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Of Turban and Flag

Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro on the roots of Sindh's popular and anti-colonial mystics



by Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro — March 29, 2019 in [Features](#), [Heritage](#) [2](#)

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Pir Jo Goth in Khairpur district is the most sacred and spiritual place for the Hurs. The Hurs are a community of Sufi Faqirs whose ancestors fought against the British Raj in Sindh under the leaderships of their spiritual mentors – the Pir Pagaras. The present 8th Pir Pagaro derives his spiritual and political power from the

shrine complex of Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah. This was the ancestor of the Pir Pagaras and the Pirs of Jhando in Sindh.

Muhammad Rashid Shah alias Rozay Dhani was founder of the Rashidiyya Sufi sub-order which was a combination of both Qadiri and Naqshbandi tariqas in Sindh. He was born in 1756 in small village of Rahim Dino Kalhoro in Khairpur district. His father Pir Muhammad Baqa Shah was a great mystic of his time, who was first initiated into the Naqshbandi Tariqa by Makhdoom Ismail of Piryaloi (died in 1761). Pir Muhammad Baqa Shah, later on the suggestion of his first mentor Makhdoom Ismail, adopted the Qadiri Tariqa and he went to Pirkot Sadhana in Jhang, Punjab, to become a disciple of Pir Abdul Qadir Jilani.



Entrance gate to the shrine complex of Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah Rozay Dhani

Pir Muhammad Baqa Shah was a man of learning. He used to spend most of his time in travelling and reading the books. One day on the way back to his village from Garhi Yashin, he took respite from his travel under a tree and slept for a while. He had a bag full of books placed under his head. Some thieves were passing by that area and spotted the bag under his head. Believing that it might have money inside, they killed Pir Muhammad Baqa Shah to get the bag. They found books inside when they opened the bag – repenting over their act. Pir Muhammad Baqa Shah (died in 1784) was buried in the necropolis of Shaikh Taib, which was located in the plains of Khairpur district. Hence he was called 'Pat Dhani' (holder of the plains). Pir Muhammad Baqa Shah had four sons namely Muhammad Rashid Shah (1756-1818), Abdul Rasool Shah (1155-1816), Murtaza Ali Shah (1759- 1820) and Muhammad Salim Shah (1765-1826).

Pir Muhammad Baqa Shah gave special attention to the education of his children and admitted them in famous madrasahs and khanqahs of Khairpur, Larkana and Shikarpur. Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah, a son of Pir Muhammad Baqa Shah, got his early education

from Hafiz Muhammad Akram Ghumro and Hafiz Zain ul Mahesar who was a disciple of Pir Muhammad Baqa Shah.

The 3rd Pir Pagaro, Pir Hizbullah Shah Rashidi,
rose in rebellion against the British Raj in
1880 and the Hur movement became a
formidable force

Pir Muhammad Baqa Shah was a close friend of Makhdoom Yar Muhammad (died in 1804) of Kotri Kabir – who he entrusted with the responsibility for imparting Islamic education to two of his sons Murtaza Ali Shah and Muhammad Rashid Shah. Both remained some time under the guidance of Makhdoom Yar Muhammad. According to *Malfuzat* the brother of Muhammad Rashid Shah formally became a Naqshbandi sufi but Muhammad Rashid Shah was not much influenced by Naqshbandi Tariqa and he later adopted the Qadiri Tariqa – and in time became, like his father, an eminent Qadiri Sufi. But the hagiographers and the disciples of Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah believe that he was both Naqshbandi as well as Qadiri!

Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah also studied in the madrasah of Haji Faqirullah Alavi (1689-1780). Under the supervision of both Makhdoom Yar Muhammad (died in 1804) of Kotri Kabir and Haji Faqirullah Alavi of Shikarpur, Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah studied Fiqah, Hadith, Tafsir, Sufism and many other religious subjects.

After completing his education, Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah became an eminent scholar and Sufi himself. After the martyrdom of his father, he became the head of the family and spiritual guide of many of his disciples. He was the author of several books and letters on mystical subjects. There were many deputies of Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah who spread his teachings in every nook and corner of Sindh, Punjab and even in Kutch and Rajasthan in India. The list of his deputies is very long. However, the prominent ones include Syed Muhammad Hassan Shah Jilani of Sui (died in 1838, buried at Sui Sharif, Mirpur Mathelo), Khalefo Mehmood Nizamani (1775-1851), Khalefo Nabi Bakhsh Laghari (1776-1863), Khalefo Sarang Kalhoro, Khalefo Allah Rakhio Kalhoro, Khalefo Muhammad Hussain Mahesar and Khalefo Muhammad Panah Kehar.



Southern view of the Dargah Mosque

He had eighteen sons, of which four died during his lifetime and four others died without any issue. The progeny of his ten sons spread to many towns and villages in Sindh, which are called, after his name, Rashidi. The family of Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah was separated into two branches – the Pagaro (bearer of the turban) and Jhandevaro (bearer of the flag). After the death of Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah, Pir Muhammad Yasin Shah claimed to be the Gadi Nashin of the shrine but the eventual decision was made in favour of Pir Sibghatullah Shah as Gadi Nashin. A Jhando (flag), a relic of Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah, was given to Pir Muhammad Yasin Shah who later became known as Jhandevaro. He migrated from Rahim Dino Kalhoro village and established his khanqah at Thullah Sharif near Baqrani in Larkana, where he died in 1859 and was buried. His son Pir Rashiduddin migrated from Thullah Sharif and established his seminary near Saeedabad in what is known today as Matiari district, which came to be called Pir Jhando village. This seminary of Pir Jhando later attracted great Deobandi scholars like Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi (1872-1944), Shaikh al-Hind Mahmud al-Hassan (1851-1920) and Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (1863-1943). Pir Jhando village also became the centre of the Khilafat Movement from 1919 to 1924 during the leaderships of Pir Rashidullah and Pir Rashiduddin – great exponents of jihad and forceful believers in tawhid.

After the death of Muhammad Rashid Shah, his son Pir Sibghatullah Shah became the first Pagaro and Gadi Nashin of his dargah. Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah was first buried at Rahim Dino Kalhoro. Later, due to the inundation in the river Indus, Rahim Dino Kalhoro village was flooded and the mortal remains of Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah were taken to Pir Jo Goth for reburial by his grandson Pir Ali Gohar Shah I, the 2nd Pir Pagaro. The 3rd Pir Pagaro, Pir Hizbullah Shah Rashidi (died in 1890), rose in rebellion against the British Raj in 1880 and the Hur movement became a formidable force under the leaderships of the 4th Pir Pagaro Ali Gohar Shah II (died in 1896), the 5th Pir Pagaro Shah Mardan Shah I (died in 1921) and the 6th Pir Pagaro Sibghatullah Shah Rashidi alias Soreh Badshah.

All Pir Pagaras derived their spiritual power from the shrine of Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah. The tomb of Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah contains the graves of all the six Pagaras except Sibghatullah Shah Rashidi II alias Pir Soreh Badshah, who was hanged by the British on the 20th of March 1943 and was buried in secret place outside of Sindh.

The Qadiri-Rashidiyya and Naqshbandi-Rashidiyya Sufis of Sindh popularly known as Pir Pagaras and Pirs of Jhando respectively, both descendants of Pir Muhammad Rashid Shah, played an active role in challenging the British authority in Sindh and subsequently changed the religious landscape of Sindh – resulting in a multiplication of shrines for their deputies and disciples that came up in the wake of their heroic struggles.

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

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