

# THE TOMB OF ḤALĪM GUL BĀBĀ AT ZIĀRAT KĀKĀ ṢĀḤĪB

SHAKIRULLAH+

## INTRODUCTION

Ḥalīm Gul, meaning a 'delicate and fragrant flower', was the fourth son of Kastīr Gul generally known as Kākā Ṣāḥib.<sup>1</sup> He was a well known *ṣūfī* and the only scholar in the family, who has left behind something in writing.

His real name was 'Abd al-Ḥalīm.<sup>2</sup> Among the common people however he came to be known by four different names, such as (i) Ḥalīm Gul Bābā, (ii) Ṣāḥib Hindūstān,\* (iii) Spin Bābā\*\* and Periyāno\*\*\* Bābā.<sup>3</sup> There is a superstition still very much prevalent among the masses that a person haunted by ghosts can be cured for certain if he visits the tomb of Ḥalīm Gul Bābā. A large number of visitors to the Bābā's tomb therefore comprises of the sick and the distressed who think that they are under the malicious control of a *jinn*—presumed to be a spirit able to appear in human or animal form and capable of afflicting people with different diseases.

Ḥalīm Gul Bābā was born on Ramaḍān 27, 1024 H/A.D. 1615,<sup>4</sup> in the *Kh*attak territory at Mela, and lies buried not very far from the tomb of Kākā Ṣāḥib in a separate graveyard enclosed on all sides by a wall. About the date of his death however there is some controversy among scholars regarding the precise day of the month of Muḥarram on which he died. According to one opinion he breathed his last on Muḥarram 28, 1092 H/A.D. 1681,<sup>5</sup> while another version fixes the date 4 days earlier on Muḥarram 24, 1092 H/A.D. 1681<sup>6</sup> in the reign of Aurangzeb 'Ālamgīr. It is generally agreed that he died at the age of 66.

## EDUCATION

Ḥalīm Gul spent most of his life in pursuit of learning. His initial school was his own home, where he received basic instruction from his father Kastīr Gul. The courses comprised of religious education and languages. Besides Pashtū, which was his mother tongue, 'Abd al-Ḥalīm is said to have learnt several regional languages such as Kashmīrī, Panjābī, Sindhī, Urdū and Hindī, besides Arabic and Persian, and could fluently converse in them. After completing his education within the family, he travelled to different parts of the country such as Lahore and Multān<sup>7</sup> etc. in search of knowledge. He was still in India when his father died in A.D. 1643.<sup>8</sup> On his return, some time after the death of his father, he started teaching in the *Madrassa* founded by his late father.

'Abd al-Ḥalīm, one after the other, married thrice and had five sons,<sup>9</sup> namely:

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- + Research student, Department of Archaeology, University of Peshāwar.
  - \* He is known to have spent some time in India in search of education at different places. Hence Ṣāḥib-i-Hindūstān (i.e. 'Lord of India').
  - \*\* Ḥalīm Gul was a handsome person with white skin colour. Hence 'Spin Bābā' which in Pashtū means 'white elderly man'. See Bahadur Shah Zafar Kaka Khel, *Shaikh Raḥamkar Kākā Ṣāḥib*, Nowshera, 1986 p. 211.
  - \*\*\* Periyān is the plural form of *Perai* which in Pashtū means a 'spirit, *jinn* or ghost'.

1. Afḍal Bābā
2. Gul Ḥasan Bābā
3. Shaikh Ḡhanī Dil Bābā
4. Raḥmat Shāh Bābā
5. Fakhr al-Dīn Bābā

His first wife belonged to the Kharrak family of Manāhī. From her, he had the first two sons, Afḍal Bābā and Gul Ḥasan Bābā. His second wife hailed from the Khattak family of Mahārājī. Out of this wedlock were born, Shaikh Ḡhanī Dil and Raḥmat Shāh. The third marriage took place when he was in India. This time he married a Hindūstānī lady who gave birth to Fakhr al-Dīn. Ḥalīm Gul Bābā had no female offspring. Kākā Khel Miāngān, now scattered in different parts of the Frontier, are the descendants of his sons.<sup>10</sup>

Ḥalīm Gul spent the best part of his life in India, as referred to above, in pursuit of spiritual as well as worldly knowledge. But it is not clear who precisely were the people from whom he benefitted. Four years before his death he wrote a book<sup>11</sup> in Persian on the life of Kākā Ṣāḥib, which was later on published from Delhi in two volumes under the title, *Muqāmāt-i Qutbia wa Muqālāt-i Qudusia*, in 1318 H/A.D. 1900–1901.

The book primarily deals with the life and teachings of Kākā Ṣāḥib. Volume I entitled *Muqāmāt-i Qutbia\** has 180 pages divided into 14 chapters whereas volume II, the *Muqālāt-i Qudusia,\*\** comprises of 181 pages. The book contains lessons regarding Kākā Ṣāḥib's life, habits, education, way of life ṣūfism, date of birth, date of death and his genealogy.

