



Captivating Architecture of Samadhis (Commemorative Tombs), Chakwal, Punjab, Pakistan

SHORT REPORT

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ABSTRACT

South Asia is an attractive land encapsulating a splendid cultural heritage in the form of dignified art and architecture. Potohar plateau is an uneven land encompassing four district of Punjab Province: Chakwal, Attock, Rawalpindi and Jehlum. Chakwal is one of them. This land is comprised of diversified landscape with hills intersected by undulating plains and rocky patches. A preliminary survey and documentation were conducted in Chakwal in 2019 which yielded a considerable number of archaeological sites and monuments. Chakwal is accommodating rich cultural profile from Stone Age to Medieval Period. Marvelous architecture of different eras is its fascinating aspect. The monuments of district Chakwal are very rich in art and architecture which show local as well as western (Greeks, Roman and Persian) influences. This research paper will throw light upon the splendid architecture of Hindu and Sikh Samadhis found in the same district. Among commemorative tombs, one of them is both Hind-Sikh Samadhi which is a unique and rare characteristic of intriguing Samadhis in the region of Potohar. Fresco paintings illustrated inside the tombs will reveal cultural articulation of Indian Sub-Continent to the western world in the form of decorative motifs as these have been amalgamated to adorn the architecture pieces.

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Imtiaz, H, Zahra, K and Raza, S. 2021. Captivating Architecture of Samadhis (Commemorative Tombs), Chakwal, Punjab, Pakistan. *Ancient Asia*, 12: 16, pp. 1–10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/aa.228>

INTRODUCTION

There are a considerable number of samadhis in the region of Potohar which pointed towards the Sikh and Hindu regime in the same land. Samadhis are basically the tombs constructed to commemorate the saints or some famous personalities. Some significant samadhis of Chakwal have been elaborated in this paper with their minute architectural details. Samadhis of Potohar consist of two form square and octagonal. Fresco paintings are executed on the walls of samadhis but most of them have been completely renovated.

All of samadhis in Chakwal are similar in art and architecture to the other samadhis located in Potohar such as in sub-division Gujar Khan of District Rawalpindi (Khan Ashraf et al 2010: 112–115). Other samadhis of Potohar are situated at Dera Bakhshian, Gujar Khan, Bagh Saradaran Road near Rawalpindi and at Kot Fateh Khan (Kalhor 2016: 2).

Several samadhis in village Bhoun of District Chakwal belonging to British and Sikh period and with their respective architectural features have been researched and analyzed. Some are still erected in different areas and some samadhis are erected in two cremation ground of Hindus which denote the commemoration of some personalities (Imtiaz Hadiqa 2019: 572–575; Imtiaz and Zahra 2020: 143).

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS

District Chakwal gone through a series of research in different times. The archaeological potential of district Chakwal has been mentioned by various explorers—Alexander Cunningham (Cunningham 1872: 188–192; Cunningham 1875: 79–94), Aurel Stein (Stein 1937: 45–66), Saifur Rehman Dar (Dar, Saifur Rehman 2001: 34–60), Sadeed Arif, Sabeena Iqbal (Iqbal, Sabeena et al 2006: 163–183; Iqbal, Sabeena 2005: 157–163) and Hadiqa Imtiaz (Imtiaz 2019: 566–579, Imtiaz et al 2020: 7–21, Imtiaz and Zahra 2020: 126–148).



Figure 1 A General View of Samadhi I at Karyala, Distt. Chakwal.



Figure 2 A General View of Samadhi II at Karyala, Distt. Chakwal.



Figure 3 Grave of Bhai Jagat Singh in front of Samadhi II, Karyala, Distt. Chakwal.

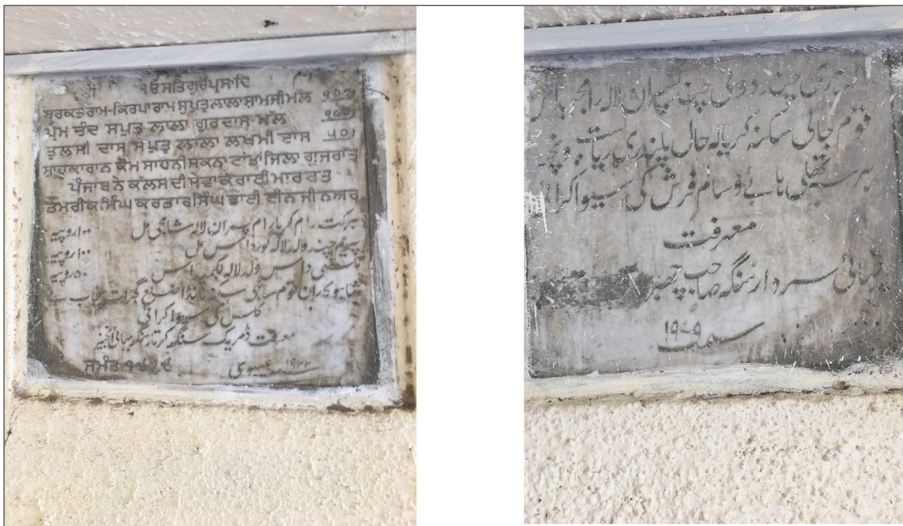


Figure 4 Marble Slabs with Donation Details, Samadhi II, Karyala, Distt. Chakwal.



