

Makli Hill at Thatta (Sindh): The Issue of its Nomenclature and Origin

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Location of Makli Hill

The geological time scale of the Makli Hill, is assigned to the Eocene period (Pithawala 1959: 70; Dani 1982: 9). This hill range starts from Pir Patho, and ending due west of Thatta. However, David Ross in his contribution has elaborated that the Makli Hill is initiating from Pir Patho and ending at Samui, located three miles southwest of Thatta (Ross 1976: 25) (Fig.3). It is important to add here that, to the west it scarcely seems to deserve the name of a hill, however, from Thatta, it is shaping into a low hilly track. It is interesting to elaborate further, that the under discussion series is varying in height, such as, from about 80 to 150 ft above the sea level. The top is plateau studded with the formal and forbidding *Sindhian* “Cactus” Thoohar (*Euphorbia Nereifolia*), strewn thick with pebbles and nodular lumps of hard yellow limestone. These are sometime quite speckled with little Nummulitic lime stone of the Kirther ranges, interbred with green clay and gypsum. This hill, on the north abruptly drops, but on the northwest, it gradually merges into the wide expanse of the plain agricultural land, yielding bushy trees (Pithawala 1959: 70; Dani 1982: 9; Qani 1965: 78-80; 1971: 150, 560-61).

The funeral part of the Makli is covering six square miles. It is containing over one million of graves, which includes the graves of the rulers, princes, princesses, ministers, nobles and ordinary persons (Cousens 1929: 111). Moreover, according to the vernacular sources, among them about one hundred and twenty four thousands are attributed to the Sufi scholars,

saints and theologists.

Nomenclature of Makli Hill

The term of Makli Hill has been variously cited by the different research scholars. However, their theories, hypotheses and assumptions are generally based on the folk traditions. In this process, passing through the phase of working hypotheses, certain legends, myths and traditions are evaluated to find out its proper etymology, in order to know about its exact nomenclature. In this regard, to solve the contention of nomenclature, we must focus on the factual issues rather than the fictional sources. However, to understand the proper etymology of the word, in quest of its exact nomenclature, the present researcher has brought both the traditional accounts and factual records to the forefront to underline the core of the problem.

It is significant to elaborate here, that the vernacular sources are mentioning different traditions. Likewise, one of them regarding the above stated term, assuming that one of the saints, on his pilgrimage to Mecca during the course of his journey, he came to this hilly area. He was highly inspired by the spiritual atmosphere of this hill and here he danced in fits of religious frenzy and acclaimed “*Haaza Makatu-li or Makka li*”, “this hill is as sacred as Mecca for me”. The word *Makatu li or Makkah li* developed into Makli by the people (Qani 2002: 567; Lari 1997: 22; Dani 1982: 5). However, it is worthwhile to remark here that Muhammad Ali Manjhi describes a little

different episode. According to which a man was going for Hajj, he stayed at the Makli Hill and saw here Mecca in his dream, therefore, he proclaimed “*Haaza Maka-li*” (Manjhi 2007: 162). While, Mumtaz Husain Pathan has cited this tradition in a different mode, accordingly that man was much astonished, by seeing such a large number of graves of the pious people. One of the spirits wished him to reside here. Who onwards constructed a Khanqah for himself and proclaimed “Haza Makkah li” this place is like Mecca for me. In this sequence, it appears that the hill owes its name from Mecca, which later on, developed into Makli (Pathan 1978: 28).

Yet another tradition portrays, that in the past there was a pious woman with the name of Makli or Mayi Makli. She came to this hilly area and got inhabited there (Pathan 1978: 359). According to the traditions recorded by the vernacular sources, when she died, was buried outside the old mosque of Makli, attached to the back of its mehrab. Moreover, it is located to the southeast of Sheikh Hamad Jamali Madrasah who was residing there for the sake of teaching and preaching at his Madrasah. Thus on his desire, Jam Tamachi constructed a mosque between A.D 1389-92. It was given the name Makli, which subsequently engulfed the entire area (Cousens 1929: 111; Lari 1997: 22; Qani 2002: 567; Manjhi 2007: 162). It may be further advocated here that the saint also declares it a Muslim graveyard instead of Pir Patho (Qani 2002: 564; Cousens 1929: 111; Lari, 1997: 22).