In A.D. 1661 Ḥalīm Gul built the tomb of his father<sup>12</sup> and invited Indian masons to do the needful. The expenditure was met through donations.

Shaikh 'Abd al-Ḥalīm followed his father in the Suharwardia<sup>13</sup> *maslik* (way) of ṣūfism.

## TOMB

Ḥalīm Gul's tomb is a rectangular structure measuring 10.40 x 5.20m and having a flat wooden roof. In the eastern wall a wooden doorway (1.9 x 1.2m) provides access to the grave chamber. The ceiling is made up of four wooden beams and, placed at regular intervals, are several rafters which cover the intervening spaces.

Externally the front wall of the tomb is relieved with plain rectangular panels disposed in two rows in stucco plaster with no decoration. Above the row of panels is a projected stone eaves (*chajja*) without any decorative features. Each of the four corners of the rectangular chamber has a minaret. On the western side the minarets are smaller and square in shape, while those on the front (eastern) side are taller and octagonal. Two more octagonal minarets stand just above the entrance and are joined together by a horizontal row of ornamental merlons.

## DECORATION

Internally the tomb is richly decorated with stamped star-shaped designs in stucco executed on the dado level. Above this level, is a horizontal row of large rectangular panels sunk

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\* Meaning 'the Spiritual Stations of a Qutb'.

\*\* Meaning 'the Sacred Sayings'.

into plaster and topped with a running acanthus leaf pattern in stucco relief (Pl. Ia). There is another row of acanthus leaves above it, but this time nicely carved in wooden superstructure. The panels are decorated with different types of flower plants in vases (Pl. Ib) and fruit dishes. The most typical of the decorative scheme is the west side where almost the entire surface of the wall, demarcated by the large panels referred to above, shows two rows of painted designs. Of these the bottom row, interspersed with four arched niches flanked by small rectangular panels, is profusely decorated with miscellaneous painted patterns in what may be called a local variety of tempera. Among the motifs employed flower plants (Pl. II) are the most frequent. In the upper row the entire area is divided up into square and rectangular panels again showing flower plant designs. In the middle of this row is the Muslim creed formula written in *Naskh* in four lines. The word Muḥammad (PBUH) in the last line is written twice from two different directions. This is as follows:

The panels are separated from each other by narrow bands showing stamped floral designs in stucco. The east wall is almost similarly decorated except that the entrance on this side interrupts the flow. Nor is there any calligraphic panel corresponding to that of the west wall. The north and the south are also similar so far as their decoration is concerned. In the upper part of the wall are ventilators for air and light.

Among the fruits which can be easily recognised are included apple, grapes, mango and melon. The most prominent colours are green, yellow, red and blue.

An over all view of the decorative scheme suggests continuity from the Mughal times. It can be compared with paintings found in other Mughal monuments in the N.W.F.P. such as the Dilazāk and Paloṣi Pīrān<sup>14</sup> tombs so far as its motifs are concerned. The technique of painting is also the same. But the obvious lack of refinement and firmness of line—the hall-mark of Mughal mural paintings — found together with stamped designs in stucco suggests a late 19th or early 20th century date. The floor is flagged with modern tiles disposed in astral designs. In decorative designs fruit dishes in the shape of a tray and flower pots or vases are found plentifully. The vases are decorated with floral designs.

## GRAVES

Besides the main grave, are clustered seventeen additional graves in the same chamber. The main grave (4.8 x 1.13m) belongs to ‘Abd al-Halīm Bābā and the others are of his descendants. All the graves are plastered with modern cement. Nothing is written on them.

Thus Ḥalīm Gul Bābā’s tomb stands distinctively apart from the late 19th century tomb architecture of the NWFP where the predominant type was a domed square chamber.

## REFERENCES

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9. *Ibid*, pp. 311, 312; Bahādur Shāh Zafar Kākā Khel, *op. cit.*, p. 213.
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11. *Ibid*, p. 212.
12. *Ibid*, p. 213; I'jāz al-Ḥaḡ Quddūsī, *op. cit.*, p. 301; Gopal Das, *Tāriḡh-i Peshāwar*, (Urdū), Lāhore, 1874, p. 335.
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14. 'Abdur Raḡmān, 'Shaikh Imam al-Din and his tomb at Palosi Piran', *The proceedings of the Hijra celebration Symposium on Islamic Art, Calligraphy, Architecture and Archaeology*, Vol I, Peshāwar, 1981, p. 121.

Pl. Ia. Ziārat Kākā Şāhib: Tomb of Ḥalīm Gul Bābā showing internal painted and stucco decoration.



Pl. Ib. Ziārat Kākā Şāhib: Tomb of Ḥalīm Gul Bābā showing internal painted and stucco decoration.

Pl. IIa. Ziārat Kākā Şāhib: Tomb of Ḥalīm Gul Bābā showing internal painted and stucco decoration.



Pl. IIb. Ziārat Kākā Şāhib: Tomb of Ḥalīm Gul Bābā showing internal painted and stucco decoration.