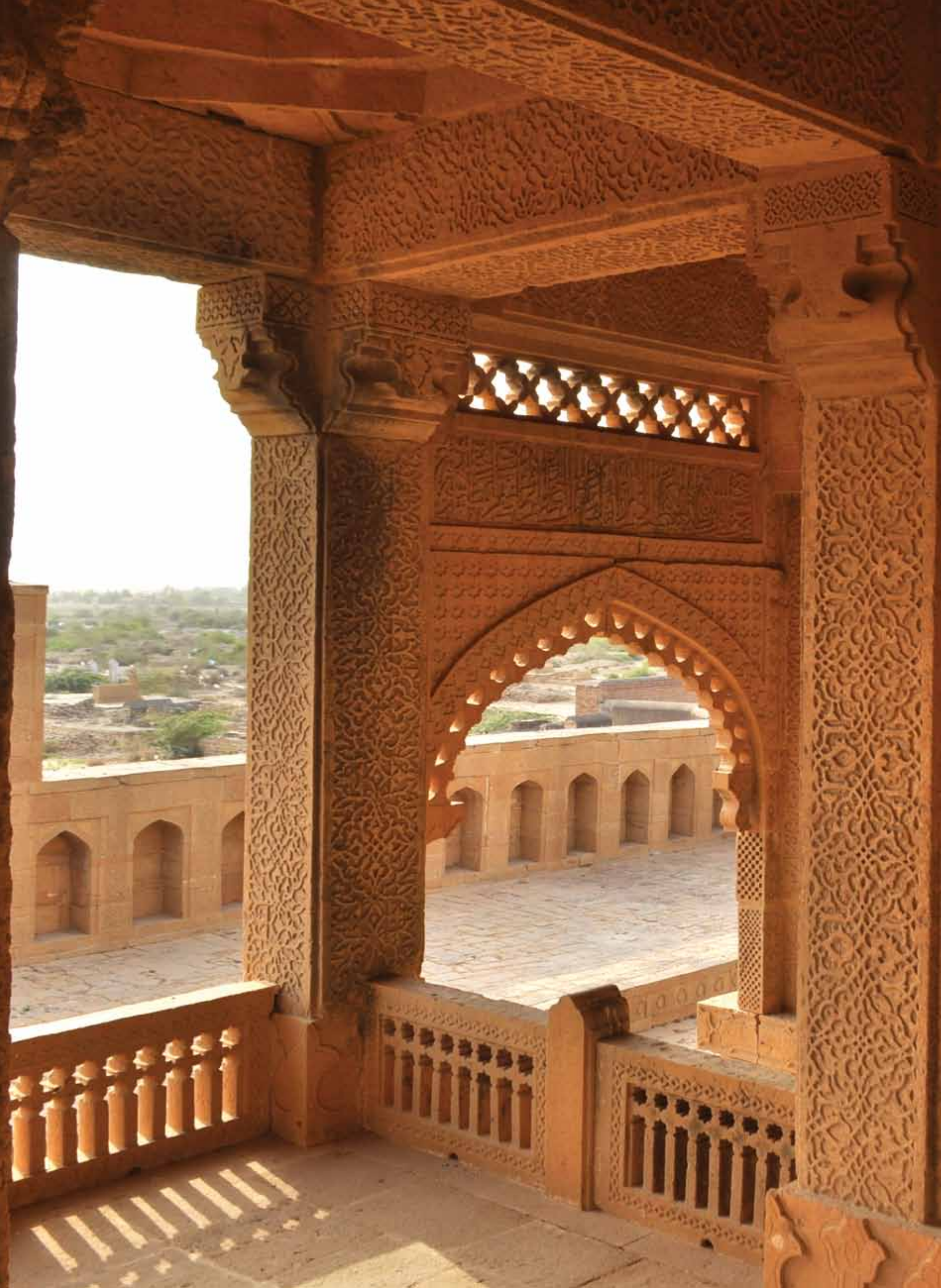


EPIGRAPHY OF MAKLI



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Culture Tourism &
Antiquates Department
Government of Sindh



Sindh Exploration &
Adventure Society



First Edition:
2018

Author:
Kaleemullah Lashari

Inscriptions Verified by:
Kaleemullah Lashari, Hafiz Jameel Ahmed Chachar

Research Technicians

Designing and Formatting:
Faraz Nazar

Photography & Composition:
Zahid Hussain Detho

Drafting on Maps:
Ayaz Ali Mashori
Mohammad Ali Mangi
Yasir Ahmed Ansari

Data & Statistics Assistance:
Kainat Baloch

Published by:
Sindh Exploration & Adventure Society, Karachi Pakistan,
& Department of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, Government of Sindh

Printed By:
SEAS, Pakistan
C,237 Sector 31/F, Darul Salam Society, Karachi.

ISBN No. 978-969-9432-03-03

Cover Page, Jacket, Inner Title Design:
Rizwan Aziz, Zulnurain Haider

Composed on Core i7,
Fonts - Al Qalam Quran 2, Jameel Noori Kasheeda,
Jameel Noori Nastaleeq, Calibri, Garamond,
Times New Roman, Arial, MV Boli
Point size - Headline 16 Bold, Sub-Headline 14, for text 12

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Acknowledgement

I feel very happy to acknowledge the support afforded by all those who rendered helping hand in the study and documentation. Present work took a long time to get finalized, and all this while an extended interaction took place with the members of Sindh Exploration & Adventure Society, and officials of Department of Culture, Tourism & Antiquities.

Dr. Asma Ibrahim, has remained associated with the study from very beginning, her advise and support was available all this while, and it was to her singular commitment to the project that the work is seeing light of the day.

Syed Sardar Shah was of the view that the publication should be supported by the Department of Culture, Tourism & Antiquities, Government of Sindh. In this regard Mr. Roshan Ali Kanasroo remained devoted to the task, and stood by the process of its printing.

Mr. Tamjeed Anjum of Department of Antiquities extended his help in computing the data regarding calligraphy. Photographers Naeem Jatoi, Danish, Kashif and Shafqat were initially attached with the training process at Makli, so were the trainees in the Epigraphy M/S Zahidul Hasan, Muhammad Usman, Muhammad Ismail, Fazul Rehman, Zulfikar and Ameerudin.

Friends in the field of publication were supportive all along; especially Ms. Kiran Fatima extended practical tips, and was eager to support the publication. Numerous proposals for its publication were floated, new ideas discussed and practical advises were extended; the final result is the doing of present author, which may not be the best choice available.

Thanks are due to Dr. Monique Kervran for providing photograph of Juna Shah Bunder, appearing on the page xiv.

It is not possible to thank each one individually, suffice it to say thanks to all the friends and associates, who have extended support, gave advises, encouraged the author in undertaking, seemingly a difficult task.

PREFACE

The interest in the written word, during past few centuries have gradually increased, it has brought many significant public records, to the attention of scholars. In many cases the related studies have uncovered new angles and provided relevance to these records. The written word 'filled, revealed, influenced, and distinguished history'.¹

In nineteenth century an amazing thing happened in orient, when among others the epigraphy emerged as one of the disciplines, capable of contributing meaningfully to the historiography. A good number of works were printed during the final decades of nineteenth century; the subject went on to gain positive attention during the first half of the 20th century. It was during this time period that significant number of historic sites/towns received academic focus of the epigraphers. But in the later half of the century that interest was lost, as could be ascertained from very lean number of works produced in that period.

This is the reason that *Makli*, boasting of the huge epigraphic material, received very little focus from scholars of the field. The Necropolis of *Makli* is situated sixty miles east of Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh province, in Pakistan.

Spread over a prominent part of a long hillock, running north to south, it is skirting medieval town of *Thatta* on its west. The site is studded with a good number of graves and tomb buildings, mostly erected in the late medieval period. It displays a wide variety of inscriptions in traditional Arabic and Persian epigraphy, carved on good quality sandstone, however few are written on glazed ceramic tiles as well.

Unfortunately the natural reasons and the neglect of centuries have taken its toll; a considerable number of cenotaphs and slabs from this graveyard are totally lost to us, much exists in highly dilapidated condition. It is feared that with in few more years we may lose another substantial part of it.

Present work is an outcome of the study that takes into consideration the amazing mass of the writings on the cenotaphs and the monuments.

The documentation of the site de-notes each grave, whether it is an elaborately carved one, or lime plastered, or it is a later day cemented one. It also indicates the clay hump or pebble strewn grave: if it has not been already flattened.

This information is charted, along with the situation of the structures, on an appropriately scaled map, helping in locating these with required accuracy. The coordinates, shown on these maps, can guide to every single point on the hill. Therefore virtually all structures and graves can be specified on Makli. It continues to document the variety of inscriptions: these being informal funerary statements, or regular epitaphs, or part of diversely rich selections from Surah / chapters from Quran. This information is made available through the photography that ensures that all five sides of the cenotaphs are captured, to appreciate the, calligraphic excellence. These inscriptions are further read, an onerous task in itself; the reading is given in regular print so that the contents are fully understood, and the information can be utilized, in further studies.

This work incidentally fulfills the conditions for the presentation of an important historic site. The heritage norms and governing laws duly emphasize on its presentation and on making it accessible so that its unique character is appropriately appreciated. Makli with its enormity, reflected through its stone carved graves and tomb buildings, has a special place among the common heritage of the world, thus winning for itself a place on the coveted World Heritage List. With this honor coming to this province, the due consideration has to be exercised, while making plans for its up keep.

Any let off in such efforts on the part of the State machinery, may earn the displeasure of the people as well as the monitoring agencies. Documentation, being the basic requirement related to recording and managing heritage is the proper means of taking in to account its condition, and planning for any rehabilitation required. Unfortunately in this field no measures seems to have been taken. Here is the beauty recorded, all structures are documented, with as much care as could possibly be taken. The richness of the site is reflected in the photographs, with

¹ George C Kohn, *Dictionary of Historic Documents, Facts on File*, New York 1991, p. v.

regard to epigraphs, not only for the record but also for all interested, according to spelt-out parameters of the study. Presentation of the physical heritage, in its current situation helps in the endeavors of preservation of the patrimony, for which the stakeholders can be mobilized whenever need be. This single but important step opens up the way for the discussion on the kind of efforts required, to achieve the preservation targets.

It is an effort to fill the void that exists between the requirements and availability of the information on the epigraphic richness of the site. It shows the written word executed by the sure hand of the scribe, and carved by the loving artisan. The general public passing by these graves, struck with the sheer beauty and enormity of the site may not realize variety of the content; the closer scrutiny however shall let them realize that the inscriptions may be rendering of sacred text or secular literary pieces; thus begins the relationship with the site. *Ayyatul Kursi*, having the single long sentence/ayah from the Quran, considered to be the representative of the graces and assured benevolence, meets the eye frequently. But it does not end there; in fact the study begins here. There is sacred text taken from many Surah, along with the other auspicious passages either from the rich Arabic tradition, or from the Persian literature, besides the original compositions, dedicated epitaphs for the dead.

The indulgence of the sponsors coupled with the efforts of learned caused many an innovation seen here at Makli. The traditions of the literature and calligraphy portray a highly cultured society that paid compliments to the learned for their efforts, and continued to provide the occasions for performance of their outstanding talents. The funerary writings not only are related to the beautiful calligraphy, but also carry evidence of the efforts of the learned, which aimed at bringing the art and craft of the versification to the production of precise and crisp lines, reporting the sadness, shock, remorse, along with the prayers for the salvage, seeking divine favors. This produced the combination of the selections from Quran, Kalima the confession of faith, the Basmala, the traditions of the Prophet, the funerary information, and so often a *Qata e tarikh*/ chronogram: the literary composition containing the year of the event, *Asma e Husna* and may be few other oddities. This generated a large amount of the material that indeed is the triumph of the written word.

As stated above present volume deals with the documentation, that provides us with the inscriptions

on each grave, the tombs buildings, the Musala/مصلا space earmarked for the non-regular prayers, Eidgah/عیدگاہ grounds for congregation, and their location through the unique numbers assigned to these. The documentation gives us the photographic coverage of each side of the cenotaph, every wall, each façade that bears the mural of epigraphy. Above all the reading assigned to each inscription is given, along with the image, so that the beauty of each written word is available to the readers for aesthetic experience.

The structures and graves are shown on the map, specifically in a color scheme that differentiate between the lime plastered and the one done with the modern day cement. All stone cenotaphs are reflected on the plan with a dedicated color, and has a number assigned on the basis of the physical survey undertaken on ground. All the readings were entered against these numbers, in order to avoid any misplacement of the data. The spread of the graves and development of the site has its historic context, spread over to a pretty long period that spans to more than six centuries. The consideration of assigning the numbers chronologically was found difficult as well as illogical, as the spread of the graveyard has never been temporal; independent clusters sprung up, with out being in anyway inter-linked spatially. Furthermore the survey methodology has its own limitations. In order to avoid the duplications the numbers once allocated, have been ascribed permanently, so that interpolation of information could be avoided,

There are a few indexes added, dealing with the simplest possible and minimum of the contents; one identifies the names of the persons with the grave numbers, or the relevant tomb building.

Likewise the inscriptional mass, the diversity of the content deserves to be indicated, but in a very subtle manner. Not to divert the attention of the scholars, interested in acquainting themselves with the inscriptions carved on the structures and cenotaphs in the necropolis. The Index of the *Ayah* from Quran, and other religious contents is also included, giving the placement of each item where ever it occurs; but at the same time care has been taken not to interrupt the concentration of the readers with the mention of it, but an indication mark has been put, at the place where the change of *Surah* has occurred; or where an *Ayah* has been omitted, or where the mistake has occurred, or even where a duplication has happened, in the inscription; thus it is a faithful reproduction in modern font, of the inscription as it appears on the structure. More detailed exposition of sacred texts, designs and patterns of cenotaphs, calligraphic

script varieties, literary contents of inscriptions and inherent indications etc. may be desired by more indulgent readers, such discussions are done and it is designed to be part of subsequent publication, under the appropriate headings in the relevant parts.

The methodology for the documentation was settled quite early, in nineteen eighties, when the present writer embarked on this journey; the basic work was completed much earlier. But issue of its presentation posed few pertinent demands. The aesthetically pleasing and symmetrically balanced structures with engaging decorations were asking for some justice to be done. At the same time important data was required to be presented for academic requirements.

But this work was slowed down due to many other non-relevant engagements; the studies on Makli were set aside. This delayed the publication of my initial recordings. Ultimately there arose another occasion when Makli got the attention, the accumulated dust was brushed away from the notes, to send the work for publication. In order to avoid any misplacement of information, or overlapping of it in presentation, or omission of relevant data the compulsion was felt to check and verify the data once more before presenting it.

The work of verification progressed well; long association with the site and study of the data helped in raising some interesting questions, many new angles started opening up, with regard to the presentation of the documentation. Besides this enormous information pushed open possibilities of research on interesting aspects. It necessitated re-consideration of the objectives of study and discussions on the information; thus it was resolved to publish these findings along with the basic epigraphy that included the re-construction of inscription, in separate works.

The layout of the basic epigraphic documentation required another set of photographs, providing visuals of inscriptions, also helping with the identification of the individual graves.

The proof reading of the Arabic text, mainly the *Ayah* from Quran, was to be carried out with great care, as the professional composers in the printing business were prone to get carried away with the settled standard text, missing the slight omissions and also commissions, made consciously by the designers; also there was a possibility of routine oversight. The concern was to publish what was exactly inscribed on the cenotaph, rather than to pick the complete *Ayah* from the standard Quran text.

Thus a team was deputed to photograph the

structures according to the numbers, assigned in a latest trigonometric survey, verified on ground with coordinates, also through the (satellite) imagery. Reproduction of inscribed text was to be checked again by this writer, to eliminate any chance of the omissions or repetitions, as there existed possibility of the same, due to the fact that the study had remained stretched to a pretty longer period.

The lay out design was another area of concern that required special care, thus in house arrangements were made, so that the number of pages could be reduced to avoid making the volume heavy; also the presentation of the data must not be monotonous, so that the focus on part of the reader is assured.

Most of these objectives have been achieved, and it will go a long way in setting standards of the presentation for the technical reports, in a comparatively new field of research and analyses.

In the process efforts were made to train a team of assistants in the field of epigraphy; thanks to the enthusiasm of participants, research assistants employed in the process of verification and handling of data have shown promise.

Despite care there is an enormous possibility that many an omissions or mistakes may have occurred. This author accepts the responsibility for it; and likes to request for sending across the information, so that the improvement / corrections are incorporated.

Kaleemullah Lashari
lasharikaleemullah@gmail.com



INTRODUCTION

Study of any World Heritage property is expected to aim at capturing its essence, document it adequately that may cause an understanding of its cultural wealth, additionally it may lead to the realization of the importance of its preservation, and at the last it may become instrumental in its proper presentation.¹

Presence of a large number of funeral structures at Makli: tomb buildings, enclosures, *musalla*, platforms and above all the indulgently carved cenotaphs, don't leave any doubt that the site has received fancy of the men of world as well as of the men of arts.

“Here, neither labor nor expense has been spared,” observes a westerner, for whom this act was uncalled for, he goes on to lament, “the absurd purpose of giving the dead better accommodations than the living”²

Indulgence of all: the sponsors, the master craftsmen and the intellectuals that helped produce the outstanding necropolis should receive a befitting enquiry.

Feelings of an unknown poet, inscribed on one of the tombs at Makli, are caught well in these lines:

ز دست چرخ کج رفتار عذار / دلا تا چندان غم خسته کردی
بکوهستان مگلی شو دل زار / که از دنیای دون وارسته کردی

“Strangely, Makli Hill is virtually unknown to historians of Islam, and of Islamic Art, and even many Pakistanis do not realize that the area of Thatta and Makli Hill is one of the most important historical sites in the country,” wrote one of the eminent orientalist.³ “The hill runs from north to south for four or five miles, is one vast cemetery.... which has been in constant use for hundreds of years, and is still the principle burying ground,”⁴ writes Henry Cosins of the *Archaeological Survey of India*. Kennedy mentions that this cemetery/graveyard contain at a rough guess, not less than a million tombs.⁵ The reference either to Makli or to Thatta may not always be considered as one, even though these two places have stood their ground together since last few centuries, one being the necessary corollary of the other. But many believe that till the

time Thatta town sprang to life, in medieval period, the references to the Makli may be considered specific to the outcrop existing on the northwestern side of the modern day town of Thatta.

