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# Sabzwari Saints of Sehwan

 by Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro — February 15, 2019 in Features, Heritage 0

Tombs of the Sabzwari Saints of Sehwan

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Sehwan, the city of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (1177-1274) has a majority of the shrines of his disciples. They are located in almost every locality of Sehwan, attracting many dervishes and devotees. However, there are shrines to some saints which predate the arrival of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. The earliest saint of Sehwan was Chhuto Pir Amrani who lived in the tenth century, a few centuries before the arrival of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar there. Chhuto Pir Amrani was born in Brahmanabad in Sindh and migrated to Sehwan, where he made his permanent abode. He died in Sehwan and was buried there. He was believed to be the brother of Dilorai, the king of Alor. He was a Hindu noble who embraced Islam and became a dervish. The shrine of Chhuto Pir Amrani is located in Sehwan and attracts many people.

In every locality of Sehwan there is a dargah of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's disciple, be it of Bodla Bahar, Nadir Ali Shah, Juman Jati Sati, Dado Ibrahim Jati Sati, Nihal Nuri, Bura Badal Sher, Mir Salahuddin, Sakhi Pan Sultan, Shaikh Topan, Shaikh Ahmad Sundani, Syed Mir Kalan etc. The Qalandar's dervishes are found at every dargah of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's disciples.



Grave of Syed Mir Kalan, ancestor of the Sabzwari Syeds of Sehwan

Syed Mir Kalan was the ancestor of the Sabzwari Syeds of Sehwan. Mir Ali Sher Qani writes in his book *Tuhfatul Kiram* that after arrival from Kandahar, Syed Mir Kalan settled in Sehwan. He used to spend most of his time at the dargah of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. According to hagiographical accounts of Syed Mir Kalan, his ancestors lived in Karbala – from where they migrated to Khorasan. Afterwards, Syed Mir Kalan migrated with his family from Khorasan to Kandahar. After coming to Kandahar, he began spending his time at the shrine of Mir Sher Qalandar. He established spiritual links with the shrine of Mir Sher Qalandar. In the khanqah of Mir Sher Qalandar, he met Mir Safai who was the caretaker of the shrine. Their frequent meetings resulted in a long-lasting friendship. During the reign of Shah Hasan Arghun (1524-1555), Mir Kalan migrated to Sindh and settled in village Khabrot near Sehwan. Hence he was also called 'Khabroti Syed'.

Syed Mir Kalan was known for his piety and piousness. He used to spend most of his time at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. After sometime Mir Safi also migrated to Sindh and settled in Bakhar. Syed Mir Kalan gave his daughter in marriage to Mir Safi.

Mir Safi had three sons – Mir Abul Qasim, Mir Fasal and Mir Masum – with the daughter of Syed Mir Kalan. Mir Masum Shah Bakhari (1528-1606 AD) served the Mughal emperor Akbar (1542-1605) and was celebrated for his military prowess. He took part in many of the military expeditions to Gujarat, Sibi, Kabul and Kandahar. He also was the governor of Bakhar and Sibi during the reign of Akbar. Syed Mir Kalan was the paternal uncle of Mir Masum Shah Bakhari which he mentioned in his book *Tarikh-i-Masumi*. Syed Mir Kalan was also very influential during the rule of the Arghuns (1524-1555) and Tarkhans (1555-1592). He was given jagirs by the rulers of both dynasties. It is also said that when Shah Hasan Arghun died without any issue in 1555, a war of succession ensued between two of his nobles Sultan Mahmood Bakhari and Isa Khan Tarkhan. Sindh became battleground between Sultan Mahmood Bakhari and Isa Khan Tarkhan. Sultan Mahmood Bakhari was based at Bakhar while Isa Khan Tarkhan was at Thatta. Fearing that Sultan Mahmood Bakhari might have captured Thatta, he invited the Portuguese for help and went himself to Bakhar. When the Portuguese under the command of Pedro Barreto Rolin reached Thatta in 1556 and found that Isa Khan Tarkhan was not there to welcome them, they plundered, looted and killed people and went back after collecting an immense amount of booty. Isa Khan Tarkhan killed people in Bakhar and Sultan Mahmood went on to wreak havoc on Sehwan. Syed Mir Kalan stopped both the nobles from further bloodletting and due to his intervention an agreement was signed between them, resulting in declaring Isa Khan Tarkhan the ruler of lower Sindh with Thatta as his seat of power and Sultan Mahmood Bakhari becoming the ruler of upper Sindh with Bakkar as his capital.

