Fig. 85: Mullah Shah khanaqah cells: view from north elevation to valley below



**Fig. 86: Mullah Shah Mosque: Interior view at colonnade with brick core revealed**



**Fig. 87: Mullah Shah east entrance elevation**



**Fig. 88: Mullah Shah sanctuary wall with pishtaq leading to mihrab through multi-cusped arch**



**Fig. 89: Mullah Shah mosque entrance staircase with engaged baluster colonnette and compressed lotus leaf fringe detail**



**Fig. 90: Mullah Shah plinth platform inverted lotus motif**





**Fig. 95: Mullah Shah blind arches on north elevation**



**Fig. 96: Mullah Shah detail of attic room grill windows in north elevation**



**Fig. 97: Mullah Shah entrance threshold with Qur'anic inscriptions**

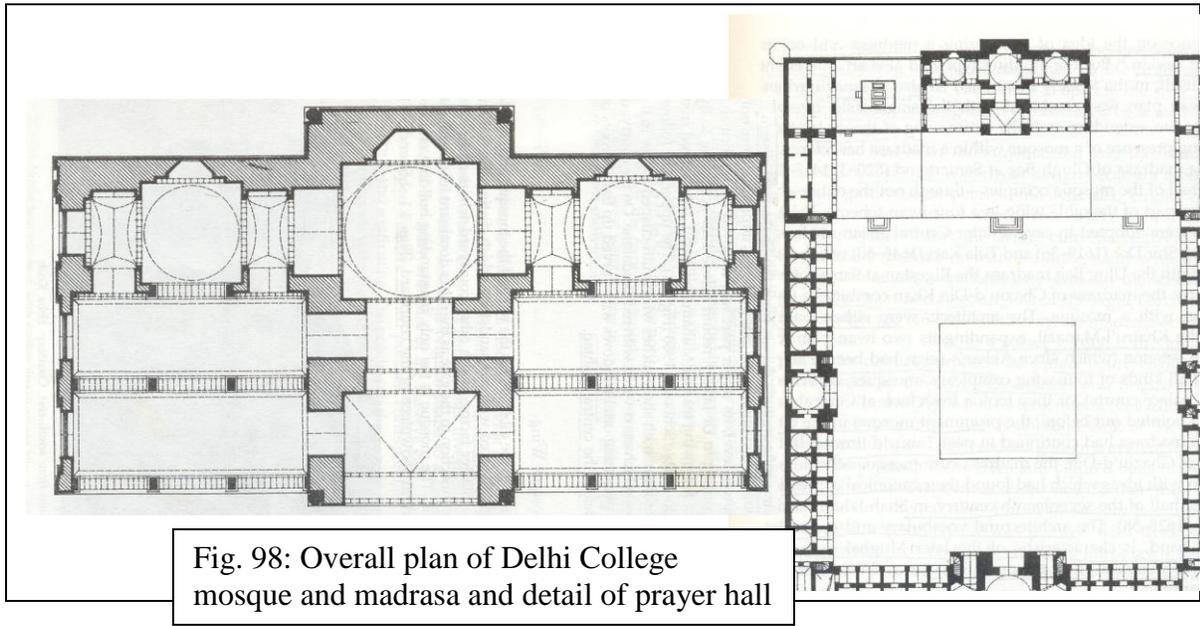


Fig. 98: Overall plan of Delhi College mosque and madrasa and detail of prayer hall

