

Persian Inscriptions of the Tomb of Mian Nūr Muhammad Kalhoro

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After the local Samma kingdom's fall in 1520 A.D., many tribes of Sindh including the Kalhoras, put up a stubborn fight against the alien rulers.¹ In this struggle Mian Adam Shah and Mian Shah 'Ali fell victim to the Mughul oppression, but the movement against the non-local rulers continued. Mian Nasir Muhammad was the first person in the Kalhora family who continuously fought battles against the Mughals and finally succeeded in gaining control of the north-western parts of Sindh. This became possible around 1681 A.D, when Aurangzeb was surrounded by troubles all over India.² On his death in 1692 A.D., Nasir Muhammad was succeeded by his illustrious son Mian Din Muhammad who ruled over different parts of central and northern Sindh for about eight years. Prince Mu'izz al-Din, the viceroy of Thatta and Multan, invaded the capital (*Garhi*) of Din Muhammad and after a series of fierce battles Din Muhammad was captured and hanged in Multan in 1700 A.D.³ With the support of the people of Sindh, the Kalhoras, however, continued their struggle under the

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1 For details see M. Saleem Akhtar, *Sind Under the Mughuls*, Islamabad: NIHCR, 1990, and M.H. Panhwar, "Heroic Struggle of Sind Against Feudalism" *Sindhological Studies*, Summer, 1979.

2 Ghulam Muhammad Lakho, *Kalhoro Daur-i-Hukoomat*, (Sindhi), Karachi, 2004, p.104.

3 S. Moinul Haq, *Khafi Khan's History of 'Alamgir*, Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1975, pp.456-57.

leadership of Mian Yār Muhammad, who succeeded Mian Din Muhammad in 1701 A.D. Yār Muhammad ruled more or less half of the Sindh including Sibi and Kachhi areas of present Baluchistan. He won the confidence of prince Mu‘izz al-Din and was awarded the title of ‘Khuda Yār Khan’ by emperor Aurangzeb.⁴ As an able ruler he was admired even by his enemies. He died after eighteen years’ rule in 1719 A.D.

Mian Nūr Muhammad Kalhoro

After the death of Mian Yār Muhammad, his elder son Mian Nūr Muhammad Kalhoro was enthroned in November 1719 A.D. Very little is known about his early life, but he was believed to have been born around 1680 A.D. Being the crown prince he received the best education including military training and assumed the reign of government when he was groomed enough to run the affairs of the country with confidence. By this time Muhammad Shah had become emperor in Delhi, who honoured him with his late father’s title of ‘Khuda Yār Khan’.⁵

Mian Nūr Muhammad planned to capture the remaining parts of Sind also, but was prevented from doing so by his hereditary conflict with the ruler of Kalat and the Da’udpotas of Shikarpur. Mian Nūr Muhammad was compelled to invade Shikarpur, the stronghold of Da’udpotas, with 60,000 soldiers under the command of his generals, Shah Baharo, Murad Kalery and Raja Lekhi. In the battle that ensued both parties suffered heavy losses. Meanwhile conditions for peace were accepted by both parties and the war ended, but the matter was not fully resolved. Consequently, very soon Mian Nūr Muhammad fought another battle against the Da’udpotas and wrested Shikarpur and Khanpur from their control. These incidents took place in 1723 A.D. and 1725 A.D., respectively.⁶

4 Mir ‘Ali Sher Qani’, *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, Urdu tr., Karachi: Sindh Adabi Board, 1959, pp.323-25.

5 H.T. Sorley, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*, 1940; reprint, Karachi: OUP, 1966, p.29.

6 Ghulam Rasūl Mihr, *Ta’rikh-i-Sindh (Kalhora Daur)* Karachi: Sindh Adabi Board, 1958, Vol.I, pp.367-84.

The chief of Kalat, ‘Abd Allah Khan who called himself to be the ‘Falcon of Mountains’ attacked Kachhi, an area under the control of Nūr Muhammad, in 1731 A.D. After the peace treaty, he, however, agreed to marry his two daughters with the sons of Mian Nūr Muhammad, but soon reneged on his promise and once again attacked the areas under the Kalhoro rule. The battle between Sindhi and Brohi forces was fought in 1732 at a place known as Janderi (present Khanpur) in which ‘Abd Allah Khan lost his life.⁷ At that moment if Mian Nūr Muhammad had wanted to take control of Kalat, he could have done so easily, but he did not do so.

After these achievements and successful wars Mian Nūr Muhammad received the title of ‘Thabit Jang’ and the gift of a *Naubat* (drum) from the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah. Recognizing the fact that Mian Sahib had emerged as a powerful leader of the Indus valley, the Mughal ruler at Delhi, subsequently decided to hand over the possession of Thatta province to the Kalhoro chief in 1737.⁸

Sindh owed its unification to Mian Nūr Muhammad’s wisdom and sagacity. His military organization was so efficient that after the collapse of colonial rule of more than two centuries, Sindh was once again reunited under his dynamic and courageous leadership. This was a good omen for the future of Sindh. For the achievement of this noble objective, the common people of Sindh also offered tremendous sacrifices along with the Kalhoro dynasty.

