

# Tomb of Nawab Bahadur Zafar Jang Kokaltash, Lahore: Hidden Marvel of Lahore Sustainable Heritage Site of Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** One of the hidden marvels of Lahore, which has been ruined twice, is the tomb of *Nawab Bahadur Khan Zafar Jang Kokaltash*. The aim of this article is to find out the comparative and descriptive analysis of the tomb of Khan Bahadur, its glorious past, and its surviving present.

**Methodology:** In order to find out more about the historical sustainable places, researchers interact with architects, artists, educators, and other experts in the field. Data and opinions from a broader range of participants and specialists also gathered through interviews with government representatives and art historians. The relevant literature was reviewed to ascertain the most effective method to collect data for the study using a qualitative approach.

**Findings:** Lahore has its own versatile history with various historical and religious impressions from different eras. During the Mughal period, Lahore became a pivotal point for their artistic interest. Besides the lavish gardens, Mughal kings had a rich contribution in constructing many secular and Islamic buildings. The royal aesthetics were reflected not only in highly decorated and well-planned architecture but also in their techniques.

**Conclusion:** The historical inquiry shows how once beautifully embellished places turned into ruins and how the most promising human skills have sunk into a quagmire of oblivion. The remains of Mughal architecture are still desirable pieces of study for observers and scholars for their intrinsic findings. Lahore, in regard to its architectural excellence, is not to be judged from the monuments that have endured through the hands of Afghans and Sikhs, as numerous monuments have been completely destroyed and many of them have been deprived of their ornamental and decorative details.

**Keywords:** Mughal Tomb, Architecture, Afghans, Sikh, Ornamental.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Lahore - The Historical Background

The inquisitive nature of mankind is always looking for ways to explore things of its interest. It is interesting to write about relics, tombs, and historical buildings—the neglected silent places around us—and try to trace out the men or the noble buried beneath these tombs and cenotaphs. Lahore, the world-famous city, is adorned with the delicate embellishments of refined buildings and gardens. This resplendent city has faced many turbulent times, yet it stands gracefully with the blend of historical pride and modern velocity. The cultural heart of Pakistan has a long history of more than 2000 years. Many references can be found in the documents of the second century A.D. and in Hindu legends of the pre-Christian period (Syed Muhammad Latif, 1982). The history of the glorious city goes prior to Muslim rule; Hindu mythology attributes that the old name of Lahore was “Lava” or “Loh,” son of Rama Chandra, for whom it is said to have been named *lohawar* (Britannica.com). The city of “*Labokla*” found in Ptolemy’s 2<sup>nd</sup>-century *Guide to Geography* (Claudius Ptolemy, 2024) may also be the oldest name of Lahore. People from many religions, including Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians, have ruled this region. Consequently, Lahore has historical documentation of many religions, and the city has reflected with a specific culture and origin since antiquity. But it was the Ghaznavid dynasty’s capital (Persianate Muslim Dynasty of Turkic mamluk origin), from 1163 to 1186 c. A Mongol army had destroyed Lahore in 1241 and the city was constantly under the attacks of Mongols during the 14th century A.D. Then, in 1398 the city was conquered by Turkic capturer Timur (Dirk Collier, 2016). With the arrival of Babur in 1524, Lahore entered a new golden age under Mughal Dynasty (1526-1759). City became the royal residence of Mughal emperors and greatly expanded during the reigns of *Akbar*, *Jahangir* and *Shahjahan*. But it declined during the time period of *Aurangzeb*. After the death of *Aurangzeb Alamgir* (1707), the city was facing a power struggle between Mughal rulers and Sikhs (Prof. Dr. Shaukat Mahmood, 2024).

In the mid-18th century, Lahore, again, was invaded by *Nadir Shah* and became the settlement of Iranian empire. With the decline of the last Mughal emperor and rise of Sikhs, the city experienced another chapter of history. Sikhs became more powerful and during the rule of *Raja Ranjit Singh* (1799-1839), Lahore had been brutally ravaged. After the death of *Raja Ranjit Singh*, the city came under the British rule. Lahore became the capital of west Punjab after independence in 1947 ((Prof. Dr. Shaukat Mahmood, 2024)).