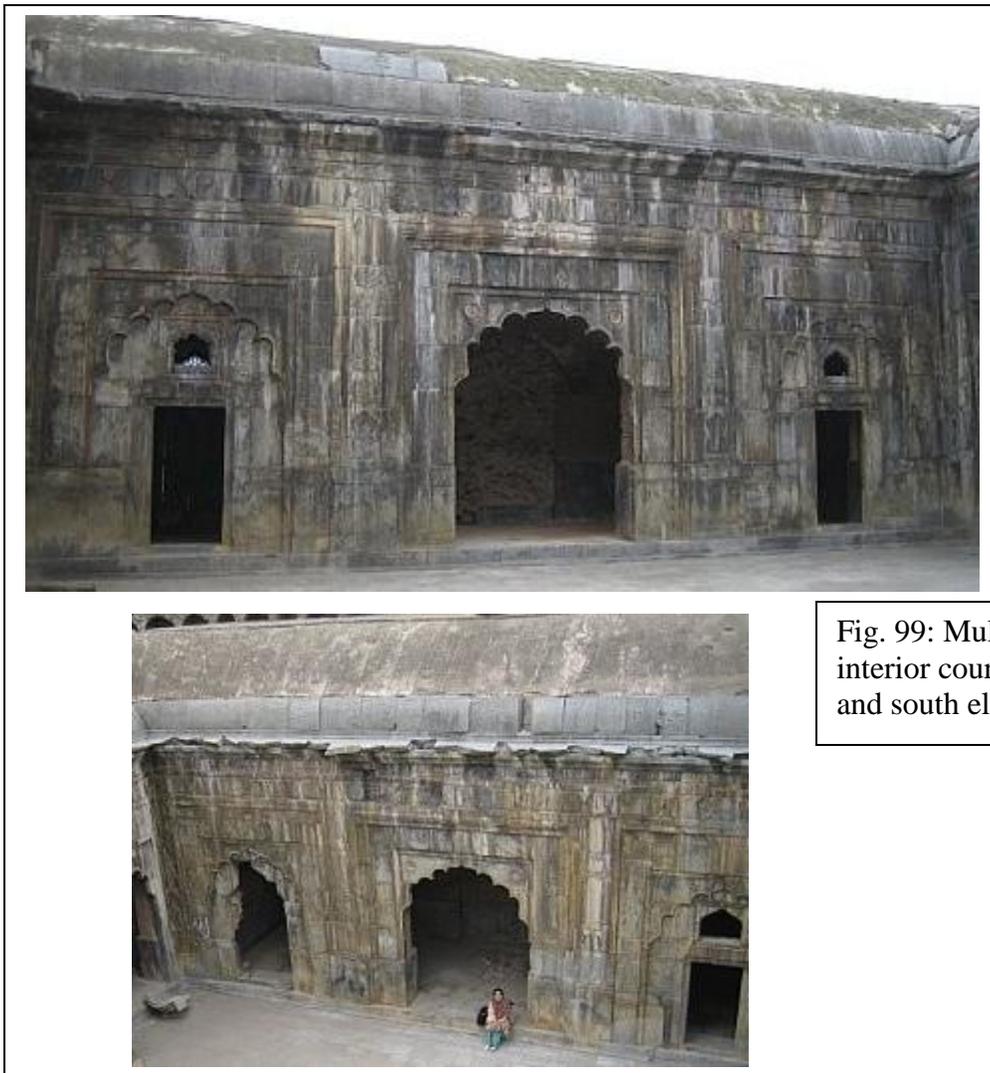


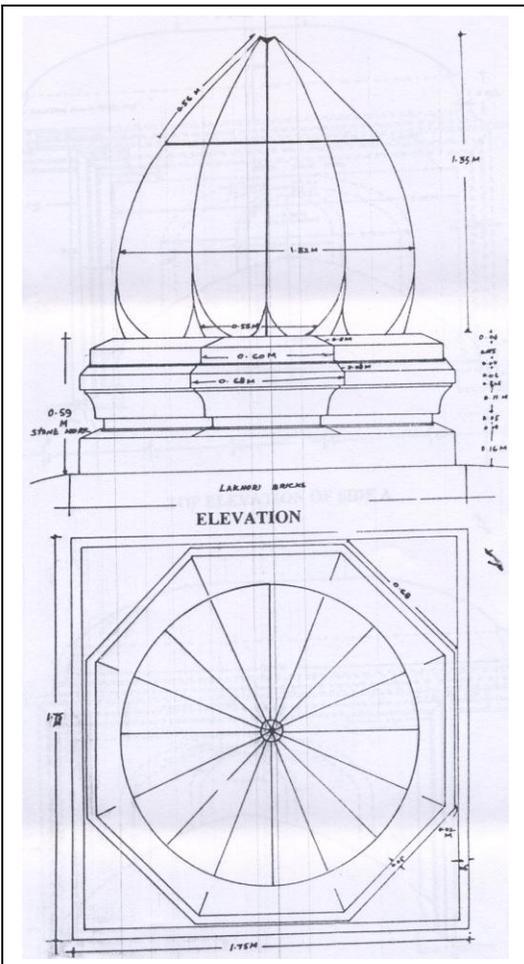
Fig. 99: Mullah Shah mosque interior courtyard @ north and south elevations



