

# Taj mahal – college essay



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128 ebba koch EBBA KOCH THE TAJ MAHAL: ARCHITECTURE, SYMBOLISM, AND URBAN SIGNIFICANCE Much has been written on the Taj Mahal, but little has been said about its architecture. There has been only one interpretation of the symbolism of the mausoleum, 1 and the urban situation of the monument in the city of Agra has been almost entirely neglected. In brief form, this essay presents the main results of a recently completed monograph in which I address these issues. 2 The Taj Mahal is the Mughals' great contribution to world architecture, and, as the contemporary sources reveal, it was conceived as such from the very beginning (? . 1). In the words of Shah Jahan's early historian Muhammad Amin Qazwini, writing in the 1630s: And a dome of high foundation and a building of great magni? cence was founded—a similar and equal to it the eye of the Age has not seen under these nine vaults of the enamel-blue sky, and of anything resembling it the ear of Time has not heard in any of the past ages...it will be the masterpiece of the days to come, and that which adds to the astonishment of humanity at large. 3 Not only was the monument to be a magni? cent burial place for Mumtaz Mahal, Shah Jahan's beloved wife (d. 631), but also—and this is explicitly pointed out by the emperor's main historian {Abd al-Hamid Lahawri—it was to testify to the power and glory of Shah Jahan (r. 1628-58) and Mughal rule: They laid the plan for a magni? cent building and a dome of high foundation which for its loftiness will until the Day of Resurrection remain a memorial to the sky-reaching ambition of His Majesty, the Sahib Qiran-Thani (Second Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction of the Planets Jupiter and Venus), and its strength will represent the ? rmness of the intentions of its builder. In other words, the Taj Mahal was built with posterity in mind, and we the viewers are part of its concept. I came to study the Taj Mahal in the <https://assignbuster.com/taj-mahal-college-essay/>

context of a survey of the palaces and gardens of Shah Jahan that I have been conducting since 1976 as part of a larger survey of Mughal architecture. With the assistance of Dr. Yunus Jaffery from Dr. Zakir Hussain College in Delhi, I have established from the Persian sources a corpus of thirty-five Shahjahani palaces (sing. dawlatkhana) and garden residences (sing. bagh), of which twenty-four proved upon field investigation to exist in varying sizes and states of preservation. In the whole of Islamic architecture, this is the largest extant body of palaces built by a single patron. Entirely new measured drawings of seventeen palaces were prepared by the Indian architect Richard A. Barraud, who drew them on the basis of measurements he and I made during extensive fieldwork, which I undertook because many of these complexes are hardly or not at all recorded. Altogether, Mughal architecture, like the Islamic architecture of India in general, is not well documented.

The art historian cannot rely on measured drawings to the same extent possible for the better-documented areas of Islamic architecture or for Western historical architecture in general. The pioneering surveys of the Archaeological Survey of India from the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries included several Mughal sites, but only a few—such as the monographs of Edmund W. Smith on Fatehpur Sikri and on Akbar's Tomb at Sikandra—were published. More often than not, when one wants to have an exact plan of a building one has to go and measure it.

On the other hand, while establishing this basic documentation, the art historian is confronted by all the questions the discipline has developed in the span of its existence, during which the approach has moved from formal

assessment and analysis towards contextual studies. I began my survey of the palaces at Agra and, during the 1980s, spent months in the Red Fort, measuring and photographing its buildings. From here the Taj Mahal was always before my eyes at a distance across the river Yamuna, popularly called Jamna (Fig. 2), and one of these views eventually became the cover image of my book *Mughal Architecture* (1991), in which the Taj Mahal: architecture, symbolism, and urban significance 129 Fig. 1. Agra, Taj Mahal (1632-43), mausoleum and flanking buildings seen from the upper level of the gate. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1996) I dealt with the Taj Mahal for the first time, albeit only briefly. I felt overwhelmed by its perfection, splendor, and sheer size. Eventually I realized that as a scholar I was not alone in my awe of the famous building. The vast literature on the Taj Mahal comprises surprisingly few serious scholarly studies and, as I pointed out at the beginning, there is as yet no monograph or modern analytical treatise dedicated to its architecture. At the same time I came to realize that many answers to my questions about Shah Jahan's palaces and gardens lay in the Taj Mahal as the ultimate project of his architectural patronage. The national incentive to study it in detail came in 1994, when the editors of the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* asked me to write the article on the building. 10 This started my project of newly documenting and analyzing the entire mausoleum complex; I am the first Western scholar since India gained independence in 1947 to have received permission for such an undertaking, through the generosity of the Archaeological Survey of India. With Richard Barraud I have been measuring and photographing the buildings of the complex in intermittent expeditions during the last ten years. 11 The survey has brought me into the remotest corners of the Taj Mahal, and this close

encounter with the architecture has revealed the contribution of the anonymous workmen who inscribed their mason marks on the stones. 12 I began my analysis by looking at the entire complex of the Taj Mahal and at its urban situation. I could not help noticing that the Taj Mahal invites an approach that coincides with what since the 1970s might be termed a “deconstructive reading. According to Jaques Derrida, the main propagator of this method of disassembling and questioning established notions, all Western thought is based on the idea of centers—Origin, Truth, Ideal Form, Fixed Point, Immovable Mover, Essence, God, and Presence—that guarantee all meaning. The problem with these centers is that they attempt to exclude. In doing so they ignore, repress, or marginalize others. 13 Even those who are tiring of deconstruction will see that the idea of center-and-margin illustrates the perception of the Taj too tellingly not to be included in this discussion. Traditionally, the white building of the mausoleum takes the position of the center in the conception of the beholder, who hardly notices the large complex at the end of which it stands. Due to the prominence of the tomb, its surrounding architecture has received very little attention—in other words, it has been marginalized. It thus seems important first to consider the entire complex, especially its subsidiary courtyards, which emerge as integral components of its design.

In addition, I have extended the investigation of the surroundings of the Taj to its larger environment, to its relationship to the city of Agra. ANALYSIS OF THE COMPLEX The mausoleum is set at the northern end of the main axis of

a vast oblong walled-in complex that measures 896.10 x 300.84 m (2941.5 x 986.5 Shahjahani gaz), which works out to 1112.5 x 374 Shahjahani gaz. Of this complex, the tomb garden and its forecourt are fully preserved; we measured it as 561.20 x 300.84 (300) m, that is, 696 x 374 (373) gaz (2941.5 x 986.5).<sup>14</sup> The Shahjahani linear yard, called gaz or zir, corresponds to about 81–82 cm, or 32 inches; our field studies have shown that it was not an exact unit but a relative, proportionally used one, the length of which could vary slightly, even within one and the same building complex. For the overall length of the Taj complex, the average gaz figure comes to 80.55 cm. The tomb garden consists of two main components: a cross-axial, four-fold garden—in the form of a classical charbagh (Fig. 3: B)—and, towards the river, a raised terrace on which are placed the mausoleum and its flanking buildings (Fig. 3: A).