Despite all the historical turbulence and vicissitudes of time, Lahore is rich in art, craft and architectural history. The Mughals had almost made it the second capital of India, making it more beautiful. The main focus was to build grand mosques, palaces, gardens and tombs which were prevalent in the Islamic typology, unique geometry and grandeur.

*Ishq o Tehzeeb hai mera Lahore;*

*Iss k har daur se muhabbat hai*

The Mughals (1526-1857 A.D), have enormously contributed their finest aesthetics and splendor to the art and architecture of India. They have built numerous historical buildings, including mosques, mausoleums, baradaris, forts, royal gardens (adored the concept of *Chahar bagh*), caravanserai (roadside inns), and roads, which have had a powerful impact on architectural history. The reflection of Islamic symbology is seen in art and architecture in the Mughal era, with the amalgamation and influence of Persian, Turkish, and Indian styles. Indo-Islamic architecture was significantly shaped by the Mughal emperors, especially in the northern Indian subcontinental cities of Delhi, Agra, and Lahore. The Charbagh style, large gateways, slender turrets, calligraphy, arabesque, and geometric patterns were all hallmarks of Mughal architecture (Prof. Dr. Shaukat Mahmood, 2024).

During the reigns of *Akbar, Jahangir, and Shahjahan*, the Mughals' glorious and splendid era can be observed. Many historians claimed that the Mughal dynasty can be divided into two periods: the era of glory and grandeur (1526-1707 A.D.) and the decline period (1707-1857 A.D.). After the demise of *Aurangzeb* in 1707 A.D., the Mughal empire witnessed the decline and was besieged by the foreign powers.

The Mughal architecture represents the Islamic symbolism of perfection and beauty. Besides many well-known Islamic and secular buildings, like the Taj Mahal, Badshahi Mosque, Lal Qila, and Jahangir Fort, there are many less popular yet worthwhile monuments built during their rule in the subcontinent. The tomb of *Nawab Bahadur Khan Zafar Jang Kokaltash* in Lahore is one of those silent and little-known architectures of the city, bearing the promise to stand in solitude with grace even after being demolished twice.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The existing literature on *Kokaltash's* tomb is descriptive rather than comprehensive or scholarly. Many books and articles have been examined in order to comprehend and analyze the current study project, *Tomb of Kokaltash*. In addition, Dr. Shaukat Mahmood, renowned art historian and scholar of Pakistan and officials from the Directorate General of Archaeology, Tourism Department, Government of Punjab, were interviewed in May 2024. These interviews also add valuable insights to the research paper. The 18th century (C) *Tehzeeqat-e-Chishti* by Maulvi Noor Ahmed Chishti is a valuable source. Moreover, Online sources have also been instrumental in supporting the development of this research paper.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

