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Title

"Zikri Religion: Disputes Regarding Its Founder and an Analysis of the Scholarly and Spiritual Roles of Its Prominent Scholars

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"Zikri Religion: Disputes Regarding Its Founder and an Analysis of the Scholarly and Spiritual Roles of Its Prominent Scholars"

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Abstract

This paper examines the founder of the Zikri faith and the biographical accounts of its prominent scholars, while critically analyzing the long-standing historical misconception regarding its origins. The study highlights that most historians, without proper verification, have continuously repeated the claim that Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri, the founder of the Mahdavi movement, was also the leader and founder of the Zikri faith. However, this assertion lacks credible evidence and is not supported by historical or factual data.

Furthermore, although traditional historiography often merges Mahdavi and Zikri traditions, this research demonstrates that there exists a clear doctrinal and ideological distinction between the two. The theological and ritual framework of the Zikri faith cannot be traced back to Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri. Instead, historical and textual evidence confirms that the true founder of the Zikri religion was Muhammad Atki (or Utki), whose teachings represent an independent intellectual and spiritual development, distinct from Mahdavi principles.

Additionally, the study reveals that regional politics, juristic rivalries, and polemical writings over time have distorted historical realities, resulting in false accusations and misrepresentations of key religious figures.

The research also emphasizes the importance of conducting ethnographic field studies on contemporary Zikri communities to promote an objective and evidence-based understanding of this complex religious phenomenon. Moreover, it includes an analytical overview of the biographies of notable Zikri scholars, shedding light on their intellectual and spiritual contributions.

Keywords: Mahdavi, Movement, Zikri, Faith, Jaunpuri, Muhammad Atki, Sectarian Identity, Reformist Movements, Historical-Critical Method.

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The Zikri Religion in Historical Perspective

Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri, who claimed to be the Mahdi, was born in 847 AH (1443 CE) in Jaunpur — a renowned city of the province of Oudh (Awadh), India. His followers came to be known as Mahdavis.

Muhammad Jaunpuri (born: September 9, 1443 CE / 842 AH – died: April 23, 1505 CE) was an Indian ascetic who proclaimed himself as the awaited Mahdi. Both the Mahdavi and Zikri sects regard him as the Mahdi.

He traveled to Iran (Khorasan) and the Hijaz, where he declared his Mahdiyyah (claim to be the Mahdi) in Makkah. On returning to India, he continued to preach the Mahdavi doctrine, traveling as far as Afghanistan. He lived for sixty-two years. His followers referred to him respectfully as Miran Syed Muhammad Mahdi Ma'ood. According to Muntakhab al-Tawarikh and Matla' al-Wilayah, his father's name was Syed Khan and his mother's name, as recorded by the author of Matla' al-Wilayah, was Bibi Akha Malik.¹

However, later Mahdavi writers, after some generations, began recording his father's name as Syed Abdullah, when no direct descendants of Jaunpuri remained. The reason for this alteration was to make his claim conform to the well-known Prophetic tradition stating that "The Mahdi's name will correspond to my name, and his father's name to my father's name." Thus, by naming his father Abdullah, they sought to validate his claim to Mahdiyyah. Moreover, Burhanuddin Mahdi, the author of Shawahid al-Wilayah, even declared his mother's name to be Aminah, thereby fully shaping his teacher's lineage to fit the Prophetic description of the Mahdi.²

In reality, Syed Muhammad himself never claimed that his father's name was Abdullah or that his mother's name was Amina. On the contrary, when people questioned him, saying that the Prophet ﷺ had declared, "The Mahdi's name will correspond to my name, and his father's name to my father's name," he replied:

"Is God, the Almighty and All-Powerful, not capable of appointing the son of Syed Khan as the Mahdi?"

Similarly, when one of his opponents attempted to defeat him through argument, Syed Muhammad, in a state of indignation, said:

"Why do you not wage war against God Himself, who has made the son of Syed Khan the Mahdi?"

Syed Muhammad was tall, handsome, and intelligent; his brilliance and natural intellect were evident from childhood.³

Some scholars of the Zikri faith regard Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri as their founder. However, this claim does not withstand critical scrutiny. In two

separate analytical studies of his teachings and beliefs, it is evident that the doctrines of the Mahdavi movement bear no resemblance to those of the Zikri faith. Therefore, the alternative position — that Muhammad Atki (or Utki) was the actual founder of the Zikri religion — is far more consistent with historical and theological evidence.

The Zikri Religion in Historical Context

The Zikri faith has a history of approximately 450 years. According to its foundational sources, the founder of this religion was Muhammad Atki, who hailed from the city of Attock in Punjab. His exact date of birth and lineage remain obscure, and even the Zikri texts themselves provide little reliable information about these details ⁴

According to Zikri sources, Mulla Muhammad Atki appeared (was born) in 977 AH (circa 1569 CE). The following couplet by Shaykh Muhammad Qasr Qandi holds significant importance in this context:

“When nine hundred and seventy-seven years had passed since the Hijrah of Prophet Ahmad ﷺ,

that pure soul (Mulla Muhammad Atki) set foot in Hindustan.”

