

*History of
Royal Tombs*





FIG. 1.4

FIG. 1.4
Portal of the Gur-i-Amir Mausoleum,
Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Though many buildings survive to exhibit this style, there are not many tombs among them. The Shezade Mosque (1544–48) in Constantinople (Istanbul) built for Sultan Suleyman, exhibits to perfection the relationship between the component parts of the Ottoman mosque. Beyond the prayer chamber, almost in the centre of the garden, stands the tomb of Prince Shezade. It is an octagonal tower adorned with decorative stone inlay and capped by a ribbed dome, which reflects Central-Asian traditions (Fletcher 1996:616).

In Persia, the Safavids united the country and extended its borders into southern Russia. By the late 16th century, Persian intellectual and artistic activity focused on the Safavid capital of Isfahan, where a new town was established to the south of the medieval city. The Safavids developed bridge structures that not only carried traffic across rivers, but also served as dams. The shrine of Imam Reza Meshed includes caravanserais, oratories, libraries, hostels, madrasas, mosques and other buildings, but not many royal tombs. Competition between shrines produced local variations, some examples of which can be seen in Qum, Najaf, Kerbala and Samarra (Iraq). Despite these variations, however, a significant unifying character grew, that further became symbolic of Persian architecture.

By the end of the 16th century, much of northern and north-western India was under the Mughals, starting with Babur. However, the period of Mughal architecture in general, and tombs in particular, started only when Babur's grandson, Akbar, built Humayun's tomb in Delhi (1556–66). Mughals further developed their architecture in Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore.