It is equally interesting to make a mention of yet another tradition. It is narrating that once an old and ill woman started her journey to offer Hajj. According to the vernacular sources, when she arrived at this hill region, it was late evening time. Therefore, she spent the night there with the desire to resume her journey by

the morning. It is said, while sleeping, she dreamt, in which she was told that *haza Makkah li* “this is Mecca for you”. When she got up in the morning, she went to the nearby mosque or *Madrasah*, and discussed the dream with the theologian. He interpreted the dream as “this place is as sacred as Mecca for you”. As a matter of fact, the theologian may would not have compared the place with Mecca, however, he might have explained to the ailing lady that her dream is denoting that, any place where you would be offering your prayers (worships) and good deeds shall be like Mecca for you. Moreover, since this dream is associated with the at issue place, therefore, the locals considered it as sacred as Mecca. It may be further added here that either from the name of a pious lady Mayi Makli, or the prophecy of the dream “*Makkah li*” or the saint pronounced it as “*haza Makkah li*” laid the foundation for the derivation of Makli and the area as Kohistan-i Makli or the Makli Hill. In the same context David Ross has named it “Little Mecca” (Ross 1976: 24), However it is indeed pertinent to advocate here that Orlich has mentioned it “Meki Hill” which is obviously showing close affinity with the sound of Makkahli, denoting Mecca like (Orlich 1976: 103-4). In this connection, it is equally vital to proclaim here that Raverty has mentioned different terms for this hilly region. Such as, “Mukhahli” and “Makkahli” (Raverty 1979: 170 & 181) are clearly showing that the local sources are suggesting the derivation of its etymology from the supposed version of knowledge.

It is interesting to elaborate here that besides, the above stated hypothetic versions, inquest of its proper nomenclature, there are as well pre-Islamic myths and legends, forwarded by the historians in search of its proper roots of origin. In this regard, Manjhi quoting from G. M. Sayed’s portrays, that there was a believer sect

“Digambara” founded by “Mankali”, whose followers named this place after him as “Mankali” which is the prototype of Makli (Manjhi 2007: 162).

In order to reach to the exact conclusion, it is sterling to elaborate here, that the hypothetic traditions and its proper etymology shall be examined in the light of authentic references either quoted or scientifically investigated. In this sequence, H. Pottinger in his works registered an important reference, such as, “Mukulee” a name from which the term Makli has been taken, whereas, J. Wood claims its derivation from Mukali (Wood 1976: 5-8).

In this process, Ali Ahmad Brohi cited a very significant hypothetic tradition, perhaps proving its association with the under discussion term. In this connection, Brohi co-relates the word Makli with a primitive temple of “Mahā Kālī” furthermore; he denies the other theories or suppositions regarding its derivation (Brohi 1983: 53-54).

It is pertinent to advocate here that Brohi believes the existence of a Hindu temple, which was known as “Mahā Kālī”. Whereas, in this sequence, Wood mentions its derivation from “Mukali”, which seems to be the corrupted form of “Ma’kālī” or “Mātā’kālī”. These are the localised versions of the name “Kālī”, which is also called “Mahā Kālī”. Likewise, Pottinger has identified its origin from “Mukulee”, showing its connection with “Mukali”, which is itself representing its nomenclature from Mahā Kālī, presumably converted locally into Mā’kālī and then became as Makli.

It may be further elaborated here, that Knappert denotes the Hindu mythological association, in which the two gods such as “Mahā-Kala” means Śiva the god of the irrevocable time

(Knappert 1995: 138), whereas, the name of a goddess such as, “Mahā Kālī”, is indicating an epithet of Devī-Uma-Kālī (Knappert 1995: 139). Thus, in the light of Brohi assumption, such as, the existence of Mahā-Kālī temple and Knappert’s mythological association, are visibly showing its proper etymology.