In this, the Taj Mahal garden follows the form of the typical garden of Mughal Agra, the waterfront garden. As I have shown elsewhere, this is a specific form of the charbagh developed by the Mughals in response to the the taj mahal: architecture, symbolism, and urban significance geographic conditions of the Indo-Gangetic plain, and more specifically for the riverfront situation at Agra. Here the water source was not a lively spring on a mountain slope, as in the Mughals' native Central Asia, but a large, slow-flowing river, from which the desired running water had to be brought into the garden by means of water lifts.

Accordingly, the Mughals conceived a garden type to take advantage of this waterfront situation; the main building was not placed in the center of the garden, as in the classical Mughal charbagh, but rather on an oblong terrace

(kursa) running along the riverfront. The garden component was on the landward side of the terrace. This shift towards the riverfront provided the main garden pavilions with the climatic advantages of running water and presented a carefully composed front to viewers on a boat or across the river (fig. 2). From the garden itself, the buildings presented an equally satisfying backdrop (fig. 1). 15 URBAN CONTEXT Mughal Agra consisted of two bands of such riverfront gardens lining the Jamna, of which only a few survive today. The key to my reconstruction of this riverfront scheme, which formed the urban context of the Taj, is a plan of Agra dating from the 1720s, in the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum in the City Palace in Jaipur; to my knowledge it is the earliest plan of the city (fig. 5). 16 It shows forty-four garden complexes (including the Agra Fort) along the river and gives their names, which are usually those of their owners, in Devanagari script. 7 Information about these gardens can also be pieced together from the Mughal histories and eulogistic descriptions of Agra, in which gardens of members of the imperial family and of nobles are occasionally mentioned, especially in the context of an imperial visit. Another source is topographical descriptions of Agra written in Persian by local informants for British administrators after the British took Agra in 1803. In his *Tafrīh al-Imrāt* (1825–26), Sil Chand describes the gardens of Agra by the same names as feature on the Jaipur plan. 8 The main owners of the riverfront gardens of Agra were the emperors Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, members of their imperial family, and their nobility the amirs and mansabdars. Even Mumtaz Mahal had a garden at Agra, which she bequeathed to her daughter Jahanara; what is left of this Bagh-i Jahanara is now known by the corrupted name Zahara Bagh and lies south of the 131 Ram Bagh, originally Nur

Jahan's Bagh-i Nur Afshan (? g. 5: 3 and 4; ? g. 6). 19 The evidence indicates that most of these gardens followed the riverfront design, with the main building on a terrace overlooking the river and a ch? rb? gh on the landward side. 0 ANALYSIS OF THE COMPLEX RESUMED The design of the Taj garden thus introduces an established Mughal residential garden type into the context of a monumental imperial mausoleum. The waterfront scheme not only determines the shape of the funerary garden of the Taj, it is also a key element in the planning of the entire Taj complex. At the part of it to the south of the garden is a large rectangle (? g. 3: C) whose central square forms the Taj forecourt, called jilawkh? na by Shah Jahan's chroniclers, the of? cially appointed court historian {Abd al-Hamid Lahawri and Muhammad Salih Kanbu, who wrote on his own account.

Both provide us with almost identical detailed descriptions of the entire Taj Mahal complex, on the occasion of its of? cial completion on 17 Dhu 'l-Qa{da 1052 (February 6, 1643). 21 Both historians are remarkably consistent in their use of architectural terms; I follow their terminology. The jilawkh? na square (? g. 3: 11) is framed on both of its shorter sides by two smaller courtyard enclosures. An open bazaar street (? g. 3: 12a, 12b) divides these courtyards and provides the main access to the jilawkh? na and, beyond that, through a monumental gateway (? g. 3: 9), to the tomb garden.

The northern pair of courtyards contained the residential quarters for the tomb attendants, the khaw??? p? ras (? g. 3: 10a, 10b). The southern pair contained subsidiary tomb gardens of lesser wives of Shah Jahan, whose identity is still under debate (? g. 3: 13a, 13b). These tomb enclosures echoed the design of the main tomb garden on a smaller scale because they



followed the characteristic waterfront scheme of a cross-axial ch<sup>h</sup>rb<sup>h</sup>gh combined with an oblong terrace on which stood the tomb structure and its flanking buildings. (These buildings, with one exception, are no longer preserved. On the outside of the Taj complex are three buildings, two to the west (Fig. 3: 20, 21) and one to the east; the latter represents another subsidiary tomb complex of this type (Fig. 3: 13c). The waterfront scheme is thus transferred to a landlocked situation in these miniature replicas of the main garden. Not only that, but the waterfront garden is also used as the ordering scheme for the entire sub-

132 ebba koch Fig. 3. Site plan of the Taj Mahal with terms derived from the Persian descriptions by Lahawri and Kanbu of 1643: A. riverfront terrace (kurs<sup>h</sup>), B. tomb garden (b<sup>h</sup>gh), C. complex of the forecourt (jilawkh<sup>h</sup>na), D. complex with cross-shaped (ch<sup>h</sup>rs<sup>h</sup>) bazaar and four caravanserais (sar<sup>h</sup> }<sup>h</sup>), 1. mausoleum (raw<sup>h</sup>a), 2. mosque (masjid), 3. assembly hall (mihm<sup>h</sup>n kh<sup>h</sup>na), 4a-f. wall towers (burj), 5. pool (haw<sup>h</sup>), 6. first temporary burial site of Mumtaz Mahal, 7a, b. garden wall pavilions (im<sup>h</sup>rat) popularly called Naubat Khana (Drum House), 8. double arcaded galleries to the south of the garden (w<sup>h</sup>n dar<sup>h</sup>w<sup>h</sup>n), 9. gate (darw<sup>h</sup>za), 10a, b. quarters for tomb attendants (khaw<sup>h</sup> p<sup>h</sup>ra), 11. forecourt (jilawkh<sup>h</sup>na), 12a-f. bazaar streets (b<sup>h</sup>z<sup>h</sup>r), 13a-c. subsidiary tombs (maqbara) all popularly called Saheli Burj (Tower of the Female Friend), 14. gates (darw<sup>h</sup>za): 14a. popularly called Fatehpuri Gate, 14b. popularly called Fatehabad Gate, 15. gate (darw<sup>h</sup>za) popularly called Sirhi Darwaza, 16. caravan

> the taj mahal: architecture, symbolism, and urban significance 133 Fig. 4. Plan of the preserved complex. (Drawing: Richard A. Barraud and Ebba Koch) serai (sar<sup>h</sup> }<sup>h</sup>) known since the eighteenth century as: 16a Katra (Market) Omar Khan, 16b. Katra Fulel (Market of Perfumes),

16c. Katra Resham (Silk Market), 16d. Katra Jogidas, 17. entral square (chawk), 18a, b. west and east gates of the bazaar and caravanserai complex, 19. south gate of the bazaar and caravanserai complex popularly called Dakhnay Darwaza, 20. outer western tomb, 21. mosque popularly called Fatehpuri Masjid. (Drawing: Richard A. Barraud and Ebba Koch) 134 ebba koch Fig. 5. Plan of Agra, drawn with added numbering after a plan painted on cloth datable to the 1720s, 294 x 272 cm, in the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, City Palace, Jaipur (cat. no. 126): 3. Ram Bagh (Bagh-i Nur Afshan), 4. Zahara Bagh (Bagh-i Jahanara), 9. Tomb of I{timad al-Dawla, 17.