**Fig.100:Mullah Shah mosque @ jharoka balcony at exterior south elevation**



**Fig. 101: Mullah Shah mosque jharoka balcony bracket detail**



Figs, 102,103: Mullah Shah: monumental lotus finial on mihrab dome with plan and elevation drawing



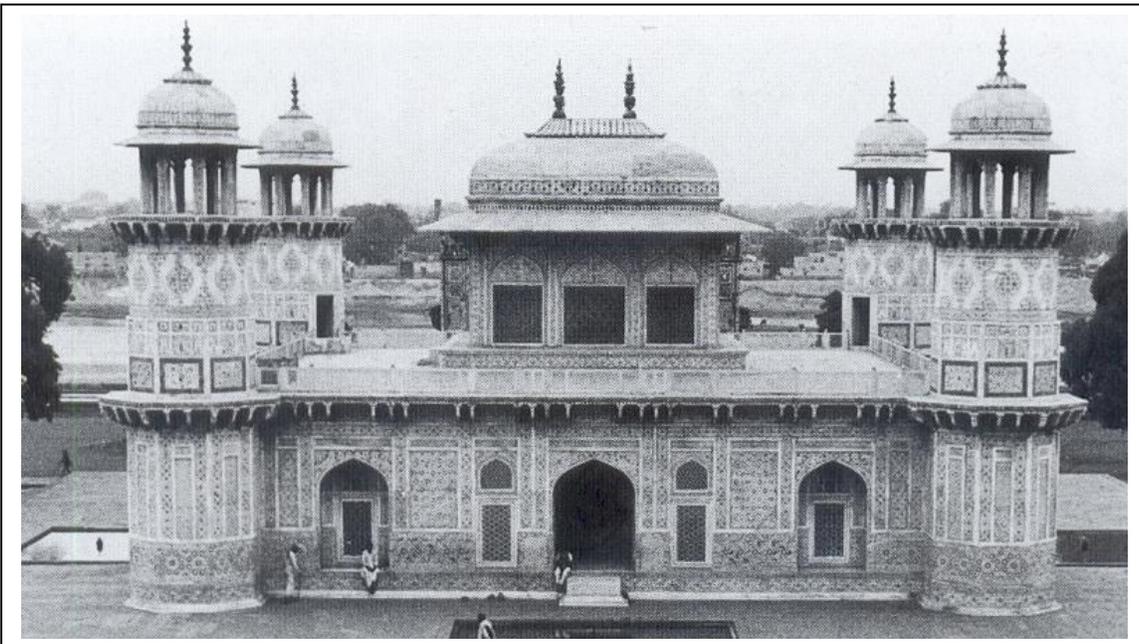
**Fig. 104: Mullah Shah: exterior mihrab projection at west elevation**



**Fig. 105: Mullah Shah: detail of exterior mihrab projection with the bangle roof detail**



Fig. 105a: Bangla of Jahan Ara in the Agra Fort



Figs. 106,107: I'tamad ud Daula tomb elevation to tomb entrance and corner perspective