However the early references to the Makli and Thatta mostly are related to the 14th century, even though these are indirect, and throw not much light on the history of the origin of town, but still these provide some clue that may help in understanding some aspects regarding emergence of the town and its necropolis. The region was undergoing considerable social and geographic change; the new perceptions were co-relating things, the drastically shifting river bed, resulting from the enormous amount of sediment deposits over floodplain, brought by the river to the lower Indus delta, caused silting of established ports and compelled creation of new landing sites. Driven by the force of the economic needs no one was emphatic to re-define the new ports; it explains the continuous use of the names of the old ports, even when the old ones had long undergone abandonment. On the other hand the new names too were considered good enough to explain the long abandoned sites in the region. In *Tarikh Mubarak shahi*, written in the year 838AH, it is mentioned that the Sultan Muizuddin Sam Ghori marched against the ‘*Uchcha, Thatta wa Multan*,⁶ whereas it was *Daibul*, and Thatta was yet to make its appearance; likewise the *Tabqat e Akbari*⁷ mention *Diul*, and Thatta in same breath, making them synonymous. Whatever role Thatta came to play in such circumstances, it was most probably perceived as a thriving crafts hub, with rich cultural life in 14th century, fit enough to be the capital of a distant province of *sultanate*, and Makli was emerging as the place of remarkable sanctity.

The literary references also attest to such status. The comparison with the tall pine trees of Thatta to denote the gracefully tall beloved couldn't possibly have been an odd selection of the words, without any meaning or connotation, as in the same verse the poet is talking about *Uchch*, an already established and famous town:

سرو چو تو ، در احپ و در تته نباشد
گل مثل رخ خوب تو ، البتہ نباشد

1 The essence of the World Heritage Convention: The General Conference of UNESCO adopted on 16 November 1972 the Recommendation concerning the Protection at National Level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage.

2 Captain Wood, *Journey to the Source of the Oxus*, 1872, p.8

3 Dr. Annemarie Schimmel, 1983, *Makli Hill*, Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi, p. 5

4 Henry Cousens, *The Antiquities of Sind, with Historical Outline*, Archaeological Survey of India, vol XLVI, Imperial Series; Government of India Central Publication Branch, Calcutta. 1929, p. 111

5 As referred in Cousens, *The Antiquities of Sind*, p. 111

6 Sir Jadunath Sarkar's Manuscript, refer H. Beveridge (tr.) *Tarikh i Mubarak shahi*, by Yahya bin Ahmad bin Abdullah Sirhandi, Low Price Publications, Delhi 1990 (R), p.

7 Rajindar Nath De, 1911, *The Tabqat e Akbari*, by Khwajah Nizamuddin Ahmed, Calcutta, P. 37 £2

The Cypress like you is neither in Uccb nor in Thatta,

The flower like your pretty face is certainly not existent.

Amir Khusro's verse is coming handy to prove the position of Thatta in popular imagination, which indicated a tasteful town, nursing beautiful tall trees.⁸

Interestingly *IbneBatuta* in account of his travels in late 14th century didn't mention Thatta by name, however he provides a pleasant view of *LabriBunder*, the port of southern Sindh, which was *linked with Yemen and Fars in trade*; its yearly revenue yield was six million rupees. It doesn't prove that Thatta didn't exist at that time. The town was hostile to Delhi, as proved by the fact that a claimant to the throne of Delhi, found refuge at Thatta. Ibn e Batuta, being in the service of King of Delhi, thought it appropriate not to enter in the Thatta town.

The Delhi based historical texts have testified to the presence of Thatta, as early as the last days of Sultan Muhammad Tughluq, who died (d. 1351CE) near Thatta; the forced departure of the royal armies back home, in utter confusion was vividly described by *Barani* as well as *Affif*.⁹

These historians had no first hand knowledge of Thatta, and also the details of the late Sultan's campaign, they seemed to have remained detached from the march of the King, who keenly pursued a dissident; it is testified by the fact that they had lost touch with the marches of the imperial army from Gujarat in to the territory of Sindh via Cutch; also they had not much knowledge of the person, who was so hotly pursued by the Sultan to the vicinity of Thatta. The narratives identified him as *Taghi*,¹⁰ whereas the word only means 'the rebel'¹¹; they even failed to note the fact of the burial of Sultan Muhammad Tughluq in Sehwan.¹²

Feroz Shah tookover as Sultan and *Khutba* was recited in his name in Jumma prayers at the tomb complex of *UsmanMarandi* the Saint of *Sehwan*, life long association with Sehwan and Thatta is well known.



The dedicated plaque of the contribution of Feroz Shah Tughluq at the tomb complex of QalanderShahbaz, at Sehwan(National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi).

Muhammad Tughluq's death near Thatta is a well known fact, but the fact of his burial at Sehwan is not registered by students of history. Subsequently Thatta was subjugated by Delhi Sultanate. Feroz Shah the successor of Muhammad Tughluq kept his life long association with Sindh.

The next incident that fetched attention of the Delhi intellectuals was the subsequent fall of Thatta (763AH/1362CE) to Sultan Feroz's stratagem; the event was much celebrated:

و ز جمله فتوح ، گل فتح تهنه بود
کز استماع آن همه حلق انتشار بود

The importance accorded to this event has been attested by the verses, which are available in the narratives of the period, especially the poet *Mutahir Karra* 'مطاهر کڑه' (d. ca 790/1388), who composed odes to this event.¹³

The verse of Amir Khusro of Delhi, as quoted above, referred to Thatta in a very positive tone, comparing its tall cypresses to immaculate one. No doubt Thatta continued to be celebrated; the imaginations of one poet¹⁴ must have soared so high that he claimed:

نی نی که شهر نیست بهشتی است دلپذیر
آراسته بسندس و استبرق و حریر

*Oh no! It is not the city, but the pleasant haven'
Wrapped in brocade and gold threaded soft silk!*

All such praises, confirming to the oriental tradition of poetic exaggerations, may not be totally out of context, these can be taken as expression prompted

⁸ Amir Khusrau, *Diwan e Kamil*, ed. M. Darwish, Tehran 1343sh/1965, Nr. 486, as referred to in Annemarie Schimmel, *Makli Hill* 1983, p. 6

⁹ *Tarikh Feroz Shahi*, Barani, Calcutta 1862, p. 535-6, & *Tarikh-i-Feroz Shahi*, Shams Afif, Calcutta. 1890, p. 19-20; see also Agha Mehdi Hussain, 1963, *Tughlaq Dynasty*. S. Chand & Co. New Delhi, p. 386

¹⁰ *Tarikh e Mubarak shahi*, p.120

¹¹ F. Steingass, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, 1884, p.623

¹² Dr. Muhammad Shafi, *Oriental College Magazine*, Lahore, February 1935, vol. II, no. I. pp. 156-6i; also *Maqalat Moulvi Muhammad Shafi*, vol. I, Majlis Tarqi e Adab, Lahore, pp. 319-25. See also Dr. Muhammad Shafi, *Sanadid e Sindh*, pp.28-32; Dr. N A Baloch, 'Burial Place of Sultan Muhammad b. Tughluq', in *Sindh: Studies in History*, Kalhora Seminar Committee, Karachi, pp. 127-132; N A Baloch (2003) *Sindh: Studies Historical*, Pakistan Study Centre Jamshoro, pp. 157-164

¹³ Mir Ali Sher Qani', *Makli Nameh*, (tr.) Dr. N B G Qazi, Sindh Archives, Karachi, 2011, pp. 28-36

¹⁴ Waheed Mirza, 'Matahar Karrah', *Oriental College Magazine*, Lahore, May 1935, p. 160; also *Oriental College Magazine*, August 1935, pp. 161-216

by a society with high culture, the urban setting where certain order and planning had exerted its influence. Today the setting of some of the quarters in town of Thatta and the ruins studded on the hill of Makli are an appropriate testimony of the highly developed material culture.

The rise of *Summas* during 15th century was gradual, so was the decline of the power of Delhi. The trade and commerce grew considerably [S P Chhablani, Economic Conditions in Sindh, Sindhi Adbi Board, Hyderabad, New Edition 1995, p.99], as the interference from outside was at the low ebb.

The *Summas* became victims this time from a different sort of aggression. Rising militarism among the tribes in former *Temurid* empire saw *Arghuns*, part of *Amir Gurgan's* forces getting active, under their fiery commander *Zulnun Arghun*, who held the joint Governorship of *Kandhar*, along with the son of the king of *Herat*. One such excursion did cost the *Arghun* forces heavily, where some of their elders got killed at the hands of the tribal forces of Sindh (1490CE), such reference exists in one of the epigraphs, proudly adoring the enclave of Jam Mubarak Khan:



قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم اذا تحيرتم في الامور فاستفتوا من اهل القبور صدق يا رسول الله اهل المقام يا مخرجنا الاعظم مبارك خات بن سلطان نظام الدين شاه بن صدر الدين شاه بن صلاح الدين شاه بن سلطان ركن الدين شاه وهو المظفر على مغلال الهروي والقندهار - كتبه قطب الدين بن محمود // احمد بن دريا خات غفر الله له

The subsequent events show that getting advantage of the factions among various tribes in Sindh, where *Jam Feroz* (r.915-16H) the last Summa ruler marginalized arms bearing tribal elders, the *Arghuns* made inroads in to the *Thatta* territory. Fall of the city was coupled with brutality and destruction. It was one of the tragic periods of history of Sindh when *non-royal* intruders were able to create a niche for themselves and subjugate a very refined society through military highhandedness. It comprehensively destroyed the linkage between productive elements of the society and the decision makers, affecting very base of trade and progressive agriculture.

The subsequent persecution of selected tribes, labeling these as *arm-strong*, coupled with the aggressive policies against the agrarian population, created a gulf between the ruled and rulers. This gap affected the cultural aspirations, besides letting the agrarian population resort to rebellion so often; local craftsman also suffered greatly.

The change disrupted the cultural links between Gujarat and Sindh, instead it enhanced communication with the lands on west; preferred architectural practices from this period are visible at the necropolis of Makli, the preferred burial ground of people of Thatta. Whatever came to the lot of Thatta town is not left today except one or two ruined structures.

The rise of Sher Shah Suri in Bengal compelled Humayoon, Mughal King of India to flee; his coming to Sindh (1541CE/948H), to muster some help from the traditional followers of Temurid Kings, met with cold shoulder. Shah Hasan Arghun expressed all courtesy, but that remained limited to messages only, he didn't appear in person to pay homage. He did also destroy the crops in the adjoining areas just to create difficulties for the visiting armies. The King ultimately decided to forego Thatta and look for help elsewhere; Shah Hasan was obliged to provide the زادراه /Expenses for the passage for King's journey to Persia.

Shah Hasan Arghun died issueless (d.962H/1555); his Amirs Meerza Esa at Thatta and Sultan Mahmud at Bukkur ended up by taking over; this informal arrangement was prone to create confusion, as both of them aspired for the rest of the country (between Thatta and Bukkur). Meerza Esa tried to muster assistance from the Portuguese of Goa; he under compulsion made a hasty advance, in the hope of getting there earlier than marched on Schwan in haste, without waiting for the help to arrive. Sultan Mahmud's good sense won the day, Meerza Esa had to agree to reconciliatory proposals; meanwhile the Portuguese arrived at Thatta, and were at a loss to make any sense out of situation, as they heard Meerza Esa's coming to terms with Sultan Mahmud. There was no one at Thatta to attend the situation, and pay the compensation to them. The heightened rage of Portuguese was let out on innocent inhabitants (973H/1565-6), who suffered losses

of life and property at their hands, and Portuguese made off with huge amount and destroyed certain parts of the city.

This was the second destruction of Thatta, which is well recorded in the history. MeerzaEssa had taken all the trouble to expand the trade, was attentive to exports and had paid attention to the affairs of *LabriBunder*, but he died immediately after the Portuguese plunder of Thatta, and narrowing the canal from Bunder to the town in the year 973H; his successor *MirzaBaqi* Beg was schizophrenic; his misadventures proved drastic for the growth of society and economy. He attracted attention of Akbar the Emperor of India for wrong reasons, which ultimately brought Mughal armies on Thatta. Subsequently due to disrepair it accumulated the silt and contributed to the reduction of trade at this port.



The fortress, having extended living quarters, the Roman Bath, multiple annexes indicate at lavish arrangements, it was under the use of Shah Bunder, the Port Master of LabriBunder

However we have some accounts available from this period, by European travellers, which gives us fair idea of the flourishing economy of Thatta. Withington paints a very bright picture as he regards it as most important in the matter of trade and reports free access to its port. In his view Thatta was a place of great importance in India during the early seventeenth century [Whittington, *A Journey over Land, from the Gulf of Honduras to the Great South-Sea Performed by John Cockburn And Five other Englishmen, &c.*; see also William Foster, *Early Travels in India*, H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921, pp.188-233].

LabriBunder, the port of Thatta [Foster, *Early Travels in India*, p.224] was linked with Lahore, Agra and Bukkur, the three most inland but most prosperous emporia of Central and Northern India found a market for their merchandise in Thatta [Ram Chandra Prasad, *Early English Travellers in India*, MotilalBanarsidas, Delhi, 1965, p.263].

Withington reports how an Englishman who arrived at Thatta earlier, along with his Indian attendant safely, died in mysterious circumstances, the only explanation that was available was that they were poisoned by the two Portuguese friars, who being European residents there had closer access to them [Foster, p.225].

It is difficult to give credit to this story, but it indicates that the Portuguese were fully entrenched at Thatta as far as the trade was concerned, and their social standing with the officials was strong.

Portuguese presence at *LabriBunder* was also reported; there is hardly any doubt regarding their domination of the maritime trade in the region. The port (*LabriBunder*) was well supplied with textiles, and had abundance of cheap necessities of life, which Portuguese carried to the Persian Gulf that brought them huge profits [M H Panhwar, 'An Introduction to Willem Floors book *The Dutch East India Company (VOC) and Diwel-Sindh (Pakistan) in the 17th and 18th Centuries*,' www.panhwar.com].

Mughal takeover of Thatta was not a peaceful transaction, as it is generally presumed; in the face of Mughal aggression *MirzaJani* Beg, who had earlier succeeded *MirzaBaqi*, understood the defense needs of people under attack. To deny the advancing army the food, fodder and silver, he ordered the towns and crops to be reduced to ashes; Thatta suffered the most, it was put on fire by its residents, reportedly it simmered for a whole month. This destruction of the city was more devastating than the earlier plunder by Portuguese; it was comprehensive and planned. It might have served the defense purposes but it affected the population most profoundly; it also deprived the posterity to enjoy the beautiful and well-planned city, bejeweled with highly refined architecture.

The surrender of *MirzaJani* to *Khan e Khanan* subsequently eased out the situation, but it couldn't trigger start the production or trade; the recovery was slow and it couldn't achieve the previous pace. The reconstruction too was limited to bare minimum, it couldn't bring back some of the wonderful pieces of public works as well as private property that underwent destruction.

Mughal takeover was bound to affect the day today life at Thatta, society underwent transformation; former elite was reduced to the level of ordinary citizens. During the initial decades of took over, the Mughal officials / *Mansabdars* and their agents handled affairs without knowledge of local affairs, they were virtually cutoff from the populace. It deprived the city of usual social development, thus its former glamour became a far cry.

The new administrators / officials were required to step in the vacuum created by the Mughal takeover; their absence from Thatta at times was not a willful act, they were required to be at the Court of Mughals introduced the proxy administration.

However there were some exceptions to this rule, when few of the locals, though in Mughal service, were given the assignments to serve at Thatta, but it was brief. The situation not only caused a gradual decrease in the trade but also became instrumental in discrediting the Mughal authority.

Yousuf Meerak's account of Sindh [Yousuf Meerak, *Mazhar e Shahjahani*, Sindhi Adbi Board, Hyderabad] should have proved to be a timely reminder, but it is very much doubted that this discourse, which was meant for the Emperor Shah Jahan ever reached him. It is a very clear picture of subjugation at the hands of a distant power, which had no interest in welfare of the subjects who were the source and cause of the revenues, generated for the king. The account was written by a person belonging to the privileged classes, of the family who was in the employment of great Mughal. If this was not brought to the attention of the rulers there was no way the local aspirations can reach the royal court.

It gives details of the mismanagement, friction between the rulers and the ruled, the uprising of the peasants and tribes rebelling against the rowdy officials, ruling a well-behaved and peaceful population. These were few of the reasons, which may have contributed to the decline of the urban Thatta.

It is appropriate if we do not separate town and graveyard adjoining it, while considering the overall development of the society and its funerary practices; the practices, which were largely influenced by its cultural sensitivities.

The Necropolis of Makli has fetched some specific mention as a graveyard, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The space, considered as holy, was most sorted after, there are a few direct, and also some passing references to its acquired sanctity; at least the Thatta based writers described it in that vein. The earliest account is said to have been written by Qazi Mahmud Thattvi, under the title of '*Tazkiratu Auliya*' (980AH/1572CE),¹⁵ which referred to this graveyard, but it is not available to us; thus it cannot be said what it exactly tells about the hill. *Tarikh e Masumi* was completed around 1009AH; it has no description of this graveyard, however there is mention in narration of an event that helps in indicating to the modern reader, the sanctity assigned to Makli. Mir Masoom states that

when *Shah Hasan Arghun*, the ruler of Sindh died near the village *Sann*, his body was brought to Thatta and was buried in the Villa of Mir Ahmed Wali near the river; the body was however transferred after three months to a dedicated tomb, built for the purpose of temporary burial at Makli.¹⁶ Nothing much about the Makli could be ascertained from this early history of Sindh. But if we look at this event, it does convey the importance attached to the place. Even though it was already decided to take the body and bury the late Arghun Chief in Makkah, still it was preferred to shift the body and subject it to yet another temporary burial from Thatta, to Makli. This shows the respect attached to Makli, a place of distinction worthy of taking all the troubles to take the body there. It may be taken as an indication of great esteem, in which the dead chief was held.

Syed Abdul Qadir's account is so for the earliest testimony available (1016AH/1607CE), wherein he has indicated specifically about the necropolis, while discussing some of the highly revered saints, and their last resting places. Burton has quoted from him, but he has some how distorted the details; according to him it was the *Jam Tamachi* who "in AD 1500 (*the year given by Burton is much off the mark*) on the order of a distinguished saint, built a mosque upon the hills, which he called *Mekli*, or *Makkali*, "Mecca-like," for virtue and sanctity; and "directed that thenceforward this should be the holy locale, in suppression of *Pir Pattah* on the Baghar Creek, formerly the pet *P'ere Lachaise* of defunct Sindis".¹⁷

Syed Abdul Qader Thattvi, completed his work in the year 1016/1607, wherein he referred to the myth of beginning of the burial in this graveyard. He might have taken clue from an earlier text, or was depending upon some popular tale, cannot be confirmed. But he too has given contradictory information regarding the initiation of the burial. He has stated that it was *Shaikh Hammad Jamali* who advised Jam Tamachi, the Summa Chief 'to allow the burials henceforth on the hill.' This is indeed an interesting statement, implying that prior to those days the hill was not supposed to receive the remains of the mortals. It may also be taken as that the *land use* might have been subject to certain entrenched practices, or it was controlled through some kind of regulations; hence the intercession of the holy fellow, seeking relaxations of the sanctions.