Mahtab Bagh, 20. Taj Mahal, 28. Agra Fort. (Drawing: Richard A. Barraud and Ebba Koch) sidiary complex of the Taj. In order to understand the complete design, we must turn to contemporary description and look at eighteenth- and nineteenthcentury plans (compare ? gs. 3 and 7). 22 From these it becomes apparent that south of the jilawkh? na there was another courtyard complex with a cross-axial arrangement (? g. 3: D). It was formed by open, intersecting bazaar streets (? g. 3: 12c, 12d, 12e, 12f), which corresponded to the walkways of the garden, and four squarish sar? }? , that is, caravanserais or inns (? g. 3: 16a, 16b, 16c, 16d), taking the place of the four gar- den plots. We meet here with a unique and highly creative transfer of a ch? rb? gh design onto a complex of utilitarian civic architecture. Hence the con? guration of the rectangular unit containing the jilawkh? na and the cross-axial unit to its south echoed the waterfront scheme of the Taj garden. The entire complex of the Taj Mahal thus consisted formally of two units

following the waterfront design—that of the Taj garden, a true waterfront garden, and that of the landlocked variant of the subsidiary units.

The tomb garden and the subsidiary complex were the taj mahal: architecture, symbolism, and urban signi? cance 135 Fig. 6. Plan of preserved and reconstructible building substance of the so-called Zahara Bagh, identified as Bagh-i Jahanara (late 1620s to 1630s), Agra. (Drawing: Richard A. Barraud and Ebba Koch) connected not only formally but also functionally. The utilitarian unit serviced the funerary unit of the tomb garden. By imperial command the upkeep of the tomb was ? nanced by the income generated from the bazaars and caravanserais, in addition to that of thirty villages from the district of Agra. 3 The service unit was the counterpart (qar? na)<sup>24</sup> of the tomb complex, linked to it by design and function. The two zones, the funerary and the “ worldly,” relate also to the dialectics of the Islamic concept of d? n waduny? }, the domains of the spiritual and the material life. 25 Furthermore, the addition to the mausoleum complex of quarters for merchants and foreign travelers ensured “ that the whole world should see and admire its magni? cence,” in the words of the French jeweler and traveler Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, who was in Agra in 1640–41, and again in 1665. 6 Its reception through world travelers— jah? n-naward? n or rawandah? - 136 ebba koch yi {? lam, as the Mughals called them<sup>27</sup>—thus forms an integral part of the concept of the Taj Mahal. Of this two-part service unit, the southern cross-axial component is the great mystery of the Taj Mahal: we do not really know how much of it survives. Hardly anybody who walks through the southern gate of the jilawkh? na (? g.

3: 15) and enters the narrow street with the marble inlay workshops realizes that this area, known as the Taj Ganj, was originally part of the Taj complex.

Here a densely built city quarter has grown up in which the architecture of Shah Jahan has been buried almost entirely; today one can make out only fragments of the wings of the original bazaars and caravanserais. The four gates of the central square or chawk are preserved (although two only in part) and protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (fig. 8). The Taj Ganj is, however, an integral part of the Taj Mahal, an indispensable component of its planning. It has been lost, but there is no doubt that it should be given back to the Taj by some means.

I am planning to do this in the form of an architectural model that will reconstruct the entire complex of the Taj Mahal, the River Jamna, and the imperial garden called Mahtab Bagh on the opposite side of the river. The model will enable visitors to understand that the Taj is unique not only because of the grandness of the tomb building but also because of the carefully planned creative design, the scale, and the multifunctional complexity of the entire compound. It will also draw attention to the Taj Mahal as a constituent part of the urban scheme of Agra.

I envisage placing the model in the new Visitors' Center at the Taj Mahal, in the eastern and western courtyards of the khaw??? p? ras (fig. 9), today called, respectively, Fatehabad Gate Court and Fatehpuri Gate Court. The Taj Mahal Visitors' Center is part of a new initiative for "the conservation and restoration...of the Taj Mahal and surrounding areas and a new site visitor management," realized since 2001 in a partnership between the Indian

government, represented by the Archaeological Survey of India, and the private sector—the Indian Hotels Company Ltd. that is, the Tata Group of Hotels. The project is monitored by the Taj Mahal Conservation Collaborative, directed by the conservation architect Rahul Mehrotra and by Amita Baig, and advised by a body of global experts of which I am part. 28 Fig. 7. Plan of the entire Taj Mahal complex with designations of the main buildings in Persian, late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin, MIK 10060. the taj mahal: architecture, symbolism, and urban signi? cance 137 Fig. 8. Taj Mahal, bazaar and caravanserai complex (fig. : D), gate of the central chawk (square) leading to the northeastern caravanserai today called Katra Fulel (fig. 3: 16b). The area is now built in and over by the city quarter Taj Ganj; in the background can be seen the gate of the Taj Mahal garden, behind it part of the mausoleum, and to the right the Mihman Khana. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1999) THE TAJ AS BUILT ARCHITECTURAL THEORY The reconstruction of the original complex of the Taj establishes the determinant role of the waterfront garden in its planning.

The complex of the Taj Mahal not only explores the potential of the waterfront garden as an ideal funerary and a utilitarian worldly form, it also expresses canonically the architectural principles of the period. We have no texts to turn to because the Mughals had no written architectural theory, and one wonders to what extent they were affected by the ancient Shastric tradition of building theory. The Sanskrit texts translated in an extensive program under Akbar did not include the outstanding Indian genre of art and architectural theory, the *shilpa shāstras* and *vāstushāstras*, respectively; theorizing about art was not a Mughal literary preoccupation. True, it was

hardly a major theme elsewhere in the Islamic world, but one would have expected the Mughals to become interested in the ancient Indian textual tradition of art theory, all the more since, like the Muslim dynasties in India before them, they continued to absorb Indian artistic conventions into their art and architecture, and even newly revived them. However, the fact that no texts exist does not mean that architectural theory was absent from Mughal thinking, especially in the time of Shah Jahan.

