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Rizvi Saints of Sukkur



by Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro — September 7, 2018

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Sukkur is home to many historic monuments and Sufi shrines. It is probably the first city in Sindh to receive the first Suhrawardi saints (13th century) and later the Qadiri Sufi saints. Both these Suhrawardi and Qadiri Sufis saints were initially from the Rizvi family. The Rizvi family of Sindh produced a number of eminent saints, Sufis, soldiers, scholars, poets and administrators. The shrines of Rizvi Sufi saints are scattered in different parts of Sindh, with the prominent ones being located in the towns of Sukkur, Bukkur, Rohri, Nasarpur and Thatta.

One of the eminent Rizvi Syeds of Bukkur was Syed Muhammad Shah Makki, the son of Syed Muhammad Shujah, who was born in Mashhad in Iran. One day, on the way to Makkah to perform Hajj, Shah Shuja visited Shaikh Shahabuddin and became his disciple. Shaikh Shahabuddin married him to his daughter. Shah Shuja lived many years in Makkah where Syed Muhammad Shah Makki was born. He was called Makki – as he was born in Makkah itself. Later his father Shah Shuja migrated from Makkah and lived in Mashhad where he died and is buried in the shrine complex of Imam Ali Reza. In the 13th century, Syed Muhammad Shah Makki migrated from Mashhad to Sindh along with his family, friends and some relatives and settled in Bukkur which was then called Harsna according to some scholars and Farisha to others.



Shrine of Syed Muhammad Makki

Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi (1145-1234) was a nephew of Abu al-Najib Suhrawardi (1097-1168) who was the founder of the Suhrawardi order of Sufism. The Suhrawardi order was later developed and spread to all over the Islamic world by his nephew Shaikh Shababuddin Suhrawardi.

Syed Muhammad Shah Makki was the ancestor of all of the Rizvis of Sindh and India. He should not be confused with the saint of same name Syed Muhammad Shah Makki at

Hyderabad. Both are different saints. Syed Muhammad Shah Makki had four sons and two daughters. Syed Muhamamd Shah Makki gave his daughter Fatima in marriage to Jalaluddin Surkh-Posh Bukhari (1198-1292). When Fatima died, Syed Muhammad Shah Makki also married his second daughter Zuhra to Jalaluddin Surkh-Posh Bukhari of Uch. Syed Muhammad Shah Makki died in 1246 in Sukkur. The shrine of Syed Muhammad Makki is located near the Deputy Commissioner's Office in Sukkur and is most popular amongst his devotees.



Mehrah in the mosque of
Pir Sadruddin Shah at Bukkur

Two of the sons of Syed Makki, Syed Sadruddin Al Khatib and Syed Badruddin, became more prominent. Syed Sadruddin was born in 1204 AD at Bukkur. He was a very virtuous and spiritual person whose righteousness and spirituality spread all over Sindh and even in some parts of India. He was a Suhrawardi saint who spent most of his time travelling in Sindh and Punjab and finally established his khanqah at Bukkur where many people got a mystical education. He died in 1270 AD, leaving behind four sons and two daughters. His shrine is located at Bukkur Island between Rohri and Sukkur. It is one of the most popular shrines of Sukkur and Bukkur and is always crowded with his devotees who come not only from the towns of Sukkur and Rohri but also from other districts of Sindh and south Punjab. They come to seek peace and solace at the shrine of Syed Sadruddin. As a sign of supplication to him, the visiting devotees lock China padlocks on the iron frame of the grave of Syed Sadruddin, now popularly known as Pir Sadruddin, which are then unlocked when their wishes are fulfilled. A very grand new tomb is being built over his grave. Close to the tomb of Pir Sadruddin is located the chilagah of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (1177-1274) who is believed to have visited Pir Sadruddin's khanqah and prayed at the present chilagah.

The descendants of Syed Muhammad Shah Makki migrated from Bukkur to different towns and villages of Sindh and some even went to Jhansi in India. This family of Rizvi Syeds produced a number of eminent scholars, poets and saints—prominent among these were Syed Shah Haqqanin (d.1630), Syed Mir Januallah Shah (d. 1754), whose shrines are located in Rohri, Syed Abdul Qadir (the author of *Hadekatul Aulia*), Miyon Shah Inayat Rizvi, a poet of great merit and repute (whose shrine is located in Nasarpur), Mir Saeed Khan, Syed Aban Shah, Mir Ghulam Shah Rizvi and Syed Jado, to name a few.

Syed Jan Muhammad Shah Rizvi, also known under his nom de plume Mir Janaullah, was another eminent Qadiri Sufi saint of the Rizvi family of Rohri. He was initiated into the Qadiri Silsila by Shah Inayat of Jhok in Thatta. There were fourteen khalifas of Shah Inayat, however, Janullah Shah was his chief khalifa. He was sent back to Rohri by his mentor to initiate the people into the Qadiri Silsila. During this time, Rohri was the main centre of the Qadiri Silsila. Syed Mir Janaullah Shah was also a poet who composed his '*Diwan Mir*' (a collection of his poetry) in the Persian language. He also composed three *Mathnavis* in Persian by the names of '*Mathnavi Dar Bahar*', '*Mathnavi SaqiNama*' and '*Mathnavi Sifat Maikhana*'. He died in 1754 and was buried in Rohri.

Syed Mir Janaullah Shah is equally venerated by both Muslim and Hindus castes of Sindh, with both the old and new tombs of Syed Mir Januallah Shah Rizvi having been erected by his Hindu devotees. The old tomb was erected in 1917 by his Hindu devotee Seth Lala Bherumal who was a contractor in Calcutta, India. The old tomb, in a bad state of preservation, was demolished in 1989 and instead a new tomb was erected by another Hindu devotee, Dr. Diwan Gurbakhsh. According to the Sajjada Nashin of the shrine, about nine million rupees were spent by the Hindu devotee on the construction of the new tomb of Syed Mir Janaullah Shah Rizvi.

Another eminent saint from the Rizvi family of Rohri was Syed Hyder Shah Haqqani, who was born in Bukkur. He got early education from the famous religious scholars of Bukkur and later moved to Rohri where he died in 1630. Today, the shrine of Hyder Shah Haqqani is the most popular shrine in Rohri and is located in the Syed Mohallah of the town.

Apart from Syed Hyder Haqqani, another eminent Rizvi saint of Rohri was Syed Jado Rizvi. He remained in Rohri and did not travel to any other parts of Sindh, however, two of his sons, namely Syed Mir Muhammad Yousaf and Abdul Razzaq did migrate from Rohri to Thatta in the sixteenth century.

Sukkur and Bukhuri remained the earliest centre of Suhrawardi saints of Sindh, prominent amongst these were aforementioned Sufi saints Syed Muhammad Makki, Syed Sadruddin. Apart from these Suhrawardi saints from the Rizvi family, Shaikh Nuh Bukkuri (d.1238) was another Suhrawardi saint who was directly initiated into Suhrawardi order by Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi himself. Later a few saints were also initiated into the Qadiri Silsilah.

These Rizvi shrines in Sukkur, Bukkur and Rohri are frequented by both the Muslims and Hindus. Both Shias and Sunnis venerate these saints and hold festivals together carrying forward the messages of tolerance, peace and love which these Rizvi saints of Sukkur, Bukkur and Rohri taught and spread not only among their Muslim devotees but also among their Hindu disciples.

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: