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History in shambles



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Derelict graves of Maqsoodo Faqir and Mubarak Faqir Talpur

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There are many historic monuments in the Umarmkot district of Sindh which are fast falling to pieces. One such neglected heritage site is of the Khanani Talpurs, who largely served the Kalhoras. About 12 km north of Samaro Town and 10 km south of Bachao Bund is

located the cemetery of Mir Mubarak Khan Talpur. There are more than 25 stone carved graves, all of which have crumbled to pieces. Luckily almost all of these graves bear inscriptions.

Mir Mubarak Khan, after whom this necropolis is named, was a general of Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhoro (1719-1753), who bestowed upon him a fiefdom (jagir) near the present necropolis. This necropolis is the only surviving royal cemetery of the Khanani lineage of Talpurs. There are more than thirteen royal graveyards of the Talpurs distributed across Sindh. The earliest one is located at Drigh Bala where the ancestor of the Talpurs, Mir Suleiman Khan alias Kako Khan, is buried. Some family members of the Talpurs believe that he is buried in Choti Bala in Dera Ghazi Khan, from where the tribe migrated to Sindh in the seventeenth century to become disciples and soldiers of the Kalhoras (1700-1783). Mir Suleiman alias Kaka Khan had eight sons namely Hotak Khan, Bijar Khan, Manik Khan, Aali Khan, Jeevan Khan, Meeran Khan, Dafar Khan and Safar Khan. Four of his sons Hotak Khan, Manik Khan, Aali Khan and Shaho Khan became illustrious – from whom descended the four royal houses of Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Tando Muhammad Khan and Khanpur.



Crumbling grave at Mir Mubarak Khan Graveyard

The Shahdadani, the main rulers of Hyderabad, are named after Mir Shahdad son of Hotak Khan. Likewise, the Sohrabani, the rulers of Khairpur State, are named after Mir Sohrab, the grandson of Mir Shahdad. Similarly, Manikani, the house that ruled Mirpurkhas, was descended from Mir Manik son of Mir Kako Khan.

Mir Shaho Khan was the ancestor of the Shahwani Mirs. Prominent amongst them was Mir Muhammad Khan, who is believed to have been the founder of Tando Muhammad Khan. Mir Mubarak Khan, son of Aali after whom the Khananis are named, is believed to have founded Khanpur – which was also known as Khanpur State under the Kalhora dominion.

Mir Mubarak Khan's graveyard is one of the finest in terms of carvings in all of Umarmkot district

There are five graveyards which are associated with the Manikani Talpurs namely: 'Mir Allahyar Ja Quba' at Drigh Bala in Johi, Dadu; 'Chitori' in Mirpurkhas; 'Pir Aman Shah' near Rajo Nizamani, Tando Muhammad Khan; and 'Ahmed Shah', 'Mir Mirzo' and 'Ketyun' in Badin district. There are four royal cemeteries of the Shahdadani Talpurs, which include the two clusters of tombs at Hirabad, Hyderabad, 'Khadabad II' near Hala and 'Qubo Shahdad' near Shahpur Chakar in Sanghar district. The Sohrabanis, the sub-lineage of

the Shahdadanis, are buried in 'Qadir Bakhsh Ja Quba' in Rohri Taluka, Sukkur. The descendants of Mir Shaho Khan are buried in a graveyard at Fateh Bagh, where the magnificent stone tomb of Mir Muhammad Khan Talpur is located.

The Khananis, the descendants of Mir Mubarak Khan Talpur, are buried in the graveyard of Mir Mubarak Khan. There are nine inscribed graves in the necropolis. Prominent amongst these stone-carved graves is that of Mir Mubarak Khan. Formerly, there was an eight-pillared canopy over the grave of Mir Mubarak Khan when I first visited the graveyard in 2004. When I revisited it in 2005 for my book *Chatri: A symbol of Tribal Power in Medieval Sindh*, the canopy had caved in. All the architectural elements of the canopy are strewn over the site. The grave of Mir Mubarak is in a deplorable condition, thus exposing the burnt bricks beneath. The local people have placed chadars (sheets of cloth) on the grave. The inscription on the grave reads "Mubarak Khan Faqir walad (son of) Mir Aali bin Kaka Baloch year AH 1157/AD 1744".



Crying for renovation

The word 'Faqir' on his grave is interesting. All the Talpur disciples of the Kalhoras used to call themselves 'Faqirs'. To the west of Mir Mubarak's grave is located a crumbling stone-carved grave of his son Maqsoodo Faqir. It is also an inscribed grave. The local people have also placed a chadar (sheet of cloth) on his grave. There was a stone grill around his grave which has also disintegrated. To the south of the grave of Mir Maqsoodo is the inscribed stone-carved grave of Yaro Faqir son of Jeevan Khan, who died in AH 1161/AD 1748. Jeevan Khan was an uncle of Mir Mubarak Khan. This graveyard also contains the graves of the Yarananis and Daryakhananis. Darya Khan was the brother of Mir Mubarak Khan whose stone-carved grave is located west of the grave of Mir Mubarak. The grave of Shadman son of Darya Khan is located south of the grave of Mir Mubarak Khan. The graves of Tajo Khan and Aludo Khan are located east of the grave of Mir Mubarak Khan. Both were the sons of Mir Mubarak Khan.

This graveyard is one of the finest in terms of carvings in the whole Umarkot district. All the graves of Mir Mubarak Khan and his family were erected on raised platforms. The distinctive features of the graves were stone jalis (grills) which reflected how opulent the builders were. The descendants of Mir Mubarak Khan, the Khananis, are mainly living in Rajo Khanani, Andalo village in Badin, Digri, Tando Jan Muhammad and other towns of lower Sindh. But unfortunately no one from the family is taking care of these fabulous pieces of art which are crying for renovation.



Rosette on a grave at Mir Mubarak Khan Talpur Graveyard

Like the town Khanpur, which lies 4 km northeast of the graveyard, today it is nothing but a site of ruins. The graveyard, quite simply, presents a neglected and deserted look – entirely unfitting for a site of great historical significance for Sindh.

The graveyard should immediately be restored before it 'becomes history'. The Endowment Fund Trust for preservation of the Heritage of Sindh (EFT) has been doing restoration work in many districts of Sindh, which is very admirable. The EFT should also restore the graveyard of Mir Mubarak Khan, which will not take much in the way of resources. Timely preservation can still save it from further decay and destruction.

The author is an anthropologist and has authored three books: 'Perspectives on the art and architecture of Sindh', 'Memorial Stones: Tharparkar' and 'Archaeology, Religion and Art in Sindh'

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