My investigations have shown that theory was laid down in the architecture itself. As in painting—and I have tried to establish this for the historical images illustrating Shah Jahan's history, the P? dsh? hn? ma29—the ruler's buildings and formal gardens express these concepts so systematically that we can derive them from their form itself. The Taj is 138 ebba koch Fig. 9. Taj Mahal, view from the roof level of the gate towards southeast onto the khaw??? p? ra (quarter of attendants) now called Fatehabad Gate Courtyard (fig. 3: 10b) and the subsidiary tomb to the east of the jilawkh? na (fig. 3: 13b). Photo: Ebba Koch, 1995) “built architectural theory,” which can be read almost like a literary text once we have mastered the grammar and vocabulary of the architectural language. The buildings speak to us “with mute eloquence” (bazab? n b? zab? n? ), as Lahawri puts it. 30 We note here the purest expression of a consistent formal systematization characteristic of the entire art of Shah Jahan; it represents a distinctive and outstanding contribution speci? c to this period. The principles of Shahjahani architecture, which interact closely with one another, can be identi? ed as follows: 1. Geometrical planning. . Symmetry. Favored in particular is bilateral symmetry, for which we even have a term in contemporary descriptions of

buildings, namely, qar? na, 31 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. an Arabic word that expresses the notion of pairing and counterparts but also of integration, thus ? tting conceptually into the ideas of universal harmony that played a great role in the imperial ideology of Shah Jahan. In a typical Shahjahani qar? na scheme, two symmetrical features, one mirroring the other, are arranged on both sides of a central, dominant feature. Hierarchy. This is the overriding principle, which governs all the others.

Proportional formulas expressed in triadic divisions. Uniformity of shapes, ordered by hierarchical accents. Sensuous attention to detail. Selective use of naturalism. Symbolism. the taj mahal: architecture, symbolism, and urban signi? cance 139 Fig. 10. Agra Fort, courtyard now called Machchhi Bhawan, originally the “ Ground Floor Courtyard of the Hall of Private Audiences” (Dawlat Khana-i Khass), south wing with marble baldachin for Shah Jahan’s throne, 1630s (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1980) A palace wing of the so-called Machchhi Bhawan (1630s) in the Agra fort illustrates these principles very clearly (? . 10). The wing consists of uniformly shaped arcades with a hierarchical accent in the center, in the form of the emperor’s marble baldachin. The central feature and the identical arcades on both sides express in a triadic division bilateral symmetry, or qar? na. The baldachin attains its hierarchical accentuation by the use of nobler material—namely, white marble—and with selective naturalism: it is formed of organic baluster columns, decorated with naturalistically sculpted acanthus leaves that also appear in stucco as decoration of the interior cupola.

These elements are shaped with sensuous attention to detail and are in stark contrast to the plainer arcades of the wings. The organic plant forms of the

baldachin symbolize the emperor, whose throne stood below it, as the generator of blossoming and wellbeing. 32 This is underlined by the pot with over? owing leaves out of which grows each of the four columns—a p? r? a ghata or p? r? a kalasha, in Indian architecture an ancient symbol of growth, fecundity, and prosperity (? g. 11). 33 This example is meant to suggest that the same principles govern the entire architecture of Shah Jahan— palaces, gardens, mosques, and mausoleums.

They are, however, expressed most grandly and most consistently in the Taj Mahal, whose architecture epitomizes the Shahjahani system. THE PRINCIPLES OF SHAHJAHANI ARCHITECTURE AS EXPRESSED IN THE TAJ MAHAL First, a rational and strict geometry is ensured by the use of grid systems based on the Shahjahani gaz. Different modules are used for the garden and the subsidiary 140 ebba koch gate (darw? za) to the garden (? g. 3: 9), the forecourt (jilawkh? na) (? g. 3: 11) and its southern gate (? g. 3: 15), the square (chawk) (? g. 3: 17), and the southern gate of the bazaar and caravanserai complex (? g. : 19). These elements are ? anked on both sides by pairs of identical buildings: the mosque (masjid) (? g. 3: 2) and the assembly hall (mihm? n kh? na) (? g. 3: 3), two garden wall pavilions (cim? rat), now called Naubat Khana (? g. 3: 7a, 7b), and, to accentuate the corners of the enclosure wall and the terrace step, three pairs of tower pavilions (burj) (? g. 3: 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, 4f). The elements of the subsidiary unit (? g. 3: C, D) are arranged in the same mirror symmetry. Integrated into the overall qar? na symmetry are centrally planned elements, namely the four-part garden (b? gh) (? g. : B), the four-part bazaar-and-caravanserai complex (? g. 3: D), the miniature ch? rb? ghs of the subsidiary tombs (? g. 3:



13a, 13b); the individual buildings of the mausoleum (Fig. 3: 1) and gate (Fig. 3: 9) are raised over central plans (compare Figs. 3 and 4). Each element plays an indispensable part in the composition; if just one part were missing, the balance of the entire composition would be destroyed. Bilateral symmetry dominated by a central accent has generally been recognized as an ordering principle of the architecture of rulers aiming at absolute power—a symbol of the ruling force that brings about balance and harmony.

For Earl E. Rosenthal, this is expressed in the palace built into the Alhambra in Granada by Charles V in 1526 as a statement of the Christian Reconquista of Spain, “ a striking symbol of the stratification of aristocratic society under centralized authority. ”<sup>35</sup> Third, triadic divisions bound together in proportional formulas determine the shape of plans, elevations, and architectural ornament of the Taj. A leitmotif is the tripartite composition consisting of a dominant feature in the center flanked by two identical elements; the configuration relates in turn to hierarchy as well as to vertical symmetry (Figs. 1 and 12). Fourth is the hierarchical grading of material, forms, and color down to the minutest ornamental detail. Particular striking is hierarchical use of color: the only building in the whole complex faced entirely with white marble is the mausoleum. All the subsidiary structures of the Taj complex are faced with red sandstone; special features such as domes may be clad in white marble (Figs. 1, 2, 12). This hierarchic use of white marble and red sandstone is typical of imperial architecture— Fig. 11.