Some remarkable burials prior to the date of referred anecdote clearly defy this understanding. However this tale marks the beginning of the hill being used as a general graveyard; it is not clear what prompted the *Shaikh* to seek the 'new policy.' In any case in due course of time Makli became one of the largest necropolises in South Asia.

15 Dr. Abdur Rasul Qadri (tr.), *Hadiqatul Auliya/أولياء*, Sindhi Adbi Board Jamshoro, 2007, pp. 7, 13

16 Mir Muhammad Masum Bakhri, *Tarikh e Masumi*, tr. Makhdum Amir Ahmed, Sindhi Adbi Board Jamshoro, 1953, 2006 (R), p. 189

17 Richard F. Burton, *Sind Revisited: With Notices of The Anglo-Indian Army; Railroads; Past, Present, and Future, etc.*, Richard Bentley and Son, London, 1877, pp. 148-9

18 'MAKLI'S SPATIAL SPREAD: Study of the Historical Growth of Makli Necropolis', a talk by present writer, at a Workshop organized by Islamic Arts Museum, Berlin, Germany, 22-25 April 2015; planned for publication later in 2017

19 Syed Abdul Qadir Thattvi, *Hadiqatul Auliya*, (ed.) Pir Hussamuddin Rashdi, Sindhi Adbi Board, Hyderabad. 1967, 2007 (R), p. 109

20 Sayyed Tahir Muhammad Nasyani, *Tarikh Baladab Thatba urf Tarikh e Tabiri*, Sindhi Adbi Board, Hyderabad, 1965

21 Sayyed Tahir Muhammad Nasyani, *Tarikh e Tabiri*, tr. Niyaz Hamayuni, Sindhi Adbi Board, Jamshoro, 1988, 1995(R), pp. 59-63, 170, 133, 137-8, 176

22 Shaikh Muhammad Azam, *Tuhfatu Tabrin*, tr. Dr. Abdur Rasul Qadri, Sindhi Adbi Board, Jamshoro, 1990, 2006 (R), pp. 30-1

23 Mir Ali Sher Qani, *Makli Nameh*, (tr.) Dr. N B G Qazi, Sindh Archives, Karachi, 2011

24 Mir Ali Sher Qani, *Tuhfatu Karam* (tr. by) *Makhdam Amir Ahmed*, Sindhi Adbi Board Jamshoro, 1975, 1994 (R)

25 Mir Ali Sher Qani, *Tazkira Maqalat e Shura*, Sindhi Adbi Board Karachi, 1957

26 Mir Ali Sher Qani, *Maiyyar Salikane Tariqat*, ed. Dr. Khizer Naushahi, Idara e Maarif e Naushahiyya, 2000, pp. 582-3

27 Das Sindhi in Vergleich Zum Prakrit und den anderen neueren Dialekten sanakritischen Ursprungs. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft*, 16, 1861 also referred in Prof. Dr. Annemarie Schimmel 1983, *Makli Hill*, Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi, p.5

28 Alexander Hamilton, *New Account of the East Indies I*, p.123-4, as referred in *Sind Revisited*, p. 150f

29 *Sind Revisited*, p.153

30 *Ibid*, p.153

31 *Ancient Monuments Preservation Act 1904*, http://asi.nic.in/pdf_data/5.pdf; accessed on 11.11.2016

32 V. S. Bendrey, 1944, *A Study of Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica, With Special reference to the Inscriptions published in the Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica 1907-1938*, Karnatak Publishing House Bombay, 1944, Indus Publications, Karachi, Reprinted (nd), Appendix A, p 179

We shall revisit this issue later while discussing the growth and expansion of the graveyard.¹⁸ For the present it suffices to say that Abdul Qadir's account testifies to the very special place assigned to Makli as a graveyard. In his view the hill was a holy place and received the mortal remains of the outstanding personalities of the times.¹⁹

Sayyed Tahir Muhammad Nasyani²⁰ has painted a very interesting picture of Makli. He says that it is one of the most frequented places, where on the fixed days of each month the inhabitants of the town used to throng. The merry making was specifically associated with the hill, where the people also paid their respects at the tombs of pious.²¹

Tuhfatu Tabrin, an eighteenth century hagiography of 'pious' of Thatta has also indicated a few outstanding burials at the Necropolis, but quite understandably no further description, neither of the type of the structures nor the decoration over these is made available. The author has also quoted from *Hadiqatu Auliya* the anecdote referred earlier, regarding the burials to begin in 14th century.²²

A very moving account was penned down by one of Sindh's out standing historians Mir Ali Sher Qani. This account though reports some very 'holy persons' buried on Makli, interestingly he mustered a narrative that is important from socio cultural point of view, if we may loosely describe it so. Qani has eulogized the site as the sacred place, replete with the burials of pure and holy.²³ However he had widely referred to Makli in his three books, *Tuhfatu Karam*,²⁴ a history of Sindh; *Tazkira Maqalat e Shura*,²⁵ an account of the Persian poets of, and those who were associated with, Thatta; and *Maiyyar e Salikan e Tariqat*, another account of the outstanding religious personalities, some of whom are related to Thatta/Makli and buried there as well. It again emphasizes that the place is a chosen one, and also many of those burials have caused it to become holier.²⁶

No further account is published, which may describe the graveyard till the westerners generally and the East India Company's employees specially came around. Strictly speaking later centuries saw Europeans showing some interest in the site; the comments of Ernest Trumpp are interesting, as he described the ruins of Makli Hill as the most magnificent in whole of India.²⁷

Whatever has come to light is mostly brief, being travellers' accounts, for instance Alexander Hamilton indicated in the year 1699 'forty-two fine tombs'.²⁸ These accounts understandably fell short of noticing, or mentioning hundreds of beautifully carved and highly decorated graves, made of golden sandstone. No one reported any inscriptions or paleographic material; however Burton was an exception. Though he has correctly read the date on the *Musalla* wall of *EidGab* as year 1043H, but further to it his comments on the inscriptions are interesting: he reports, "quotations from the Koran in characters whose chief beauty is illegibility".²⁹ He goes on to state that virtually there is no possibility of deriving any substantive historical information from these. "In these countries very little of 'the history of people is to be learned from their sepulchers and the Muslims want the mania of Historical epitaph and laudatory inscriptions which as often render our Christian monuments the means of mirth having been duly paid".³⁰

In the early 20th century the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), an official organ of the Colonial Government had this graveyard partially enlisted, under the law of 1904.³¹ They took notice of the tomb complexes on the unclaimed state land, but left a substantial part of the *Hill* that was also part of the graveyard.

ASI had launched *Epigraphic Survey* in India, which brought under publication equally important and even some less significant texts in publication. The Government used to publish the survey from Calcutta, to report the material dealing with ancient Indian history in general. Owing to the un-deciphered discoveries and recordings made available, this publication was enlarged and in 1909-10 a "supplementary" was issued comprising of Arabic and Persian inscriptions. This acquired position of an independent publication in 1912, thus a series of volumes appeared, containing the contributions from outstanding experts of the field, under the title of *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica*.³² It is hard to say that the inscriptions from Makli monuments were not noticed, however these were not reported in epigraphia.

The absence of discussion of this historical site can hardly be explained. It is a fact that the graveyard is full of inscriptions, some appearing on tomb buildings, others decorating the enclave walls, the portals and few even on *Musalla*; besides a large number of these are cut and carved on the stone cenotaphs. This epigraphic mass offering relevant historical information does not fail to display symmetrical

inscriptions in various styles/*khat*/scripts, these truly present an aesthetic treat to the eye.

All along these years no further progress is on records of ASI on this account; notwithstanding the ASI's ignoring the half of this site.

However it is reported that some individual focus went on to capture the text thus carved, mainly due to colonial period thrust for recording and documentation. Sir Syed's *Athar e Sanadid*/آثار صنادید came out in the later half of the 19th century. This account of the historical buildings of Delhi might have inspired someone in Sindh. One such initiative by Khan Sahib Khudadad Khan, a native official of the staff of the Commissioner in Sindh, remained unnoticed for three quarters of the century. It only got some partial mention by Pir Hussamuddin Rashdi, who admits possession of some readings from Makli by Khudadad Khan,³³ from which he referred freely in his writings also. Khan during his career proved himself to be a prolific writer, he penned down quite a number of works, including a short history of Sindh, in 1900.³⁴ But his work about Makli remained unpublished, neither he wrote exclusively about it nor about its epigraphy in any of his other works, thus his collection remains virtually unknown, till today.

As referred above his notes however came in to the possession of Rashdi, who utilized some of these.³⁵ While using this information Rashdi has mentioned these with the title 'Katbat e Makli az Biaz Khudadad Khan' (Biaz).³⁶ *Rashdi has at times mixed up epigraphs* and locations of these, it supports the presumption that neither he was clear about the location of some of the inscriptions, nor the notes could make things very clear for him. This confusion can be explained by another presumption that someone might have been employed by Khudadad Khan to copy the inscriptions. He being the *Native Chief Munshi*/scribe³⁷ of the Commissioner in Sindh, being excessively busy with his assignments and routine duties, also was resourceful enough to get epitaphs recorded for him.

The references in Rashdi leave little doubt that the *Biaz* must have contained a fulsome recording. The emphasis of the Colonial administrators in their personal capacity to collect and provide the material on the history and physical heritage is visible, when we look at the available publications. Most of the Company/British employees were involved in research and compilation of such works; sometimes the archaeological writings are also there. The emphasis on documentation was result of the observations made by the Lords of the Committee

of the Council of Education in England who required that photographs, plaster casts, and accurate measurements of Indian's ancient buildings be sent to England.³⁸ This emphases in the air might have influenced Khan to undertake the exercise. Besides his official duties he remained busy in undertaking and collecting information, which he utilized subsequently. His history of the recent past of Sindh, which he named as "لب تاریخ سنہ" / *compendium/digest of Sindh's History*" is understandably based on the bits and pieces of the information he had gathered during his long career as an official.³⁹

All the references (foot notes in Rashdi's work) to the quotations from the *Biaz* give page numbers; closer scrutiny indicates that the structures, which are closer to each other, are linked to the page numbers mentioned (in Rashdi's footnotes), in series that denote a sort of logical assemblage of the information collected. The referred page numbers readily indicate that *Biaz* must be quite an effort at collection of the information. Whatever we can make out of *Biaz* it has actually left us in amazement as it has gone on to note the quotations from *Quran*; about these inscriptions even the Burton has lamented blaming its *illegibility*; thus it seems to be an advancement on the understanding of the scholarship, which at that time might have been content to the identification of the buried person, therefore recording of the epitaph would have sufficed; as all the subsequent scholars and students of the paleography have done generally, and in the case of Makli particularly.

It is a fact that such works were popular among the students of history, where the Epigraphs were faithfully recorded. Especially the major graveyards from Central Asia, Afghanistan, Persia and India had fetched good attention of the scholars. As much as the Mughal prince *Dara Shikoh* has penned down one such account where he has not only mentioned the burials of many 'pure and holy' but also, to some extent, have shown interest in *Qataat e Tarikh* also.⁴⁰ The scholars who edited those works discussing the lives and the achievements of past masters did receive a *good attention*; the footnotes and annexures were prepared with the edited volumes. For instance the tombs of *Herat* were described by Amir Syed Abdullah al Hussaini; and Maulana Ubaidullah and Khundzada Mulla Muhammad Siddique Harvi; these three works were famously called *Risala e Mazarat e Herat*. This *Risala* was very ably edited by Fikri Saljuqi, who added a tremendous amount of information, specially the epitaphs, giving an enormous amount of first hand information collected during the field work, with details of paleography, deserving praises of modern scholars of the field.⁴¹ Ahmed b. Mahmud's *Mazarate Bukhara* is another such work that provides us with the information of

33 Hussamuddin Rashdi used the *بیاض/notebook* of Khudadad Khan, who is said to have notes of readings made of the epigraphs, sometimes around late nineteenth century, see Rashdi, Hussamuddin Rashdi, (ed.), *Makli Namō*, of Mir Ali Sher Qani, Sindhi Adbi Board, Hyderabad. 1956 pp. 450f, 490-92f, 515f, 520, 535, 548-53, 566-71, 573-95, 601-08

34 Refer the Introduction to the work by editor Dr. N A Baloch, 1959, *Lub e Tarikh e Sind*, Sindhi Adbi Board, Hyderabad

35 Rashdi *Makli Namō*,

36 In the footnote, *Makli Namō*, p.450].

37 Introduction to *Lubb-e-Tarikh-e-Sindh*, Edt, by Dr N.A Baloch, pp.4-7

38 D.K. Chakrabarti, 1988. *A History of Indian Archaeology, from the Beginning to 1947*. Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi; p.57, as referred in Nayanjot Lahiri, *Finding Forgotten Cities: How the Indus Civilization was Discovered*. Permanent Black, Delhi, 2005, p.294f

39 Quite a few publications are to his credit, and Khudadad Khan's descendants, living in Sukkur, claim that there are still few unpublished, but they are overly guarding these, may be in future these see light of the day

40 Dara Shikoh, *Safinat ul Auliya*/شہزادہ دارا شکوہ قادری سفینۃ الاولیاء نفیس اکیڈمی کراچی ۱۹۸۹ء

41 *Risala e Mazarat e Herat*, (ed.) Fikri Saljuqi, Government Press, Afghanistan, Kabul 1967

those remarkable burials in and around Bukhara; it has been very ably edited by Ahmed Gulcheen,⁴² but it has neglected the epigraphic aspect of the subject. Same is the fate of many remarkable works regarding the famous graveyards, for instance the burials of the notables of *Tabriz* were described in *Raudat-al-Jenan* (975AH), *Raudat-ul-Athar* (1011AH) and later on in *Manzar-al-Auliya* (1304AH).⁴³ Whereas the burials around Old Shiraz have been discussed in a remarkable work '*Shud ul Azar*,' which was translated in Persian and have been very competently edited and published under the title of *Hazar Mazar* by Dr. Nurani Visal, from Shiraz; it too has not referred to the epigraphs.⁴⁴

⁴² Ahmed b. Mahmud, *Mazarat e Bukhara*, (ed.) Ahmed Gulcheen, 1379H

⁴³ Preface, Muhammad Razem ben Muhammad Tabrizi. *Manzar-al-Auliya*, (Ed.), Mir Hashim Muhdis, Manzawa Markaz Asnad Majlis Shurai- Islami, Tehran, 1388 Hijri Shamsi

⁴⁴ *Tazkira e Hazar Mazar* (ed.) Dr. Nurani Visal, Kitab Khana e Ahmedi Shiraz, 1364H Shamsi

⁴⁵ Shaikh Muhammad Riza, *Riazul Alwab*, The Historical Society of Afghanistan, Kabul 1967

⁴⁶ *Risala-e-Mazarat e Herat*

⁴⁷ Muhammad Ibrahim Khalil, *Tezkira Mazaret-e-Kabul*, Anjuman e Tarikh e Afghanistan, Kabul 1339HS

⁴⁸ Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, As'ar e *Sanadeed*/آثار صداید, ed by Dr. Moin ul Haq, Pakistan Historical Society Karachi, 1966, and later in greater details, with a degree of accuracy, in an extensive reporting, in a remarkable work: Basheeruddin Ahmed, 1919, *Waqiat e Dar ul Hukumat Delhi*, vols. I, II & III, Shamsi Machine Press, Agra; reprinted by Urdu Academy, Delhi, 1990

⁴⁹ *Oriental College Magazine*, February 1935

⁵⁰ *Maqalat e Muhammad Shafi*, (ed.) Ahmed Rabani, Majlis Tarqi e Adab Lahore, vol. I

⁵¹ Khan Bahader Prof. Dr. Moulvi Muhammad Shafi, *Sanadiid e Sind*, ed. and published by Ahmed Rabani, (nd)

On the other hand those who have been conscious of the importance of physical remains as the source material of history have looked in to the paleography as well; attention may be drawn to one such work dealing with tombs, cenotaphs and slabs from *Ghazna*, which have been very ably recorded,⁴⁵ with conscious efforts to create an Epigraphic document. Earlier S. Flury recorded some of the selected tombs of *Ghazna*, along with illustrations, but this was a limited focus compared to the work by Muhammad Riza (author of *Riazul Alwab*).

Herat's burials were described in detail, with historic notes.⁴⁶ Likewise the inscriptional records of the tombs of Kabul too were completed by one of outstanding literary figures of his times.⁴⁷

The extensive remains of Delhi are the tale of this wonderful settlement, which had vigorous lords to come to occupy its throne and studded it with the expression of their grandeur. The region has seen many settlements to come up, climb high on the preferential ladder, and subsequently face an undeserved neglect. Construction spree of its rulers, chiefs, elite and notables contributed in bringing diverse ideas, and in rare cases, novelties to enrich the architecture of this amazing city. As the fate would have it Delhi has been extensively settled and speedily ruined, not only by the political upheavals, but also by its subsequent development and re-settlements. The eight cities kept coming into existence one after the other throughout the extended period in the life of this regional center, where a large number of public buildings, funeral structures and graves were erected. All these are embellished with the enormous number of inscriptions. Many of these were reported by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.⁴⁸

The reporting in *Waqiat e Darul Hukumat Delhi* (*Waqiat*) may be dubbed as the appropriate attempt and a good example of epigraphic recording.

The quantum of the inscriptions is immense; by every standard we may call the burials spread over these eight cities larger than Makli. The meticulous

care with which epigraphy is dealt by *Waqiat* is the testimony to the technical understanding of *Epigraphic Arts* by its writer.

The variety of scripts rendering sacred text and funeral information (epitaphs), replete with chronograms, repeatedly coming up, shows that the capital of Indian sub-continent had reached a level that without doubt be rated as very high in the practice of this art form.

The first modern exposition of Makli took place in the earlier half of 20th century. Dr. Muhammad Shafi visited the site in the nineteen thirties; he being a true student of the languages and Oriental traditions was in better position to appreciate the importance of the site and its epigraphic content. Preliminary notes of his Sindh visits were published in 1935;⁴⁹ later these were enlarged and published in compilation of his writings.⁵⁰ His recordings of the funerary inscriptions of Makli were sorted out in the shape of a list, presented in chronological order; thus the epitaphs referred to in the list were either partially quoted or were fully omitted. However his epigraphic understanding was obvious as he had many chronograms un-tied. His writings on Sindh's epigraphy were edited by his son for publication, after the death of the author, under one title *Sanadiid e Sindh*/سنادید سندھ.⁵¹ Dr. Shafi was indeed a fit person to record inscriptions pretty accurately, but the value of his published recordings of Makli as epigraphic documentation is not much high. He referred to only 235 inscriptions from Makli; he might also have paid some attention to the sacred text as well, but these are not referred to in his published writings. Dr. Shafi in his bid to present the historical sequence shortened the inscriptions, jotted his notes and presented these in a chronological sequence. It actually served his purpose but distorted the 'epitaph,' thus its identity became an issue. Makli is a pretty large site of over 2000 acres of land, out of which only 992 acres are officially brought under the custody, having hundreds of graves scattered all over, leaving quite a good number of graves out of the attention of the custodians and also the students of history. Burials were not in a sequence or dictated by any timeline, but their presence may have been governed by the affinities (familial, tribal or social). Thus these are not in any easily explainable sequence. Any reference to these graves chronologically, with out having some indication of context/locus makes it pretty difficult to co-relate and identify the inscriptions with the structure, until and unless an accurate reference exists. He seemed to have taken much beaten path for his observations/recordings, as graves situated out of the reach of main paths are not reflected among his

list, which indicated names and the years; omitting other details. This curtailed recording cannot allow the luxury to co-relate the listed with the epigraphs on ground.