(Qasr Qandi, Untitled Manuscript, dated 1037 AH, p. 119)

He supported this with a purported ḥadīth:

“O Abu Bahr! You ask when the Mahdi will appear. The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘He will come after my death from the land of Hind, in the year seventy-seven and nine hundred (977 AH). His name will be like mine, and his father’s name like my father’s.’”⁵

However, no authentic ḥadīth with these exact words exists in any canonical collection. Only the last part — “His name will be like my name and his father’s name like my father’s name” — appears in Jami‘ al-Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Fitan, Bab Ma Ja’a fi al-Mahdi.⁶

According to this narrative, the Zikri scholars claim that the Mahdi appeared in 977 AH in India, bearing a name and lineage similar to the Prophet ﷺ.

The prominent Zikri scholar Qazi Ibrahim Panjguri wrote the following verses about Mulla Muhammad Atki:

He descended to earth from the heavens above,

The world was illuminated by his arrival.

When the year nine hundred seventy-seven was complete,

The promised one came into being.

With the advent of the appointed time,

The hidden light (Noor-e-Khafi) was made manifest.⁷

The numerical value of Noor-e-Khafi is 977, symbolizing the year of his appearance.

According to Zikri writings, after Mulla Muhammad Atki's manifestation at Attock, he instructed his followers to build a beautiful mosque on a high mountain. Qazi Ibrahim Panjguri describes it poetically:

At the command of the noble leader of the caravan,

They built a place of worship upon a lofty hill.

They cleansed the site and erected the sacred house,

So splendid it seemed like a garden from Paradise.⁸

Muhammad Ishaq Darazi,

a Baloch Zikri author who wrote *Who Are the Zikris?*, elaborates on the general Zikri belief that Imam Mahdi Mulla Muhammad Atki descended from the heavens. The Zikris believe that when God created Adam (peace be upon him) from the dust of the earth, He promised that the earth would one day be blessed by the footsteps of the Mahdi. Therefore, they hold that Mulla Muhammad Atki descended in human form, wearing simple ascetic garb, his face radiant with divine light.

His arrival remained hidden from the masses; only those of exceptional intellect and spiritual insight recognized him and accompanied him like devoted moths circling a flame. Others, unaware of his true nature, dismissed him as a mere dervish. He appeared on a Monday night at dawn, in 977 AH, upon a high mountain near Attock, in human form and ascetic dress.⁹

During his spiritual journey, some companions remained with him until the end, while others, unable to endure the trials, departed. Qazi Ibrahim Panjguri writes about his loyal followers:

Those who remained steadfast saw his radiant face.

Eighty (80) sincere believers, who had faith in the unseen,

Endured the trials and succeeded in their devotion,

While those who could not persevere departed,

Depriving themselves of divine grace.¹⁰

Although detailed and verifiable information about Muhammad Mahdi Atki's early life is scarce, Zikri sources mention that he was a native of Attock and appeared in 977 AH. He was well-versed in religious sciences and once engaged in a debate with the renowned scholar Akhund Darwiza Baba, a contemporary theologian and reformer.

However, no records identify his parents or formal teachers. From Akhund Darwiza's book *Tazkirat al-Abrar wa al-Ashrar*, it appears that Mulla

Muhammad Atki did not believe in the finality of prophethood (Khatm-e-Nubuwwat). After losing the debate, he fled to Makran, where he reappeared later as the founder of the Zikri faith. His disappearance or death occurred around 1029 AH (1619 CE). His religious writings include *Burhan*, also known as *Kanz al-Asrar* and *Wahidaniyah*, though these works are now considered lost or hidden. No record exists of his marriage or descendants.

The earliest historical mention of him appears in Akhund Darwiza Baba's (940–1048 AH) work *Tazkirat al-Abrar wa al-Ashrar*, which documents their debate on the issue of the finality of prophethood.

Akhund Darwiza (d. 1048 AH) was a 16th-century Pashto scholar, theologian, and opponent of heterodox movements. His known works include *Makhruq al-Salam*, *Irshad al-Murideen*, and *Tazkirat al-Abrar wa al-Ashrar*. He studied under Mulla Jamal al-Din Hindustani and Pir Baba Syed Ali Tirmizi. His shrine is located in Hazara, near Peshawar¹¹

In *Tazkirat al-Abrar wa al-Ashrar*, Akhund Darwiza refers to his opponent as Mulla Rahmatullah Atki, but historical evidence suggests that the person he debated was, in fact, Muhammad Mahdi Atki (977–1029 AH), who later fled to Makran and became the founder of the Zikri religion. Darwiza records this as follows:

"He claimed that he was going to the House of God (Ka'bah),
but instead he made himself known in the region of Kech, Makran."

(*Tazkirat al-Abrar wa al-Ashrar*, ed. Idara Nashr wa Ishaat Sarhad, p. 220)*

This removes the doubt that Mulla Muhammad Mahdi Atki (Rahmatullah Atki) might have been someone else. This view is further supported by a well-known Zikri scholar, Muhammad Qasr Qandi, in the following couplet:

"You are Rahmatullah, the Light of God,
Never separate from your friends and kin."¹²

From this evidence, it appears that Mulla Rahmatullah Atki, in order to avoid humiliation or to strengthen his claim of being the Mahdi, changed his name to Muhammad after migrating from his original region. The debate between him and Akhund Darwiza Baba also suggests that Mulla Muhammad Mahdi Atki must have spent his early years acquiring religious education, reaching such intellectual maturity that he could engage in theological discussions with renowned scholars of his time.