Marble baluster column of the baldachin of Shah Jahan's throne, topped with an acanthus capital and growing out of a pot with overflowing acanthus leaves, the Indian purusha ghata. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1979) complexes, and

even individual buildings have their own grid. The unit of the garden and the riverfront terrace is based on a grid with a 23-gaz module, and the unit of the jilawkh? na and bazaar and caravanserai complex on a 17-gaz module. In the planning of the mausoleum a 7-gaz module is used and in that of the gate a 3-gaz module. 34 Second, there is perfect symmetrical planning with emphasis on bilateral symmetry (qar? a) along a central axis on which are placed the main features. The main axis running north-south is represented by the garden canal and the bazaar street in its extension. On it are set the dominant features: the mausoleum (raw→a) (? g. 3: 1), the pool (haw→) (? g. 3: 5), the the taj mahal: architecture, symbolism, and urban signi? cance 141

Fig. 12. Taj Mahal, Mihman Khana (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1996) rial Mughal architecture, but here it is explored with unparalleled sophistication. It represents the clearest link to pre-Islamic Indian Shastric concepts and expresses social strati? cation.

The Mughals elaborated here an architectural praxis that already had been adopted by the early sultans of Delhi and that conforms to older Indian concepts laid down in the Shastric literature. The Vishnudharmottara, an authoritative compilation composed in Kashmir in about the eighth century, recommended white-colored stone for Brahmin buildings and red for those of the Kshatriyas, the warrior caste: 36 “ White, it would seem, is opposed to red as the purity of the Brahmin is opposed to the ruling power of the Kshatriya. ” The synthesis of the two colors had an auspicious connotation. 7

By using white and red in their buildings, the Mughals represented themselves in the terms of the two highest levels of the Indian social system: architecturally speaking, they were the new Brahmins and the new Kshatriyas

of the age. Until Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperors were concerned to define themselves as rulers in Indian as well as Muslim terms; the historian {Abd al-Qadir Bada}uni (d. 1004/1595–96), who was an orthodox Muslim and wrote a history of Akbar on his own account, criticized the emperor for letting himself be addressed as an incarnation “ like Rama, Krishna, and other Indian kings.

38 Fifth is the uniformity of shapes, ordered by hierarchical accents: for instance, only one type of columnar support—the Shahjahani column—is used in the entire complex. It has a multifaceted shaft, a muqarnas capital, and a base formed of multicusped-arched panels<sup>39</sup> and is always combined with a multicusped arch. The proportions and details of the columns may vary according to their position in the complex. In the galleries on both sides of the gate (fig. 3: 8a, 8b) they form monumental arcades (fig. 13, and cf. fig. 10); on the roof level of the mausoleum similar arcades on a smaller scale are set in the back sides of the portals, and Shahjahani half-columns<sup>142</sup> (ebba koch Fig. 13. Taj Mahal, galleries south of garden on both sides of the gate (fig. 3: 18), Shahjahani column with faceted shaft, muqarnas capital, and base formed of four multicusped panels, each enriched with a flowering plant in relief. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1995) Fig. 14. Taj Mahal, roof level, pillar with paired Shahjahani half-columns of roof chhatra (kiosk), behind the back side of the porch with gallery formed of Shahjahani columns and multicusped arches. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1996) and the pillars of the four marble chhatra (kiosks) surrounding the main dome (fig. 14). This uniformity is true of the entire architectural vocabulary and its decoration; it applies to the paneling of the walls with shallow multicusped niches and cartouches, and to the treatment of vaults. One type of decorative facing is used for the main vaults and the half vaults of the

mausoleum and gate (figs. 15, 16)—a network developed from points arranged in concentric circles, which Shah Jahan's authors described as *qutub khana*, or mold work, because in the original plaster form of the vault the pattern was applied by means of molds (fig. 15).

The design was transferred into marble in the central dome and half vaults of the *pishtaq* of the mausoleum (fig. 16). Sixth, the principle of sensuous attention to detail is expressed most exemplarily in the *chhatris* of the mausoleum *dado* and in the exquisite *pietra dura* (literally, "hard stone": gemstone inlay) decoration of the cenotaphs of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan and the screen that surrounds them (figs. 17, 18, 20, 21). Seventh, in the Taj the selective use of naturalism emphasizes hierarchy. The most naturalistic decor appears in the chief building of the entire complex, the mausoleum (figs. 17, 18, 20, 21). Eighth, the sophisticated symbolism in the architecture—*the taj mahal: architecture, symbolism, and urban significance* 143

Fig. 15. Taj Mahal, garden gate, half vault of the southern *pishtaq* showing plaster facing with *qutub khana*, that is, a network forming kite-shaped compartments developed from stars arranged in concentric tiers. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1996)

Fig. 16. Taj Mahal, mausoleum, central dome with *qutub khana* in marble relief. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1996)

144 ebba koch brought to its ultimate monumentalized design; thus it was raised to a level above the sphere of mortals.

The concept of the eschatological house also governs the elaborate program of the inscriptions, designed by Amanat Khan Shirazi. Z. A. Desai and Wayne Begley have shown that passages of the Qur'an selected for the inscriptions focus on themes of the Last Judgment, divine mercy, the reward of the

faithful, and Paradise (p. 19).<sup>42</sup> Such themes are entirely fitting for the mausoleum in their evocation of the abode prepared for Mumtaz in Paradise. Begley, however, uses the evidence for another, less close-at-hand reading and sees in the Taj Mahal an architectural realization of an Islamic cosmological scheme—namely, the concept of the Throne of God on the Day of Judgment, as envisaged and recorded in a diagram by the thirteenth-century Spanish mystic Ibn al-ʿArabi in his *Futūḥ al-Makkiyya* (1238).<sup>43</sup> Why then, as Maria Eva Subtelny has pointed out,<sup>44</sup> is the famous Throne verse (Qurʾān 2: 255) extolling God’s majesty<sup>45</sup> absent from the inscriptional program of the Taj Mahal? Begley’s interpretation ignores not only that, but also the use of an established Agra garden plan for the layout of the inscriptional program expresses, as I have suggested, the concept of the mausoleum as earthly realization of the mansion of Mumtaz in the garden of Paradise.

This is clearly formulated by Lahawri in the official history of the emperor’s reign: ...the exalted mausoleum, which imitates the gardens of Rizwan [the guardian of Paradise], and which gives an impression of Paradise (literally, the holy enclosures) (*rawāʿa-i muḥallā ki az riyāʿat-i Rizwān hikmat yat kard wa az haḥḥat-i [rat al-] quds nishān dahad*).<sup>40</sup> Mughal eulogistical references have a complexity of their own; while they may represent a purely literary convention, they can also have a direct bearing on the work of architecture or art that they praise.