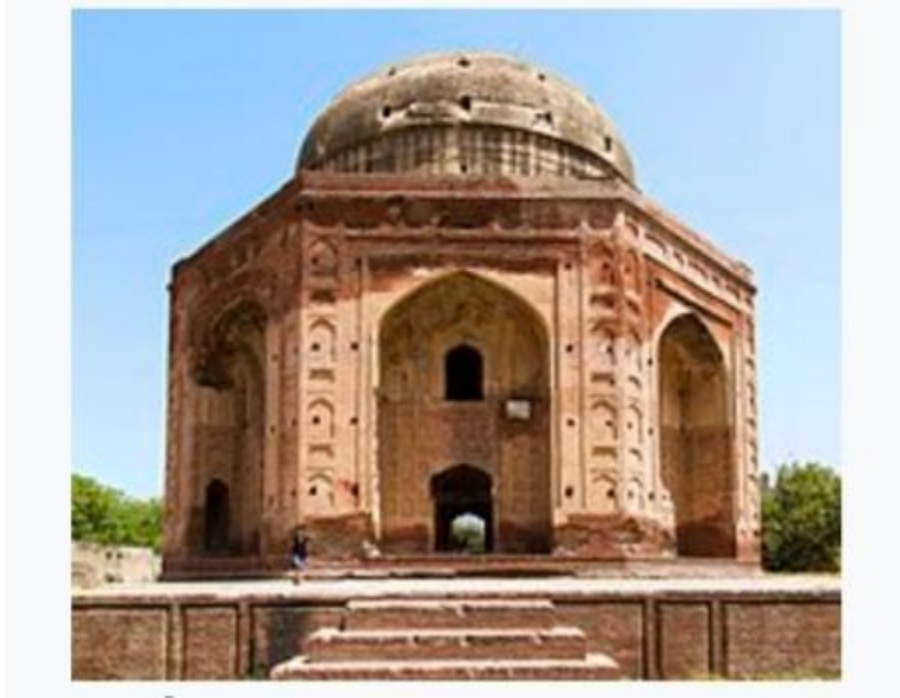
However, scholars and researchers typically use a range of research techniques whether analyzing art, architecture, or trends. These might consist of: An analysis of the literature. To learn more about the history of the *Kokaltash* monument and other mausoleums, researchers conduct a comprehensive review of the body of extant literature, academic papers, books, exhibition catalogues, and other relevant publications. In order to find out more about the historical sustainable places, researcher interacts with architects, artists, educators, and other experts in the field. Data and opinions from a broader range of participants and specialists can also be gathered through interviews with government representatives and art historians (Creswell, 2017). The relevant literature was reviewed to ascertain the most effective method to collect data for the study using a qualitative approach.

## **4. RESULTS/DISCUSSION**

### ***4.1 Tomb of Nawab Bahadur Khan Zafar Jang Kokaltash***

The visual silent language of heavily damaged tomb echoes the forgotten history of lost tales. Along the canal bank road in *Mughalpura*; located behind the Royal Palm Country Club, when the road from *Garhi Shahu* (left side) is intercepted (Creswell, 2017); a silent yet magnificent old structure stands: the tomb of *Nawab Bahadur Khan Zafar Jung Kokaltash*, another hidden and neglected historical marvel of Lahore. Travel towards the south of Shalimar Link Road from G.T. Road and take a right turn towards Canal Bank Road and find that the tomb is located at the opposite side of the railway lines. It is assumed that the tomb was built in 1697-98.

The real name of *Bahadur Khan Kokaltash* was *Mir Malik Husain* and it is said he was a foster brother of *Aurangzeb*. He was a quiet man by nature and was also regarded as one of the wisest intellectuals in the imperial court. He was a high-ranking officer during the Mughal period. He served as the governor (Subedar) of Deccan, *Allahabad* and lastly the governor of Punjab in 1691-1693 A.D. He found the favor of Emperor *Aurangzeb* for capturing his recalcitrant brother, Prince *Dara Shikoh*, who was promptly executed for heresy (The News, 2019). He was given the title of "*Khan-e-jahan*" by *Aurangzeb* and raised his rank from 700 horses to 7000 horses (Directorate General of Archaeology, Tourism Department, Government of Punjab, May 2024).



**Plate no. 01:** Tomb of Nawab Khan Bahadur Kokaltash (Mughalpura)  
(Source by author, Collection 2024)

Later, the emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir had dismissed him from his position, as he had lost an important battle against the Marathas. Four years later, he died on 23 November 1697 A.D. He is often confused by the nobleman of *Akbar's* court named *Khan-e-Jahan*, who had died in 1602 (Syed Muhammad Latif, 1892). Historical reviews showed his time period differently, but it is an approved fact that he lived during the reign of *Shahjahan* and *Aurangzeb*. Historian *Kanhaiya Lal* wrote about that *Khan-e-Jahan* was buried at this place, but later in Mughal history, there was no evidence about this, and historians disagree with *Kanhaiya Lal's* statement. Noor Ahmed Chishti, another historian, wrote about the structure of the tomb in his book "*Tahqeeqat-e-Chishti*" but did not write anything about *Khan Bahadur Kokaltash* (Maulvi Noor Ahmed Chishti, 18<sup>th</sup> century (C)).