In 1956 appeared an edited volume of 18th century work *Masnavi Bustan e Bahar* of a Thatta based historian Mir Ali Sher Qani.⁵² Hussamuddin Rashdi, the editor collected hitherto published historical information, relevant to characters and events famous and important, as much as he could. But these notes could not be presented as footnotes, as none of these related to the subject matter composed in the *Masnavi* by Mir Qani. The editor was in fact in love with Makli, like the author of the *Masanavi*; he used to frequent the site, and tried his best to acquaint himself with the tombs there. He might have checked his notes with the *Biaz* of Khudadad Khan⁵³ and might have desired to organize his notes in more coherent way, but his health had troubled him considerably⁵⁴ thus he appended these to the *Masnavi* as necessary corollary. Studded with this additional information, the bulky volume neither offers a crisp text, nor it compliments the composition of Qani; it in fact forms a separate reading, elbowing out *Masnavi* itself.

Naturally the readers were bound to lose sight of the literary work itself, and regretfully its social relevance also. The editor went on to make linkages between the mass of historical notes, scattered over 600 pages, mentioning the persons of importance from the *Arghun-Turkhan* and *Mughal* periods, most of them even having no relevance to the burials here. Admittedly the *Masnavi* of Qani, neither deals with the history of the site nor it takes in to consideration the funerary details.⁵⁵ It certainly deserved a different treatment. In his adoration of the site the editor thought it to be a significant historical reference ground, thus he consciously made efforts to introduce the famous and important personalities of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Those living beyond the geographical and social linkage were liberally referred. He continued his association with the site, keeping close contact with the Department of Archaeology, which duly supported the study by this well-mannered pleasant person.⁵⁶ He eagerly sought and utilized the information, map/sketches & photographs provided to him. Understandably Rashdi did not design *Makli Namo* as an Epigraphic study. He however tried to build a compendium of source material for historical re-construction of three centuries (15th to 17th of CE), but could realize very late that it needed a simple but different

treatment.⁵⁷ Whether any one considers the edited volume of *Makli Namo* to be a history of the period or not,⁵⁸ it is certainly not a document to be categorized as a paleographic exposition of the site. However the editor did take troubles to refer to quite sumptuous amount of the inscriptions appearing on cenotaphs, these may be a small percentage out of huge material available there. Surprisingly his was the only effort, published to date, to have quoted some of the sacred text from Quran, appearing on few of the cenotaphs; reason might be that he towed the line taken up earlier by Khudadad Khan and quoted the readings offered in the *Notes/بياض*. It confirms to his life long resolve to present, whatever new source of information comes to hand.

The *Notes/بياض* of Khudadad Khan have not been introduced in a due manner, even though many of the inscriptions have been either quoted or referred to, in footnotes of the *Makli Namo*. It would have been commendable if he had described briefly the extent of information available and manner of its arrangement. Unfortunately he has not left any clue of the whereabouts of the *Biaz* either.

It is also not known whether the inscriptions were copied actually, or simply the *Ayah* numbers were given in the *Biaz*; however as discussed earlier the way it appears in the footnotes, having page numbers indicated, it leaves the impression that *Biaz* could be a pretty organized source material. If so, its importance lies in the fact that many of the structures, cenotaphs and stone slabs available during the late nineteenth century, might have been lost to us; in fact couple of such instances have been noticed while perusing the *Makli Namo*. However we fear that there might have been more losses than what we can make out today, on the bases of partial references made available in *Makli Namo*.

During 1950s, as well as later, few visitors' accounts of the graveyard appeared, along with the feelings of awe at such a large necropolis; these accounts did refer to some of the structures as well as to their inscriptions. These writings in shape of columns and essays published in the newspapers and periodicals were well received; at least one of these ran in to more than one printing.

Professor Mahbub Ali Channa's account of his visit to Makli Hill, was initially serialized in a literary Journal in the years 1955-56, it was subsequently published in a book form.⁵⁹

52 It was completed in the year 1164H; date of its completion was recorded by Mir Qani in a chronogram:

سال وی گنت بیسبل الہام / بوستان بہار تازہ دل

53 Such impression is based on the reference to the *Biaz* in his notes, where he suggest corrections to the contents in the *Biaz*; see for instance p.491f in Rashdi, *Makli Namo*

54 See Rashdi *Makli Namo*, p. 35

55 Rashdi, *Makli Namo*, p. 3; see also the Preface by present author to Mir Ali Sher Qani, *Makli Nameh* (tr.) Dr. NBG Kazi, Sindh Archives, Karachi, 2011

56 Rashdi, *Makli Namo*, p. 491, 492f, 558-65

57 Rashdi, *Makli Namo*, p. 35

58 Rashdi, *Makli Namo*, p.39

59 Professor Mahbub Ali Channa, *Makli Takri Jo Sair*, Sindh Adbi Board Jamshoro, 1987

In response to the publication of Rashdi's edited *Makli Namō*, a local scholar from Thatta thought it worth a while to 'point out to the mistakes in the *Makli Namō*' and made a bid to correct the facts reported by Rashdi.⁶⁰ He did correct a few anomalies in the reported epitaphs. Tufail Ahmed titled his book as "*Jadeed Makli Namō*," in follow up of the Rashdi's *work*. His account and accuracy of reading was advancement over the published material, but this commendable effort was limited only to reading of some 62 epitaphs, and definitely stopped much short of the spelled out targets. Though it does make a few corrections, but did not go on to cover the reported inscriptions.

Earlier after partition of Indian Sub-continent a new Department of Archaeology was established in Pakistan; some well-groomed officers in the ASI tradition came to this country, they were experienced in the field and already famous such as Dr. M Nazim, Moulvi Shamsuddin Ahmed etc. But their writings with regard to Makli are not available. The new generation of the officers in the sixties devoted some time to Makli. Dr. M A Ghafur reportedly did survey of the site in 1962; he remained interested till he departed to *Bangladesh*. However nothing much came out in this phase too. Some stray papers were the outcome, including a short work on calligraphers which was of Thatta by M A Ghafur. It was well received, even though it was not an exhaustive account of calligraphers, which was its specific subject. Dr. Shafi had already mentioned more than twenty practicing calligraphers from Thatta, on the bases of historic references and the epigraphs.⁶¹ The *Calligraphers of Thatta* could only refer to sixteen such names; being a true Archaeologist he enrolled only those whose signatures were noticed on the remains of Makli/Thatta.⁶²

There appeared a few more publications on this necropolis, but each work had its own area of interest. One covering the architectural description has almost no reference to the inscriptions. The epigraphic element is neglected despite the fact that it is universally considered the integral part of architectural decoration in Muslim societies. The preferential texts are linked to various parts of the buildings, inspiring the onlookers to good deeds, reminding them of the rewards for the right conduct. These certainly add character to structures.

Dani's write-up on Thatta/Makli⁶³ was commissioned as the celebration and exposition of the old cities of Pakistan, with reference to history and architecture, for a publication program aimed at glorifying the *Islamic Period*. The other studies in the same series covered the towns of *Multan* and *Uchchh*.⁶⁴

The Department of Archaeology, Pakistan, later re-organized as Department of Archaeology and Museums (DoAM), had a few good attempts to initiate epigraphic survey of the site, much in tradition of its forerunner ASI.⁶⁵ But it is unfortunate that due to technical and administrative difficulties none of these could be completed, even though these had actually taken off well. However a smaller initiative of the DoAM in shape of a month long training program did produce results. Participants of this training have published some of the proceedings of the survey,⁶⁶ "to give an idea about the richness of the inscriptions at Makli and their importance;" it was focusing on celebrating the dated epitaphs. The article (Bukhari et.al) reported 269 inscriptions/epitaphs and these were translated in to English as well.

Another work on Makli, under the joint authorship that included a practicing architect, was expected to have more technical exposition of the architectural elements and its history; it did achieve some of its objectives.⁶⁷ The work was result of yet another long affinity with the site, discussing the architecture and decorations of the so-called *Summa cluster*. The needs of documentation generally and also to epigraphy specially were never targeted, thus there was no such information brought in and discussed.

Happily we have some good attention paid to this important site, as it attended the prestigious position and was inscribed on *World Heritage List*. Even though the custodians are eager to maintain this site on the coveted list ever since its nomination, they have not been successful in dispelling the apprehensions of UNESCO, which has noted with great concern the absence of the documentation and concrete plans to safeguard the site. All that the Department of Archaeology could do was not enough that could satisfy even the partial needs of enlistment. Lack of material on proper presentation of the richness of the site is also the cause of uneasiness of the World Body.

Given the importance of the site and its close association with an old historic town Thatta, a very well thought out list of objectives has to be spelled out. The stakes of the town with a weak economy, but the high expectations of the society in the heritage site, may not be allowed to rob it of its glory and push it to destruction by resorting to uncalled for commercialization of the surroundings. The site with its *World Heritage* status, and also with its interesting remains is required to be considered for a well thought out plan to develop its potential. Paving the way to save the patrimony and link the modern day world to its rich and proud past, without compromising the historic character of the town.

⁶⁰ Abu Siraj Muhammad Tufail Ahmed Thattvi, 2005, *Jadeed Makli Nameh*, Maktaba Sahibzada Siraj Ahmed, Makli

⁶¹ Dr. Moulvi Muhammad Shafi, 'Khattatan e Sindh: Iqtabasat Tuhfatul Kiram' in *Maqalat Moulvi Muhammad Shafi*, vol. I, (ed.) also 'Sindh Kay Baaz Katbay', in *Maqalat e Moulvi Muhammad Shafi*, vol. I, pp. 289-388

⁶² Abdul Ghafur, 1974, *The Calligraphers of Thatta*, Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi

⁶³ Ahmed Hasan Dani, 1982, *Thatta: Islamic Architecture*, Institute of History, Culture & Civilization Islamabad

⁶⁴ Under the directions of Dr. N.A. Baloch, Pakistan National Institute of Historical & Cultural Research made a special program of publication to celebrate Fifteenth Century of Islamic Era; see Ahmed Nabi Khan, 1980, *Uchchh: History and Architecture*, National Institute of History and Culture, Islamabad. p. xvi; and Ahmed Nabi Khan, *Multan*, National Institute of History and Culture, Islamabad

⁶⁵ Archaeological Survey of India

⁶⁶ Bukhari, Muhammad Shah & Khattak, Habibullah Khan, 'Muslim Epigraphy', in *Museum Journal, National Museum of Pakistan*, vol. I & II, January-December 2001, pp.143-173

⁶⁷ Suhail Zaheer Lari & Yasmeeen Lari, *The Jewel of Makli*, Heritage Foundation & Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1997

Apart from other bids, to safeguard the site and attract the domestic tourism, it is important to create the link between today and the yesteryears. But that can not be achieved with out careful recording, specially the epigraphic one, as it helps to identify the stalwarts of the society, being the fore fathers of the clans and tribes, trying hard to preserve their self respect in present depression, caused mainly by a dead economy.

The immense epigraphic material available today on site can possibly help us in identifying the persons from the past, highlighting their importance in those times and indicating their relationships with the present generations. Alas! There is not much time, and these tombs are fully threatened, even though standing proudly on the historic grounds, offering some information from the past. These may further deteriorate to the extent, when it may not be possible to reconstruct the text and we may lose the chance to reconstruct the past.

Unfortunately the published data falls much short of the requirements, and fails to fulfil the needs of a worthy reference to one of the Islamic world's greatest epigraphic wonders.

Certainly it was realized that sufficient attention was not paid to the graves and the structures in Makli. The available recordings are limited to the small number of epitaphs and a few photographs of the impressive tomb buildings. Highly talked about but seldom-referred *Makli Namo* stops short of addressing the needs of detailed recordings. Even though it may have advantage of having chance to report the situation that was prevalent some seventy years ago, when the losses to the site might have been comparatively few and also the deterioration of the inscriptions comparatively less. But this chance seems to have been lost, as the *Biaz/notebook* of Khudadad Khan, was never prepared for publication. On the other hand learned Rashdi might have taken the material for granted. He did not venture upon the merits of it, he certainly would have liked to sort the notes of Khudadad Khan, as he was a very careful scholar, but due to his circumstance, ill health and traveling,⁶⁸ hard pressed with the time he showed dependence on the data as it appeared to him. He understandably was under constant encouragement from the publisher and associates to go for its quick publication;⁶⁹ thus in the end it was not possible to shape up the notes, which were indeed of historic importance.

The second exercise undertaken in the matter stopped short of appreciating that there was much to the

paleography then the simple epitaphs.⁷⁰ However the requirements of the Epigraphy as a discipline are to be observed, hence present study went on to capture the spirit of the unique legacy of this necropolis.

The documentation was done with the view to make the rich written historic material available; definitely it was not designed to make up for the deficiencies in the existing accounts of the graveyard.

Contrary to the general impression that the cenotaphs proudly boasted the names and the dates, there were many epitaphs with out any mention of the year, and some were even with out the names.

Ratio of Named and Unnamed Cenotaphs

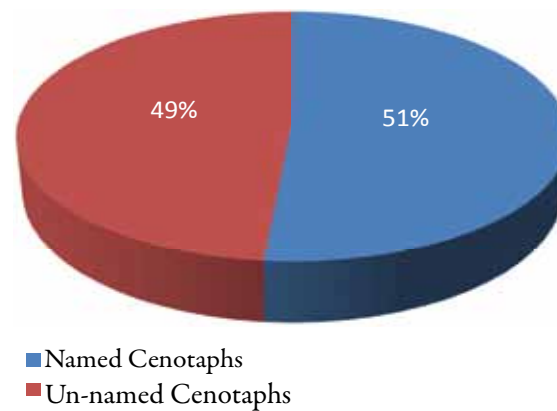


Chart 1: The ratio between Epitaphs without the names is amazingly high.

Chart 2 helps to have the exact idea of the dated graves in different time categories.

Distribution Of Graves in Categories

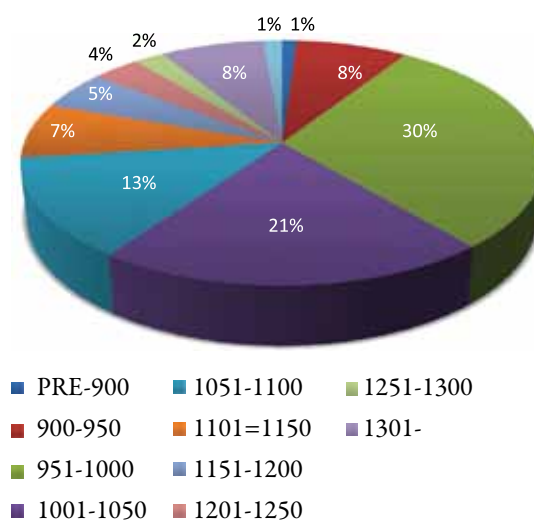


Chart 2: The six centuries of Makli's existence is here divided in categories, each one showing time bracket of 50 years.

⁶⁸ Rashdi, *Makli Namo*, p. 35

⁶⁹ Rashdi, *Makli Namo*, pp. 39-40

⁷⁰ Bukhari et. al

⁷¹ Kaleemullah Lashari "The Analyses of the Use of Sacred Text in Makli: Surah Indicate a Timeline;" Paper presented at IBA Karachi, 26th October 2015

Visibly there are many graves belonging to the Summa period (prior to the year 928H), but only those cenotaphs, bearing the date have been included in the distribution chart, all graves without mention of the year are considered undated, despite these having creditable stylistic belonging to a particular time frame.

The basic requirement of the documentation of the epigraphs is to *attempt a reading*, further recording the same, as exactly as it appears. But it is not as simple as it sounds; variously the recordings tend to be afflicted by some limitations, making the results doubtful (refer *Chart 18*).

*The writings on the cenotaphs and structures contain the sacred text also, mostly the quotes from various *Surah* of Quran. It shall be appreciated that a good number of *Surah* has been inscribed on these graves; even on a single cenotaph there are more than one *Surah* quoted, at times it may reach four, or more.

In Chart 3 each line show detail of *Surah* appearing on a single cenotaph; the chart 3 deals with the period of Hijra year 951 to 1000.

Chart showing number of *Surah* appearing on some of Cenotaphs between the years 951 to 1000H.

Ayat ul Kursi	Al-E-Imran						Tauba
Ayat ul Kursi			Zumr		Mulk		
Ayat ul Kursi	Al-E-Imran						
Ayat ul Kursi	Al-E-Imran	Baqarah					
Ayat ul Kursi				Qasis			
Ayat ul Kursi			Zumr				
	Al-E-Imran	Baqarah					
Ayat ul Kursi		Baqarah				Rehman	
						Rehman	
		Baqarah					Bisma
	Al-E-Imran	Baqarah					Sajda
	Al-E-Imran						
Ayat ul Kursi							Inam
		Baqarah		Qasis			
			Zumr				
Ayat ul Kursi	Al-E-Imran						
Ayat ul Kursi		Baqarah					
Ayat ul Kursi		Baqarah					
Ayat ul Kursi					Mulk		

Chart 3: In the category of time frame falling between the years 951 to 1000 Hijra it can be observed that upto 3 different Sura appear on a single cenotaph.

Chart showing number of *Surah* on graves falling in the time frame of year 1051 to 1100

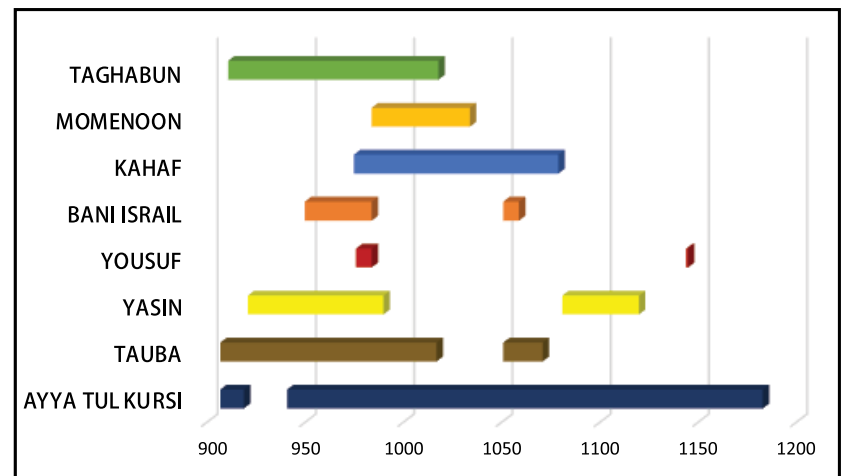
	Al-E-Imran		Zumr	Qasis	Mulk	Rehman	
	Al-E-Imran		Zumr				Jumma
		Baqarah	Zumr				
							Yousuf, Yaseen
					Mulk		
Ayat ul Kursi							
	Al-E-Imran				Mulk		

*Chart 4: Period from year 1051 to 1100 Hijra show that the number of *Surah* has increased to five on a single cenotaph.*

The cenotaphs also may have other material inscribed; may be the *tradition* of the Prophet, a *Durood*; *Kalima*: the profession of faith, or the *Basma*/بسمه; *Nad e Ali*/نادعلي; a verse or two, in Persian. Thus a wide variety of inscriptions considered auspicious and also necessary, have found their way on these carefully dressed stone slabs.