However, no historical record mentions his teachers or the centers of learning where he studied. Likewise, the exact date and location of his debate with Akhund Darwiza remain uncertain. According to historical accounts, Mulla Atki returned from his spiritual journey and arrived in Kech Makran around

1019 AH, where he spent ten years on Koh-e-Murad before disappearing (or passing away).¹³

Zikri sources claim that Muhammad Mahdi's travels lasted for about twenty-three (23) years, suggesting that his debate with Akhund Darwiza Baba likely took place around 997 AH.¹⁴

Zikri Scholars and Literary Figures

1. Availability of Biographical Data:

The biographical details of Zikri scholars and writers are scarcely found in classical or modern literature. In an effort to gather such information, contact was made with Muslim Zikri Anjuman Ittihad through Ram Das Gallery, Lyari, via Abdul Ghaffar Muhammad Sardar Mahdavi Bhutto Nagar. However, no useful data emerged. Later, a meeting was held with Dr. Inam-ul-Haq Kauser, a distinguished Balochistan scholar, in Quetta.

Dr. Kauser earned his M.A. from the University of the Punjab in 1953 with distinction. He joined government service and was appointed as a lecturer at Degree College Quetta in 1956. In 1973, he became the first scholar from Balochistan to receive a Ph.D. He later served as Assistant Professor at the University of Balochistan, Principal of Government College, Chairman of the Balochistan Educational Board, and Director of Curriculum. He authored more than seventy books, mainly on the history and culture of Balochistan. During an interview conducted on 14 July 1998 in Quetta, he confirmed that no comprehensive biographical accounts of Zikri scholars or writers are currently available.

Biographical Notes on Zikri Scholars and Writers

The scholars of the Zikri sect actively participated in missionary and preaching work but paid limited attention to writing and documentation.

(1) Shaykh Muhammad Qasr Qandi

In the Zikri community, the term Shaykh (locally "Shay") refers to a learned, pious, and religious leader. Shaykh Muhammad Qasr Qandi is regarded as one of the earliest and most respected Zikri figures. A study of his life reveals that he authored no known works related to the Qur'an, Hadith, or Fiqh. However, his Persian prose and poetry are preserved in handwritten manuscripts among Zikri followers.

(2) Mulla Ibrahim Panjguri

Another important figure is Mulla Ibrahim Panjguri. Although well-versed in Islamic sciences, his written contributions are limited. He is credited with a

short Persian treatise titled Tafsir Zikr Allah ("Commentary on the Remembrance of God"), which discusses the spiritual significance of Zikr according to Zikri beliefs. This work, along with its Urdu translation, was published in Karachi by Mazhar Umarani.

He also authored Dar Sadaf, a Persian book that exists both in print (Karachi edition) and manuscript form. This text provides a detailed account of the life of Noor Muhammad Mahdi and his companions based on Zikri doctrine, making it one of the primary sources for understanding the origins of the faith.

(3) Mulla Abu Bakr

His full name was Chiragh Abu Bahr bin Syed Chiragh Musa. He belonged to the Mullai family of Zikris in Makran and lived during the 18th century CE. His exact dates of birth and death are unknown. Mulla Abu Bakr was a poet who composed verses in Persian. His poetry primarily reflects religious devotion and mystical thought, rich in Sufi symbolism and moral reflection.

Sample Verse:

(Not included in the original excerpt, but his works are characterized by deep spiritual longing and unity with the Divine.)

Begin with the praise of God — the One without partner, pure and exalted.

وحده پاک لاشریک حمد الله ابتدا کن بگو حمد الله

Begin by saying: Praise be to Allah, the One and Only, without partner — all praise belongs to God.

His sacred essence, spotless and radiant, O Glorious One,

بار عصیا گردنم بردار ذات پاک بے شگوں جل الله

Pure and flawless is the Divine Essence; O Glorious Lord, remove the burden of sin from my neck.

Remove the rust of darkness from my heart,

ترک باطل زنفس مابردار زنگ ظلمات از قلب بردار

Cleanse the rust of darkness from the heart, and take away the falsehood from within my soul.¹⁵

On the Unity of God (Tawhid)

واحد الپاک لاثریک حمد الله ابتدا کن بگو قل هو الله

Begin by saying "Say: He is Allah, the One" — the Pure, without trace or likeness — all praise belongs to God.

ذکر توحید لا اله الا الله الله ذات پاک چگوں جل الله

The Divine Essence is pure, resplendent — the remembrance of Unity: "There is no god but Allah."

On the Inner Self (Batin)

چون نیاید حق رحمت با چون ندارد درد باطن با

When the heart feels no pain within, how can Divine mercy enter it?

ذکر توحید لا اله الا الله رح زرد می بری محشر با

How will you escape from the terrors of Judgment without the remembrance:

"There is no god but Allah?"

توبه کردن بهوائے نفسانی خویش را توبه لکن زشیطان

Protect yourself from the deceit of Satan and the snares of your own desires.¹⁶

On the Blessing of Divine Remembrance

ذکر توحید لا اله الا الله برکت ذکر رب سبحانی

The blessing lies in remembering the Sublime Lord — in the chant of Unity:

"There is no god but Allah."

آن کسان مخلصان درگاه نیست برکه را عمل سخاوت نیست

He who lacks generosity of deed has no sincerity in the Divine court.

ذکر توحید لا اله الا الله قسمت نور معرفت هم نیست

He is deprived of the light of gnosis who neglects the remembrance: "There is no god but Allah."

در دو عالم ابرو داری در سخاوت تفاوت کن باری

Show generosity, for through it you will gain honor in both worlds.