It is significant to advocate here, that Ali Ahmad Brohi has mentioned in his works, that the tomb of Jam Nizam-ud-Din Nindo was constructed from the dismantled material of a Hindu temple, located in the vicinity, which was called “*Mahā Kālī*” (Brohi 1983: 53-54). In this regard, it is equally important to work out the possibility of such hypothetic view, whether such temple with similar name existed or not? In this process, except Ali Ahmad Brohi, the indigenous chronicles and the archaeological survey reports are absolutely silent regarding the existence of *Mahā Kālī* temple in the region of our concern.

In this connection, the present researcher during the documentation of the Makli Hill monuments, has started exploration in its surroundings. During the course of exploration, the researcher has discovered Hindu temples at Makli Hill. It may be mentioned here that during the course of investigation, the researcher met with the caretaker of the “Mātā Bhawani” temple. It may be added here, that presently a road leading from Karachi to Thatta, which onward, approaches to Hyderabad, is separating the Makli necropolis into two parts i.e. the northwestern side (Mound “A”) and the southwestern side (Mound “B”). The under discussion temple is located on the Mound “B” just in front of the Shah Abdul Latif mosque, which is on the right side of the main road. The present researcher met with the caretakers, Mr. Jai Kumar and Mahārāja of the temple Mr. Jivan Śrī Mahā Rāja. During the course of

discussions, they pointed out three temples such as; “Mātā Sinha Bawani Mandir”, which is located on the right side of the main road as mentioned above. The second temple i.e. “Mātā Kālī” or “Ma’kali” or “Mahā Kālī” Mandir’ is of great significance. This temple has completely vanished, however, the original platform over which the Balidan ceremony was offered is still being used. This temple is located about 200 m to the west of Mātā Sinha Bawani temple. The Balidan concept in Hinduism is holding utmost importance, therefore, the concept of Mahā Kālī Devī and even Mahā Kālī temples are of great significance, where the rituals are still practiced. After making enquiry, the caretakers were unable to provide sufficient information regarding the original plan of the building. However, it is narrated that they have been told from generation to generation that the Mahā Kālī temple was crowned by dome and richly carved with architectural decoration.

The third temple is called the “Mātā Mansha Mandir”, it is situated about 2 km to the south of “Mātā Bawani Mandir”. Yet another “Mahā Kālī” temple is located on the Makli Hill, just outside the Kalan Kot fort near the stepped well. It is a rock shelter or located inside a low cave. It has mostly vanished, however, the nich or the place for *sindhur* practice is intact, where the *sindhur* ceremony is still being offered, moreover, the *Balidan* cult was also practiced here in order to accomplish the rituals.

The caretakers told that according to the Hindu traditions, once “Rām Chandarji” visited these temples and stayed in this vicinity during the course of his pilgrimage. It is said that from here, he had been to Hinglaj temple located in Makran Baluchistan, in order to accomplish his pilgrimage rituals. The above stated mythological tradition is suggesting the

association of the epic hero of “Rāmāyaṇa” “Rām Chander” with Makli (Burnes 1975: vol. III, 30-34; Ali 1987: 132). Thus it appears that the cluster of temples located in the vicinity of Thatta and Makli Hill are clearly indicating that one of the Hindu Rāja established a city at Thatta before the arrival of the Arabs known as “Sameenuggur”, which seems to be the corrupted form of “Swaminagar”, the city of the gods (Burnes 1975: vol. III, 30-34). This can be further advocated in the light of “Tata” the actual name of the place. In Sanskrit it means the sound of Śiva (William 1963: 432, col. 1), while Thathani means the abode of Śiva (William 1963: 430, col. 1).

It can be further attributed here that keeping in view the above stated mythological assumptions seeking its proper derivation such as, the sound of Śiva or the abode of Śiva, in connection with Swami-Nagar or the city of the gods, moreover, Manjhis interpretation of Mankali, the founder of Digambara sect (Manjhi 2007: 167), denoting a naked ascetic, also called the epithet of Śiva (Knappert 1995: 93), all are possessing close affinity, furthermore, these are visibly showing its proper derivation. The Hindus once in their life go to Hinglaj via “Mātā Bawani” and “Mahā Kālī” temples. Moreover, Bawani is the offshoot of “Mahā Kālī”, whereas, Gorī and Kalka are the other names for “Mahā Kālī”. In this connection, Gorī temple is located in Nagarparkar and Kalka Devī temple in the Rohri Hills. The above mentioned different names are the forms of Mahā Kālī a Hindu goddess seems to have been caused for the origin of the in question name.