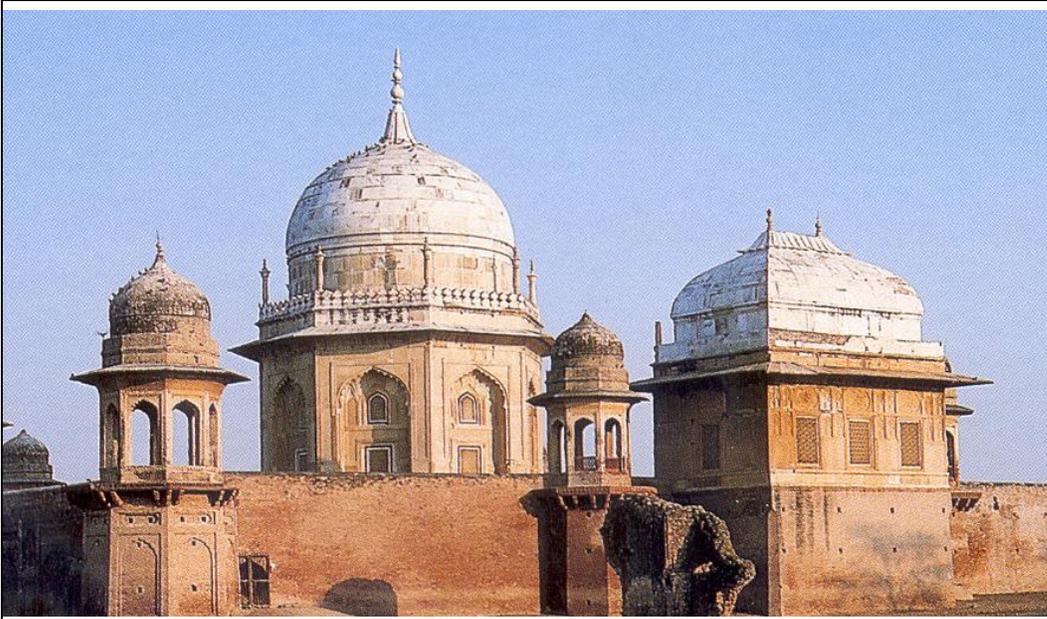


Fig. 109: Sheikh Chilliie Tomb complex Thanesar (1650)

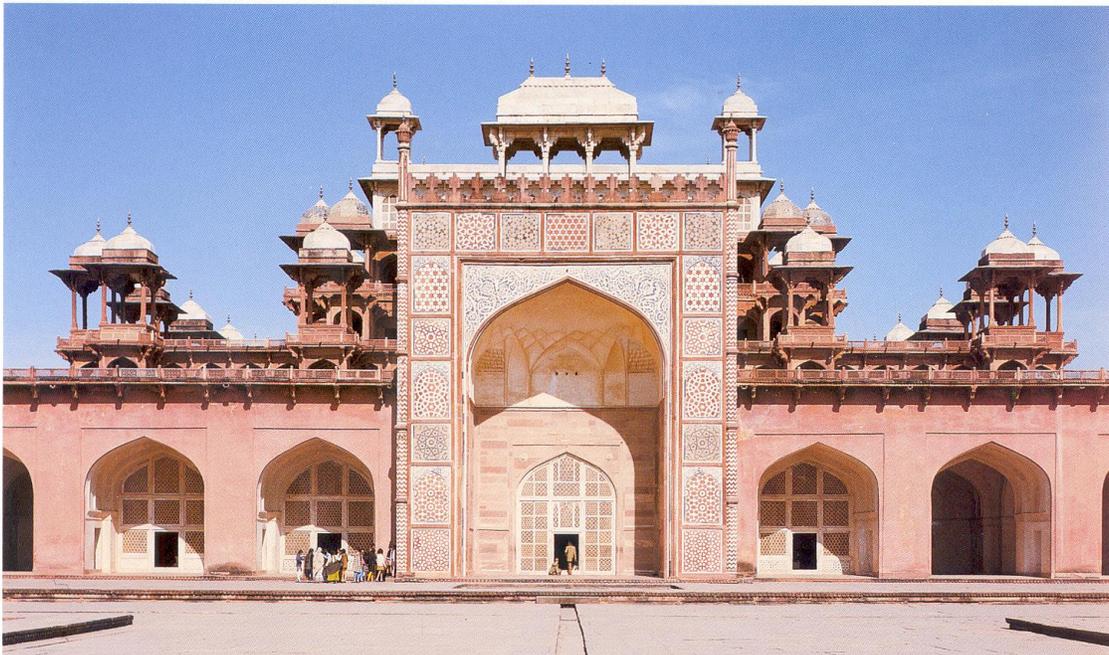
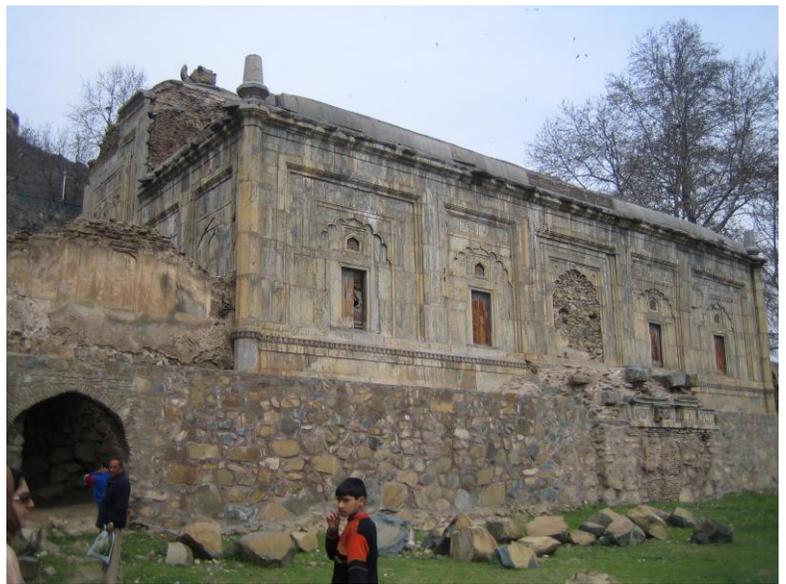