ذکر توحید لا اله الا الله عمرش اعظم دلش برداری

Let the heart be lifted through this remembrance: "There is no god but Allah."

ذکر توحید لا اله الا الله قالب القلب چون زرحمانی

When the heart's form becomes Divine, remember: "There is no god but Allah."

کن عطا به امت دانی شربت معرفت بوشانی

Grant the drink of Divine knowledge — bestow it upon the knowing ones of your community.

ذکر توحید لا اله الا الله بخش ایشا که علم روحانی

Give them spiritual understanding — the remembrance of Unity: "There is no god but Allah."¹⁷

Mulla Qazi Ibrahim Panjguri

Mulla Qazi Ibrahim Panjguri was a native of Tasp Bustani, a small town in Panjgur (Balochistan). He was born in 1728 CE. His father's name was Mirza Muhammad Noot and he belonged to the Kashani tribe. Initially, he served as a Qazi (judge)

in Panjgur but later adopted Zikri beliefs, settled in Turbat, and died there. His poetry abundantly reflects his religious ideas — focused on mysticism, love, and divine unity. He composed hymns, odes, ghazals, and praises, often addressing spiritual leaders with deep reverence. His poetic pen-name was Ibrahim.

Sample Poem (Hamd and Praise)

کنم نعت مهدی صاحب زمان پس ز حمد آن ریزو کاروان

After the praise of the Divine, I turn to the caravan of praise — I compose a eulogy for Mahdi, the Master of the Age.

غنچه کشایم دین در کلام درویش غایم ز جانشین سلام

I greet the hidden dervish, the successor of truth, and unfold the flower of faith in my words.

صحابان داعی آغاز کن بهر نغمه وصف سازم درین

For this melody of praise I prepare the tune; let the companions and preachers begin their chorus.

بخود ساز کرویای آشنا به بال خورد پیر به موج سما

The elder soars on the waves of ecstasy, mingling with the celestial angels.

سماع ساز با بن که شیدا شدم مغنی بیا نغمه در پریم

O minstrel, come! Sing — let me whirl in divine dance, for I am lost in love.

که مجنون ولیلی و سرور دران خروش ز جان و دل آرام جان

From the heart's depth rises a cry of passion — Majnun for his Layla, and joy in that madness.

بخویم خیرنم تار میخیز ازین پیکر مگر شود ایز جانی

If the soul departs from this body, it will rise like fragrance from the beloved's locks.

چو در صدف امهرش در دل شد مرادم از یک کا حاصل شد

My purpose is fulfilled — when the pearl of love settled within the shell of my heart.

وگه باز کر جمع شوند در تحد بسم تو ده کردند خاک جسد

In Your name they buried the dust of my body; one day, all will be gathered again by Your command.¹⁸

Praise of the Prophet (Na'at)

تعریف نعت بیحد صلوت بر محمد صلوت پر محمد آن نور پاک سرمد

Blessings upon Muhammad, the eternal radiant Light — praise beyond measure be upon Muhammad.

شوئیم زنگ از جان صلوات بر محمد گویم ای عزیزان صلوات بر محمد
O beloved ones, send blessings upon Muhammad — let us cleanse our hearts'
rust by invoking his name.

دانی که اوست بهتر صلوات بر محمد آن صدر بدر سر در سالار حشر و محشر
He is the chief, the full moon of guidance, the leader of Resurrection — you
know, none is greater than Muhammad.¹⁹

On the Virtues of the Mahdi

نعت رسول گویم از خلق بهتر است بعد از ثنائی ایزد داور ذوالمنن
After praising the Generous Lord, I find it most fitting to sing the Prophet's
praise from the depths of my heart.

جمله طفیل مهدی ساقی کوثر است جنات و حور نوری و جن و انس
The gardens of paradise, the houris, angels, and mankind — all owe their joy
to Mahdi, the Cupbearer of Kawthar.

آن کواکب هدایت بر جمله راہبر است آن آفتاب ملت آن پیشوا خلق
He is the sun of the nation, the leader of creation, the guiding constellation for
all who seek²⁰

Longing for the Hidden Mahdi

دو چشمم آن تو دارم روشنائی کجائی مهدی مخفی کجائی
Where are you, O Hidden Mahdi? My eyes draw light only from your vision.

بجز تو قلب ماموری نه دارم بجز تو چشم من نور نه دارم
Except for you, my eyes have no light; except for you, my heart has no
command or peace.

و ما غم پویائی از تو دارم جمال روشنائی از تو دارم
My beauty and illumination are from you; my sorrow and yearning are also
from you.

به گفت اهل بیت را ابراهیم ثانی توئی دانا اظهار روٹھائی
You are the knower of secrets — so said Ibrahim Thani (the second Ibrahim)
among the people of the Household.²¹

On the Creation and the Divine Order

نہد نقطه در اندر صدف بنام خدائی چو تیر هدف
In the name of God — like an arrow to its target — He placed the point within
the shell.

بر آورد خلق عجائب از آن صدف بطن در وجود نقطه دان
The shell of existence bore a drop — and wondrous creation emerged
therefrom.

بسر در زمان تاج فرفش نهاد بر آورد شخص از دین خاک زاد
He raised a being born of dust and placed upon his head the crown of time.

بنوعیکه ایزد بران خواسته دو عالم ز بهرش بر آراسته

Both worlds were adorned for his sake, for so the Almighty had willed.

