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# Holiest of relics

Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro on some of the most venerated objects to be found in Sindh's spiritual and mystical landscape



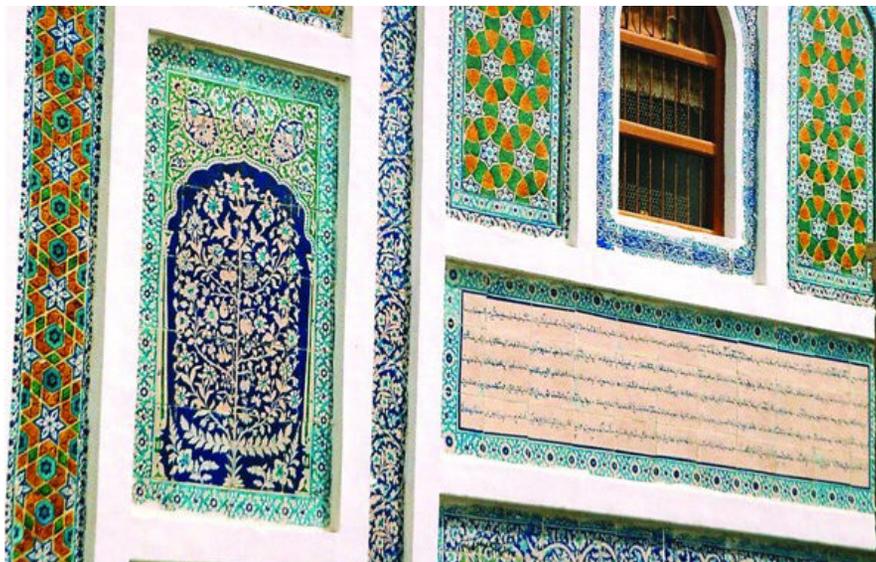
by Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro



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[1](#)



Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro on some of the most venerated objects to be found in Sindh's spiritual and mystical landscape

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The veneration of relics is popular across South Asia. Memorials on the models of tombs have been built over many of these relics. Shrines known as Qadam Rasul (Footprints of Prophet Muhammad PBUH) are found in Delhi, Awadh, Lucknow and many other Indian cities. According to Annemarie Schimmel, the relic of a footprint of the Prophet (PBUH) was preserved from early times and special Qadam Rasul sanctuaries were erected for it. Hairs of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), or pieces from his shirt, as well as relics of Imams Ali (A.S.) and Hussain (RA) are preserved in various places from Kashmir to Sindh and the Deccan.

In Sindh there are some shrines which preserve the Islamic holy relics. Shrines known as Waar Mubarak/Moi-e-Mubarak of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Qadam Gah of Maula Ali (A.S.), Abdul Qadir Jilani (the founder of the Qadiri tariqa of Sufism) and Ismaili Imams are found in some of the cities, towns and villages of Sindh.



Waar Mubarak Dargah, Rohri

The prominent Qadamgah Maula Ali at Hyderabad enshrines the footprints of Imam Ali (A.S.). These footprints were brought from Iran to Hyderabad during the reign of Mir Fateh Ali Khan Talpur, who was a friend of Fateh Ali Qajar of Iran. According to a family history of the Talpurs, sacred footprints of Imam Ali (A.S) were given by the Iranian King to Mir Fateh Ali Talpur. Mir Fateh Ali Talpur kept them at Pucca Qila, Hyderabad, where he built a special room inside Pucca Qila (fort) for these holy footprints beside a mosque for Ziyarat. After namaz (prayers) on Thursday night the women of the Talpur family used to venerate these footprints of Imam Ali (A.S). The common people had no chance to see them except on the Eid of Nowroz. The last ruler of the Talpur dynasty in Sindh, Mir Naseer Khan Talpur (1829-1843), on the request of the people, built a shrine of footprints of Imam Ali