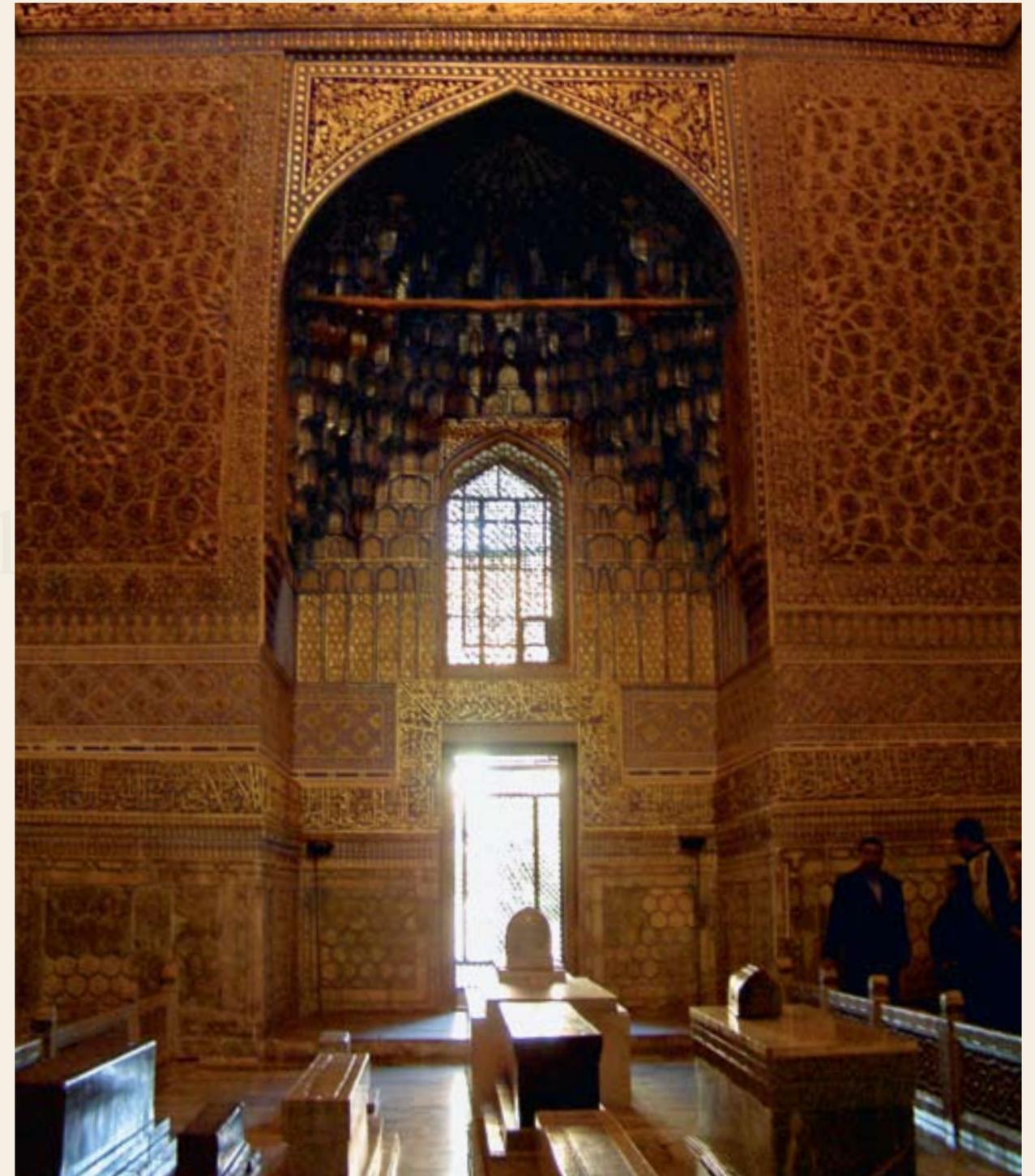


FIG. 1.5

FIG. 1.5
Main Hall of the Gur-i-Amir Mausoleum with the
graves of Timur, his son, grandsons and teacher,
Samarkand, Uzbekistan



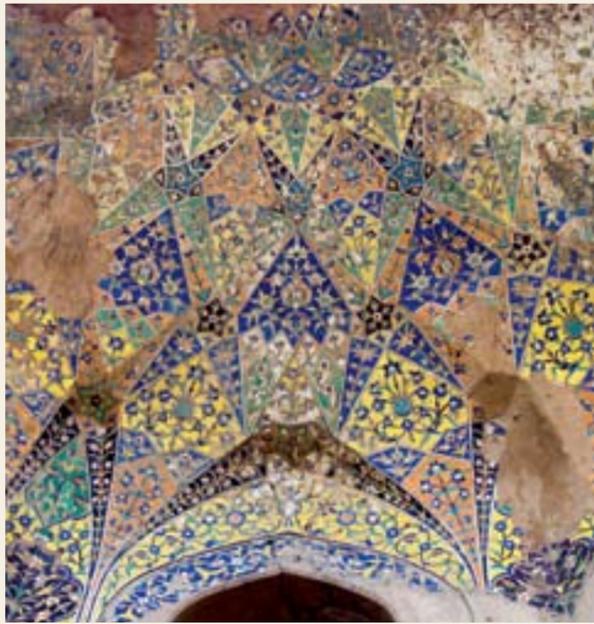


FIG. 2.2

about 10 years), and the Agra Fort—the seat of several Mughal emperors including Akbar—in order to study the Hindu architectural influence on Islamic monuments in India. We present several images on each of these, in order to concretize the above discussion on architectural designs and decorative patterns. Before we do this, however, it is important to briefly describe each of the above buildings and the Hindu influence and architectural elements found in them.

FIG. 2.2
Persian *muqarnas* in Asaf Khan's tomb, Lahore, Pakistan

FIG. 2.3
Persian decorations on an exterior wall of Asaf Khan's tomb complex, Lahore, Pakistan

FIG. 2.4
The Alai Darwaza, New Delhi

The Muslim rule in India began at the end of the 12th century, when Qutb-ud-din Aibek established the Mamluk or Slave dynasty. As the first Sultan of India, he built the Quwwat-ul-Islam (Might of Islam) mosque (the oldest in India) and the Qutb Minar. The Khaljis, who took over from the Slaves, built the famous Alai Darwaza as an extension of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, the city wall of Siri (in Delhi) and the tomb of Ala-ud-din Khalji. Ala-ud-din Khalji was the most prominent of all the Khalji sultans (he chased the Mongols out of India) who wanted to build such grandiose monuments as the Alai Minar, near the Qutb Minar, which was never built. Nevertheless, the



FIG. 2.3

Khalji rule witnessed architectural progress after a lull in building.⁷

The Tughluq rulers (who succeeded the Khaljis), were fond of architecture, especially under Firoz Shah Tughluq who built mosques, religious schools and public works (e.g. roads and bridges). The Persian influence on Indian architecture declined during the reign of the Tughluqs. This may be explained by the occupation of Persia by the heathen Mongols who did not believe in Islam: they cut off relations with India (Alfieri 2000:37). The heaviness and bulky nature of the buildings and the speed at which they were built (Ghiyas ruled for only five years) did not allow

elaborate decoration. However, this does not suggest a total lack of decoration of Tughluq buildings. Some decoration was achieved “with polychrome techniques through alternating slabs in different colours of stone, and with “carved and moulded stucco”.

The Qutb Minar Complex (Mehrauli, New Delhi)
This complex contains the first monuments of Muslim India, which date back to the 12th and 13th centuries (that is, well before the Mughal period). Work on the Qutb Minar started in 1199, with Qutb-ud-din Aibak's victory tower, 73 metres high, celebrating the victory of Mohammad Ghuri and Qutb-ud-din over the Rajput Chauhans, the then rulers of Delhi. The



FIG. 2.4

