

FOLK TALE PAINTINGS IN THE JAMALI TOMBS OF SHAHDADKOT, SINDH (PAKISTAN)

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the folk tale murals that decorate the Jamali tombs in Shahdadot tehsil, Shahdadkot-Qamber district. In every nook and corner of Sindh there are storytellers who narrate folk tales in a rhythmic manner to amuse both the rural folk and themselves. Folk tales also influenced poets and painters of the land. In order to express their feelings some painters produced folk tale depictions on many tombs in Sindh, particularly on Jamali tombs in Qamber-Shahdadkot district.

INTRODUCTION

Like other districts of Sindh, the landscape of Qamber-Shahdadkot is dotted with a number of historical places. Prominent amongst these are the tombs of Haji Ismail, Mian Shahal Muhammad Kalhoro, Ghafur Shah near Shahdadkot, Main Majan Gopang (a disciple of Mian Nasir Muhammad Kalhoro in Qamber town, Dau- Ja -Quba at Gebi Dero, the tombs of Mirzani Chandia near the village of Gebi Dero, Husnani Chandia in the village of Rais Bambho Khan, Mastois at the village of Darya Khan Mastoi, Aitbar Khan Chandio in the village of Darya Khan Mastoi, the tomb of Mian Mir Muhammad Kalhoro in the village of Abad Kalhoro, Gaji Khuhawar near the town of eponymous, Chakar Khuhawar in village of Mian Shahal Muhammad, the necropolis of Khosa tribe near the village of Sanjar Bhatti, and the tombs of Jamalis in Shahdadkot tehsil.

Shahdadkot tehsil of Qamber-Shahdadkot has many historical tombs. However, the most important are those of the Jamali tribe. Like other tribes, they also played a very important role in the socio-political history of Sindh during the rule of the Kalhoras and Talpurs.

The art of painting flourished right from the Samma rule in Sindh particularly stone engraving and paintings at Makli Hills the largest necropolis of the world. During the Kalhora period both miniature paintings and wall paintings were the hallmark of the above period. One finds a number of portraits of the Kalhora rulers and princes (Aslam Abbasi, 2002). Likewise, wall paintings were the distinctive feature of the Kalhora paintings, which mainly depict folk tales, scenes of rustic life or social life tribal chiefs, battle scenes etc. The Kalhoras believed to have been built many tombs for themselves and their soldiers. The tombs of the Kalhoras depict floral and geometric designs whereas the soldiers' tombs bear figural representations (Kalhoro 2010:229)

The Mughal, Decanni and Rajput artists also portrayed the romances of Laila and Majnu, Shirin and Farhad, and Dhola Maru (Daljeet 1999, Okada n.d, Crill n.d). The Kalhora artists painted mainly folk tales on the tombs not to mention battle scenes and folk culture. The artist Warith executed the manuscript depicting the romance of Sayf al Muluk wa-Badi al Jamal for Kalhora prince (Siddiqi 1969).

The celebrated painters of the Kalhora period, who executed purely Sindhian folk romances of Sasui-Punhun, Moomal- Rano, Suhni-Mehar, Leila-Majun, Nuri-Jam Tamachi, on the various tombs in Larkana and Qamber-Shahdadkot were Piyaral Mashori, Miral Mashori, Jurio Mashori, Tooh Mashori, Imam Bakhsh Mashori, Koral Mashori, Dodo Chandio, Gul Mohammad Vighio, Qadir Bakhsh Kalhoro, Chakar Khan Jamali etc. Piyaral Mashori, Imam Bakhsh Mashori, Tooh Mashori and Koral Mashori were the inhabitants of Mian Nasir Mohammad Village in Khairpur Nathan Shah and were buried in the necropolis of the same village (Kalhoro 2005:54).

The Jamali tombs are famous for their paintings. There are at least five tombs of Jamali tribe in the Shahdadkot taluka. They all are decorated with paintings of folktales, battle scenes, and scenes of everyday life etc. This paper has been divided into two parts, the first part describes the tombs and the second discusses the folk romance paintings

THE TOMBS IN IMAM BAKHSH JAMALI VILLAGE

Imam Bakhsh Jamali village is located some 18 km northwest of Shahdadt. It takes its name after its founder, Imam Bakhsh Jamali. It contains some historical tombs reminding the visitors its past glory. Originally, there were four tombs only two of which have survived. The tomb of Imam Bakhsh, after whom the village is named, does no longer exists. The tombs of Sobdar Jamali and Bhai Khan Jamali still dominate the landscape of the village.