دو بنیاد از نیک و بد در سرشت چو ایزاد گل آدمی را سرشت

When God shaped man from clay, He placed within him both good and evil as
twin foundations.

عطاء ز رحمت نوسنید را الهی بیا مرز خواننده را

O Lord, forgive the reader of these verses, and shower mercy upon the
listener.²²

Prominent Scholars and Poets of the Zikri Faith

Shay Amani

Shay Amani was a native of Ashar, a region in Iranian Balochistan. He lived during the eighteenth century CE, contemporaneous with Mir Nasir Khan Noori, the ruler of Kalat (r. 1794). His exact date of birth and death remain unknown.

According to Balochistan: Tarikh ki Roshni Mein (p. 507), Shay Amani served as commander of the Zikri forces of Ashar in the battle fought at Miri between the followers of the Zikris and the forces of Mir Nasir Khan Noori, during which many leaders, including Umar Kuchgi, were killed.

Like most poets of his era, Shay Amani primarily composed religious and moral poetry. His writings reveal a profound command of theology and a refined poetic imagination. He regarded Zikr (remembrance) and Fikr (reflection) as inseparable and expressed their importance as follows:

غافل مشو از ذکر جابل مشور فکری

بے ذکر و بے فکری بنده به چه کار آید

Be not heedless of remembrance, nor ignorant of reflection;

What use is a servant without remembrance and thought?

On the transience of worldly life and the certainty of death, he writes:

اے نظر کن کہ جہاں باغم است

ایک کہنہ وجود بکس رحم نہ کر دست

کس از شجر رونق او میوه نخورست

مرگ آمدنی است ز نو باز نہ گردد

Behold the world — it is but a garden of grief,

An old existence that shows mercy to none.

None has tasted fruit from its tree of splendor;

Death shall come, and none shall return.²³

Comparing youth and old age, he observes:

جوانی چون درخت میوه دار است

گل در هجرت بوستان کنار است

به پیری می‌آسی مانند خار است

عجیب فصل و بهار ارا نوجوانی

Youth is like a fruitful tree;

its flowers bloom in the garden of life.

Old age is but a barren thorn;

how wondrous is the springtime of youth!²⁴

On morality and manners, he remarks:

آنکه در عشق می نازند

بهتر آنند که آدب نازند

بالدب سنگ می شور گوهر

بے ادب کمتر نازند گاو و خر

Those who take pride in love are better still when graced with manners;

Politeness turns a stone into a gem,

But without manners, even ox and donkey boast in vain.²⁵

Shay Jalaluddin Khan

Shay (Sheikh) Jalaluddin Khan, son of Kamil Khan, hailed from the prominent Sheikh family of the Zikri community in Qasr-e-Qand, Iranian Balochistan. He lived during the 12th century AH (18th century CE). According to Zikri tradition, he was the grandson of Shay Hamd Darfishan, and thus descended from a distinguished family of scholars and poets.

He composed poetry on a wide range of themes — divine praise (hamd), prophetic eulogy (na't), supplication (munajat), ghazals, and elegies — primarily reflecting religious, ethical, and mystical ideas.

Sample of Hamd (Praise of God):

حمد ایزد ز سر صدق بگو از دل و جان

قادر و قاهر بے چون خداوند جهان

Praise be to God, uttered with sincerity of heart and soul —
the Powerful, the Absolute, the incomparable Lord of all worlds.

بادشاهی که بار است به حکم

آسمان را زیر زیر زمین کرد عیاں

A King whose command sustains the heavens,

Who made manifest the depths of the earth.²⁶

On the vanity of worldly youth:

ای نوجوان بے خرد کردی گناه بے عدد

غافل منشور از حال فرد عمر عزیزت می‌رود

O heedless youth, you have sinned beyond count;
Wake up! Your precious life slips away day by day.²⁷

He writes of himself:

جلال بسم تو دل می برد چو آب
خوب کسی خورد لقمه زد محاله

Jalal, in Your name, my heart melts like water;
Fortunate is he who tastes a morsel of Your grace.

And regarding his lineage:

جلال ابن کمال خانم کمین جمله یا رام
بهر نومی غزل خوانم برای طالبان بشنو

I, Jalal, son of Kamil Khan, the humblest of servants,
Recite ghazals for those who seek — listen to my song.²⁸

Shay Sulaiman

Shay Sulaiman was the son of Muhammad Darfishan Qasr-Qandi, a distinguished Zikri scholar. He grew up in the scholarly and spiritual environment of Qasr-e-Qand, under his father's tutelage, which inspired his poetic inclination.

He began composing verse during his father's lifetime, and one of his poems dates to 1158 AH (1745 CE).

Sample Verse:

الف متعه بود و ثمان از حضرت سبع مرسلان
تحریر شد در زبان رحمی بکن اے پرده پوش

When the letters reached completion through the seven Prophets,
It was inscribed in language divine — have mercy, O Veiled One!

In praise of God, he says:

گویم ثنائی کردگار آن بادشاه بر قرار
صنعت گردد بر درد گارا رحمی بکن اے پرده پوش

I speak the praise of the Everlasting King, the Creator —
Have mercy, O Veiled One, upon Your weary servant.²⁹

In Praise of the Prophet:

چون اول و آخر توئی در باطن و ظاهر توئی
کے را رسد ماد من ارجی بمن اے پرده پوش

You are the First and the Last, the Seen and the Hidden —
Who can surpass me in love for You, O Veiled One?³⁰

Mulla Shahdost

Mulla Shahdost, son of Mulla Kaman, belonged to the Mullai family of Kech-Makran. Little is known about his life, though he was a Zikri by faith. Shay Abdul Rahman preserved two of his poems.