Thus, in the light of Brohi’s view and the present researcher’s identification of “Mahā Kālī” temples at Makli Hill and its importance as a cult image in the entire locality caused for its derivation. Therefore, either from Mukulee,

or perhaps Mukali, then into “Mātā Kālī” or “Ma’kālī” or probably Mahā Kālī caused for the derivation of Makli or even Makli may be considered the corrupted form of Ma’Kali, which is one way or the other has its very visible etymology from Mahā-Kālī. These eventually paved way for the origin of the name Makli.

Origin of Makli Hill Graveyard

The history of Makli is shrouded in mysteries. In this process, it is a sterling fact that the question of its origin is a certain phenomena, which has created doubts among the scholars that how and when the under discussion graveyard, was founded as a funeral and worshipping centre? However, in this regard the traveler’s accounts, geographers, autobiographers and the present research scholars, one way or the other have discussed the different issues of Makli Hill, however, very little work has been done so far.

In this sequence, it would be pertinent to argue here that the present researcher besides, the hypothetic theories, has been able to find out both the archaeological sources as well as the literary accounts, which can very easily solve this matter of contention. In this concern, the vernacular sources are clearly denoting that Sheikh Hamad Jamali, a great Sufi scholar and saint, was responsible to set up Makli, as a sacred place of worship and as well as a funeral place. It was subsequently followed by his imperial Samma disciple Jam Tamachi, who started his rule in A.D 1369-70, was ousted by Jam Juna in A.D 1372. However, it was due to the blessings of Sheikh Hamad Jamali, he regained his power in A.D 1388-89 and ruled till A.D 1392 (Lari 1997: 8). It was during this phase of time, when the saint desired for the construction of a mosque, which was built by

his royal disciple near his Khanqah or Madrasah in A.D 1389-92. It was subsequently named as Makli Mosque by the saint (Qani 2002: 564-67; Cousens 1929: 111). In this connection, it is significant to proclaim here, that David Ross is quoting Qani, who is mentioning that Sheikh Hamad Jamali declares it as a funeral place instead of Pir Patho (Qani 2002: 564; Ross, 1976: 25). In this connection, it is vital to proclaim here that the story of this place becoming as a graveyard started with the tradition of Mayi Makli’s grave, situated outside the mehrab of the Makli mosque. Whereas, the Chaukhandi of Jam Tamachi A.D 1392, may be considered as the first ever royal tomb. In this process, it appears quite visibly that Jam Tamachi under the Samma dynasty initiated it as a burial place. In this regard, it was duly continued as a worshipping and funeral place under the Arghuns A.D 1520-1555, Tarkhans A.D 1555-1613 and later on, under the Mughals. Thus, keeping in view one can very easily observe four important periods of the above stated ruling dynasties, who during their domain have given special attention to its religious significance.

It is indeed interesting to point out that besides, the above cited literary sources, the in question term has also been recorded in the epigraphic sources, such as in the case of Murad Nizam-ud-Din’s Chaukhandi, located to the north east of Amir Khani grave complex, showing Persian couplets carved in nastalique style, which can be noticed on the inner lintels. The most significant feature of this inscription is the date A.D 1638 and the name of the place, which is the first ever instance of its kind at Makli Hill. It is denoting the name “ba’goristan-e-Makli”, means the graveyard of Makli (Javadi, 1992: 254). It is indeed sterling to mention here, that in the graveyard of Makli Hill, four different periods can be recorded, such as, I-Samma, II-

Arghun, III-Tarkhan and IV-Mughals, who have constructed their burials in this area. Furthermore, these burials can be classified into six major groups such as, I. Mosques, II Madrasah Pavilion, III. Mausoleas, IV. Chaukhandis, V. Grave platforms with mosque enclosure or Raṅk and VI. Platform with graves.