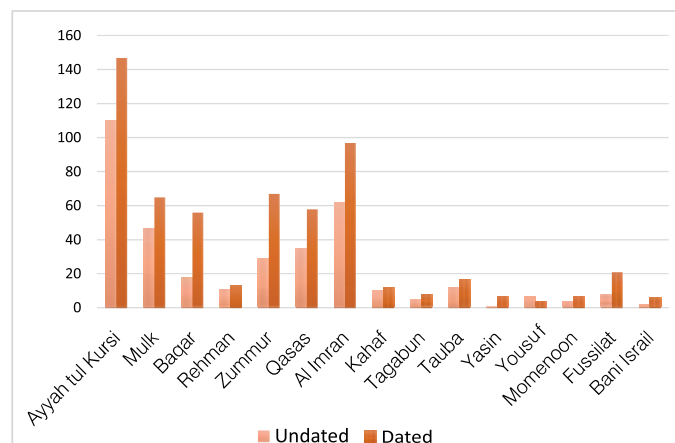
This richness not only deserves to be celebrated, but it opens up a few possibilities for study. It can be charted systematically, for using in developing probabilities in time related enquiries; in fact it did show that some of the *Surah* are preferred over others in different period slots.

Time line Depicting Appearance of *Surah*



*Chart 5: It is clear that each *Surah* has been preferred during certain specification period*

Surah: Dated & Undated



The present writer has used this combination in assigning the nearest time frame to the undated cenotaphs;⁷¹ the Chart 3, 4 & 5 give a fairly good idea of some of the possibilities.

Since reading the inscriptions have always been challenge, the scholars have considered the reading of the quotations from *Quran* relatively easy. It is mainly due to the fact that most of the readers attempting the reading are already exposed to the sacred text; socio-cultural scene provide many such occasions where the recitation of it is routinely observed in the South Asia.

But this ease is sometimes very detrimental to the correct reading, because the reader can predict the next word, and sentence, following, but so often it is not so. The decorative carving on cenotaphs have created multiple pockets/spaces for the inscriptions, these are eagerly taken by the carvers; at times the carvers do have their logic that makes them divide the space in certain ways, where the sequence of Ayah is not followed as the tradition has set it. Thus the reading of the sacred text is replete with problems, where sometimes the words are miss-spelt, or omitted; at places even the 'Ayahs/آية', which are logically following the sequence have been left altogether.

The readings done in the present recordings have been carried out with this fact clearly kept in mind.

Typical calligraphers' over sight, if it may be called that way, is neglecting to have precise renderings of the dots/نقطه, *airab*, *tanveen* (short vowels, diacritical marks) etc. It is well known that *Nastaleeq* script at times encourages excessive نقطه/dots. It is in historic reaction to the omissions of the dots in *Kufic* and *Thulluth* scripts; sometimes it was even considered mastery over language, or beauty of calligraphy. It has not posed any threat to correct reading, as the omissions can be ascertained, everyone knows the number of dots a 'yae/ي' has. But it poses the difficulty when 'yae/ي' is not meant and still a dedicated space is left blank in middle of a word for *Hamza/هـ*, a short vowel, where the sign denoting *Hamza/هـ* is not carved; in such case absence of either dots or *Hamza* symbol shall lead one to consider it as 'yae.'

In sacred text this happened quite frequently, the calligraphers rendered word 'Malaikah/ملائكة' and omitted to place the mark of 'Hamza/هـ', it was thus necessarily taken as 'yae/ي' and it may cause these instances to fall in the category of 'nontraditional spellings.'

Here the word is rendered not in accordance with the tradition, as 'yae/ي' is used instead of 'Hamza/هـ' (a).



(a)

Though the dots/نقطه of 'yae' are absent, mark for 'Kaf/ك' should not be taken as 'Hamza/هـ' (b).



(b)

The omission of 'Hamza' is not considered allowable as 'yae'. At times the over indulgent calligraphers have put the 'yae' as well as 'Hamza.' This has been taken as use of excessive letter (d).

The 'yae' is used here instead of 'Hamza' the mark is denoting the 'Kaf' and should not be taken as 'Hamza' (c).



(c)

The case becomes clear where the 'Hamza/هـ' is shown, it can be compared and the sign of kaf/ك is also shown, both can (d).



(d)

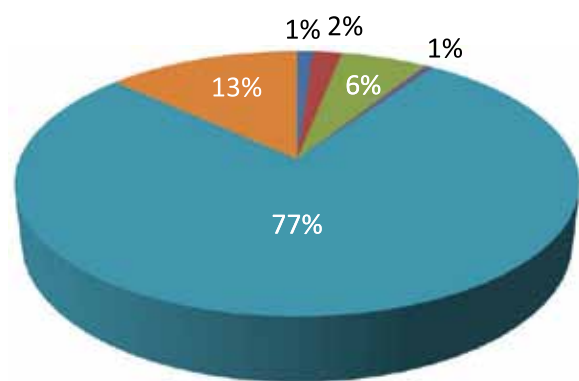
Anyways there are more cases of 'non traditional spellings;' other such commissions are observed excessively in the rendering of the word 'baes/بئس'. Often the 'Hamza/ء' has been omitted and the 'yae' is written instead.

Thus there is a range of instances where the repetition of one word has taken place; likewise the words are missed, or at places the oversight has rendered the repetition of half an Ayah etc. All such instances are marked with a 'marker'; see below the set of markers used to denote such cases of omissions or commissions, in the given readings, for the reference of readers.

*	Where Change of Surah occurs
○	Ayah is Complete
∅	Ayah remains incomplete
▲	Where Extra letter/word is used
+	Where Word/letter is missing
>	Where Ayah is missing
^	Word spelt untraditionally
∨	Where sequence of text is incorrect

Apart from it the carver has been indulgent to the extent that the text, received from the calligraphers, has been distributed, according to his considerations of the appropriate space and the length of the texts, to fit in the cartouches/sections produced/dictated by the decorative design, on the stone cenotaph. This is the reason that the reader all of a sudden finds a break in the text, where the quotation from one 'Surah/سورة', still halfway/yet not complete, is followed by another 'Surah/سورة'; this may even happen with in the same cartouche/sub-section.

Omissions and Commissions in Execution of Inscriptions



- Non traditional spelling
- Irregular Sequencing of Ayah
- Omission of Ayah
- Omission of a Letter/Word
- Surah Changing Abruptly
- Word Repeated

Chart 6: The instances of change of Surah are huge and interestingly remain un-noticed. It is the reason that even knowledgeable reader miss noticing many Surah, which are inscribed in between the already running Surah

Count of Various Elements in Omissions & Commissions

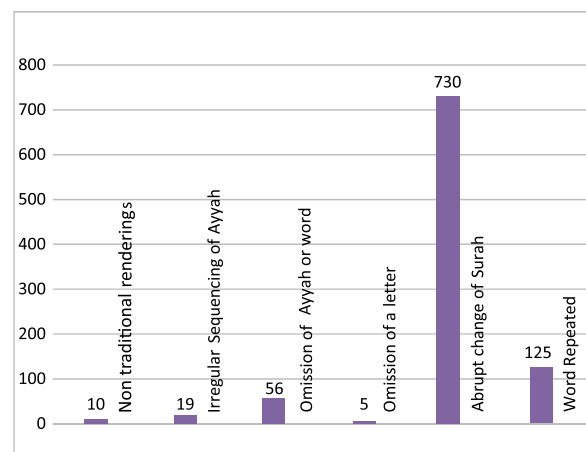


Chart 7: The quantification of the commissions and omissions in sacred inscriptions is represented here.

It may create problems of reading, thus these variations have been indicated, wherever these occur, with distinct marks appearing on the text; further to it for the sake of convenience the mark is explained on the relevant page as footnote.

No doubt the widespread growth of Thatta town was a direct result of an economy that thrived because of its trade relationship with the surrounding regions.

Newly acquired prosperity during medieval period allowed the society to nurture existing and acquired traits, cultivation of high culture, acquisition of luxury goods, coupled with temptation to be identified with expensive lifestyle, that didn't exclude the funeral practices, becomes the normal traits. This economy however couldn't keep its pace of promised growth, due to the lack of development of political institutions. The region meanwhile became victim to the expansionist zeal of the rules in *Delhi*. Thatta saw an outright subjugation. Its merger in to the centralized administrative machinery brought additional burden on its newly formed institutions, and also exposed this society to variety of new social practices. The resulting enrichment in some cases, and stress in others may find its description in many forms; however the funeral structures of the people of Thatta can provide a tangible evidence, of great merit and authenticity.

In order to develop use able tools for future research the present study can be very important; various aspects may be charted consciously, in the required way to provide quantified values, if needed.

Each type of the inscribed material may be divided in to further subdivisions: possibly temporal or spatial; these could be branded in sub-types, by any intelligent method.

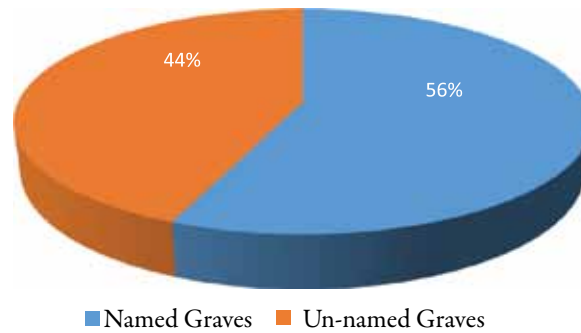
For instance further probe could become possible if the whole data is divided in various categories; as we saw division of 50 years' slots in *Chart 2*. The information could dole out some plausible features: besides affording many other explanations. It can be seen that the graveyard has flourished greatly during the period falling between the year 951 to 1050 H; while slowly and gradually the trend of erecting cenotaphs suffered continuously (pl. refer to the *Chart 2*).

This information is useful in providing insight in many possible aspects, for instance if we appreciate that the erecting a stone cenotaph is quite an important proposition, it has lots of expenses involved, it may have very strong bearings upon the socio-economic realities of Thatta. Likewise the relationship of the new administrators with the former elite of this town can better be understood, if we realize the fact that the management issues caused the *Persio-Afghan* ruling elite to extract the revenues directly through their representatives, and not through the local notables. This factor might as well have discouraged the folks from any display of economic wellbeing.

One part of the inscriptions in the Epitaph, the funeral statement may be: information regarding the person, the name; other important ingredient of epitaph is the year of the sad event.

Many of the epitaphs show names, but it is not universal, quite a good number of names have not found their place on cenotaphs; the chart gives a fair idea of the fact that how many of *Chart 8*: epitaphs don't have names inscribed. Following chart shows what percentage of the names appear in each period category:

Inscribed Graves Named & Un-named



Names Category Wise

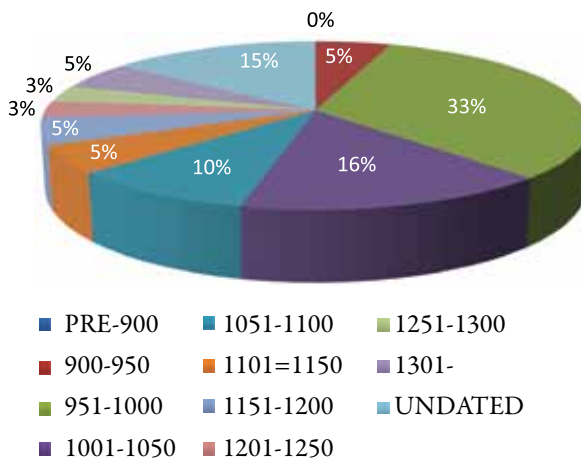


Chart 8: The percentage of Names is shown in each time category.

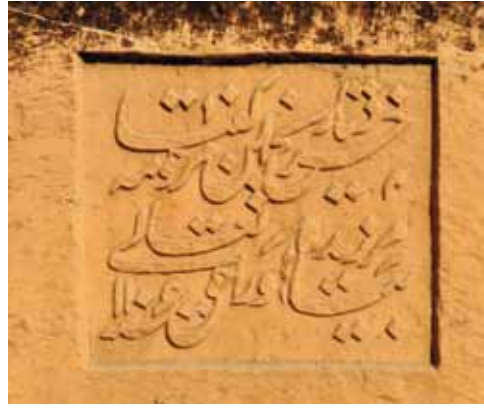
Similarly the appearance of the year too is not universal; as we saw nearly half of the inscribed graves are undated. Where the year of death is given it may appear in figures, simple Arabic numerals. But this fact must be kept in mind that the oriental tradition of *Tarikh Goi*/تاریخ گوی/*composing chronograms* was very strong in Thatta; thus we rightly expect the years to be inscribed in Chronograms/مادو تاریخ; these require a careful reckoning.

The مادو تاریخ or chronogram, as indicated above is governed through *Abjad*, it is a system where the sum total of values assigned to each letter, in a specified verse, sentence, phase or group of words, gives the date of the event commemorated.⁷² Deciphering the chronograms is another task, as these are of various types, starting from simple ones to those

⁷² Edward G. Browne, 1906. *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. II, 1906, Good word Books, New Delhi 2008 (R), p. 76-7

where the year is hidden, showing lot of industry and ingenuity/صنعت. The decipherment of chronogram is replete with many problems; there are certain ambiguities associated with the value assigning, especially of letters Hamza, alph, tai, hai hawaz (ه، ا، ق، و، الف، الف مقصوده، هاء مخلوط، ياء معروف، ياء مجهول، تاء مصدری) تاء دراز وغیره) as these are variously written,⁷³ The computation of the values assigned to each letter sometimes creates problems, as the sum total of preferred phrse is higher then the required year count, the crafty composer indicates such deduction of additional numbers, with in the composition; it is called تخرجه thus with due care the year was assigned on the surer evidence.

The Chronogram



حسرد تارخ این گفت مرحوم
سرزیده بیا اورا حق تعالی سنه ۱۱۰۴

The Chronograms are an integral part of funeral statement, it is interesting way of providing the vital information, especially regarding events, individuals, their contributions and incidents (mostly related to their death). These are composed in pleasing and easy to remember phrses, so that these could be quoted generation after generation, providing the authentic year of the happening.

Traditionally the Eidgah was a place of importance, socially it used to fetch prime attention during the عیدین /two eid festivals every year. Even though this huge ground remain unutilized for the whole year excepting two days, but the multitudes it attract lines under its importance. The Eidgah has on building but the *Qibla Wall*. It was built in the year 1043H, probably another of the royal favors, as it is a well known fact that Shah Jahan was well disposed to *Thatta*. The fact of its inception was frozen in a chronogram. Later after two hundred and forty years *Eidgah* was largely repaired, this fact was also celebrated in a chronogram.

It is interesting to see the two chronograms decorate the same structure, one gives the year of its founding (1043H), the other is telling the story of its repairs / re-erection (1281H). The composition employs the same theme, and almost uses the same *Madeh-e-Tarikh*, with meaningful addition.



حنان مالک رفات یوسف حنان /
ساخت طاعت گنجی ز بخت بلند /
فدسیان بھر سال اقامش /
کعب اھل فضل یافت اند ۱۰۴۳

The above instance is a simple statement that is eye catching as well easy to remember,



چون اللہ بخش شد آل عباس /
زیب ترمیم این مصلی کرد /
بے سرحد و جهد خوان سالش /
کعب اھل فضل زیب کرد
سنه ۱۲۸۱

“The deep consideration provided the year of the blessed deceased, come the exalted one and take care, the year 1106 (H)”

Interesting trend of adopting the already composed chronogram to new situation is visible here: originally chronogram was “کعب اھل فضل”. Later when the repairs were carried out the original chronogram was very well adopted to state the fact of the rehabilitation کعب اھل فضل زیب کرد.

73 فرمان فتحپوری، فن تاریخ گوئی اور اس کی روایت، سنگ میل لاہور ۱۹۸۲ء ص-۳



A memorial stela found on a grave, near Jalwagah Imameen has an interesting Madeh-e-Tarikh Chronogram; دست دی بادامن آل عباست, which gives out the year 1142 of Hijra.

The attraction behind the appropriate phrases continued to haunt the poets, the Madeh-e-Tarikh referred above, influenced the poet to use the phrase once again, with appropriate adaptation. The chronogram composed for illustration Mir Mazar, who laid life to honor the values, held very dear by the folks; the chronogram reads: دست دی بادامن شاه شهید: that gives the year 1203H.



دست دی بادامن شاه شهید سنه 1203H

The *Qata-e-Tarikh* in the following instance is interesting one, the composer kept closer to the fact of the unfortunate life, and was successful in concealing the year in the last phrase. It is stated with in the composition that the *Lallan*, the youth left the world, indicating that the value of the *Lallan* is to be subtracted from the total; thus the figure of 1129 is arrived at.



سنه ۱۱۲۳ (کذا)

نهفت تاریخ وفات او نعره در زمان (کذا) /
هائی در بدر جوانی رفت لالان از جهان /
بیست و هشتم شهر جمادی الشانی الخمیس رحلت نمود

*Hidden in the chest of kings is the year of
the event, this is the challenge;
So sad the youth in disarray Lalan left the World*

The most controversial cleric of his times, who caused quite a few ripples in the still pool of the religio-academic circles in Thatta has *Madeh-e-Tarikh*, most probably composed by one of his equally learned successors:



سنه ۱۱۷۳

گفت هاتف ز گلستان جهان باز پرسید
طزاری و تدس بفسر دوس محمد هاشم

The prayer of the successors for the departed soul to arrive in paradise is well stated, where the religious sanctity of Makhdum is also well referred.

As seen earlier there is a sumptuous number of epitaphs at Makli; with in these fair amount of cases the year is assigned.

Out of all epitaphs some good number of these have the year assigned either directly or through the chronogram; the *Chart 9* reflects it in detail.

The year embedded with in the chronogram is deciphered through the computing. At times the year is also inscribed in figure with in the epitaph, it helps in re-computing the calculations. The *Chart 10* below indicates where the epitaph shows the year that is narrated in the text; the year embedded with in the chronogram; the year also inscribed in figure besides the chronogram.