Figure 5 A General View of Samadhi at Dhuman, Distt. Chakwal.



Figure 6 Fresco Painting along Ceiling of Smadhi at Dhuman, Distt. Chakwal.



Figure 7 Mural Frescos and Ritualistic Materials Inside Samadhi at Dhuman, Distt. Chakwal.



Figure 8 A General View of Samadhi in Main City Chakwal.



Figure 9 A General View of Samadhi at Talagang, Distt. Chakwal.



Figure 10 Lateral View of Samadhi with Concentric Blind Arches Flanked by Alcoves.

DOCUMENTATION OF SAMADHIS IN CHAKWAL

Samadhi is comparatively simpler in architecture as compared to temple. Usually, it comprised of the following parts:

- Main Hall
- Drum
- Dome
- Lotus followed by Pinnacle or Finial

SAMADHI I, KARYALA (FIG 1)

Tehsil: Chakwal, District: Chakwal, Province: Punjab

Nature of Site: *Samadhi*

Measurements: Length: 4.2 m, Width: 3 m

Location: It is located in Mohallah Jagat Singh.

Approach: It can be approached through Bhala to Karyala road in eastern direction.

Coordinates: Latitude 32°50' 22.22664" N, Longitude 72°52'49.99872" E

Nearest Village: Bhala

Description

This Samadhi is square in plan with octagonal drum on which a ribbed dome is erected. Its finial is missing. Dome is embellished with a linear row of hooded cobras (seven heads) which is a characteristic feature of Shiva, the destroyer (it is majorly used to deck Shiva temples). Three multi-foiled pointed arches are carved on exterior wall of the Samadhi. The central one serves as a main entrance. Three rectangular recesses with jail work add to the beauty of this tomb. A series of lotus petals runs all around the main four corners of frontal view. This *Samadhi* is constructed with lime mortar and standard sized bricks. Deteriorating plaster exposes naked bricks at the corners.

Period: Sikh

State of Preservation: Deteriorating

SAMADHI II, KARYALA (FIGS 2–4)

Tehsil: Chakwal, District: Chakwal, Province: Punjab

Nature of Site: *Samadhi*

Measurements: Height: 12.19 m, Width: 4.5 m

Location: It is located in Mohallah Jagat Singh.

Approach: It can be approached through Bhala to Karyala road in eastern direction.

Coordinates: Latitude 32°50' 22.6431" N, Longitude 72°52'49.47792" E

Nearest Village: Bhala

Description

This Samadhi has square plan with octagonal drum. Drum is followed by a ribbed dome. Lotus petals are surrounding the dome with outwardly folded tips. This Samadhi is whitewashed both exteriorly and interiorly. Main entrance is flanked by two marble plates which show the donors who gave funds for the renovation of this Samadhi. Interiorly, niches are provided on walls of this Samadhi.

There are three graves in this tomb. One is made in front of main entrance while two are constructed inside. The one present outside is of Bhai Jagat Singh and those present inside are of Bhai Surat Singh and Bhai Heera Singh. They were the father and grandfather of Bhai Jagat Singh respectively. They were the descendants of Bhai Praga Jee who offered his children; Satti Das and Matti Das in services of battle when Guru Hargobind Singh was at war. He was the sixth Guru of Sikhism. Later on, when Guru Tegh Bahadur Singh (ninth Guru) seated on the throne then again Bhai Matti Das and Bhai Satti Das provided their services to Guru Family. Still today Ravinder Kumar, a thirteenth generation of Bhai Praga Jee is living in the same village.

Still today this *Samadhi* is functional and is practiced and look after by the son of Ravinder Kumar and his family. He is the son of Bhai Jagat Singh. In Hindu mythology usually the deceased are burnt but as per testation of their ancestors, they were buried at this place. Later on, a tomb was built there to commemorate them (Mrs. Kumar Ravinder personal communication, Dec 5, 2019).

Period: Sikh

State of Preservation: Renovated

SAMADHI, DHUMAN (FIGS 5–7)

Tehsil: Chakwal, District: Chakwal, Province: Punjab

Nature of Site: *Samadhi*

Measurements: Length: 5.5 m, Width: 2.5 m

Location: It is located in Khanpur, Chakwal.

Approach: It can be approached through Khanpur to Dhuman link road.

