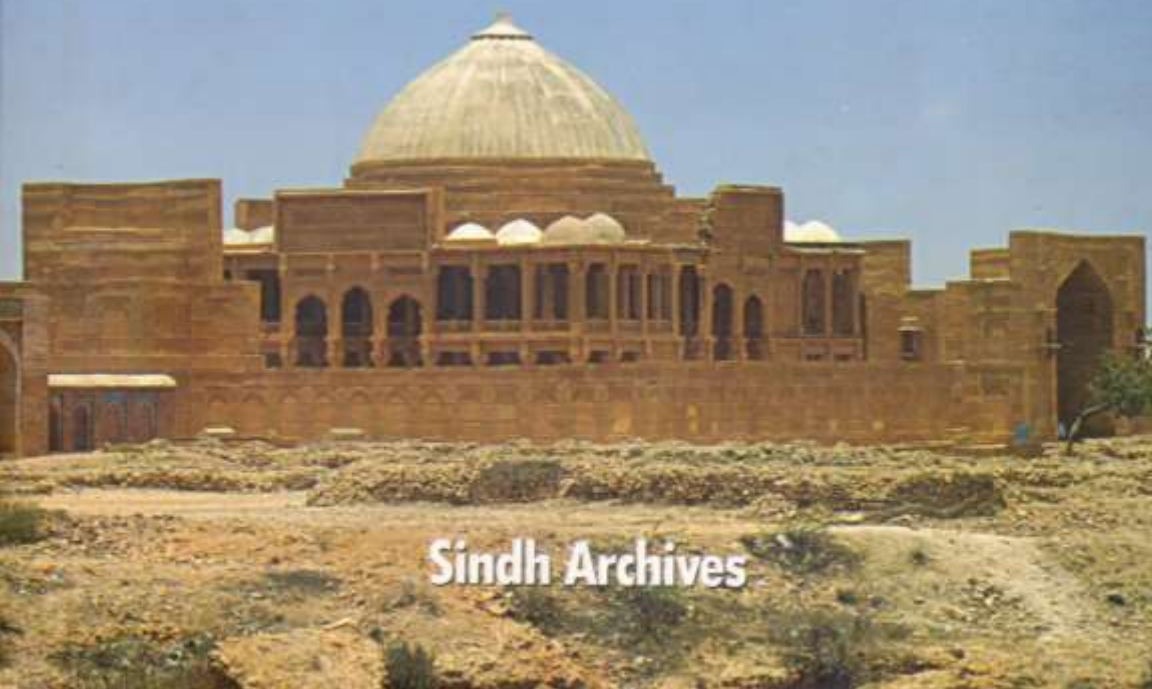


# Makli Nameh

Mir Ali Sher Qani'

Translated by  
Dr. N B G Qazi



Sindh Archives

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English translation of

**Makli Nā'izh**

of Mir Ali Sher Qāni'

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## Preface by General Editor

There are a few remarkable books about the graveyards of medieval period, which give details of the lives of holy persons and describe the structures and monuments associated with their names. Burial grounds in *Herat*, *Samarkand* and *Bukhara* are few such sites which have caught the attention of scholars. These write ups are highly devotional but informative also, discussing some biographic aspects with a few architectural details, and occasionally epitaphs are also recorded. Makli Nameh falls in the same category, as far as it refers to the burial places of holy and saintly persons, but it is different in its contents and spirit. This write up by Qāni' is not taking care of physical facts at all.

As we know that Qāni' is already famous for few works he wrote and these have been published earlier, those contain few historic accounts, one in the form of a regular history, under the title of *Tuhfat ul Karam*, and two other works as biographies of poets, and saintly figures, with the titles *Maqalat-e-Shurae* and *Tazkira-e-Salikan Tariqat* respectively.

In those works he discussed historical events and personalities, most of those who happened to have played some role in Sindh's affairs and social life. Few of those persons were even brought to be buried at Thatta's prestigious graveyard i.e Makli, and possibly considered to be the most revered site.

In such backdrop questions can be asked as to the motive behind the writing *Makli Nameh*, as we know that he had the basic understanding and talent to address the historical issues,



as he has proved in his subsequent writings, then what was it that prompted the ever busy writer, to take up yet another "task" "that had as such no clear official assignment to perform and there was every likelihood that it might not impress any potential sponsor also.

These questions prompt every enquiring reader on the path of search, to find out some convincing explanation to it. The answer, admittedly, is hard to come by, the exercise may not succeed in providing some ready statement of the objectives he had in mind, nevertheless it is bound to bring some interesting facts to the fore.