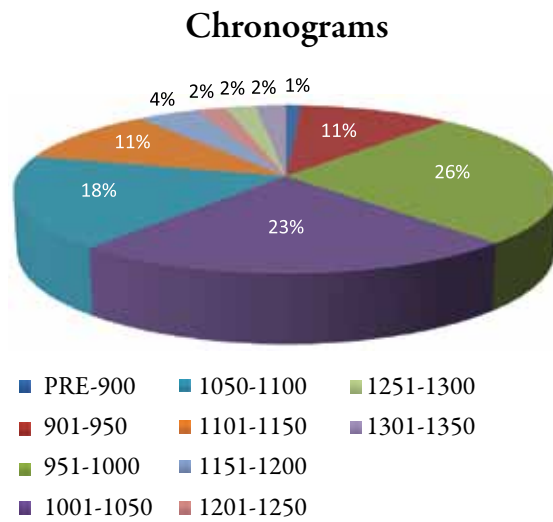


Chart 9: Frequency of occurrence of chronogram is ascertained in various time categories; 10th & 11th Centuries of Hijra are most productive Periods.

The chart, besides assisting an observant eye in marking many smaller details, reveals that contrary to the general belief that the society of Thatta was more literate during the 9th century, the percentage of the chronograms appears to have been larger in the 10th and 11th centuries of Hijra.

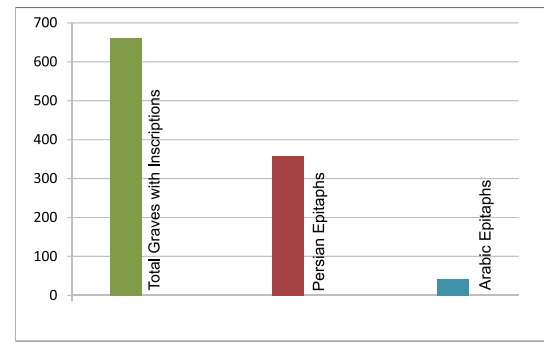


Chart 11: All inscribed graves do not have the epitaphs/funeral statement, these are generally in Persian, however a small number are in Arabic.

It is also one of popular beliefs that Arabic was considered *auspicious Language*, fit enough to decorate the funeral structures. While looking at the number of Arabic epitaphs it is clear that it has not been popular all along, its usage varies, as this fact can be glanced through the following chart:

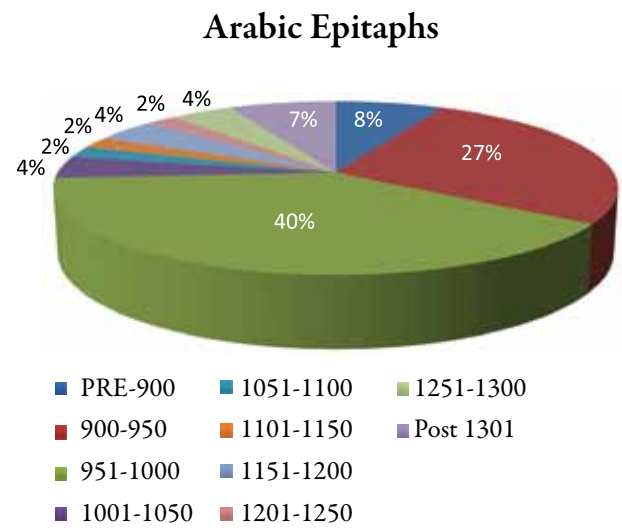


Chart 12

The 10th century shows the greater usage of Arabic in the epitaphs; the trend declined gradually in the later years of the century. It started bowing out in the subsequent years, but again picked up in the 14th century of Hijra.

Likewise the situation with regards to the Persian is charted hereunder:

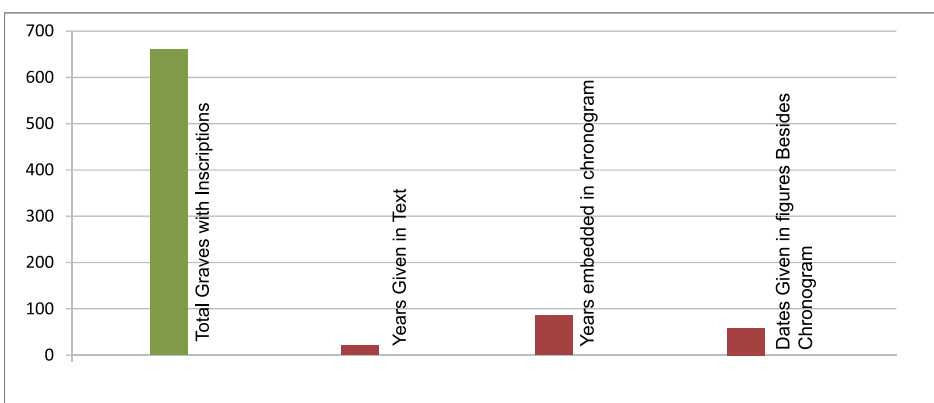


Chart 10: Compare the number of epitaphs having chronogram/ قطعَات تاریخ where the year is also given in addition to the abjad reckoning.

Persian Epitaphs

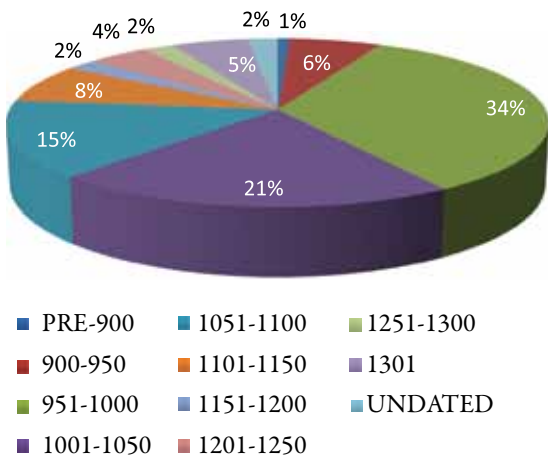


Chart 13: The ratio of Persian epitaph confirms that the literate indulgence was more in later half of 10th Century than any other period.

The epitaph as a rule of thumb appears on the southern surface of the cenotaph, but there are a few exceptions, where it has been inscribed on northern face as well. However in very negligible cases it has appeared on all other sides: such as east, west and top of the cenotaphs. It is sometimes seen beginning on the north and culminating on the southern face.

Placement

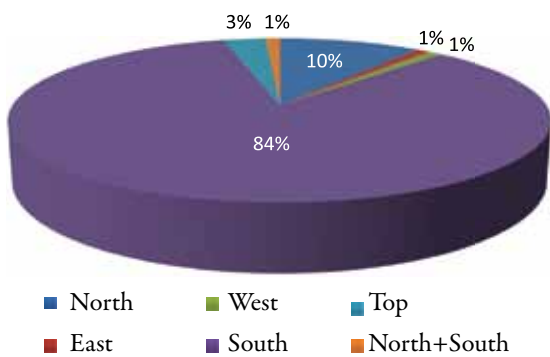


Chart 14

While looking at the statistics it becomes obvious that epitaph as a staple practice is assigned to south side. In few cases where the epitaph contained sacred text, it started from north and continued to south face, as per the designated location. However due to slip of focus or due to the bad planning it may find its place on any other side.

Out of this smaller number of exceptions, we may focus on further to know about the practice of this north-south epitaph period wise:

North-South Category Wise

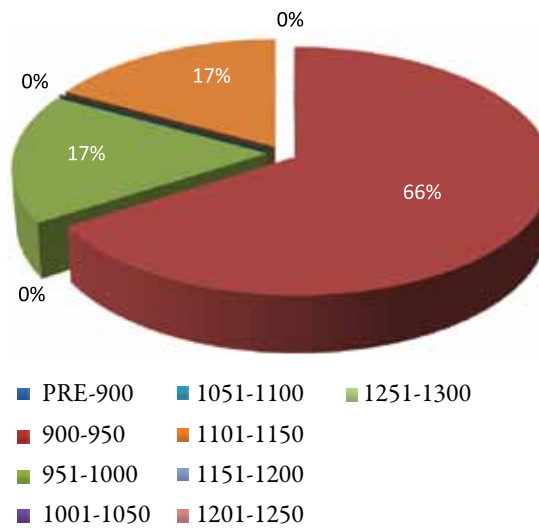


Chart 15

The Ratio of Cenotaphs with and without Epitaphs

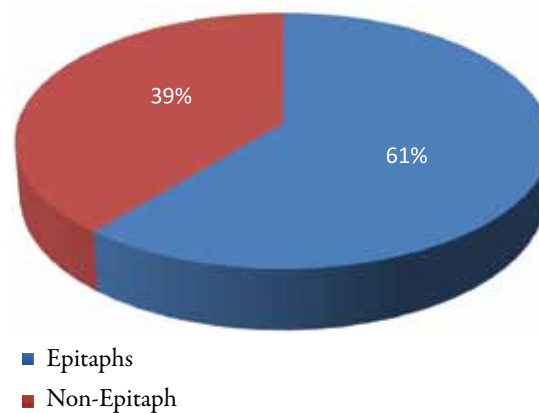


Chart 16: All inscribed cenotaphs do not have the epitaphs/funeral statement, the Chart gives us a clear picture of it.

There is thus an un-ending possibility of utilization of the data, once it has been collected, as demonstrated; this brings us to recognize the importance of authentic recordings. Emphasis on correct reconstruction of inscriptions may have looked out of place initially; however after seeing some of the deductions arrived at, one might like to appreciate that accuracy in recording is the base on which the possibilities of further research can rest.

But correct reading is difficult at times, as inscription on stone has its own issues; unlike the written documents on other mediums. The stone inscriptions

are prone to suffer from weathering in a different way. The age may let the inscription to disappear partially or totally; the grain size of the stone may allow variety of weathering effects, thus the deterioration may lead to different interpretations to the letters. Uneven surfaces are most likely to create deception, at times the incisions made by the scribe are not uniform, this may cause simple deviation of the reading. Injuries to the corners or other parts of the letters, or to the diacritical marks so often throw challenges to decipherment of the text.⁷⁴ Falling away of the dots, or its omission altogether, as part of the calligraphic 'excellence', has already made life difficult for the recorders. Wind, humidity and sunlight have beaten the surface so much that at places the precisions of the line achieved by the chisel, controlled by sure hand of the master craftsman is hard to find.

When all earlier works reporting the inscriptions of Makli are referred it becomes abundantly clear that the results of those attempts made at readings, have been largely afflicted with the usual difficulties indicated here before. Naturally the recordings reported were meant to substantiate the historical events they were narrating. The chart below quantifies the proportion of recordings of the epitaphs offered by each of the works.

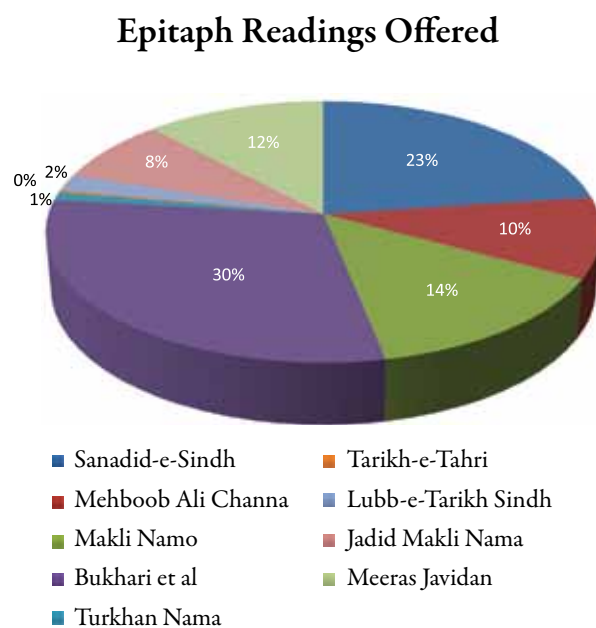


Chart 17: Showing the percentage of the readings offered by various Publications, out of the total number of epitaphs

As shown above the recordings of the epitaphs covered by the works are not much, reason being that time constraint of writers was at work in some cases, whereas in others there was no clear perception of

the importance attached to the palaeographic aspect. Most of these recordings suffered on many counts. The weathering was at work, in most of the cases.

Chronograms/قطعات تاريخ⁷⁵ posed difficulties in correctly dating the event of death, or *Raising* of the cenotaphs.

This created problems: for instance this difficulty in decipherment of dates may affect to a lesser degree the understanding of the spread of the graveyard itself, besides creating confusions in chronology of events.

Likewise there is a demonstrated lack of understanding in deciphering names, especially those ingrained in Turkic/Mongol traditions, along with the words, denoting the careers or professional assignments held. A quick glance at the following table (*Chart 18*) shall make it clear that reading issues afflict the offered readings, and a very small number of offered readings correctly reconstruct the given inscription. Leaving aside the sacred text, which is recorded by minimum number of the recordings, the total number of Epitaphs counted at Makli is 400.

All inherent difficulties and extraneous defects necessitate resorting to some clear way of restoration of the text *disfigured or gone*. It throws much burden on the shoulders of the undertakers of the recordings, thus requiring a statement of the code of the ethics 'agreeable to the scholars familiar with the field. These restorations of the text could invariably become point of the dispute.⁷⁵ The simplest way to deal with these is to resort to the simple manner of indicating the doubtful reading; to distinguish it from the rest of the text is the main responsibility. It shows the integrity of the undertaker to leave the 'doubtful' part or the missing text, which he/she feels that it is difficult to decipher, with a level of certainty, acceptable, and ultimately to the scholars of the field. The restorations 'best be suggested by the one who is working on the spot,⁷⁶ thus the small brackets have been used to show the restorations of the damaged or the missing part, and the indication (كذا) or (?) meaning 'doubtful' has been used for showing both the categories of 'likely' or the 'doubtful' parts of the body of the text. Wherever damages or missing inscription occurs, and its restoration cannot be suggested, the gap has been indicated with the dotted line.

⁷⁴ V. S. Bendrey, *Epigraphia*, p. 41

⁷⁵ Bendrey, *Epigraphia*, p. 41

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.41

Analysis of Readings of Epitaphs (Total 377) offered by Various Writers

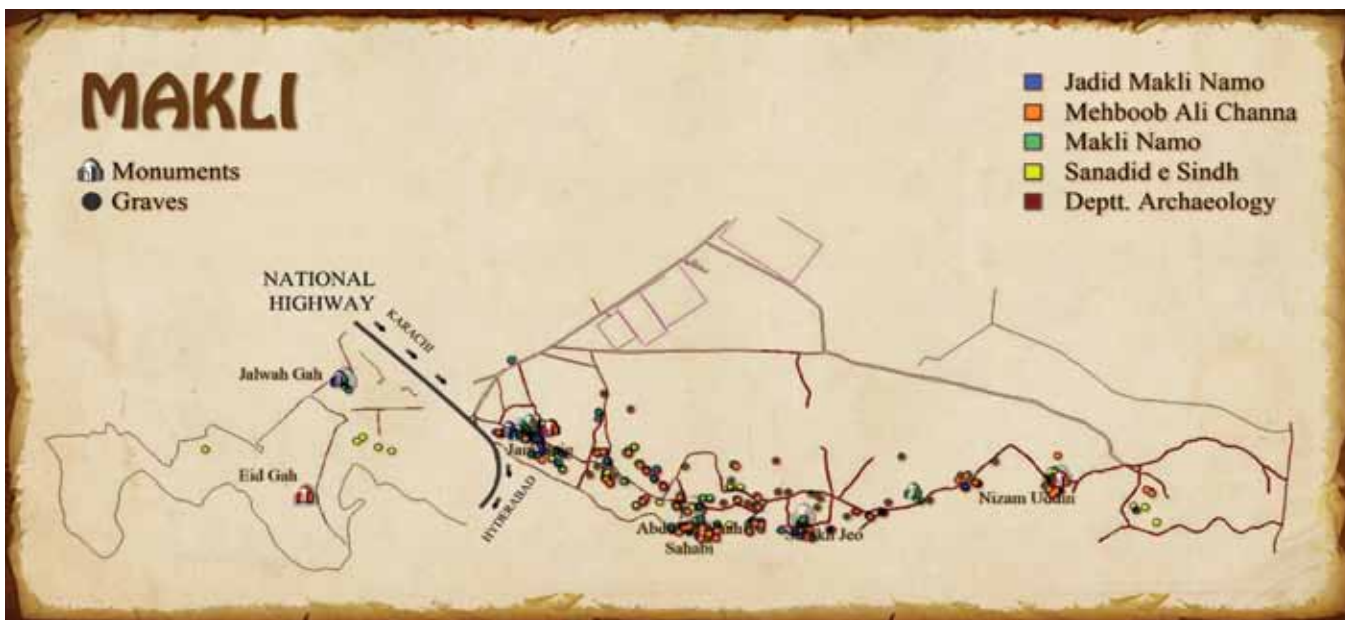
Published Work	Name Correctly Offered	Name Offered otherwise	Year Correct	Year Offered otherwise	Madeh e Tarikh Correctly deciphered	Madeh e Tarikh un-Deciphered	Total Epitaphs	% of total Epitaphs
Jadid Makli Namo	17	50	34	15	5	12	62	16.45
Sanadid-e- Sindh	170	5	91	58	29	16	183	48.54
Meeras Javidan	77	10	51	21	11	21	97	25.73
"Makli Hill Visited"	82	6	56	29	7	23	85	22.55
Museum Journal	197	22	123	21	21	31	242	64.19
Makli Namo	83	7	58	29	12	12	105	27.85
Turkhan Namo	5	0	2	0	1	3	6	1.59
Tarikh-e-Tahri	3	0	1	0	1	1	3	0.8
Lubb-e-Tarikh	2	3	0	1	0	8	12	3.18

Chart 18: Present study has identified and suggested reading of 377 epitaphs. The table above portrays the picture of the readings offered by each work, compared with the suggested readings in the current work.