In order to arrive at their meaning, the metaphors used in such eulogies thus have to be carefully evaluated against the evidence brought forth by formal analysis.<sup>41</sup> In the Taj Mahal, every aspect of the architecture supports the

concept of the paradisiacal mansion. It is expressed in the overall planning of the entire complex. The waterfront garden, a typical residential garden form of Agra, was realized in ideal forms and Fig. 17. Taj Mahal, p. 145 of Mausoleum, marble dados with rows of naturalistic flowers representing heavenly flowerbeds. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1978) The Taj Mahal: architecture, symbolism, and urban significance 145 Fig. 18. Taj Mahal, p. 46 of the Mausoleum, dado flowers of mixed botanical species, detail. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1978) The Mausoleum. 46 He also disregards another highly relevant aspect, that is, the floral decoration that forms an integral part of the building. In a direct appeal to our senses, the concept of the paradisiacal garden house is expressed in the delicate flowers that appear on the dados, at the eye level of the beholder. They are carved in sensuous detail and represent naturalistic but not necessarily identifiable botanical species<sup>47</sup> that transform the lower walls of the mausoleum into ever-blooming paradisiacal flowerbeds (Figs. 17, 18). The naturalistic decoration culminates in the interior, in the central ensemble of the cenotaphs of Mumtaz and Shah Jahan and the screen that surrounds them. These are covered with spectacular flowers and plants inlaid with semi-precious stones, in commesso (composition) di pietre dure; the Mughals called the technique parcha khar (literally: “driven-in work”) (Fig. 20). The poet Abu Talib Kalim tells us that the painterly effects that could be obtained with parcha khar made it possible to create the desired naturalistic flowers, permanent and thus superior images of their counterparts in nature: On each stone a hundred colors, paintings, and ornaments have become apparent through the chisel’s blade. Fig. 19. Taj Mahal, interior of the central hall, south arch. End of the inscription of Qur’an 39: 53–54, with the colophon of the

calligrapher, reading “ Finished with His [God’s] help; written by the humble faqir Amanat Khan al-Shirazi, in the year one thousand and forty-eight Hijri [1638–39], and the twelfth of His Majesty’s auspicious accession. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 2001) 146 ebba koch Fig. 20. Cenotaphs of Mumtaz Mahal (1632) and Shah Jahan (1666) in the main tomb hall. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 1981) Fig. 21. Cenotaph of Shah Jahan in the lower tomb chamber (“ crypt”). Detail of poppies and yellow flowers set in cartouches, inlaid with semi-precious stones in pietra dura/parch? n k? r? technique. (Photo: Ebba Koch, 2002) the taj mahal: architecture, symbolism, and urban signi? cance The chisel has become the pen of Mani48 Painting so many pictures upon the translucent marble (? b-i marmar). ....

Pictures become manifest from every stone; In its mirror behold the image of a flower garden. They have inlaid flowers of stone in the marble: What they lack in smell they make up with color. Those red and yellow flowers that dispel the heart’s grief, are completely out of carnelian and amber. .... When of such stones the surface of a tomb is made, The deceased will [want to] clasp the flower pictures to her heart. 49 147 and to provide a lasting memorial to his fame. Strict formal principles served to express within each work of art and each building the hierarchy and timeless order of Shahjahani rule.

With their successful appeal to our senses, the seductive aesthetics make the message the more persuasive. It is the fusion of the intellectual and the sensuous that has made the Taj Mahal such a successful monument up to the present day. Lastly, the close connection between form and meaning in Shahjahani art makes it a methodological exemplar of general art-historical

relevance; it reminds us that formal analysis should not be in opposition to a contextual approach but rather a starting point for art as history.

Institute für Kunstgeschichte University of Vienna NOTES Author's note: A visiting fellowship from the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University in autumn 2002 enabled me to work on the manuscript of Taj Mahal, and to present my findings in a lecture in the Aga Khan Program Lecture Series on Nov. 14, 2003, which forms the basis of this article. I thank Gulru Necipoğlu, David Roxburgh, Jeffery Spurr, Andras Riedlmayer, and Sunil Sharma for their interest in my research and their help during my stay in Cambridge.

For supporting my project of the documentation and analysis of the Taj Mahal, I wish to thank the Jubiläumsfonds der Österreichischen Nationalbank, the Bundesministerium für Unterricht und Kulturelle Angelegenheiten, Austria, and Mr. E. Alkazi. 1. W. E. Begley, "The Myth of the Taj Mahal and a New Theory of its Symbolic Meaning," *The Art Bulletin* 61 (1979): 7–37. Begley's interpretation of the building as a replica of the Throne of God became widely known, probably because of its eccentricity and also because there was no proposed alternative; it even made its way into the popular travel guide literature: see *Lonely Planet: India*, 8th ed. Hawthorne: Victoria, Australia, 1999), 392. 2. *The Complete Taj Mahal and the Riverfront Gardens of Agra* (London: Thames and Hudson, forthcoming 2006). 3. Muḥammad Amīn Qazwīnī, *Pūshhīnāma*, British Library Asia, Pacific, and Africa Collections (henceforth BL APAC), Or. 173, fol. 234b (librarian's refoliation 235b), my translation; cf. the translation of this passage in W. E. Begley and Z. A. Desai, *Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb: An Anthology of Seventeenth-*  
<https://assignbuster.com/taj-mahal-college-essay/>



Century Mughal and European Documentary Sources (Cambridge, MA: Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture and Seattle: University of Washington Press, ca. 1989), 42. 4. {Abd al-Yam? d L? hawr? , The B? dsh? hn? mah (Persian text), ed. M. Kab? r al-D? n A? mad and M. {Abd al-Ra?? m (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1865–72) vol. 1, pt. 1, 403, my trans. ; cf. the trans. of this passage in Begley and Desai, *Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb*, 43. 5. I thank Dr. S. M. Yunus Jaffery for his continuing assistance in reading and translating Mughal source material. On both cenotaphs of Shah Jahan, which were placed next to those of Mumtaz after his death in 1666, the decoration with paradisiacal ? owers was given preference even over inscriptions.

Inscriptions had decorated the sarcophagus-like element of both cenotaphs of Mumtaz, the one in the lower and the other in the upper tomb chamber, and full ? owering plants appear only on the platform of her upper cenotaph. But both of Shah Jahan’s cenotaphs are covered all over with ? owers (? gs. 20, 21); the only epigraphy appears in the form of a brief historical epitaph at the south end of each cenotaph. The weight given to ? oral decoration is in tune, on the one hand, with the overall concept of the mausoleum as paradisiacal garden house, but the exclusively ? oral decoration of the emperor’s cenotaphs makes a more speci? statement, relating, even after his death, to the use of ? ora in his court settings to express imperial propaganda. The court poets and writers tell us that Shah Jahan was “ the spring of the ? ower garden of justice and generosity,” 50 the renewer (mujaddid) under whose rule “ Hindustan has become the rose garden of the earth, and his reign...has become the spring season of the age in which the

days and nights are young. ” 51 CONCLUSION From our investigations, the reign of Shah Jahan emerges as a time when the visual arts were most consistently and systematically explored as a means of promulgating imperial ideology.