Sample Na't (Praise of the Prophet):

بگویم نعت سردار نبیان
رسول جن و انس عالمیان
شفاعت خواه جمع امتیان
سردارم قربان بیدار محمد

I sing the praise of the Leader of Prophets,
The Messenger to jinn and humankind,
The intercessor of all nations —

My master, may I be sacrificed for the sight of Muhammad.

He also wrote advisory and moral poetry, such as:

نصحت گوش از من برادر
بگن از قول فرقانے تو باور

Listen, my brother, to my counsel —
Believe in the message of the Qur'an.³¹

Mir Sher Ali Jangi

Mir Sher Ali Jangi was the son of Mir Abdullah Jangi, the ruler of Qasr-e-Qand, and the nephew of Muhammad Darfishan. He hailed from a poetic and literary family, though detailed records of his life are unavailable. His poems were preserved by Shay Abdul Rahman, reflecting spiritual devotion and religious fervor.

Syed Abdul Karim Shah

Syed Abdul Karim Shah was a Zikri religious leader in Kalat, belonging to a Sayyid family. He was highly revered within the community. He passed away in 1988 and was buried within the Zikri enclosure at Mewa Shah Cemetery, Karachi.

After his death, his son Syed Mazloor Ahmad Shah succeeded him as religious head, while Syed Dad Karim, a former member of the Balochistan Assembly, managed external affairs due to Mazloor's young age.

Sample Verse:

مهدی که نور آخرین
کل مرسلانی سرور دیان
من عرض دارم ازین
یا مهدی آخر زمان
تو قادر و رب رحیم
رحم بن بر عبد الکرم

Mahdi, the final Light,
The leader of all Messengers, the guide of faith —
I offer my plea: O Mahdi of the Last Age,
You are the Powerful, the Merciful Lord —
Have mercy upon Your servant Abdul Karim.³²

Prominent Scholars and Poets of the Zikri Faith (Continued)

Mulla Izzat

Mulla Izzat was a native of Sarbaz, a town in Iranian Balochistan. He belonged to a family of Zikri Mullāyīn (religious scholars). Throughout his life, he remained deeply devoted to the defense and propagation of the Zikri faith, enduring numerous hardships for this cause. He ultimately left his homeland and migrated to Turbat, where he spent the rest of his life. Detailed biographical information about him, however, remains obscure.

Sample Verse — Na‘t (Eulogy of the Prophet ﷺ):

اے دلایر خیز خوان نعت رسول انس و جن
آن شفیع یوم محشر ماه و سالار جہاں
ای بدرگاہ رفیع محرم اسرار دان
چشمہ علم یقین از کرم بارد بیان
گویم عزت از دل و جان نعمت آن سلطان دین
بلبل باغ جنان و نور رب العالمین

Arise, O brave heart, and sing the praise of the Prophet of mankind and jinn,
The intercessor of the Day of Judgment, the moon and master of the world.

O guardian of the exalted court, knower of divine secrets,

The fountain of certain knowledge flows from Your grace.

I, Izzat, proclaim from heart and soul the bounty of that King of Faith —

The nightingale of Paradise, the light of the Lord of the Worlds.³³

On the Majesty of the Mahdi:

از شافع المسلمین ختم جملہ مرسلین
تاجداران جملہ شاہان مہدی صاحب زمان

From the intercessor of Muslims, the seal of all Messengers,

The crown among kings — Mahdi, the Lord of the Age.³⁴

Aziz Lari

Aziz Lari was a resident of Laristan, in Iranian Balochistan, hence known by his regional title Lari. He served in the army of Mir Nasir Khan, the ruler of Kalat, and played a significant role in the promotion and dissemination of Zikri

teachings. He compiled the sayings of Muhammad Mahdi Asli in a Persian treatise titled *Haqiqat-e-Noor-e-Pāk wa Safarnāma-e-Mahdi*, also known among the Zikris as *Risāla-e-Azīzīyah* (1029 AH). His detailed biographical data remain unknown.

Sample Verse:

ای دل مکن گناه که تحقیق مردن است
ای نیک کن که قیامت رسیدن است
ای دل سفر ز دنیا تحقیق کردن است
دین دار بے بقادران دار رفتن است
اے دل فدائے مرگ ترا ہم شنیدن است
صبح اجل ز مطلع عمرت رسیدن است
نوشه براه سائے که تنہا روی بگرد
با منکر نکیر جواب دادن است

O heart, sin not, for death is certain;

Do good, for the Day of Judgment is approaching.

The journey from this world is inevitable;

The pious shall depart to the eternal abode.

O heart, be ready for death's call;

The dawn of fate rises from the horizon of life.

Prepare your answer, for the angels of questioning await.³⁵

On the Unity of God:

یقین میدان در برد نیا که لا معبود الا هو
ولا موجود فی الکونین لا مقصود الا هو
چو تیغ بد است آری بیا تنہا چو غم داری
بجو از غیر حق یاری کہ نشا الا هو

Be firm in faith, O seeker, that none is worshipped but He;

None exists in the two worlds, none is sought but He.