The reason for comparatively small number recorded in all these years can be understood partially by looking at the following map, which shows the area covered by each work. In fact it is

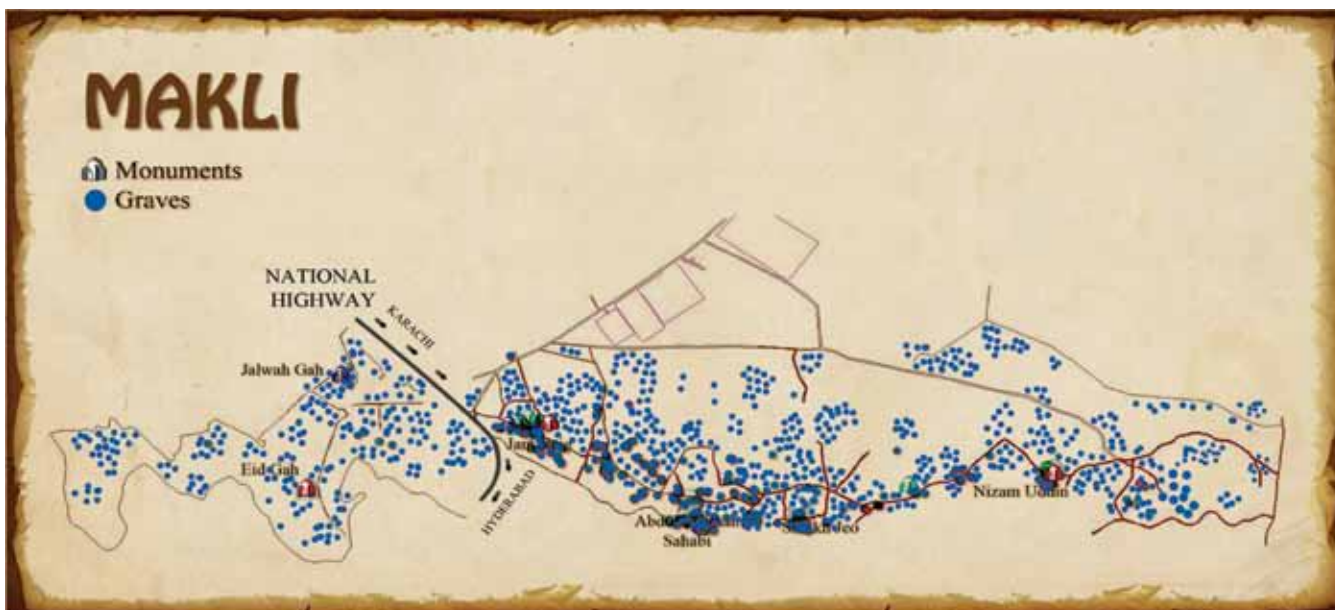
very interesting as it shows beyond doubt that the writers of these works have strolled along the beaten path and neglected the clusters, which lay far away from that route, on both the sides.

Map Showing The Coverage By Various Works



Likewise the following map shows the area covered by the present study; the comparison can indicate that more area has been brought under the focus.

Map Showing The Coverage By Present Study



The cenotaph, itself the embodiment of art and reflection of funeral practices, is a fit place to judge the output of various phases during the existence of the site, stretched over to a pretty long time on a huge area. This focus has helped in classifying the types of stone slab, so often a monolith cut and carved in a certain manner: this provides required help in placing the undated graves in the temporal slot, where undated cenotaph possibly belong. It was necessary to commit oneself to do it, as contrary to the general belief that the epitaphs dole out the date on each grave; as mentioned earlier, more than nearly half of the inscribed graves are un-dated.



Cenotaph #161, p174.

The grave of Amir Sultan Muhammad accompanies the headstone also, which shows the *Rumi* winding around the inscription panel; at the corners it assumes semi crest form, small crests/ *Kapali* (*Turkish*) کونہیل (*Urdu*)/are however present in the center of the longer sides.

Various Types of Cenotaph Vs. Time Sclae

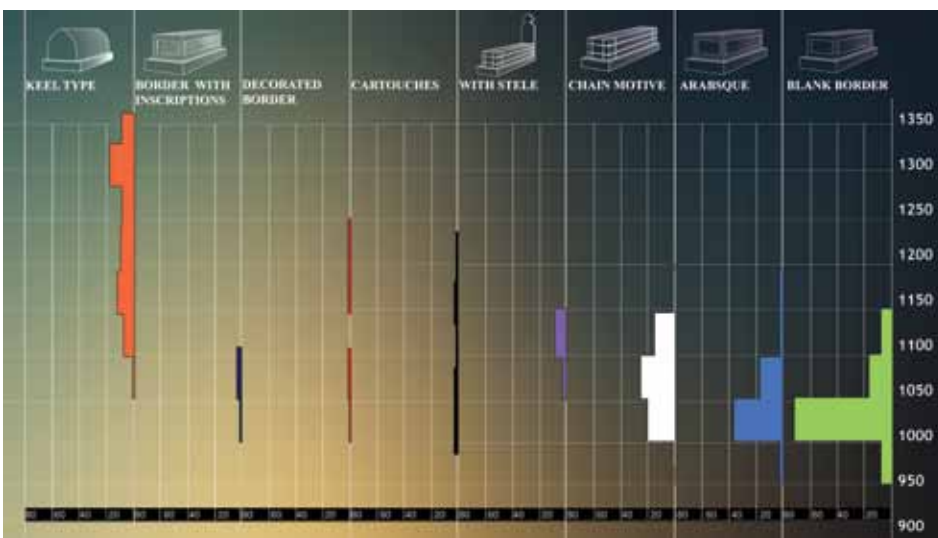


Chart 19

ARABESQUE AND ITS FINERIES

Understandably the arabesque (*Islimi, nebati, Rumi*) style of decoration characterized by intertwining plants and abstract curvilinear motifs, have remained mainstay in the architectural decoration. It alone and also associated with the calligraphy has shown remarkable grooming at Makli. Its inception at *Thatta-Makli* is from two sources, one is the old local, which was influenced by Delhi, from Sultanate period, and later the inception of the Central Asian tribal inception, bringing predominantly *post Temurid* tradition of the *Herati Court*.

The types of the classical ones are available in the later half of the 10th century, right from the fifties onwards, down to the end of that century. These are carved in real good taste, creating an impression as the carvers were well versed with it as the foliated vine curves gracefully, never disturbing the aesthetic balance.

The following frame has an outstanding design, it *combs* the *Rumi/basic spiral vine* with *Tepelik/the crest* in a graceful manner, required to be celebrated in its own right.



متر توفی الامیر المرحوم سلطان /
محمد بن امیر حاکم معقل فی یوم /
انہیس سنہ ثلاث و ستین و تسعمائتہ
(963)



Similar is the case in other cenotaphs from this particular class / timeframe, where the refined movement of the vines, intertwined with the crest is leaving a pleasant look around the epitaph of *Paindeh Muhammad*:



در تاریخ یوم الاربع من الاحد
شهر صفر
سنہ احدی و سبعین و تسعمائتہ
(971)

The plate form of Dost Muhammad is tastefully built, his cenotaph shows a slight variant *Islimi*, where the crests are hollowed, making it much lighter that is again pleasing to look at:



platform of dost muhammad khan #459, p419

The cenotaph of Ameer Khwaja Ali Muhammad, though employing the floral symbols, is devoid of the swings of the vines, here the movement is subjected strictly to some arithmetic dictates:



Cenotaph of Ameer Khwaja ali muhammad the topside #449, p414

Amir Sultan Muqeem's cenotaph has a sleek design, though the elements are light in formation but the combination is so composite that it leaves feeling of crowded house; here the *Kapalis*/کونچل are imposing, again a classical combination.



#348 Islimi band on the Cenotaph of Ameer Sultan Muqeem (d.962) (#348, p403)

The cenotaph dedicated to the daughter of Amir Sabir Beglar is another such case, but here the vines move at leisurely pace; despite the huge weathering of the stone monolith the design shows the delicate vines gracefully swirling around the crests:



Cenotaph of daughter of Ameer Sabir Beglar #346, p400

In this category one can see that it is not the matter of single vine moving, but the accompanied formations are closing around itself and form the sort of light crest / *palmettos*; the cenotaph over the grave of Ameer Sultan Muhammad son of Ameer Mahmud son of Syed Atiqullah bin Ameer Muhammad (#315) has a Good design, and also a good calligraphic hand, surely it was an important commission; it leaves a feeling of neatness, balance and is less crowded:



مترتونی یوم انیس چھار ماہ
سنہ ستین و تسمائینہ
الرحمة توفد س روح و نور سرمدہ
(960H)

Feel the graceful movement of vines, easily moving to reach the crest, the Kapalis are full sized but look least obtrusive.

Here one cannot fail to notice how easily the design curves around the corners at the angle of ninety, making a perfect frame.

On the cenotaph of Bibi Gul Andam (#253, p265) one cannot fail to notice good arabesque, neatly executed along with the fine calligraphy in good hand, but the grace of vine moving at an easy pace is missing; more of geometric dictation.



وفات یافت صالح مرحومہ
بی بی گل اندام تاریخ سنہ ۱۰۰۳

The cenotaph #390 has one of the finest Arabesques, especially on top; geometric balance is apparent in the design, yet it's free movement is outstanding. These designs are normally appearing as border to the calligraphic friezes. Its usage on the sides of the cenotaph, and on top of it is generally in similar vein; sometimes the preference seems to have been attached to the top side facing sky.



Here is an arabesque band in a classical tradition; it is employed on the cenotaph framing the calligraphy all around. Thus the arabesque is predominantly coupled with the calligraphy in enhancing its impact.



The design seen above creates the crest with vine shoots, gracefully moving in rhythm. This instance supports the conclusion that special attention is paid to the upper (top) surface of the cenotaphs, as a matter of practice.

There is an interesting inception at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries, when one finds purely geometric influence, here the parallel lines intertwine and tease the onlooker in to linear puzzle, but it is not out of place to admit that it leaves a pleasing impact, the cenotaphs number 429; 347; 342 and 1175 have this decorative designed strictly devoid of floral component, running around the calligraphic frieze. Almost all of the examples with this design are founded linked with the time frame around the year 1000 H, This one is pertinent example that gives the year as “Alph / الف (۱)”, meaning *one thousand*.



وفات یافت مرحوم مغفور میر فرح
ابن میر محمد بیک ارغون در
تاریخ سنه
(۱۰۰۰)

The headstone on the grave of Babur Sultan is also a case in point, where the design with interlocking lines is encircling the inscription, the stone is again of the same period, date is in same slot, and the inspiration /chronogram gives the year 999 of hijra.



سرامر سیه پشمانی ز سر خواب برون بخاهد /
قضائی اسانیرت دیگر کون بخو (۱) اهد شد //
(H999)

Even though the cenotaph #311 has classical design carved, but the artisan seems to have got defocused, as the crest and کونپیل are losing some balance, which being replicated.



The Design on the grave of Hasan Khan(#311, p380), which as dated as of 1035 Hijra, is from the mainstream; there established design were being copied and carved. In the process smaller details were obliterated, as it is visible in this picture.

The ingenuity shown in the following illustration[#318, p383] testifies to the use of imagination, where the classical design as followed as aspiration, but elements have been transformed, it not only produced novelty, yet saving the tradition and labor.



#318, p383

The following illustration [#322] is an example of experimentation that was part of an era, which required new forms in illumination/عمل; here the swiveling vines (*Rumi*) are not the mainstay, but the small crest / *Kapali*/کونپل is multiplying instead to produce the dynamism required for *Islimi*; note the mature hand of designer.



The lines successfully create impression of being concentric, thus deprive the vines of their typical character the swinging movement [#322, p384]

In the same spree, more experiments (#333) were carried out, it shows yet another type of decorative format, it could be given a separate status of a sub-type, if such an effort is made for defining the variety of *islimi*; crest and total subjugation of floral element to a pattern of some geometric form is obvious here.



#324, p385

Above referred styles are a bit different from each other, but these are necessarily tied to the classical tradition (of the Arabesque), which might have been standardized in the *Mamluk-Temurid* search for striking an idiom of decoration, worthy of high consideration, yet to be available for a fast extending building spree; not that there was such command from above, but the strong rulers were followed by a large number of assignees, appointees, servants, and officials who were in no mind to experiment therefore it style acquired a huge vocabulary, from the inter-action between artisans and eager officials and followers of the post-Temurid aristocracy. This trend became influential at Makli, the experiments seem to have caught fancy of artisans as well as sponsors. This is a true reflection of influence that is visible in most of the commissions at Makli.

The Local impact

It is pertinent to mention that stone being the popular building medium in Thatta and the region on its south and east has been a very busy area for the stone masons/سلاوٹ *salavats* and carvers/سنگتراش / *sangtrash*. The decorative motifs frequently used had some Indo-Islamic designs, which have stayed with the stone carvers through out centuries. It is pertinent to note as the Arabesque had assumed secular character, so did the Indian decorative style, as it went on to shun the religious iconology.

In the regions around Thatta much of the tribal funerary structures have an articulated decorative carving.⁷⁷ Interestingly these are geometric largely, but the wavy / *labarvallari* (Sanskrit) friezes are also represented. Its geometric forms are influenced by the elements in nature, thus showing some lovely carved presentations.



True to its defining character this design has every element of arabesque, fancifully combining foliage, around serpentine life-like line with symmetrical dynamism, yet representing variety of ornamentation. One such design strictly subdued with inspiration from the nature and life that is not accidental, most of such designs could be seen in the northern part of the hill, and in the adjacent lower ground on its south.

⁷⁷ Kaleem Iashari, *Study of Stone Carved Grave, SEAS Pakistan, Karachi 1996*, pp

The Calligraphic Element

As stated above the extended use of the written word is observed at Makli: be it part of sacred text or the refined creative literary expression; attracting assorted words from the lexicon, poured over hundreds of ‘*epitaphs*,’ adorning the structures. These varied architectural masterpieces, minor as well as major, have been duly complimented with equally tasteful renderings. The art of executing writing over monuments remained in bloom for a long time. The widespread usage of the Arabic calligraphy in the art of building might have been instrumental in attracting the calligraphers to Thatta, besides the ever flourishing profession of book production.

Makli generally has the earlier burials near the northern tip of the hillock, these are said to belong to the times of *Jam Tamachi*, in the 14th century of CE. The Summa elders and the elite of other tribes have remarkable tomb structures and interesting cenotaphs.



The tribal burials were tied with an age-old tradition, practical in the lower Sindh, and southern Baluchistan, along the coast; these structures might have been the inspiration for most of the cenotaphs on the Makli Hill and vice versa.

Almost all of these had the inscriptions, few are still bravely displaying it; but we don’t have any information about those, which are lost to us, but those still surviving are more or less rendered in “*Thulluth* /ثلث.” Additionally no name of the calligraphers is available.



The Ayat ul Kursi /آية الكرسي (2/255) is the mainstay of the most of the graves, it kept its presence on most of the burials, blessing these since the early burials to the 12th century. The cenotaph adores an early grave of a tribal chief, on the northern side of the Makli Necropolis.

One of the famous structures from this time-period is Shaikh Hamad Jamali’s *Madarsa*; it has a rich epigraphic embellishment, it is in the advanced stage of decay, it still holds the clue to the refined *Thulluth*/ثلث; the outstanding quality of the script is indicative of the indulgence of highly educated class of the society.



The Madarsa/مدرسه in ruins has many extracts from Quran; the inscription containing the dedication epigraph is not available, but the identification of the structure is possible through available historical narratives.

The liking for the *Muhaqiq* /محقق, and *Rehan* /ریحان was not lost on the folks in Sindh; the calligraphers though fully entrenched in the tradition of *Thulluth* /ثلث were nevertheless attempting to use the new variations in the cursive scripts, whenever any such preference was tendered by the sponsors.



The Madarsa/مدرسه of Hamad Jamali was epigraphically decorated, besides it having pleasing architectural elements. The Thulluthized Rehan is noticed here, but it has a negligible representation at Makli.

The practice of calligraphy at Thatta must have been affected by the availability of the professional calligraphers. The modest and below mediocre renderings at places, besides the highly accomplished hands, may be taken as an indicator of a varied market, where some assignments were well provided with the funding, while some of these were, trying in vain, to catch up with the conventional sensibilities.

The Madarsa/مدرسه of Shaikh Jamali was an expensive undertaking, where the octagonal architectural structure was transformed into expansive square space, with pleasing screens to provide airy comfort. The epigraphs were well planned; indicating an exceptional selection and execution. While the dedicated canopy of Daria Khan Rahu, a disciple of Shaikh Jamali shows how the non aristocratic structures fared in terms of the calligraphy. However the choice of *Khat /خط/* script remained the same that is *Thulluth/ثلث*; the 14th century preference over others, for the monumental epigraphy.



بناکرد این عمارت دریا خان راهو مرید حماد جمال ولی ..
در عهد جام تغلق سکندر شاه بتاریخ الثامن
در ..ج.م. و ار

The irregular hand seen on a canopy by Darya Khan Rahu, next to the Madarsa of Shaikh Jamali was still the Thulluth of a kind, it was very much a period related style; the following inscription on a cenotaph gives a clear picture of the practice:



The hand work of an accomplished calligrapher, used to work on paper, but being novice to the mural calligraphy; the execution is unconvincing.

Subsequent period of over a century remains somewhat obscure, though a stray occasion might have prompted some monument to be raised, and an epigraph might have scribed, but surely that has been lost. It might indicate, besides few other important elements, a society engaged in perpetual struggle for survival, while the pushy *Delhi Sultanate* showed little tolerance to the regional development. However the Summa Chief *Jam Nizamuddin's* outgoing nature cultivated good diplomatic relations all around, those were the times when number of epigraphs show the refinement indicative of a cultivated society.



The epigraph over the entrance of Jam Mubarak is a dated inscription, indicative of the continuum of the type of Thulluth up to late ninth century Hijra (dated 1490/895H)

The *Kufic* as simple script is absent at the site, but it has certain decorative usage; in the following instance it is *Tarbei/تربیی* quadruple, where the name of Ali (AS) is rendered with in a square repeated four times.



Likewise in following pleasing instance, where *Kufic* (کوفی تربیی) is depicting the names of the Holy Prophet and the Ali (AS) very impressively, it is also illuminated with an appropriate arabesque design.



*The central square containing the name of Ali, the cousin of the Holy Prophet is repeated four times attached to the center, it was one of the innovation in Kufic decorative renderings, this along with the *Shatranji* and *Banai* were mostly used in monumental ornamentations during 15th and 16th C.*



The name of Prophet (PBUH) is repeated four times in the amulet, from where the name of the style Tarbei Kufi comes. The Islimi is tastefully utilized here.

Following is the tastefully executed top stone of a cenotaph laid in traditional tribal taste.



The top stone of a Rumi cenotaph shows an amalgam of the tribal tradition with the mainstream decorative preferences.

During the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries once again rose an irresistible urge to practice other cursive forms such as *Muhaqiq* and *Rehan*; the reason may be assigned to stable economy, with import of finely scripted Qurans in personal collections, it may have re-unfused liking for the *Rehan* and *Muhaqiq* among the practitioners of خط / script; it also influenced the mural / memorial calligraphy greatly as *Muhaqiq* / محقق is observed repeatedly, having the visible traces of *Thulluth*; however it can be concluded safely that this deviation didn't last long.



[#1504]- Despite the fact that Rehan seems to have excelled in the aesthetic considerations, the Thulluth with the freedom of composite presentation however prevailed due to space compulsion.



The tribal funerary preferences were strongly at work till late Summa period, however with the inception of *Arghuns* – *Turkhans* the ensuing political rivalry made the tribes retrench in to areas southwest of Thatta. Thus the post 1516-1521 CE, the defeat of Sindh's tribal forces, preferences were distinct from the old tradition.