The written texts and the arts were seen as equally necessary means to represent the ruler and his state for a wider public 148 6. ebba koch My ? eld research provides the material for a constantly expanding archive, which today comprises several hundred architectural drawings prepared mainly by Richard A. Barraud and ca. 50, 000 photographs taken by myself. E. W. Smith, *The Moghul Architecture of Fathpur-Sikri*, Archaeological Survey of India: New Imperial Series (henceforth ASINIS) 18, 4 vols. (1894–98, repr.

Delhi: Caxton Publications, 1985); idem, *Akbar’s Tomb, Sikandarah near Agra, Described and Illustrated*, ASINIS 35 (Allahabad: Superintendent Government Press, United Provinces, 1909). In the second Indian edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 98–101. The most useful studies are Muhammad Abdulla Chaghtai, *Le Tadj Mahal d’Agra* (Brussels, 1938); R. A. Jairazbhoy, “ The Taj Mahal in the Context of East and West: A Study in Comparative Method,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 24 (1961): 59–88; Dieter Brandenburg, *Der Taj Mahal in Agra* (Berlin, 1969); R. Nath, *The Immortal Taj Mahal* (Bombay, 1972); and Lisa Golombek, “ From Tamerlane to the Taj Mahal,” in *Islamic Art and Architecture: In Honor of Katharina Otto-Dorn*, ed. A. Daneshvari, *Islamic Art and Architecture*, 1 (Malibu, 1981), 43–50. Muhammad Moin-ud-din, *The History of the Taj* (Agra, 1905), recorded for the ? rst time the inscriptions of the Taj; his pioneering

effort was superseded by Begley and Desai, *Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb*. For excellent photographs by Jean Nou, see Amina Okada and M. C.

Joshi, *Taj Mahal* (New York, London, and Paris: Abbeville Press, 1993): unfortunately the illustrations are only partly identified. For further literature on the Taj Mahal, see Ebba Koch, "Taj Mahal," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (henceforth EI2) (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2004), vol. 10, 58–60, and idem, *Complete Taj Mahal*. Koch, "Taj Mahal," fig. 4 presents my new overall plan of the complex for the first time. A brief assessment based on this survey is idem, "The Taj Mahal," in *The Seventy Architectural Wonders of Our World*, ed. Neil Parkyn (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 57–61.

We measured the buildings with metal and plastic tapes and with a laser measuring instrument called Disto Basic, made by Leica. Based on our survey, Richard Barraud did the scale drawings by hand; I took the photographs with a Nikon FS Photomic. All plans and photographs illustrating this article are part of this survey. A selection is published in Koch, "Taj Mahal," 60. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play," *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago, 1978). The width of the complex at the southern, jilawkhana, end measures 300.84 m; at the riverfront it is 300 m. This is explained by Richard A.

Barraud in his pioneering study "The Modular Planning of the Taj Mahal," based on our measurements and illustrated with three drawings, in Koch, *Complete Taj Mahal*. Barraud refutes Begley's assumption that the planning of the Taj can be reconstructed by putting a decimal grid over the whole complex and explaining away the features that do not fit into it. See Begley

and Desai, *Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb*, ? gs. 13–15, and W. E. Begley, “The Garden of the Taj Mahal: A Case Study of Mughal Architectural Planning and Symbolism,” in *Mughal Gardens: Sources, Places, Representations, and Prospects*, ed. J. L. Wescoat, Jr. and J.

WolschkeBulmahn (Washington, DC, 1996). In earlier publications I have given differing measurements of the complex. In Koch, “T? dj Ma? all,” 58, a misprint occurred in the rendering of the gaz equivalents of the preserved part, which are indicated as 690 x 313 gaz instead of 696 x 374 gaz. In my essay in *Seventy Architectural Wonders*, 61, the overall length of the complex is given as 897. 3 x 300 m, because we took it from the outer face of the southernmost gate, which projects 1. 20 m from the enclosure wall. From this comes the overall length of 1114 gaz cited in Koch, “T? dj Ma? all,” 58, which differs from the one given here as 1112. gaz. Ebba Koch, “The Mughal Waterfront Garden,” in *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design, Supplements to Muqarnas*, 7, ed. Attilio Petruccioli (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1997), 140–60, repr. in Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 183–202. Cat. no. 126. The plan is painted on cloth and measures 294 x 272 cm. I have studied it since the mid-1980s and discussed it in several publications: see Ebba Koch, “The Zahara Bagh (Bagh-i Jahanara) at Agra,” *Environmental Design* 2 (1986): 30– 37; idem, “The Mughal Waterfront Garden” in M.

C. Beach, Ebba Koch, and Wheeler Thackston, *King of the World: The Padshahnama: An Imperial Mughal Manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle* (London: Azimuth Editions and Washington, DC: Arthur M.

Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1997), cat. no. 29, 185–87 and cat. no. 45, 209–10, ? g. 132. I thank Dr. B. M. Jawalia, Keeper of Manuscripts, for assisting me in reading the inscriptions of the plan in July 1985 and Feb. 1986, and Dr. A? ok Kumar Das, then Director of the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur, for the permission to study and to publish it. As no. 45 on the line drawing of ? g. I have added a further complex, which represents the Chhatri of Jaswant Singh (d. probably 1678), a well-preserved funerary complex that does not appear on the Jaipur map. L? lah S? I Chand, Tafr? h al-?im? r? t, compiled for James Stephen Lushington, Acting Collector and Magistrate of Agra, 1825–26, BL APAC, Pers. Or. 6371. I have used the copy prepared in 1836–37 for James Davidson, Sessions Judge, Agra, BL APAC, Pers. ms. 2450. Koch, “ Zahara Bagh (Bagh-i Jahanara). ” For a full discussion of the Agra riverfront scheme, see Koch, Taj Mahal, chap. 1. L? hawr? , B? dsh? hn? ma, vol. 2, 322–31; and Mu? ammad O? li?

Kanb? , {Amal-i O? li? , 3 vols. (Lahore, 1967–72) vol. 2, 315– 20; both trans. Begley and Desai in Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb, 65–82. On Mughal historiography, see the new study by Stephan Conermann, Historiographie als Sinnstiftung: Indopersische Geschichtsschreibung während der Mogulzeit (932–1118/ 1516–1707) (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2002), 422 (on L? hawr? ) and 125, 395–96, and passim (on Kanb? ). In his painstaking assessment, Conermann regrettably does not consider art and architecture as sources of history, as I have pleaded for in the introduction to Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology, xxiii–xxvii.