When grief cuts you like a sword, seek no aid but from Him,

For there is no helper but God, *lā ma'būd illā Hu.*³⁶

He lived during the eleventh century AH and is regarded as one of the devoted disciples of Muhammad Mahdi Itki, thus honored among the Zikris.

Maulvi Faqir Muhammad Sindhi

Maulvi Faqir Muhammad Sindhi was among the Zikri religious scholars

(*Mullāyīn*). His exact dates of birth and death are unknown. He authored a

book titled "Main Zikri Hoon" (I Am a Zikri), written in Urdu, to instruct Zikri

followers on religious matters such as Zikr, fasting, marriage, initiation

(*bay'at*), prayer, and funeral rites. On page 4 of his book, he clarifies that the

work is not meant for debate or controversy, but purely for the guidance and benefit of Zikri adherents.

Although he was called Sindhi due to his residence in Karachi, scholars confirm that he was ethnically Baloch, since the Zikri community historically does not include non-Baloch members.

Shay Gul Muhammad

Shay Gul Muhammad was born in 1886. His father, Shay Abdul Rahman, descended from Shay Muhammad Darfishan Qasr-Qandi. Among Zikri scholars, his name is held in great esteem. Through tireless effort, he compiled a manuscript containing selected works of prominent Zikri poets, thus preserving their literary legacy for posterity. This handwritten collection (still unpublished) is regarded as a treasured document among Zikri circles. Though originally from Qasr-e-Qand, he later migrated to Kech Makran, where he lived until his death in 1956, at the age of seventy.

Sample Verse:

گر کسی پرسے بلاد این مسکین
فی البلاد از بلاد قصر قند دان
از سکونت نشته ام در کیچ
مسکنم است از ملک در مکران

If one should ask of this poor man's land,
Know it is from the city of Qasr-e-Qand.
Yet I dwell now in Kech,
My home lies in the land of Makran.

بیا ساقیا باره جام ده
که یک خبر نوشم پیاله بده
چون توفیق باشدم را کار ساز
کنم نظم توصیف آن بے نیاز

Come, O cupbearer, pour me a goblet —
Let me taste the wine of divine remembrance.
If granted grace, I shall compose
Verses in praise of the Self-Sufficient One.³⁷

He prays humbly:

خطا کروم بے عصیان یارب
توئی واقف ہمہ احوال یارب
امیدوار است گل محمد بدرگاہ
امیدم بر آر از لطف یارب

O Lord, I have sinned — You know all my faults.

Gul Muhammad hopes in Your mercy;

Grant me my wish through Your compassion, O Lord.³⁸

And about himself, he writes:

مسکین تو گل محمد عیاں
روز و شبای تسبیح خواں
رحمی بکن ای کار ساز

I am the humble Gul Muhammad, ever engaged in prayer —
Have mercy upon me, O Provider.³⁹

Shay Muhammad Darfishan Qasr-Qandi

Shay Muhammad Darfishan Qasr-Qandi, whose given name and poetic pen name were both Muhammad, bore the title "Darfishan". He was born in 1040 AH. His father was Shay Jalal, and his mother Maryam, daughter of Mir Abdullah Khan Jangi, ruler of Qasr-e-Qand.

His ancestry traces back, through five generations, to the renowned Sufi saint Hazrat Junayd Baghdadi (r.a.), as recorded in *Safīnah al-Awliya* by Dara Shikoh (tr. Muhammad Ali Lutfi, Karachi, 1959, p. 59). His forefathers migrated from Baghdad to Sharak, a town near Shiraz, Iran, before settling in Balochistan. He received his early education at home and became a master of both exoteric and esoteric sciences. His poetic collection, titled *Darwajūd*, consists of 2,412 verses, discussing themes of Divine Unity (Tawḥīd), the transience of worldly life, salvation and perdition, Judgment Day, Paradise, and Hell. He was also well-versed in history.

Sample Verse:

بسیاری از شاهنشاهان بسیاری از پیر و جوان
آمد بهارش را خزان جمله فناه جمله فناه
نوح نجی الله کجا ابن خلیل الله کجا
موسی کلیم الله کجا جمله فناه جمله فناه
لقمان و افلاطون کجا با مال کجا قارون کجا
یحیی کجا شمعون کجا جمله فناه جمله فناه

Many kings and elders have come and gone —

Their spring turned to autumn; all perished, all perished.

Where is Noah, the saved of God? Where is the son of Abraham?

Where is Moses, the speaker with God? All have perished, all perished.

Where are Luqman and Plato, and Qarun with his wealth?

Where is John, where is Simon? All have perished, all perished.⁴⁰

He also writes:

مادم صف با صف آید لشکر نم
برند دل از سکونت بر زمام
رو چشم بود دائم را فراقت
بمثل طوطی شکر دہانم

When ranks upon ranks march forth,
My heart detaches from worldly rest.
The sight of You is ever before my eyes;
My tongue, like the parrot's, is sweetened with remembrance.⁴¹

Of his own poetry, he remarks:

ای زبانی کہ بالفاظ سخن می‌گویی
من نمی‌دانم کہ آواز فصیحی ز کجایی
ای دل آن بہتر کہ ترک مردم آزادی کنی
دائماً ہائی و بجای بد نکو کاری کنی

O tongue that speaks with words of eloquence,
I know not whence comes your fluent voice.
O heart, better to abandon vain company,
And constantly replace evil with virtue.