With *Arghun* – *Turkhan* military ascendancy in Sindh, Thatta witnessed the popularity of Central Asian building / architectural preferences, it may be labeled as widespread inception of Timurid traditions. Additional mediums are witnessed; architectural ceramics was readily accepted against the monotonous stone surfaces.



The inscription frieze running over the Mehrab in enclosure of Ameer Khanis' show the impact of polychrome inscription tiles.

Writing on cobalt and turquoise blue with white must have its own appeal; it is feared that being on fragile material, in comparison to stone, many of these may have been lost.



The tile panel on the octagonal tomb building of Mirza Jani Baig; the tomb most probably was built before the Mirza's death in 1009.

We have some remarkable calligraphers practicing the art, whether it was on paper or other mediums, in this remarkably well-developed medieval town of western India. The drain of books out of *Sarkars* of Bukkur and Thatta was rampant during the 18th century, when Persians as well as Afghans valued good manuscript equalant to 10 to 15 pieces of silver; thus it is difficult to find many fine manuscripts left in Sindh.

The earlier calligraphers have signed themselves in style, and their learning is showing through the humility they profess:



The signature reads: "the exercise undertaken by the slave of Allah, the Omni present Master, Hasan bin Ruknuddin;" the learning is obvious in the humility expressed.

Many signatures seems to have been lost due mainly to the reason that it always forms the last part of the epigraph; probability of these suffering breakage & misplacement is large, restorations were mostly erratic.



One such piece, which has been restored with in the inscription freize, but at wrong place, thus the identity of the person is obscure.

Sixteen calligraphers were reported by Dr. Abdul Ghafur, whereas a few more names were identified during the documentation; signature pieces of these may help in identifying their respective contribution at Makli Hill.



کتبه فقیر محمد شیخ بن حسن شیخ

The later period calligraphers did continue to sign some of their pieces as per practices; the historian Ali Sher Qani has written about few of these, one such Habibullah has many of his signed practices available all over Sindh. Ahmedullah however is not known through the *Tazkiras*, like few others having their names known only through their signatures. However few famous names mentioned in historical texts have not been found at Makli; may be they had limited their activity to paper [Mir Ali Sher Qani has given quite a good number if them; the calligrapher of Thatta reported by Mir Ali Sher were discussed by Moulvi Muhammad Shafi in his paper see Dr. Moulvi Muhammad Shafi, "Khattat and Khattati in Sindh," in *Maqalat e Moulvi Muhammad*, vol. I].



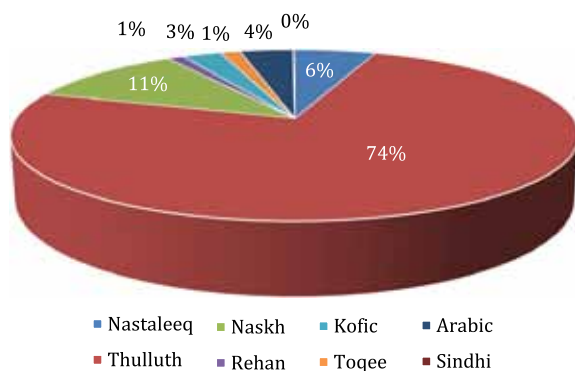
A signed piece of Ahmedullah, a calligrapher working in later period, by the time glamorous period was long over

Thatta might have lost many of its artistic contributions in other crafts, but architectural calligraphy got more than its share preserved in its graveyard and monuments.

Closer observation suggest the popularity of *Thulluth* for communicating every text, it being impressive to look, came handy to the Thatta calligraphers, who most of the times preferred *Thulluth* for the monumental writing, whatever their level of accomplishment was.

Inscriptions as referred earlier are varied, but the scripts are not numerous, variations usually associated with the age and also variety related to levels of accomplishment are at display. The cursive scripts like *Naskh*/نسخ and *Thulluth*/ثلث are much at work, where the later has surely overtaken the earlier, outnumbering it with huge margin.

Sacred Text



مثل تو جویم هر زمان تا شد من با ارام جان

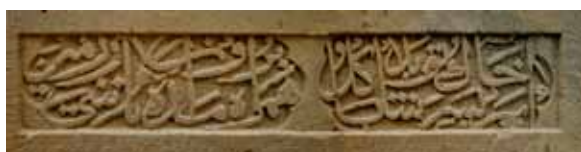
بی مثل بودی در جهان مثل تو بیدک الم چون [742#]

The early Persian inscriptions, specially the literary compositions, be it epitaph or a verse reflecting sorrow have also appeared since early period in the Necropolis.



دستم بگیر که حنن عالم بود /
شدفوت من از غضبم پیوستم /
جستم ز جهان چون سال نوشتن از افسوس /
چون رفت بگفت آه دستم زدستم
(1021AH)

Persian composition is effectively rendered in *Thulluth*, many such examples prompt the comment that the Makli remained a preferred ground for this type of calligraphic Script / خط. It is an interesting fact that the *Naskh* or *Thulluth* has been considered fitting font for the Arabic since few centuries, but in Makli it was the *Thulluth* that catered for the Persian epitaphs to be inscribed as well for a long time.



ایم خالت بسر تو شایه با گل / همراه برون آمده باشی وزمین

The lamentations of the passing away might not have been one of the favorite topics for the poets but surely the elegy has its place in the literature, and we have a bit of it also adapted on Makli cenotaphs:



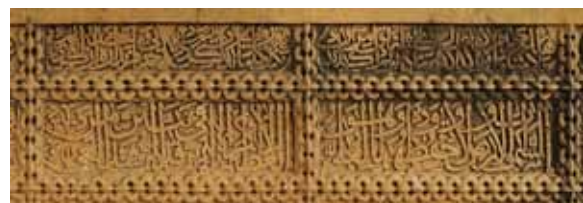
ریختی خون دل از دیده گریان پدر رحم بر جان پدر
نامدت ای جان پدر

The Persian verse is well suited to the circumstances of the funeral and burial, the *Thulluth* appropriately depicts the richness of the composition.



جان خود بدهد و جان تو عوض
// بستاند بود کرفاقبض ارواح بفرمان پدر

The practice continued for almost a century before the *Nastaleeq* was adopted for Persian; the Epitaph on the cenotaph dedicated to Khan Alam is an apt instance to show the validity of the foregone conclusion; here the flourish of hand is able cherish and inscription is also carved in good stead.



بادشاهبا جرمر مارا در گزار / ما گناه گاریم تو آمرزگار /

تونیکو گاری وما بد کرده ایم / جرمر به اندازه از به حد کرده ایم

السموات والارض ولا یؤده حفظهما وهو العلی

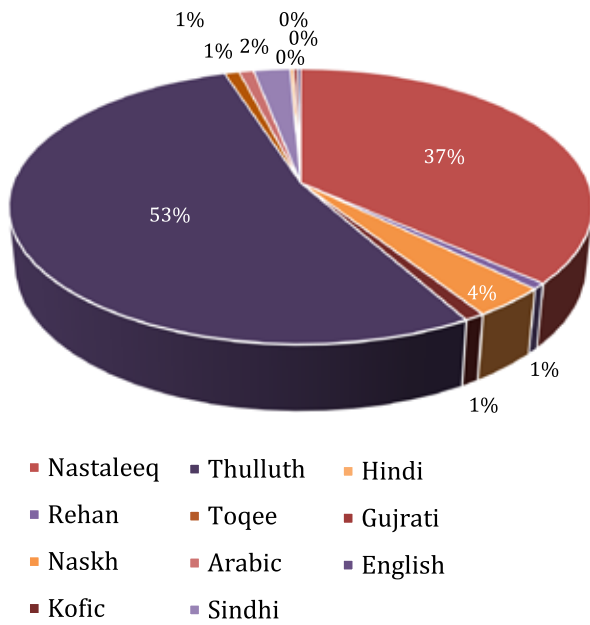
العظیم لا اکراه فی الدین قد تبین الرشد من الغی

The upper line is Persian verse and the larger calligraphic frieze is tract from Quran, the calligrapher has done nothing to differentiate except putting the Persian with in cartouches [1189#].

There is a visible distinction between the early and the later day practice of *Thulluth*, apart from the good hand and a fair practice, the later *Thulluth* is sort of a composite writing, where the inscription runs in a crowded line, the words tend to cross over, overlap and run multi-tiered, jumbled up as a crowd ; whereas the earlier text was inscribed in a manner where one word followed the other neatly. The above specimen offers a very good example of it. The upper two cartouches depict Persian verse, whereas the lower line gives the text from the Quran.

The introduction of *Nastaleeq* provided another variety and excitement was universal. Though it was very clear from the beginning that the rendering of holy text was consciously relegated to *Thulluth*, and Persian became associated with *Nastaleeq*, once it made its currency.

Epitaphs Script Wise



The chart shows use of scripts in rendering of the epitaph / funeral statement, it is very clear that Thulluth outnumbers its closest rival Nastaleeq

However we have few renderings of the tracts from Surah's of Quran in *Nastaleeq*, but this couldn't get going well initially. The attempts failed to convince the sponsors of its efficacy in rendering the Arabic text in *Nastaleeq*.



This cenotaph executed immediately after year 1005H; the first ever attempt to render Quran text in Nastaleeq, at Makli. Script here is suffocated between two lines, losing its easy flowing movement [#147].

Gradually the practice of Arabic tracts, religious texts and prayers were done well in *Nastaleeq* despite the confinement imposed by the decorative chains.



The variety of *Nastaleeq* is not enormous, nevertheless pre-Mughal period specimen show remarkable fine hand in *Herati* tradition; as it was rightly expected from the *Arghun - Turkhan* connect, with Central Asia and Eastern Iran, to have made its in-roads to Thatta.



ندا رسید که وی واصل خدا شد گفت
غمین مباش که فردوس ساخته روشن
(1053)

The Nastaleeq went popular and more and more epitaphs were inscribed, the Mughal influence added body to the script, it acquired bold look [#1282].

The continuity of the output was constant once the *Nastaleeq* came in currency:



خواجہ عبدالرحیم فیض مصدر
چون بدر البت نمود و عبور
سال تاریخش از حسرت جستم
گفت با مصطفی شده مشور ۱۰۹۵

Obviously the Mughal influenced *Nastaleeq* is not that sleek, but it has its own characteristics to be aesthetically pleasing.



This inscription from the year 1025H shows 'Nad e Ali' executed in Nastaleeq; the quality is remarkable [#1294].

The importance of the calligraphy and its professional proficiency was not lost to the folks, sponsors who could still afford a good hand that was surely available; here one such work from the late period still has the high class hand.

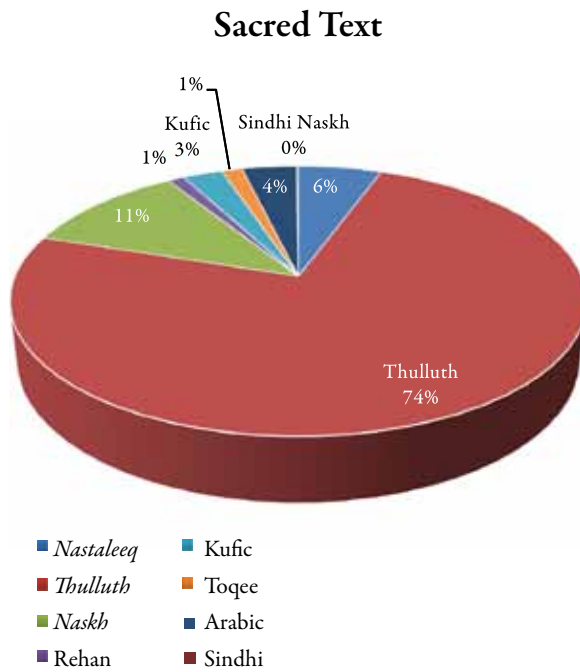


#1613

Once the society was out of the Mughal subjugation its cultural practices gradually drifted away from the value system unconsciously followed; the change can be observed in the necropolis also.



There is a variant of Taleeq visibly of some experimental nature, observed near the Jalwagah e Imameen, still visible though it has received some sprinkle during the white wash of the tomb building [#1706].



The variety of scripts employed in writing sacred text is reflected in this chart, it shows the predominant dependence on Thulluth script. Traditionally the Nastaleeq was coupled with Persian, thus it was barely employed in Arabic rendering

There is another type of scribbling on the grave stones, not confirming specifications of any of the recognized scripts; it may be termed as unconventional writing, subscribed by the tribal sponsors, lacking sensitivity to calligraphic expression. As the sanctity of the *Makli* was not lost to the folks, who also sought these burial grounds for their loved ones. In follow-up of practices they

did commission their preferred artisan to erect the cenotaphs in their tribal form, which is visibly different from the sort of standardized cenotaphs universally present on this long hillock.

These artisans, accomplished in the fineries of carving, were not exposed to the art of inscribing, thus they being not sensitive to requirements of calligraphy, carved out the name of the 'bearer of the cenotaph/ صاحب قبر', or in rare case a word or two for good omen.



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ
فَاللّٰهُ خَیْرٌ حَافِظًا وَهُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِیْنَ
هَذَا الْقَبْرِ جِیْسِر بِن مَرَاد

The tribes in the periphery of *Thatta* were leading a life that was governed under certain code of chivalry and pride; their burial too was reflective of the distinct values held dear by them. The base of the pillar of the *Chaukandi*, of one such tribal elder *Mir Mazar Kalmati*, bears inscription indicating that the women of the family sponsored the erection of tomb monument, to fulfill their responsibility in commemorating the honor and courage of the men from the family.



The Subject matter is different so is the placement of dedicated inscription; the base of the columns of chukandi/canopy is meant to show the at most respect accorded to fallen heroes of the family.

مائی سلطانی والییدہ
میر مزار شہید مرحوم و مائی
ماندی الیہ میر مرحوم برائے
خدائی تعالیٰ آزاد کر دند
سہتیل ورا چیل دختران اسمعیل
میرانی دختر پنیہ گزہ

In nineteenth century when it was required to inscribe, no pressing compulsion was felt to arrange a calligrapher, any good hand could accomplish the job; here are a couple of examples:

When it comes to simple writing, it is not very refined; it was the call of the day during most of the times in nineteenth century.



لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله
على ولي الله وصي رسول الله
صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم



[#159]

Kalima/confession of faith inscribed on a tribal grave headstone was popular in early part of 20th century; it was adopted by commercial ventures, across Sindh and Afghanistan .

The popularity of local language and its script must have been prompted by the official encouragement besides other social reasons; its appearance on the headstones must be considered a testimony to the strong currency of the Sindhi script which went beyond its day today usage.



قبر مير محفوظ علي شاه
وفات ٢٤ ذوالحجه سنه ١٢٩٥

Many tribal and later day inscriptions are not expected to fall in any one particular category of the traditional scripts, though of cursive in character and nature, these are near to the *Naskh*.



بسم الله / لا اله الا الله (الله) محمد رسول الله



[#1059]

هوٹی پٹ ح جاکرو
تاریخ ٢٤ جماد الثانی هجری ١٣٢٣

A very different class of inscriptions is also observed, where the oriental and vernaculars not used; epitaph in English language is an interesting rendering, pre Samuel Johnson 'scheme of thing' is visible, it is an experience to read the inscription.

Sometimes the tribal cenotaphs bear good calligraphic renderings, it shows that the inception of the sensibility in the earlier years of 20th century infused influences and some popular calligraphic designs were introduced, such as *Tughra*, and derivative forms of it.



P⁸⁶₁

Hare lyes the Manes
of Edward Cooke who
was taken out of the
world in the Flower of
his Age a Person of Great
Merrit and in Great
Esteem, and much
Lamented by all his Friends.
Learned in many
Languages, of great
Humanity, a Sound judge,
(of) merit and of a Generous
Disposition who depart-
ed this Life the 8th of May

1743

rial sua x

As Blooming Lilies Grace
the Field so for a day they
Shine Like him to God So
they Yeild Their Lives but
not their Names resign.
To whose Memory his
Servant

Erected this Tomb

The temple of Kali said to be the oldest site on Makli Hill has remained a place of veneration all along, situated in a natural cut with in the hill, it has no man made structure hailing from the past, but there is a multi lingual stone plaque from the late nineteenth century.



اين جاي ڌرم ساله درست ڪئي ديون د(ا)س وڌيويداس ولد نارومل لوهانه سڪنه بلده ٺٽا
براي آشايش آدمان هندوان رت گهر(4)بهواني درست شده واقع تاريخ 30 پوه چيٺ
1926 دينه ست وار تاريخ 30 جنوري 1873 بلده ٺٽا صورت ارقام يافت

#1713



#1715

The Makli attracted nationals of other countries also, Edward Cooke 'died in young years, a learned person fluent in many languages,' the epitaph of the year 1743 CE is a pleasant looking script, carved in good hand, definitely an addition to the richness of the epigraphic wealth of Makli.

Edward Cooke might have served the English Factory (under the East India Company), when the factory was established in Thatta. Another burial of 'Regiment Officer' though not as an elaborate one is also shrouded in mystery, no information is available nor the year is known through the epitaph. These persons though of unknown background were visibly of different origins, in eighteenth century the East India Company had established its 'Factory' in Thatta. Cooke might have been associated with that establishment. Whereas Madrod definitely of the Military establishment must have been one who died during the 1830s-40s while the so-called 'Army of Indus' braved the *heat of the east*.

Temple received one of its upliftment during the 1870s, the multilingual epigraph is not without interest for the scholars.

The most recent of the graves too have the epitaphs, made in various mediums, and these are at times scribed in a very ordinary manner, often in Sindhi characters that is an off-shoot of the *Naskh*:



تاريخ وفات مسلمات آچو پٽن ماء ماه شوال 29 سنه 1359

Few of the Practicing Calligraphers at Makli & their signatures

Page no / Structure	Name	Calligraphers Signature	Date
01 #1294	محمد حائے		1035
36 / Mirza Essa II	شیخ محمد		1054ھ
41 / Stone Slabs Essa II tomb Stone 84	سید عبدالقدوس بن سید علی		
114 #1261	طاہر بن حسن		1064
168 / Sultan Ibrahim	فقیر عبدالباری احمد انصاری		
174 # 161	عبدالرحیم الصدیقی		963
214 # 177	حبیب اللہ		1120
228 Mirza Muhammad Baqi	عبدالمتین حسن ابن رکن الدین		
263 # 231	شیخ محمد بن شیخ حسن		1022

303 / Mirza Essa I	حافظ عبدالرحيم بن رشيد الصديقي		
394 # 337	محمد بن سيد علي		
398# 343	رحمت الله بن سلام الله الفاروق		962
413# 443	فقير حسن		
415/ Musalla Shakh Muhammad Ishaq	سيد علي		1097هـ
425/ Musalla	حافظ عبد الرشيد صديقي		
443 # 526	درويش علي		1039
536/ Jam Mubarak	قطب الدين بن محمود		895هـ
592 # 1018	محمد باقر		1132
634 # 1621	محمد احسن عفي عنه		1144هـ

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