The tomb, like many other Mughal monuments, was severely damaged during the Sikh period. The grave and the structure were demolished by *Raja Ranjit Singh* and his army. Currently, there is no marble, carvings, mosaic work, or cupolas left. Due to inadequate maintenance of this structure, the tomb's walls and floors developed damage over time, with the edges of the marble flooring breaking off and the geometric and floral designs bordering the monument's domes deteriorating.

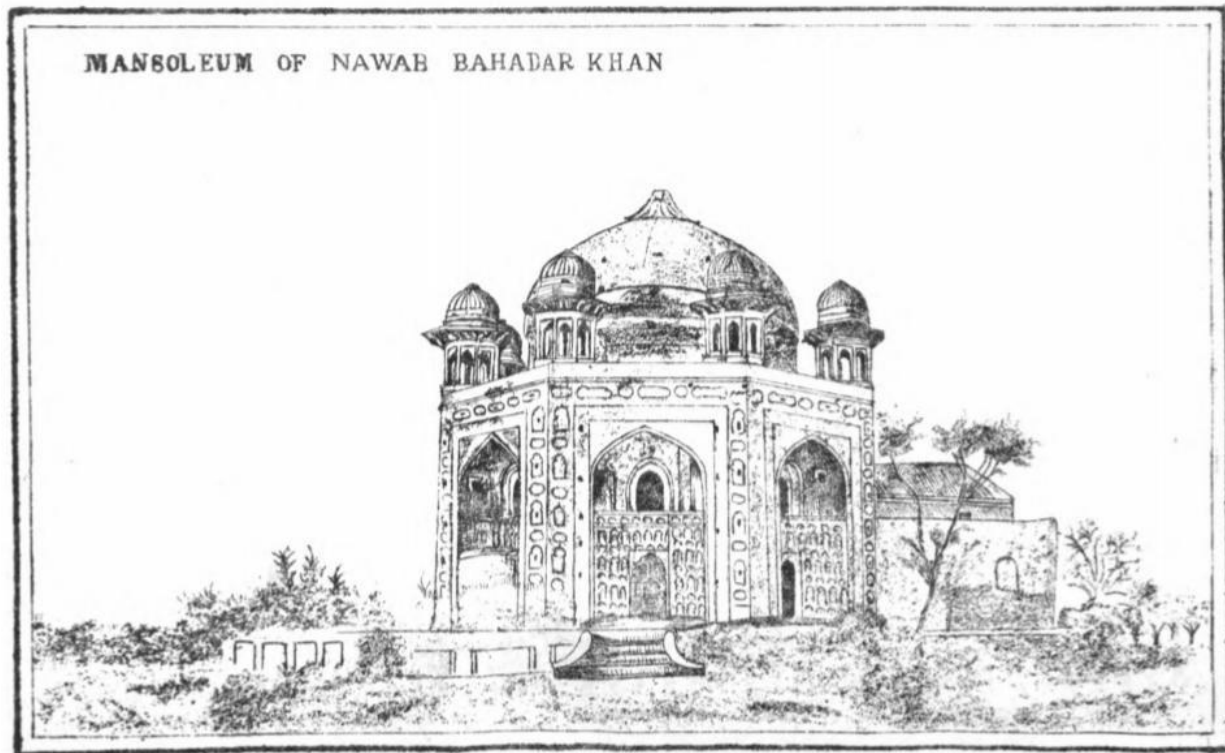
In 1849, with the collapse of the Sikh empire and the rise of the British empire, the English chiefs converted the tomb to "*Naach Ghar*," *the dancing house* (The News, 2019). When railway authorities took over the area, once part of a historic quarter known as "*Muhalla Gunj*," the tomb was put to the depraved function of a railway storehouse. It is said that this was the last tomb built during the reign of *Aurangzeb*.

#### **4.2 Structure of the Tomb**

The tomb was built in December 1697-98 CE, after the death of *Khan Bahadur Kokaltash* is one of the best examples and reflections of Mughal aesthetics during the Mughal Empire. Unique elements like Timurid peshtac apertures (a high portal or entrance, usually centrally situated), submerged panels, and *Zanjira* patterns are exhibited throughout the entire structure (The News, 2019).