Coordinates: Latitude 32°55' 07.13" N, Longitude 73°01'05.75" E

Nearest Village: Chak Baqir Shah

Description

This Samadhi has also octagonal plan with three blind round arches encased within rectangular recess on exterior walls. Fourth recess serves as a main entrance. It is erected on a slightly raised platform known as plinth. An octagonal drum is followed by a bulbous ribbed dome with missing finial. Two whorls of outward lotus petals are observed around the dome. This Samadhi is whitewashed both exteriorly and interiorly. Deteriorating whitewash reveals fresco paintings alternatively encapsulated within round niches and intersected by wall paintings. These paintings consisted of floral motifs. Monocotyledonous and dicotyledonous Indian floral plants, scroll of acanthus leaves (Greek) topped by a linear pattern of pipal leaves (Indian) have been depicted on the walls. Individual tufts of acanthus leaves have also been painted in rectangular painted recesses. Different rosettes and individual leaves are encased within

parallel helix are also illustrated along the ceiling around an eight petalled flower. Mostly, green, blue, red, brown, and yellow, white colors have been used to embellish the walls.

This *Samadhi* is still used to perform rituals by local Hindu community. Various images of *Durga*¹ have been placed inside this tomb along with oil lamps. People use to offer shawls in case they are victimized to malaria. They believe that by doing so they can get cure from this ailment as informed by the natives.

Period: Sikh

State of Preservation: Good

SAMADHI, CHAKWAL CITY (FIGS 8)

Tehsil: Chakwal, District: Chakwal, Province: Punjab

Nature of Site: *Samadhi*

Measurements: Length: 4.267 m, Width: 2.438 m

Location: It is located in a Jinnah Public School, Chakwal.

Approach: It can be accessed through Thanial road in main city Chakwal in northern direction.

Coordinates: Latitude 32°56'0.38292" N, Longitude 72°51'29.04624" E

Nearest Village: Tatal

Description

It is octagonal in plan with bulbous ribbed dome emerging from a whorl of upright folded tipped lotus petals. Finial is absent. This *Samadhi* is whitewashed. Now it is present in the courtyard of a private school. It is standing on a raised platform of standard sized bricks.

Period: Sikh

State of Preservation: Fair

SAMADHI, TALAGANG (FIG 9–10)

Tehsil: Talagang, District: Chakwal, Province: Punjab

Nature of Site: *Samadhi*

Measurements: Height: 4.572 m, Width: 3.048 m

Location: It is located in Government Boys High School 1

Approach: Talagang-Fatehjang in northern direction

Coordinates: Latitude 32°55'40.99" N, Longitude 72°25'1.78" E

Nearest Village: Tehi

Description

This *Samadhi* is square in plan with bulbous dome. Dome is followed by an inverted lotus flower. Finial is absent. A segmental band is beautifully created which runs around the dome. A wooden door serves as a main entrance encased within two concentric arches and flanked by two round niches on both of the sides to place a sculpture or an oil lamp. All the four corners of the dome are decked with thin pilasters. A small veranda is built at the right side of the same tomb which is supported by two pillars with stepped base and capitals. This veranda is covered by wooden stacks and is provided by another door which is also encapsulated within two arches and decorated by two pointed niches. Left side of the same tomb is adorned with a concentric blind arch fringed by two pointed niches. Interior of *samadhi* has elongated round arches and square recesses. This *samadhi* is constructed with standard sized bricks and lime mortar.

Period: British

State of Preservation: Deteriorating

1 [Wife of Shiva and usually appeared with a lion].

Samadhis are simply built to memorize the saints or famous personalities as already mentioned but various distinctive things came to the surface after the surveying of current samadhis. Firstly, both Hindus and Sikh burnt dead bodies as per their funeral rituals but interestingly three graves have been found in one of the mentioned samadhis. The graves are different from Muslim graves by style. Secondly, the same samadhi is practiced by both Hindus and Sikhs as they have mixed lineage i.e., maternally Hindus and paternally Sikhs. As their thirteenth generation is still living in vicinity of the same samadhi their houses have both Shiva images and at the same time Baba Guru Nanak. This samadhis is located in a Muslim village Karyala which show religious pluralism that how three different religions are flourishing side by side. The samadhi in a village Dhuman is basically practiced by Hindus but even the Muslims of the same area use to pay homage in the form of shawl if they encounter malaria disease which is another example of religious pluralism or amalgamation of cultures.

CONCLUSION

Samadhis located Chakwal have diverse architectural features indigenous (Indian) decorative elements such as lotuses, various types of arches, niches, and alcoves etc. have been amalgamated into western motifs such as acanthuses and vine scrolls. Most of the samadhis had been erected during Sikh and British period. The distinctive characteristic of Sikh period monuments has a ribbed dome with more ornamentation i.e., paintings while samadhis of British period are comparatively simpler in architecture and usually have a plain dome.

The surveyed and documented samadhis mentioned in this paper mostly belonged to Sikh period. Only one samadhis situated in sub-division Talagang of District Chakwal is traced back to British period as this area was more influenced by the British governance.


COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

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Published: 27 September 2021

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