Not much is known on when Syed Mir Kalan died. Mir Masum Shah's *Tarikh -i-Masumi* also does not say anything about his death. However, according to Syed Hisamuddin Shah Rashidi, an eminent historian of Sindh, Syed Mir Kalan died in the last years of Isa Khan Tarkhan's (1555-1565) rule. Mir Syed Kalan had four sons – Syed Barko, Syed Muhammad, Syed Mahmood and Syed Talib.

Mir Syed Kalan's grave is located in 'Sabzwari Qabaristan' also known as 'Masooman Jo Qabaristan' and 'Shahan Ja Quba' near the Sehwan Bus Terminal. The grave of Mir Syed Kalan is located in the Sabzwari graveyard. There is no tomb over his grave as the descendants and disciples of Mir Syed Kalan believe that he never allowed them to build anything over his grave. There is a cluster of six tombs in the Sabzwari graveyard – which all belong to the descendants of Syed Mir Kalan.

The prominent tomb, which is adorned with ceramic tiles, houses about 13 graves. This tomb is locally called 'Sadiq Ali Shah jo Qubo'. Not much is known about other 12 graves. The tomb appears to have been built in the Kalhora period (1700-1783). All the exterior walls of the tomb are adorned with glazed tiles but unfortunately most of these have peeled off.

This tomb is one of the most impressive and magnificent structures in Sehwan. A nearby tomb belongs to Syed Muzfar Shah I who was grandson of Syed Mir Talib, son of Syed Mir Kalan. There is no authentic information about the other four tombs as to who are buried therein. I believe that these tombs may either belong to the four sons of Syed Mir Kalan – Syed Mir Barko, Syed Mir Muhammad, Syed Mir Mahmood and Mir Syed Talib – or his grandsons. All the four tombs are noted for their high pishtaqs. It appears that the inspiration may have been taken from the tomb of Mian Yar Muhammad Kalhoro at Khudabad, the first Kalhora capital, which is located about 30 km north of Sehwan. Most of the early tombs built during the reigns of Mian Yar Muhammad Kalhoro (1700-1718) were noted for high pishtaqs.

The Sabzwari Syed family produced many saints and alims: all of them are buried in the Sabzwari graveyard except the two who are buried in the Sabzwari locality of Sehwan.

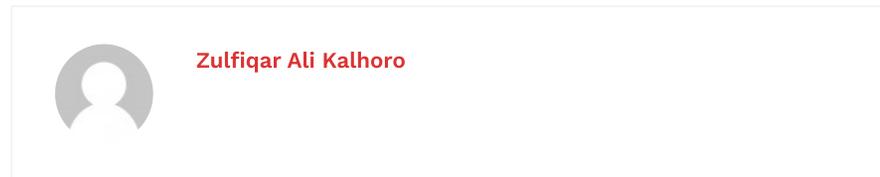
This exception includes the shrines of Bura Badal Sher and Nihal Shah Nuri – both were Sabzwari saints and the disciples of Lal Shahbaz Qalanadr. The shrines of both the Sabzwari saints are popular shrines in Sehwan and attract many devotees.

The crumbling tombs of Sabzwari saints, who played an important role in the socio-political history of Sindh, are crumbling brick-by-brick. They should be preserved before they become history. Majority of the tiles of Syed Sadiq Ali Shah's tomb have come off.

These tombs are the last remnants of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Sehwan – as a majority of the older tombs, including that of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, have been rebuilt.

*The author is an anthropologist and has authored four books: 'Symbols in Stone: The Rock Art of Sindh', 'Perspectives on the art and architecture of Sindh', 'Memorial Stones: Tharparkar' and 'Archaeology, Religion and Art in Sindh'. He may be contacted at: zulfi04@hotmail.com*

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