Sobdar Khan is believed to have been the chief of his tribe during Kalhora period. Local accounts reports that he also served the Kalhoras during the rule of Ghulam Shah Kalhoro (1757-1772). Shaho Khan, who was the son or the descendent of Mir Sobdar Jamali, believed to have been built the tombs. The tomb that is plastered with lime belongs to Mir Sobdar (Figure-1) Other than Mir Sobdar's grave; it contains two other graves, though not much is known about them. The nearby tomb, that is at a height, and built of burnt bricks, belongs to Bhai Khan (Figure-2).

The tomb of Mir Sobdar is decorated with paintings. Chakar Khan, a renowned mason and artist who was the resident of Murid Dero in Johi, Dadu, built a tomb of Sobdar Jamali. He also painted folk tales inside the tomb. This tomb is like a museum. Since a museum displays artifacts of different periods, similarly, the tomb displays many folk tale representations and include the folk tales of Sasui-Punhun, Leela-Chanesar, Nuri-Jam Tamachi, Leila Majnun, Sohni- Mehar, Moomal-Rano and Bijal-Rai Dyach (Kalhoro 2005:55)

THE TOMB OF SHAKAL JAMALI

12 km northwest of Shahdadt on same road to Imam Bakhsh Jamali, there is a tomb of Shakal Jamali, which is visible from a distance (Figure-3). It is squared and plastered with lime. Local traditions report that Shakal Jamali was the head of his village. The other version is that he was shepherd and he had built the tomb himself during his lifetime. There is still another version that holds that he was a very pious person and worshipped in the forests and haunted places. His descendants later erected the tomb. From inside it is adorned with paintings.

THE TOMB OF SAEED KHAN

20 km north of Shahdadt Kot lies a tomb of Saeed Khan Jamali in village named after him and locally known as Qubo Saeed Khan. He is believed to have been the disciple of Mian Nasir Muhammad Kalhoro (1657-92). The tomb is very simply built and is decorated with floral paintings. It is believed to have been built by Saeed Khan Jamali himself during his lifetime. He was famous for his generosity in the far-flung areas.

THE TOMB OF REHAN KHAN JAMALI

About 12 km west of Shahdadt Kot, on road leading to Ghari Khairo near the village of Noor Nabi Junejo, is situated a tomb belonging to Rehan Khan Jamali (Figure-4). He is believed to have been a landlord of his village. The tomb is also believed to have been built by him during his lifetime. It is a huge building resting on square plan. It is a deserted tomb and is abode of the birds. From a distance it looks like a Kalhoro tomb, due to its ambulatory gallery. However, there aren't any stairs in it that is a particular characteristic of Kalhoro funerary.

PAINTINGS ON JAMALI TOMBS

One of distinctive features of the tombs of the Jamalis is painting. Except for the tomb of Saeed Khan Jamali, all the other tombs depict animal and human figures. Especially, folk tale and dancing scenes are the common features of the Jamali tombs. The tomb of Sobdar Jamali is replete with the depictions of dancing scenes and popular folk tales, principally of King Dyach and Bijal, Sasui Punhoon, Nuri-jam Tamachi, Moomal Rano, Laila-Majnun, Leela-Chanesar and Sohni Mehar. Similar scenes can be seen also on the tomb of Rehan Khan Jamali. The tomb of Shakal also bears dancing scenes, but these are in the early stage of decay. The shepherds, who take shelter in the tomb during the harsh summer days, have defaced much of the paintings.

Several panels paint the folk romances and other depictions in the tomb of Sobdar Jamali. One of the panels depicts two folk tales of Moomal Rano and King Dyach and Bijal. The romance of Moomal Rano is depicted in all three tombs of Sobdar Khan, Shakal Khan and Rehan Khan. In the tomb of Sobdar is painting

of Rano with his two friends all on horseback, are shown going to Kak mahal, a palace of Moomal. The Moomal is shown sitting with her sisters in the palace. Similar depictions are found in the tombs of Rehan Khan and Shakal Khan.