It is utmost sterling to advocate here that the art and architecture developed at Makli Hill,

is visibly showing a blend of different cultures, which is mainly caused due to the cultural interactions. Thus, the indigenous values were amalgamated with the Persian and Central Asian styles, which eventually gave birth to a new mode of art and architecture that slowly and gradually became the trademark of this region.

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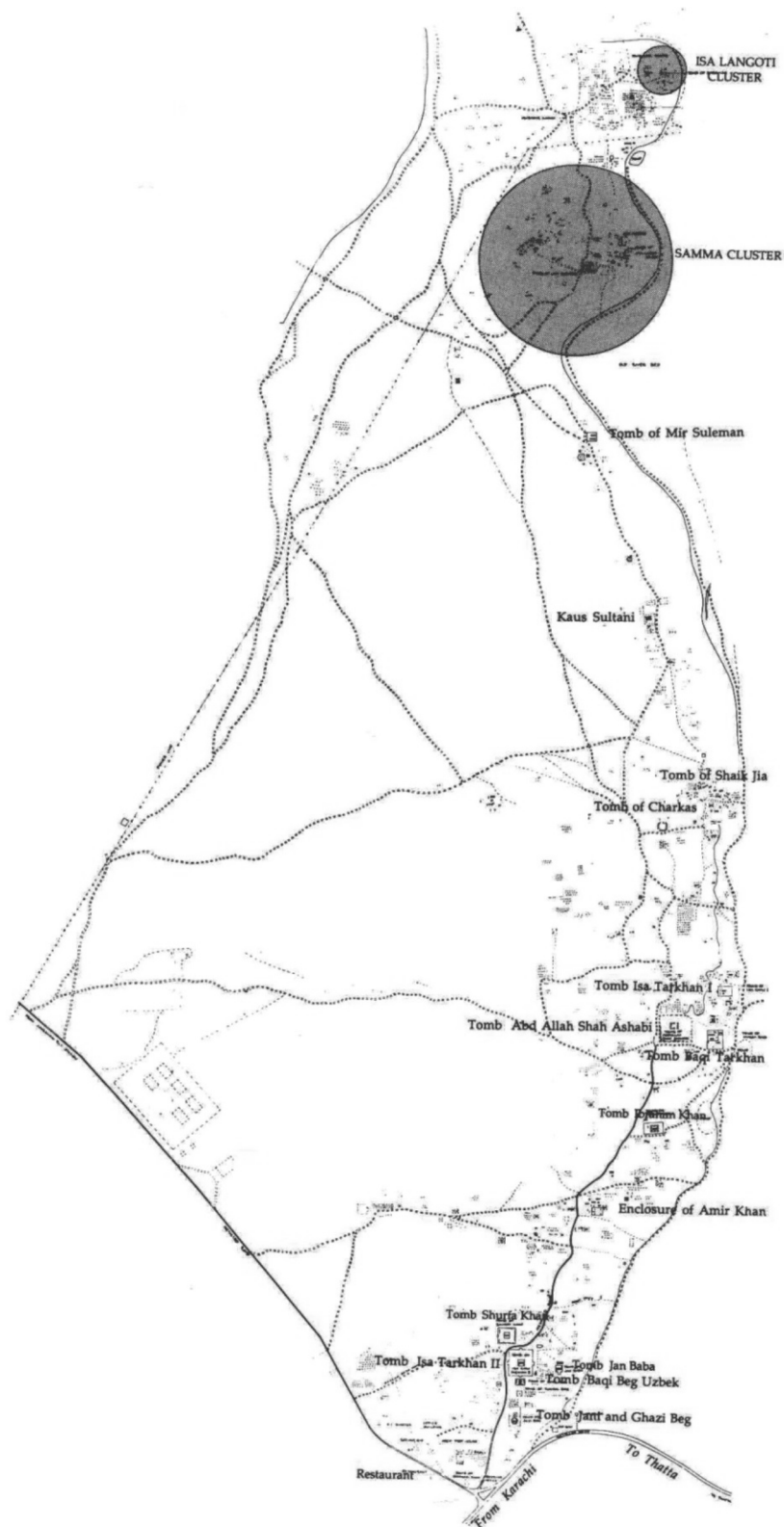


Fig.1. Map of Sindh Province (Lari, 1997: fig. 4).