Fig. 108: Akbar's tomb mausoleum entrance pishtaq, Sikandra (1612)



**Fig. 110: Mullah Shah mosque @ mihrab and handwritten shahada**



**Fig. 111: Mullah Shah mosque south elevation with blind arches and Persian inscription band above South**



**Fig. 112: Mullah Shah mosque west elevation of exterior courtyard wall with bricked-up under-ground tunnel. West Elevation of courtyard wall with bricked up under-ground tunnel (?)**



**Figs. 113-115: Mullah Shah mosque detail at north elevation blind arch with Persian inscriptions above**



Northwest Elevation: Blind arches with bands of Persian Verses above

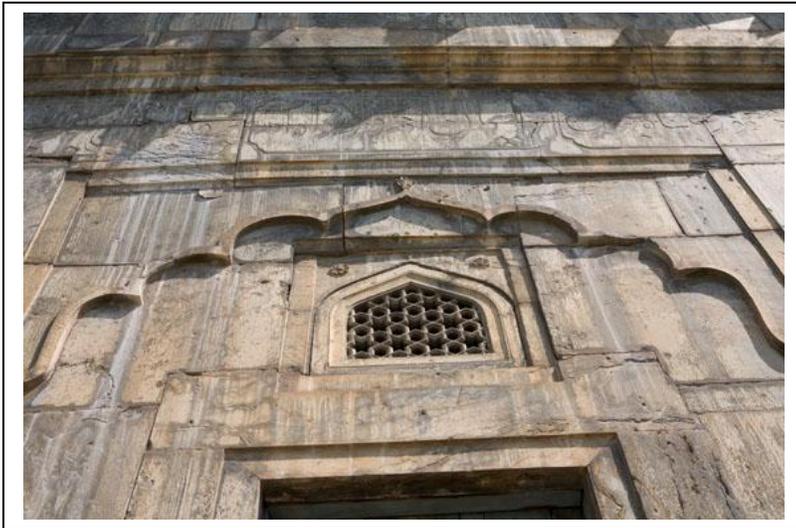


Fig. 116: Mullah Shah southwest corner at engaged column and connection to underground khanaqah cells

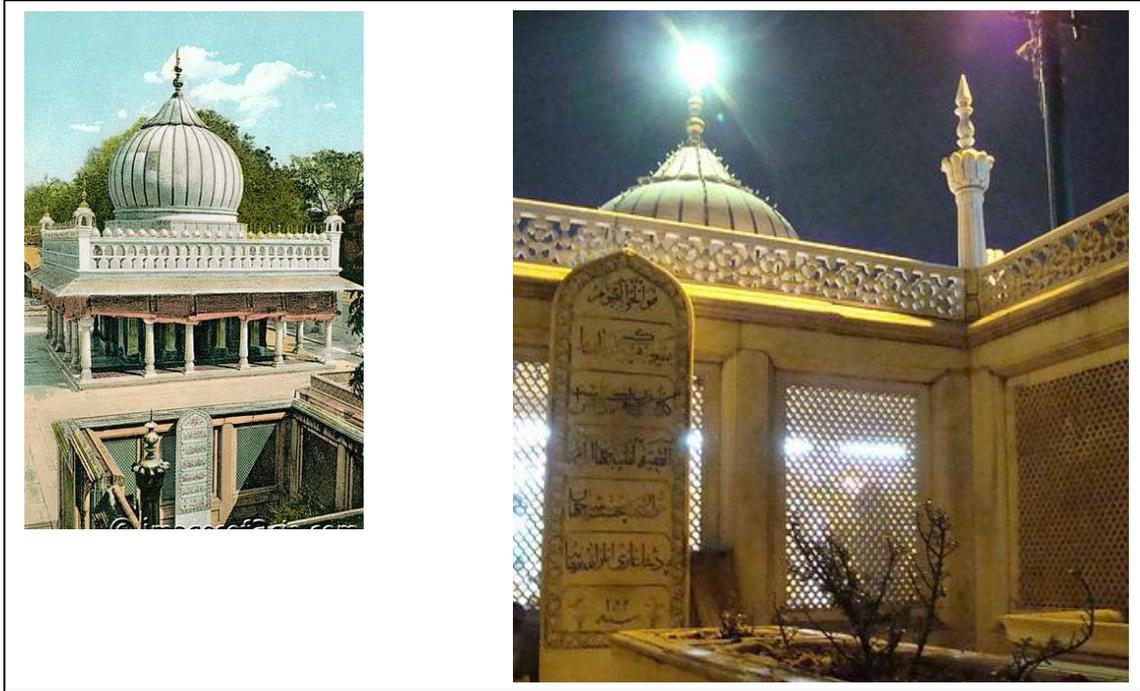


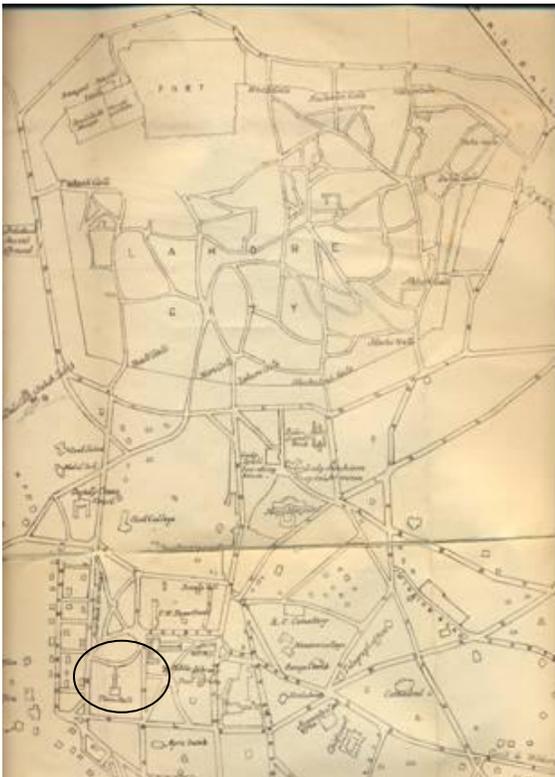
Fig. 116a: Jahan Ara's tomb over looking the Nizam ud-din Auliya's tomb, Delhi



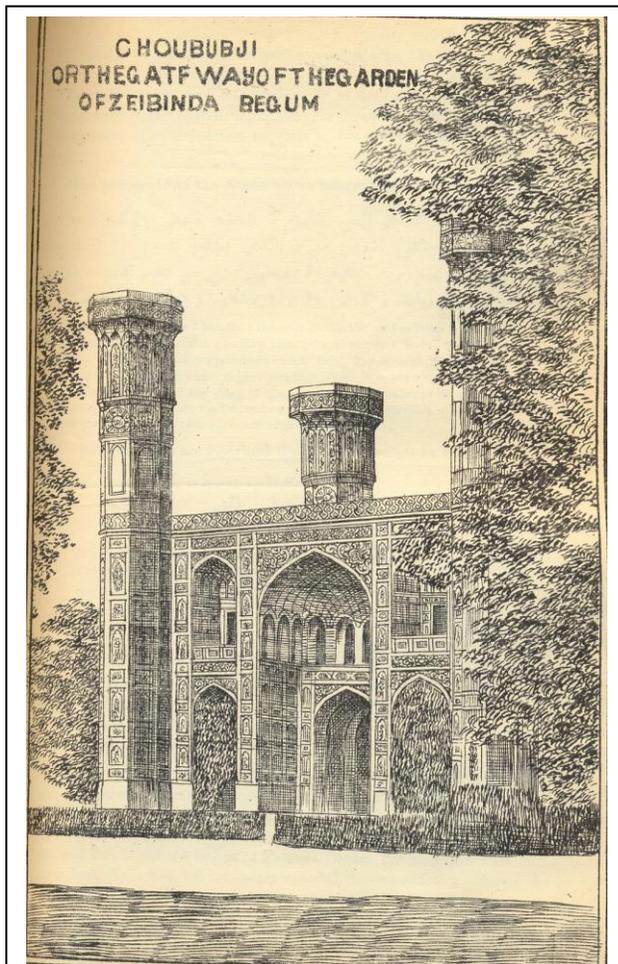
Fig. 117: Mullah Shah interior view into courtyard and toward west elevation of sanctuary wall