The folk story of Rai Dyach is also painted in the Jamali tombs. The main characters of the folk story of King Rai Dyach, which include Rai Dyach, Sorath, her maid and Bijal, are painted to capture the main characters of the story. Bijal, who was famous bard of the Junargah, is shown sitting outside the main entrance of palace, Bijal had promised to Ani Rai to bring him the head of Dyach. The main bone of contention between King Rai Dyach and king Ani Rai was Sorath. King Ani tried to get married to Sorath who lived in his state. When this news reached to Rai Dyach, he decided to marry with Sorath. When he took Sorath to his palace, this enraged to King Ani Rai and in order to take revenge, he laid siege to his capital for over year. But he could not do anything. After some time, he filled a large platter with gold sovereigns, and proclaimed in his kingdom that he would give away the gold to the one, who would bring him the head of Rai Dyach. It is said that Bijal's wife accepted the platter of gold sovereigns, and promised the head of Rai Dyach in return, claiming that her husband Bijal would bring back the head of Rai Dyach (Komal 1995:23)

Rai Dyach was a generous king, and his generosity was known far and wide. Bijal then proceeded to Junargah, and there he so charmed King Rai Dyach with his heavenly music, that Rai Dyach urged him to ask whatever he wanted, and he would have it. Bijal asked Rai Dyach for his own head, and the story is that Rai Dyach took up his sharp sword, and with his own hand cut off his head, and it fell into the lap of Bijal.

In the painting Bijal is shown playing his fiddle on the stairways of palace. Rai Dyach is shown presenting his severed head to the bard Bijal Charan. Below the image of Rai Dyach are two women figures of Sorath and her maid who appear to be mourning over the death of the king (Figure-5)

Another panel depicts several hunting, combat scenes and a folktale of Jam Tamachi. To the extreme left is the depiction of two soldiers wielding their swords. Close to this representation is combat scene between either lion or *gorpat* (wild beast) and man.

In the centre of the panel is a giant male figure with extended arms this male figure appears to be in chains both arm and legs of the person are in chains His legs are tied to pegs on either side. Near this image is the folk romance of Nuri-Jam Tamachi (Figure-6) Both Nuri and Jam Tamachi are shown sitting in boat. Nuri belonged to fishing tribe (Mohana) and Jam Tamachi was ruler of Samma dynasty of Sindh. He fell in love with Nuri during his frequent visits to Kenjhar Lake (See Komal 1995, Khamisani 2003).

One finds same paintings of Jam Tamachi in the tombs of Shakal Jamali and Rehan Khan Jamali. The panel in the Shakal's tomb contains the same story and scenes as described in the tomb of Sobdar Jamali. We find the similar depictions of the soldiers, combat between man and wild beast or *gorpat* and Nuri and Jam Tamachi. Comparatively, they look more immature images than ones in the tomb of Sobdar Jamali.

A panel in the tomb of Rehan Khan Jamali depicts similar folk romance of Nuri Jam Tamachi. This looks more refined painting as compared to both the tomb of Sobdar and Shakal Khan. Likewise, it does not contain other images such as hunting and combat scenes as found on the tombs of Sobdar and Shakal Khan.

It is also interesting to see the paintings of Laila Maju in the Jamali tombs. The romance of Laila Majnu is not Sindhian. It is an Arabic original romantic love. However, it captured the imagination of the Sindhi artists who painted the love story of the Laila Majnu in many tombs in upper Sindh. All three tombs of Jamalis depict the romantic love of Laila Majnu that shows Majnu seated under tree. The Laila is also shown approaching Majnu. A person with axe is also painted to left side of the Majnu's image that is perhaps going to cut tree. The tree appears to have bent with passage of time. Majnu spent long time under the tree waiting for his beloved Laila. The person thought that the tree was going to fall in no time so he took axe to go out to cut it. This is most popular theme which attracted the Sindhi artists who painted it in many tombs in the Larkana, Qamber Shahdadkot and Dadu districts.

On one of the panels of the tomb of Mir Sobdar is painted the romance of Laila Majnu. He is always shown seated under a

tree with animals around him symbolizing the wilderness and man with axe going to cut tree. Laila is also depicted going to meet him.