(A.S) and kept these stones in the shrine, where people could see them. This shrine was open for the general public. Before the 1947 Partition, this place was known as “Shah ja Qadam” (footprints of Shah) but with the passage of time it became known as “Qadam Gah Maula Ali (A.S.). Apart from Qadam Gah Maula Ali (A.S.) in Hyderabad, there is also a shrine at the small village of Raj Malik near Gharo in Thatta, where there are Qadam Mubarak of Maula Ali (A.S.) which attract a large number of people every day. It has become the most popular pilgrimage place in Gharo and neighbouring towns. In addition to the footprints associated with Imam Ali (A.S) there are some shrines built for the footprints of an Ismaili Imam and Abdul Qadir Jilani, the founder of the Qadiri Tariqa of Sufism. There is a shrine near Jhampir in Thatta, which contains the footprints of Hasan Ali Shah (Aga Khan I- 1804-1881), the 46th Imam of the Nizari Ismailis, which is also known as Shah Ja Qadam. This is a most sacred place for the Khoja Ismailis of Sindh. In Old Hala, there is shrine of Jilani Pir which preserves the footprint of Abdul Qadir Jilani.

### The shrine of Moi-e-Mubarak/Waar Mubarak of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was opened for the general public in 1545

At some places in Sindh on the 8th, 9th and 10th of Muharram, the footprints of Imam Ali (A.S), which are privately preserved by people, are exhibited.

However, the most popular relic shrine in Sindh, which preserves a hair from the Prophet's beard (PBUH), known as Moi-e-Mubarak or Waar Mubarak, is located at Rohri in Sindh. The shrine of Moi-e-Mubarak/Waar Mubarak of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was opened for the general public in 1545 and later during the Kalhora period, the younger brother of Yar Muhammad Kalhoro, Mir Muhammad Kalhoro, built an impressive domed structure over the of Waar Mubarak. The holy Waar Mubarak is believed to have been acquired by Makhdoom Abdul Baqi Bakhari from Constantinople in 1545. This Waar Mubarak was brought by Mian Abdul Baqi Bakhari to Sukkur from Makkah. Reportedly, Mian Abdul Baqi Bakhari went to perform Hajj. After performing Hajj he stayed some time in Makkah and married a daughter of Sheikh Nizamuddin who gave the Holy Hair of the Prophet Muhammad's beard ( PBUH) to his daughter as a dowry gift – which he had acquired from Constantinople.



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It was brought by the newlywed couple to Sukkur in 1545 and was concealed for some time until it was revealed by two of the most eminent religious personalities of Sukkur and Rohri. According to the *Zahur Nama*, a book written by Muhammad Ali Talib in 1858, the presence of Holy Waar Mubarak was revealed in a dream to two of the most eminent religious scholars Syed Hyder Shah Haqqani (died in 1630) and Makhdoom Abdul Malik. Both went to the house of Mian Abdul Baqi Bakhari to have view of the holy hair of the

Prophet Muhammad's beard (PBUH). It was later brought to Rohri and put on display for the general public. In the same year in 1545, an impressive domed structure was built over the holy Waar Mubarak.



View of Waar Mubarak Dargah and mosque from the River Indus

One enters the shrine through ornately carved wooden door. The Waar Mubarak is enshrined in a gold- and jewel-encrusted casket which was gifted by Mir Ali Murad Khan Talpur, the ruler of Khairpur State.

The domed structure over the holy Waar Mubarak is built in square plan surmounted by a heavy- looking dome painted green. The dome of the Waar Mubarak memorial rests on elevated polygonal drum. The facade of the tomb of is tastefully decorated with kashi tiles. Near the tomb is a three-domed mosque which is called 'Jami Mosque War Mubarak'. According to the inscription on the facade of the mosque, it was built by Fateh Khan during the reign of Akbar the Great. Fateh Khan was military officer and Mughal Nawab of Bakkhar during the reign of Akbar. The mosque was built in 1583 and was lavishly decorated with Kashi tiles – but unfortunately over period of time the building lost its original glory.

Many Sufi mystics and rulers paid their respects as a mark of reverence to Dargah of the Holy Waar Mubarak. The Dargah opens on special occasions – otherwise it remains closed. It opens after every Friday prayers for the general public. It also opens on the first ten days of Dhu'l-Hijjah. On this occasion, people from various parts of Sindh come to visit and seek the spiritual blessing of viewing the Waar Mubarak of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

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