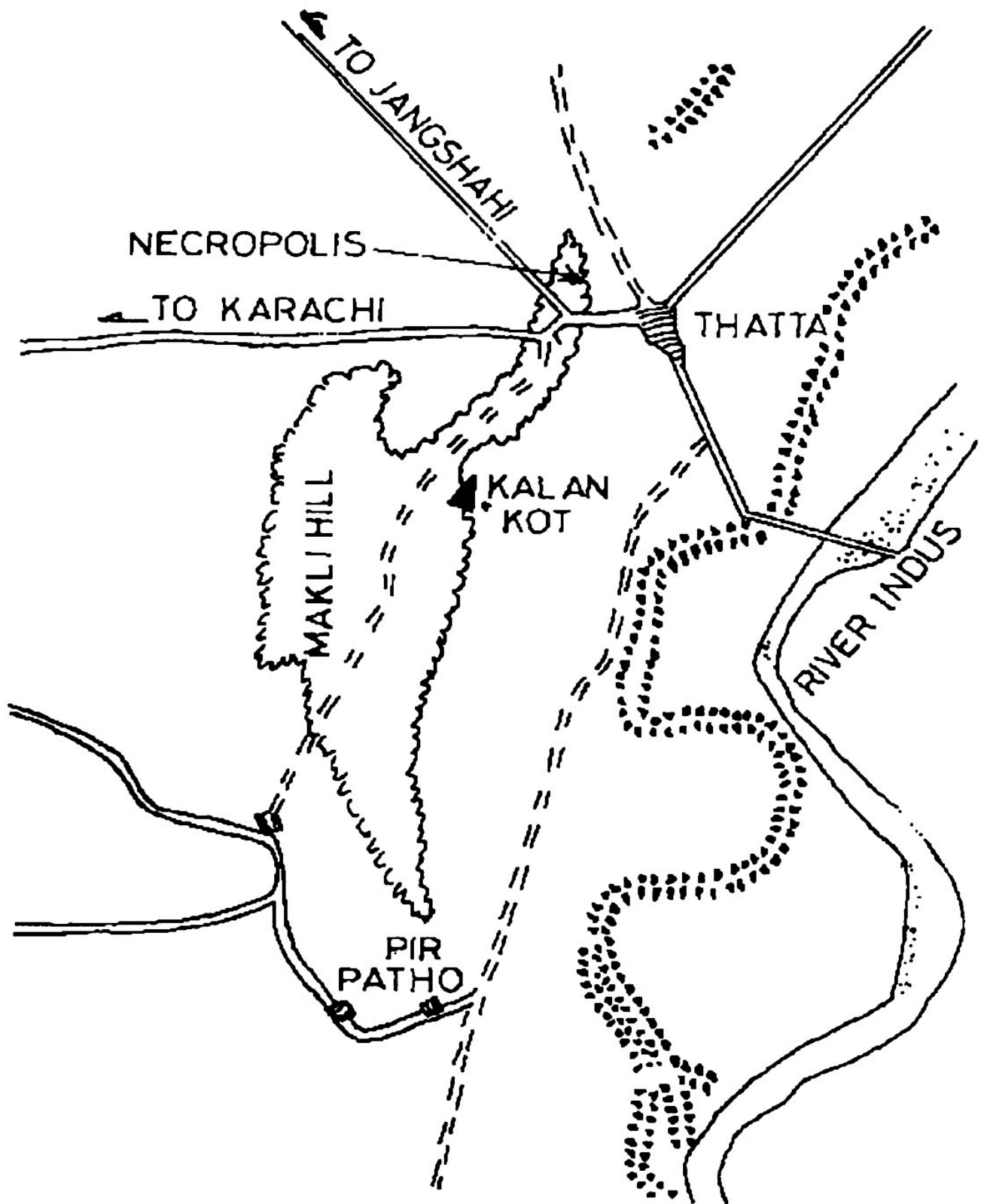


Fig.2. Map of Makli Hill (Nadeim, 2002: 93).



Fig.3. Map of Makli Hill Monuments (Lari, 1997: fig. 5).