The tombs of Sobdar Khan, Shakal Khan and Rehan Khan depict the folk tales of Suhni-Mehar, Sasui-Punhoon and Umar Marvi. The tomb of Sobdar bears the folk tale of Suhni and Mehar, one of the panels depicts Mehar seated on cot and engaged in conversation with Suhni. On either side of the cot are the buffaloes of Mehar (Figure-7). This is the favorite theme of the artists to paint the story of Suhni Mehar. Apart from this image, Sunhi is also shown crossing the river to meet her beloved Mehar. One finds Mehar across the river playing flute and grazing his buffaloes. The painter has painted the two characters Suhni and Mehar and in some depictions added a saintly figure that seems to have engaged in prayers for the safe crossing of the river by Suhni (Figure-8).

The painting of Sasui and Punhoon also adorn the tombs of Sobdar, Shakal, and Rehan Khan. The panels depict the in-laws of Sasui taking Punhoon on camel back to Keck Makran, the home town of the Punhoon. Sasui is shown following the footprints of the camel to meet her beloved. Her friend tried to stop Sasui to tread on the difficult path that passes through the looming mountains. The panel also shows the sheperd who is spinning the yarn and grazing the goats (Figure-9). In the wilderness, Sasui met the Shepard who was elated to see Sasui. The artist has focused and captured four characters of the story, Sasui, Punhoon, his brothers and Shepard. One finds similar depictions on all three tombs. However, the tomb of Rehan Khan depicts more imposing painting of Sasui and Punhoon.

The depiction of Umar-Marvi is exclusive of Rehan Khan Jamali tomb. The painting of Umar Marvi in the tomb of Rehan Khan Jamali bears Marvi with her friend at the well. Umar is shown forcibly taking Marvi on camel back to his palace in Umarmkot (Figure-10). The friends of Marvi are shown beseeching Umar to leave her. The artist seems to have focused main the figures of folk romance.

Apart from folktale representations, one also finds the dancing scenes in the Jamali tombs. The tombs of Sobdar Khan, Shakal Khan and Rehan Khan bear the dancing scenes. This

painting in the tomb of Sobdar Khan depicts a male dancer with four females on either side. This possibly represents the Leela heroine of folk romance of Leela and Chanesar, disguising as male and dancing with her friends. The similar dancing depiction can also be seen in the tomb of Rehan Khan and Shakal Khan. The dancing motif on the Skakal's tomb is not striking. The distinctive feature of the representation is the extra figure painted on the left side of it. This figure appears to be either a dance director or a minister Jakhro of King Chanesar who invited Leela, her friends and Chanesar, then Soomra King of Sindh on his marriage ceremony. One of the purposes of the invitation was to reunite the both Leela and Chanesar where Lila along with her friends performed dancing and singing. This dance represents the 'dance of Leela to reconcile with his annoyed Chanesar'. But that dance proved to be the final meeting of the lovers and both died in the marriage ceremony of their minister Jakhro (See Komal 1995 and Khamisani 2003).

CONCLUSION

The tombs of the Jamalis are famous in the district for their figural depictions. The painting of Rai-Dyach is only peculiar to the Jamali tombs. One does not find similar motif elsewhere in Sindh. Though it is not a refined painting, nevertheless they capture the main characters of the story. One can say the credit goes to the Sindhi artists to have immortalized the romantic folk love stories of Sindh. Likewise, one finds the primitive style of painting figures on all other Jamali tombs but again the artists have focused on the characters of the story than on the figures. However, the folktales and other depictions that decorate Jamali tombs indicated the aesthetics of the both artists and the owners who seem to have been ordered these monuments.

The visual heritage of the Jamali tribe is falling to pieces. In order to save the visual heritage, the concerned authorities and the descendents of the dignitaries should make concerted efforts to preserve the folk tales depictions which give an insight to 18th century historical monuments of the Kalhora period and cultural heritage of Sindh in general and visual heritage of the Jamali tribe in particular.