While Mian Nūr Muhammad was busy in consolidating his power, Nadir Shah on his return from India invaded Sindh in 1740 A.D. On hearing of this sudden attack Mian Nūr Muhammad fled from Khudabad to the desert area where he garrisoned himself in the fort of ‘Umarkot. Nadir Shah followed and surrounded him there. As a result, Mian Sahib had to pay millions of rupees in cash. He also undertook to pay two million rupees as annual tribute

7 *Tuhfat-al-Kiram*, pp.331-32.

8 Shahnawaz Khan, *The Ma’athir al-Umara’*, Eng. trans., H. Beveridge, Calcutta: ASB, 1941, Vol.1, p.818.

to Nadir Shah.⁹ Sindh suffered a fatal blow at the hands of Nadir Shah who divided Sindh into three parts. Sibi and Kacchi were given to the ruler of Kalat as compensation for the violent death of its chief 'Abd Allah Khan. Shikarpur was awarded to Da'udpotas and the rest of Sindh was given to Mian Nūr Muhammad who also received the title of 'Shah Quli Khan' from Nadir Shah. Nadir took away two sons of Mian Nūr Muhammad as hostages to the Persian court who were joined subsequently by the third one also. Nadir Shah also carried away many precious books belonging to the Kahlora collection to Iran.¹⁰

Now Sindh became dominated by Iran instead of Delhi. It was a national tragedy leading to its disintegration which resulted in the spread of chaos and lawlessness in the entire region. To restore law and order in the country, Mian Nūr Muhammad led several military expeditions against the truculent landholders and thus succeeded once again in establishing his military supremacy in the areas under his rule.¹¹

Upon the assassination of Nadir Shah in 1747 the sons of Mian Nūr Muhammad returned safely from the Persian court. The Sindh ruler had felt totally independent. He became powerful and took various decisions confidently. This was the time when he acquired some modern weapons too, from the factors of the East India Company at Surat.¹² These weapons are still found at various places in Sindh.

When his elder son Muradyab Khan returned from Iran, Nūr Muhammad handed over the reign of government to him and himself left Khudabad for Muhammadabad with the intension to lead a retired life. Muradyab Khan, however, proved to be a failure and Mian Sahib had to resume the control of affairs once again. Thus, during the remaining period of his life, he ruled over Sindh

9 Riazul Islam, "Nadir Shah in Sind," *Iran-Pakistan – A Common Culture*, ed., Bashir Ahmad Dar, Islamabad: Iran-Persian Institute of Persian Studies, 1977, pp.205-20.

10 *Ibid.*

11 E.H. Aitken, *Gazetteer of the Province of Sind, 1907*, reprint, Karachi, 1986, p.11.

12 *Ta'rikh-i-Sindh (Kahlora Daur)*, Vol.1, pp.527-28.

from Muhammadabad, the alternate new capital he had built in the present district of Nawabshah.¹³

After the death of Nadir Shah, a new invader appeared on the scene. He was Ahmad Shah Abdali who laid claim to parts of Persia and the whole of the Indus valley; the latter he subdued in 1752. Thus Mian Nūr Muhammad was left with no alternative but to accept the suzerainty of Abdali and start paying tribute to Qandahar. He received the title of 'Shah Nawaz Khan' from the Afghan king but in the meanwhile due to some misunderstanding, Ahmad Shah Abdali attacked Sindh and arrived in the vicinity of Muhammadabad. On hearing this Mian Nūr Muhammad proceeded towards Jaisalmir, but died on the way on 9 December 1753 A.D.¹⁴

Tomb of Mian Nūr Muhammad

Afghan invasion once again created chaos and anarchy in Sindh. Mian Nūr Muhammad's sudden death worsened the situation still further. However, his eldest son Muradyab Khan once again became the ruler of Sindh with the approval of the Afghan king. The contemporary sources are reticent about the funeral of Mian Nūr Muhammad Kalhoro.¹⁵ However, later studies confirm that his dead body was carried for burial to his native town Muhammadabad. The author of the *Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh* has this to say on the subject:

Doaulatpur, a small village situated on the trunk road from Hyderabad to Rohri about 12 miles south of Mero, is only of interest as being near the mausoleum of Nūr Muhammad Kalhoro, the man who extended the Kalhoro rule to the east of the Indus and made Sind one kingdom. He led a stormy life and was at last driven from his throne by Ahmad Shah the Afghan and died, it is said, at Jaisalmir in or about 1755 A.D, so it is improbable that he is actually buried in this mausoleum which his son Muhammad Murad Yār [sic] Khan, who succeeded him for a short time, is said to have built. Moreover, one of the inscriptions on the outer door makes mention of Ghulam Shah, the builder of Hyderabad, and Sarfaraz Khan, who were son and grandson respectively of Nūr Muhammad; so probably the tomb was not built or at any rate not completed until some time after the death of the latter. It is said to have been built by one Abu

13 *Tuhfat-al-Kiram*, pp.327-28.