The ? rst dated plan of the entire complex is by the British landscape artists Thomas and William Daniell, who had it prepared in Agra in 1789 and

published in their *Two Views of the Taje Mahel at the City of Agra in Hindostan Taken in 1789* (London, 1801). A similar plan, but painted on cloth, is in the 7. 8. 9. 15. 16. 17. 10. 18. 11. 19. 20. 21. 12 . 13. 14. 22. the taj mahal: architecture, symbolism, and urban signi? cance Museum of the Taj Mahal (acc. no. 22), in the pavilion set in the western wall of the garden; another plan of this type, 280 x 85 cm, is in the Museum fur Indische Kunst, Berlin, no. I 10 060.

It has been published in Pratapaditya Pal, Janice Leoshko, Joseph M. Dye III, and Stephen Markel, *Romance of the Taj Mahal*, exhibition catalogue (London: Thames and Hudson and Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989), 55, ? g. 41. The plans differ in the areas of the jil? wkhana and the caravansarais. L? hawr? , B? dsh? hn? ma, vol. 2, 329–30; Kanb? , {Amal-i O? li? , vol. 2, 319–20. See also Begley and Desai, *Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb*, 75, 81. For the term, see below. For d? n wa-duny? , see L. Gardet, “D? n,” EI2, vol. 2, 293–96, in particular 295. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, 2 vols. English trans. V. Ball, 2nd ed. ed. William Crooke (London: Oxford University Press, 1925; repr. New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1977), vol. 1, p. 90. See, e. g. , L? hawr? , B? dsh? hn? ma, vol. 1, pt. 1, 155. The aims of the venture have been laid down in *Taj Mahal Agra Site Management Plan*, brought out by the Taj Mahal Conservation Collaborative together with the Archaeological Survey of India (March 2003); for my mission statement, delivered on Sept. 28, 2001, at the end of the ? rst advisors’ meeting on the conservation of the Taj Mahal (Sept. 25–28, 2001), see 5–6; for the model, see 66–67 and 70, ? g. 12.

Ebba Koch, “ The Principles of Shah-Jahani Painting,” in Beach, Koch, and Thackston, *King of the World*, 131–43; repr. in Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, 130–62. L? hawr? , B? dsh? hn? ma, vol. 1, pt. 1, 149. See, e. g. , L? hawr? , B? dsh? hn? ma, vol. 2, 327 with regard to the Taj Mahal, namely, the placement of the Mihman Khana and mosque to both sides of the mausoleum. This concept of rulership is explained in more detail below. On the adoption of the p? r? a ghata in Mughal architecture, see R. Nath, *History of Decorative Art in Mughal Architecture (Delhi, Varanasi, and Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976)*, 6– 10.

Barraud, “ Modular Planning of the Taj Mahal,” in Koch, *Complete Taj Mahal*. E. E. Rosenthal, *The Palace of Charles V in Granada* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 249–50. See Priyabala Shah, trans. , *Shri Vishnudharmottara, a Text of Ancient Indian Arts* (Ahmedabad: The New Order Book Co. , n. d. [1990]), 268, 271. Brenda E. F. Beck, “ Colour and Heat in South Indian Ritual,” *Man: The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, n. s. , 4: 553–72; the quoted passage is on 559. Beck investigates the use of the two colors, red and white, in South Indian ritual; her ? ndings tally with the recommendations of the Vishnudharmotara. Abd al-Q? dir Bad? }? n? , *Muntakhab al-Taw? r? kh*, English trans. (vol. 2) W. H. Lowe, 2nd ed. (Bengal: Asiatic Society, 1924; repr. Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, 1973), 336. For Akbar representing himself on Indian terms, see Ebba Koch, “ The 149 39. 40. 41. 23. 24. 25. 26. 42. 27. 28. 43. 44. 45. 46. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 47. 34. 35. 36. 48. 49. 37. 50. 38. 51. Intellectual and Artistic Climate at Akbar’s Court,” in John Seyller, *The Adventures of Hamza: A Monument of*

Early Mughal Painting (London: Azimuth Editions and Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2002), 18-31.

Koch, *Mughal Architecture*, 93. *L? hawr? , B? dsh? hn? ma*, vol. 2, 323; trans. E. Koch; cf. trans. of Begley and Desai in *Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb*, 66. E. Koch, introduction to *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, xxiii-xxiv; see also idem, "Diwan-i {Amm and Chihil Sutun: The Audience Halls of Shah Jahan," *Muqarnas* 11 (1994): 143-65, in particular 149-52, repr. in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, 229-54, in particular 242-43. For a compilation and translation of the inscriptions, see Begley and Desai, *Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb*, 195-244; for a discussion of their meaning, see W. E.

Begley, "Amanat Khan and the Calligraphy on the Taj Mahal," *Kunst des Orients* 12 (1978-79): 5-39; W. E. Begley, "The Myth of the Taj Mahal and a New Theory of Its Symbolic Meaning," *The Art Bulletin* 61 (1979): 7-37.

Begley, "Myth of the Taj Mahal," in particular 25-27. Personal communication, Toronto, Dec. 5, 2002. For the frequent use of the Throne Verse in epigraphical programs, see E. D. Cruikshank Dodd, "The Image of the Word: Notes on the Religious Iconography of Islam," *Berytus* 18 (1969): 35-61, 59; S. S. Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 69, 198, 214.

I pointed this out in *Mughal Architecture*, 99; and in "The Mughal Waterfront Garden," 143-44, repr. in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, 196; but I could not convince Laura Parodi, "'The Distilled Essence of the Timurid Spirit': Some Observations on the Taj Mahal," *East and West* 50, 1-4 (Dec. 2000): 535-42, in particular 539, where she considered my interpretation of the "



ideal paradisiacal garden for the deceased” as “reductive” and preferred Begley’s Throne of God hypothesis. I have come back to the issue in the introduction to *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, xxiv.

Both Begley and Parodi overlook the fact that, however spectacular their realization, the themes of Shahjahani art were conventional, as befitting a ruler aspiring to classical equilibrium. Robert Skelton first drew attention to the ambivalence of these formal creations in “A Decorative Motif in Mughal Art,” in *Aspects of Indian Art: Papers Presented in a Symposium at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Oct. 1970*, ed. Pratapaditya Pal (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 147–52. The founder of the Manicheans, and in Persian lore the ultimate painter. *Abū Ḥayyān Kalīlī*, *Pareshānī*, Persian ms., BL APAC, Ethe 1570, fol. 164a margin; my translation differs somewhat from that of Begley and Desai, *Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb*, 83. I thank Sunil Sharma for his advice. *Bahār-i Gulistān-i ‘Adl u Karam: Yūsuf Muḥammad Jān Qudsī*, *Zafarnāma-i Shāh Jahān*, BL APAC, Persian ms. Ethe 1552, fol. 129a. *Kānbū*, *‘Amal-i Ōlī*, vol. 3, 24; see also Ebba Koch, “Mughal Palace Gardens from Babur to Shah Jahan (1526–1648),” *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 143–65, quotes on 159; repr. in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, 203–28, quotes on 227.