Figure-1: The Tomb of Sobdar Khan Jamali



Figure-2: The Tomb of Bhai Khan Jamali



Figure-3: The Tomb of Shakai Khan Jamali



Figure-4: The Tomb of Rehan Khan Jamali



Figure-5: Painting of Rai Dyach and Beejal Charan in the Tomb of Sobdar Khan Jamali

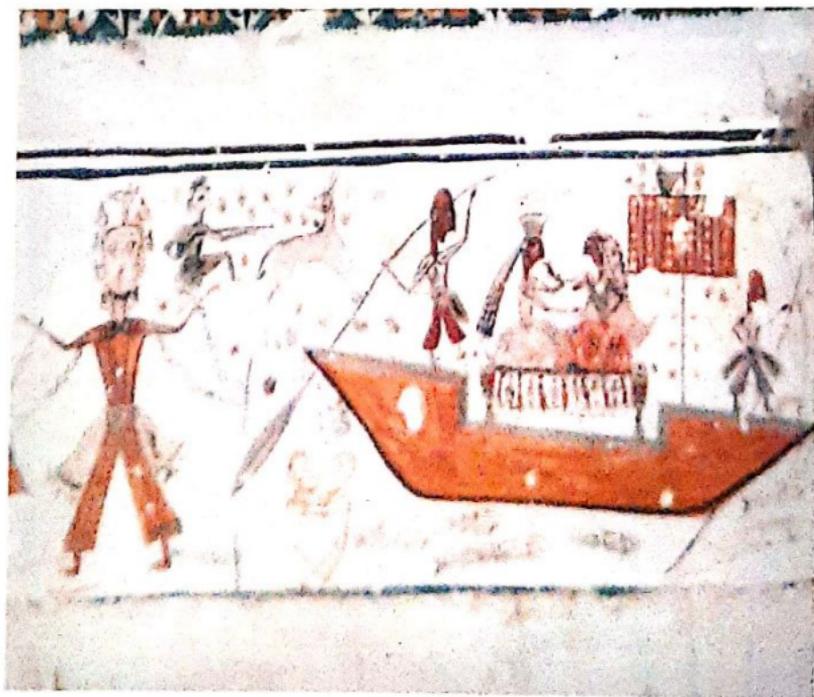


Figure-6: Painting of folk Romance of Nuri-Jam Tamachi in the tomb of Sobdar Khan Jamali



Figure-7:
Depiction of Umar-Marvi in the tomb of Rehan Khan Jamali



Figure-8:
Representation of Suhni-Mehar in the tomb of Sobdar Jamali



Figure-9:
Suhni is shown crossing the river in the tomb of Sobdar Jamali

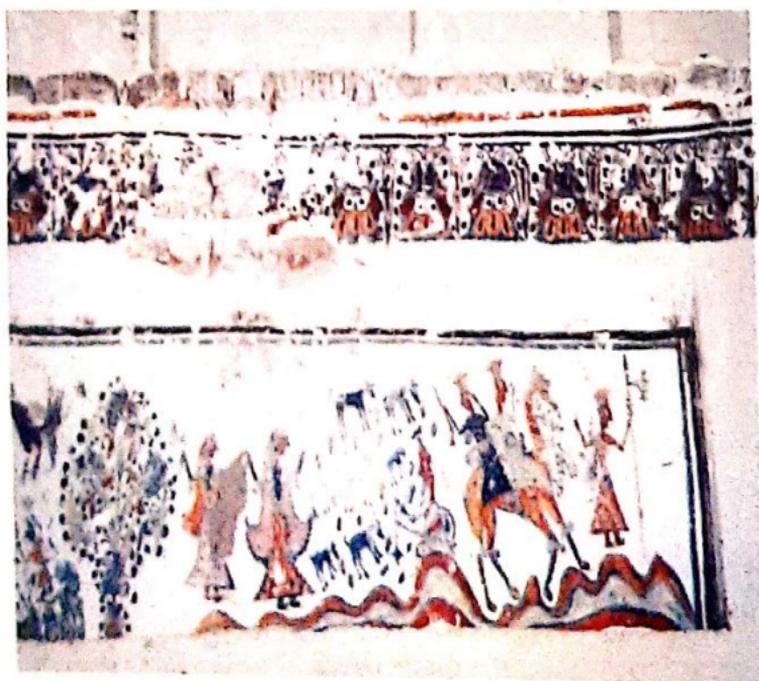


Figure-10:Depiction of Folk Romance of Sausi-Punhun
in the tomb of Sobdar Jamali

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