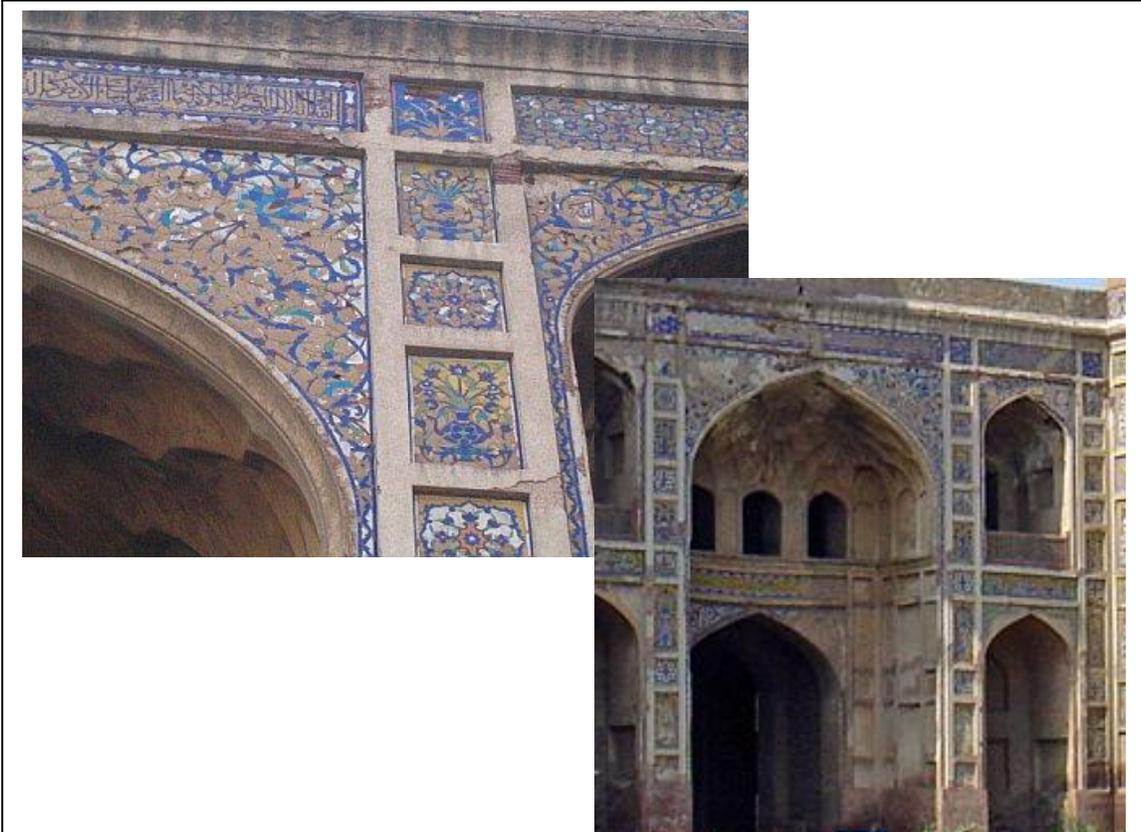
**Fig. 118: Mullah Shah exterior perspective view from maqdoom sahib dargah on northern end**



**Fig. 119: Lahore city plan and drawing of Chauburji gateway**



Figs. 121,122: Dedicatory Inscriptions over main arch and gateway in glazed tilework





Figs. 124- Wazir Khan Mosque, 1637, Lahore.



Fig. 123: Chauburj tower with glazed tiled floral motif details

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