The tomb was built on the high-raised octagonal podium, which is 5' in height and 32'6" in width. This spacious platform encircles the tomb, and all sides have lofty Timurid entrances. All eight high multifoil pointed arches are roofed with *Ghalib kari* (stalactite or Muqarnas) squinches, and these eight sides have been covered with the bricks now. It is also said that glazed tiles were also used in arched openings. Nearly eight identical façades, each with a wide central arch of 25' high and 26'6" wide. The entrances as well as each side of the façades are beautifully ornate with multifoil pointed arches on the ground floor and a small-sized open pointed arch (each arch is 3' in height and 4' in width) on the upper story for decorative or ventilation purposes. Every entrance has similar detailed decorative features like iwans adorned with muqarnas and sunken panels ornate with "symmetrical blind multifoil arches" or closed compartments and geometrical floral patterns to reduce the flatness of the walls. In the exterior of the building, it is suggested by historians that the division of the wall surface in a geometrical pattern of sunken panels would have had fresco paintings or even had some mosaic tile work, which was encroached upon during the Sikh period. Niches on the western side of the tomb are under conservation these days due to their deplorable condition. The beautiful carvings on the walls and brick masonry are evidence that it must have been a remarkable and extraordinary structure when it was built. All sides of entrances have been closed for conservation with doors made of iron bars, and only the main entrance is open for the visitors. The multi-cusped arches, decorative marble, and tiled sunken panels almost lost their beauty due to continuous invasions and negligence. The interior and exterior of the tomb once had marble facing, and the interior was embellished with skillful inlay work and a variety of stones. The tomb has two storeys, and the upper half can be reached through a narrow staircase, 1' high and 2.5' wide. Like other funerary gardens among the Mughals, as they were built on a specific idea—the symbolic representation of paradise, *Chahar bagh* (Britannica.com)—the tomb was constructed in the middle of the garden. Maybe once there was a large garden around it; now only small green strips can be seen around the tomb. Like many other Mughal buildings, the structure is a fair example of Mughal aesthetics, although only remains of the architecture are left. The uniqueness of this tomb lies in its cut brickwork instead of red sandstone, as many buildings of the Mughal era were constructed with sandstone.

Syed Ahmed Latif's book, *Lahore: Its History, Architectural Remains, and Antiquities*, 1892 (Syed Muhammad Latif, 1892). In this book, we can clearly observe through drawing that there was a presence of turrets with copulas, surrounded by the magnificent dome, which were demolished during Sikh period. There is no evidence of these copulas in the present structure. The construction was a typical analogy of *Ali Mardan Khan's* tomb ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)), which is situated a few miles away near the railway workshop, *Mughalpura*. The massive double-shelled bulbous dome, 90' in diameter, raised on a drum. The interior of the dome was lavishly embellished with "*Ghalib Kari*," incised work. From some historical references and drawing from Syed Muhammad Latif's book, it is said that the finial of the dome has also been ruined.

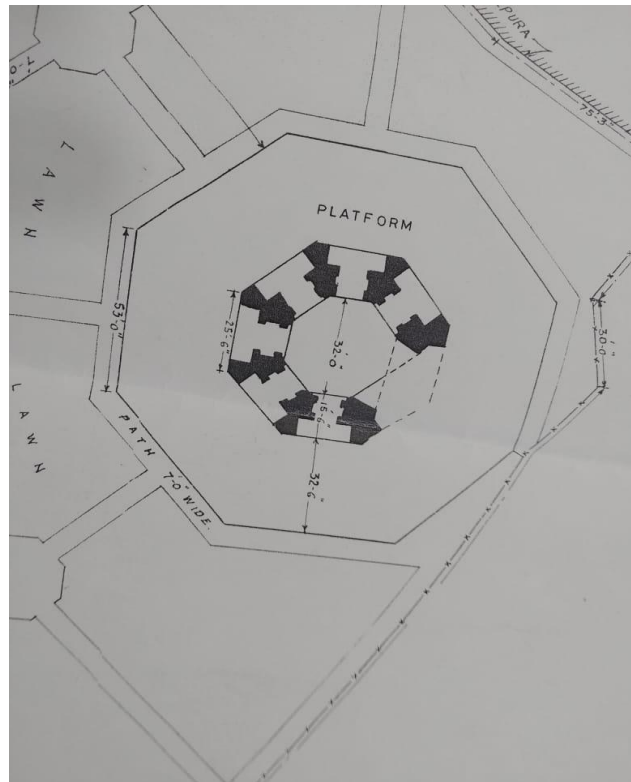


**Plate no.02:** Tomb of Nawab Khan Bahadur Kokaltash

(Source by Syed Muhammad Latif, book, Lahore: Its history, architectural remains and Antiquities, 1892).