By writing *Makli Nameh* Qāni' never meant to add any further information, whether historical, biographical or political, that he had not made available or would be communicating to his readers subsequently, about Thatta and its prominent personalities. Then why write about Makli? The answer to the reason for his composing this *Masnavi* can possibly be found within the *Makli Nameh* itself.

Most of the readers of *Makli Nameh* may like to agree to this assertion that he wanted to have some such composition that should stand out as a literary piece of writing, that might establish his extra ordinary talents with the pen.

Surely it will go on to establish his literary pretensions, once it is made available to wider circle of readership. Besides this there is another strong aspect of the *Makli Nameh* that is yet to be appreciated.

The *Bustani-e-Bahar* or *Makli Nameh*, a nostalgic painting of the image of Makli, is such a piece that goes on to describe the societal norms of the eighteenth century Thatta. Here Qāni' weaves very softly, an image of the city, as a reporter whose expositions are of great interest to the students of sociology and anthropology. He wrote about the devotional spirit, abundantly vibrant, in the society, that was undergoing degeneration, generally in Sindh and particularly in Thatta. The economic cycle had come to a halt, the ports associated with Thatta were long abandoned and silted. The crafts associated

with the export were at its lowest ebb. The political chaos was haunting the intelligentsia, and its phantoms were looming in the back of minds of general population. The city was fast losing its importance. In result of the Central Government losing its writ, petty chiefs had emerged as rival hub of political arena, and those too had to bow down to the recurrent waves of invading forces from north.

Mir Ali Sher himself, in a way, had remained a part of the beaurocratic hierarchy, he had his hand on the pulse of the times. Though he couldn't possibly perceive very clearly, the de-generation of society and loss of its strength, but he could feel the gloom. That melancholy might have caused him to get into despair, as a counter measure to it, he seems to have dived deep in nostalgia, that prompted him on a sentimental journey of the historic graveyard. Resulting outburst was extra-ordinary. He in his zeal even did not care to restrict himself to one genre of expression, *Makli Nameh* is the combination of poetry and prose, with reminiscence of the past, not very distant.

The account of holly and pious is without the biographical details, it totally lacks historical relevance. The mention is made of miraculous powers associated with the gone and dead.

Qāni' did not however, fail to mention the dates and days considered to be the most auspicious time to visit the graves of the mighty, who were able to exercise there spell beyond grave to bring spiritual gains, surely a visit to their burial places could cause some transference of ecstatic experience. The writer went on to describe how various groups of population of Thatta enjoyed visiting the necropolis.

He has rendered a great services by making available an account that provide an exposition of a society, that had intimate attachment to Makli. It succeeds in capturing the festive atmosphere that provided the visitors to this large graveyard, a unique experience: spiritual and ecstatic. He indulged in a narrative that is not much concerned with the differneciation

between beauty in stone cenotaphs and pebble strewn graves, but throws a glance all around and happily describes the luxuriant waters, the water in couple of lakes is so translucent that can be compared to the moist eyes of *houries*. The lush green patches of land, formed the parks, were thronged by the ease loving people of Thatta, who, more often than not, found some reason to come out of their dwellings to visit this interesting necropolis. While describing the site of old Taghrulabad, that is popularly called *Kalankot*, an archaeological site with lots of ruined structures, he not only compares it with, and asserts that, these are superior to that of Kashmir, "its mornings are like the sun itself in brightness and nights are luminous like the AYYATE-E QURANI". The moon derives its light from this place, "the evenings of the poor are the mornings of hope", "here the sacred gazelles are seeking their meadows". Despite this highly eugolized literary expression he never fails to indicate society's over all relation with the place, that comes immediately with in the narrative, without altering the tone of reverence.

It was long desired that the translation of this unique work be made available for wider range of readers, as it is an important document, shedding light on the 18<sup>th</sup> the century Thatta, from a very different angle, having also an academic importance, but no willing translator could be found.

The translation is a difficult task, it was considered that the Makli Nameh's ornate rendering may loose the meaning if idiomatic translation is done. Dr. N B G Kazi before undertaking the task wanted the policy decision whether the versified translation of the poems, in the narrative, and also the ornate prose are desired to be followed word for word or the essence and meaning will be preferred. General policy was conveyed to him that the versified translation may be out of place here. The translation was thus completed by the learned translator, but as he had to move from Pakistan to Germany, he expressed his inability to supervise the proof reading and setting of the translated work, thus the task of General Editor in-



creased in quantum and scope. In order to differentiate the parts Qani' composed as verse, within the narrative, these are shown in *italics*, while those parts in prose are shown in normal type setting.

It is believed that the readers will find this real hard work of the translator up to mark, and will enjoy this 18<sup>th</sup> century narrative, that was executed with great love and feelings.

### **DR KALEEMULLAH LASHARI**