14 *Ta'rikh-i-Sind (Kalhoro Daur)*, Vol.1, pp.529-30.

15 *Tuhfat-al-Kiram*, p.338.

Bakar, a famous architect of Thatta, and contains some fine stone carving and Persian inscriptions which unfortunately are much broken and difficult to be deciphered.¹⁶

This is not correct. In fact, Mian Nūr Muhammad's tomb is located in the old town of Muhammadabad, once the Kalhora capital, as is confirmed by the following statement of the famous archaeologist Henry Cousens:

The mausoleum of Mian Nūr Muhammad, the son of Mian Yār Muhammad, is situated seven miles to the north-east of Daulatpur, and about eighteen miles to the east by south from Khudabad. It, too, is a massive building of the same style as Yār Muhammad's though not so fully decorated, whitewash entering more into the general scheme of decoration. It is surrounded by other smaller buildings. Like the tomb of Shahbaz at Sehwan, the dome is surmounted by a lantern. There is nothing of any special interest about the building other than that it is the last resting place of the second of the Kalhorah chiefs.¹⁷

Persian Inscriptions

The fact of the matter is that the tomb of Mian Nūr Muhammad is situated eight kilometres to the east of Shahpur Jahanian in district Nawabshah. A number of scholars have attempted to give accurate reading of the inscriptions of this tomb but they have been only casually successful.¹⁸ The prominent scholar Dr. N.A. Baloch has only succeeded in providing us the accurate reading and appropriate shape of these inscriptions. The inscription on the north side door of burial chamber, according to him, is as follows:¹⁹

16 J.W. Smyth, *Gazetteer of the Province of Sind, B-Vol.V, Nawabshah District*, Bombay, 1920, p.25.

17 H. Cousens, *The Antiquities of Sind, 1929*, reprint, Karachi: OUP, 1975, p.162.

18 'Abd al-Rahman Soomro, *Sindh-Ja-Jhoona Shahr* (Sindhi), Hyderabad, 1968, pp.255-57; Afzal Ahmed, *Pakistan Archaeology*, No.10-22, Karachi, 1986, pp.183-86; S.K. Hajj Sayyid Javadi, *Eternal Heritage*, Islamabad: Cultural Consulate of Iran, 1992, Vol.II, pp.415-16.

19 *Diwan-i-Sabir*, ed., N.A. Baloch, Lahore: Markazi Urdu Science Board, 1984, Appendix, p.379.

The entrance gate is decorated with the following inscription of Persian couplet of Mir Sabir which seems to have been wrongly fixed by the mason.²⁰

20 *Ibid.*, pp.380-81. The actual, but erroneous, shape of the inscriptions as fixed on the walls is as follows:

Conclusion

Mian Nūr Muhammad ruled over Sindh for about thirty five years. during this period, he passed through some difficult times and saw many political upheavals. In the beginning, he showed loyalty to the Mughal empire and acquired possession of entire Sindh and gradually became an almost independent ruler of the region. At Nadir Shah's hands Sindh suffered and so did Mian Nūr Muhammad personally when Sindh was divided into three parts. After the death of Nadir Shah, Mian Nūr Muhammad accepted the suzerainty of Abdali but he was not trusted by the Afghan king. This landed Mian Nūr Muhammad in trouble once again. Consequently, he left his country and died near Jaisalmer in a miserable condition.

The inscriptions reproduced above not only mention the name of the builders of the tomb, but also confirm that the ex-ruler of Sindh was buried there. Baqir who supervised the construction work of the tomb of Nūr Muhammad Kalhoro, according to one inscription, was very near to the Sindhi rulers. The inscriptions also confirm that the tomb was built on the orders of Mian Ghulam Shah who ruled over Sindh from 1758 to 1772 A.D. This tomb was neither constructed on the instructions of Muradyab Kalhoro nor was the work on it initially started on the personal directives of Nūr Muhammad himself. Historic town Muhammadabad is now known as Mian Ja Quba 'Tomb of the Mian' as Nūr Muhammad Kalhoro is buried here. The accurate reading of the inscriptions also invalidates the theories of Afzal Khan who had earlier made a serious study of this historical monument.²¹

21 Afzal Ahmed, *Pakistan Archaeology*, No.10-22, pp.183-88.