Only the inverted lotus (petals) is still placed on the top of the dome. The external periphery of the dome only has a brick surface without any ornamentation or decorative material. The drum of the dome is beautifully adorned with small blind arches, without any decorative material. The dome is more reminiscent of the dome utilized in the tomb of *Anarkali* than those of other nobles such as *Asaf Khan* (Directorate General of Archaeology, Tourism Department, Government of Punjab. May 2024). The marble that once embellished the dome surface has also been lost and only the basic brick structure is left. Some historians suggest that the dome was not only demolished during the Sikh era (1760-1790) but also in the early British Indian period (1880-1885). In the 1965 war, most of the eastern and southern façade collapsed, but the dome was spared and supported by brick pillars before preservation. The main façade was also decorated with stone facing and inlays but is now completely bare and only has a brick covering.

The marble cenotaph is laid in the middle of the tomb, and it is assumed that it was once highly decorated with delicate work of *Pietra dura* ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)) in floral patterns. The grave was demolished during the British India Period, when the construction of the *Mian-Mir* cantonment was underway, (Muhammad Mukhtar, 2024) and used for entertainment purposes at that time. The basement was once open for the visitors, in which the actual grave (body) was placed, but now it has been closed, and the archeology department of Lahore has restricted that secret staircase, *Zeenah* with brick construction to enclose the entrances towards the basement. The durability of the monument—despite all violent times, its grace and well-planned geometrical layout cannot be exaggerated or ignored, because under the Mughal reign, Lahore rose to its high splendor.



**Plate no. 03:** Plan of Khan Bahadur Kokaltash's tomb  
(Drawing by author), 2024

It is said that, given the extent of *Khan Bahadur Kokaltash* tomb's construction, the architect would have constructed this monument by keeping the concept of symmetrical design in mind. Although there are no ornamentation or other embellishments left, the tomb's original elegance is still visible in beautifully carved blind window arches, stalactite squinches, delicate geometrical patterns, and simply cut brickwork.

Mughal architecture is characterized by domes, arches, minarets, and vaulted roofs; they have no parallel in decoration. Massive structure, extremely detailed ornamentation, and matchless artwork. The skill of sacred geometry, Islamic symbology, and detailed brick, marble, and sandstone work was at its peak during Mughal era.

It is informed that the archaeology department of Punjab has started working on the conservation of this monument but without consulting the leading experts of Pakistan. The material being used is not up to the mark; in fact, it did not match the exact standards of preserving monuments. The cement, sand, and gravel were being used massively instead of *kankar* lime plaster, which was traditionally the original material for conservation. Moreover, they are only working on basic renovations or structure, and no ornamentation or any kind of decoration is seen there.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The objective behind selecting this topic is to raise some voice and trace attention about the neglected national legacy. To gain more depth in this research paper, data was collected through different sources, including interviews, books, documentaries, and newspaper articles. Due to multiple factors, most of the historical monuments at *Dharampura*, *Mughalpura*, and on the G.T. road is in a miserable condition, demanding immediate repair.

Nawab Bahadur Zafar Jang Kokaltash's tomb is the magnificent gems that adorn the ancient city. However, historians, art enthusiasts, and travelers are left devastated by its depletion. Among many lesser-known monuments and tombs from the Mughal Era, the tomb of Khan Bahadur Zafar Jung Kokaltash is one of the hidden marvels, waiting for the resurrection of its original beauty. Fortunately, this monument is currently being restored and preserved by the government for future generations.

*“An old building is like a show. You smell the soul of the building. And the building tells you how to redo it.”*

- Cameron Mackintosh

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