He also wrote in Persian prose. His surviving manuscript includes treatises titled:

1. Mahdi Nāmāh
2. Mūsā Nāmāh
3. Seyr-e-Jahānī
4. Other untitled works

Among the Zikris, this manuscript was passed down for generations. Owing to his religious and intellectual contributions, he is revered as Shaykh al-Islam among the Zikris. He passed away in 1120 AH.⁴²

Prominent Zikri Scholars and Poets (Part III)

Mir Abdullah Khan Jangi

Mir Abdullah Khan Jangi was one of the eminent companions of Muhammad Mahdi Atki, the founder of the Zikri faith. Out of devotion to the Zikri cause, he abdicated his rule and accompanied Mahdi Atki to Turbat, where he lived thereafter. His title "Jangi" was derived from his mother's name. His father, Mir Ju'ayan, was the ruler of Qasr-e-Qand. Mir Abdullah himself was a ruler

and chief of the same region in Balochistan, renowned as a pious, devout, and learned scholar of Arabic and Persian.

He lived during the eleventh century AH and came from a family distinguished for its literary and poetic heritage. He was the maternal grandfather of Shaykh Muhammad Darfishān Qasr-Qandi.

Shaykh Muhammad Darfishān praised his grandfather's spiritual insight in these words:

یکے عارف در قصر قند بود
که در معرفت معدن پند بود

There was a sage in Qasr-e-Qand,

A mine of wisdom and a master of gnosis.⁴³

Sample Poem:

می‌گشایم از مرصد عبودیت زبان
گویم از جان حمد خلاق زمین و آسمان
صالحی که از صنع خود ازین در بوستان دید
دیدگاه می‌آورد بهار نگاه می‌آخر زمان
خالقی از جرم خاک آورد و آدم را ظهور
تاج کرمنای فرق سر نهاد

I open my tongue from the watchtower of servitude,
And from my soul I praise the Creator of earth and heaven.
The Righteous One, who by His art adorned the garden of this world,
Brings forth the spring of sight — the final age's vision.
The Creator shaped Adam from the dust,
And crowned his head with divine honor.

In Praise of the Mahdi:

بعد از توحید خداوند کرم ذو الجلال
گویشم از جان و صفت داعی حضرت زمان
گوهر درج رسالت رحمة للعالمین
انا ارسلناک رحمة دار نشان
پیشوای خلق نور اولین و آخرین
رهنمائی مشرق و مغرب امام انس و جان

After declaring the unity of the Almighty Lord,
My ears yearn for the attributes of the Caller of the Age.
The gem of prophethood, mercy to all worlds,
"We have sent you as a mercy" — His sign divine.
The guide of mankind, the light of the first and the last,
Leader of East and West, Imam of humans and jinn.⁴⁴

Mulla Madi Khan

Mulla Madi Khan was a resident of Ashar, a town in Iranian Balochistan. His biographical details are largely unknown. Shaykh Gul Muhammad preserved two of his long poems in his manuscript collection.

Selected Verses:

مراد بے بسو ہوئے ایمان
تمام گفت ز قول اسولان
نشان است آخر زمان
تحقیق برکت از ارض و سماء رفت
یا زبشش از دست عا رفت
تمام مرشدان دنیا پرستند
عصائے زہر تقوی شکستند
و نشان آفت آخر زمان است

Faith has been corrupted, the teachings of the ancestors forgotten;

The signs of the final age are manifest —

Blessings have departed from the earth and sky.

Guides have become seekers of the world,

The staff of piety is broken —

Indeed, the calamity of the end times has arrived.⁴⁵

In another poem, he reflects on the mortality of saints and believers:

اے ولابین کہ دوستان رفتند
چوں نیشنی کہ ہمدمان رفتند
شاہ درویش صابر و صادق
جملہ دن دار مومنان رفتند
محبت از درمان و برکت از دنیا
رفت بر بست ازین سال جہاں رفتند
اے مدی خان توشہ خود را
کن مہیا کہ کاروان رفتند

Behold, the friends are gone — all companions have departed.

Kings, saints, and steadfast believers, all have gone.

Love has faded, blessings have vanished from the world;

Prepare your provisions, O Madi Khan,

For the caravan has moved on.⁴⁶

Tā Khush Qadam Jangi

Tā Khush Qadam Jangi was the son of Mir Abdullah Khan Jangi, ruler of Qasr-e-Qand, and the brother of Ali Sher. He was the maternal uncle of Shaykh

Muhammad Qasr-Qandi. He lived during the eleventh century AH and, like his father, was a poet. Shaykh Abdul Rahman included several of his poems in his compilation.

Sample Verse:

تعجیب‌ها بین که من در راه جانان دیده‌ام
غنچه دریائی عمار دیده‌ام
یزدان قادر دائن یووالجیها قدرت‌اش
غنچه علم چون دریائی عمار دیده‌ام

Behold the wonders I have seen on the path of the Beloved —
Buds blooming like oceans of light.
The Almighty, Creator of all power,
Reveals blossoms of knowledge deep as the sea.
فی دیده‌ام درار زنی پنهان شده
که بخانده صاحب همچو زندان دیده‌ام
I have seen a hidden beauty behind the veil,
A secret known only to the captive of divine love.⁴⁷

Shaykh Nasiruddin

Shaykh Nasiruddin was the nephew of Shaykh Jalal and the grandson of Shaykh Muhammad Qasr-Qandi. His father's name was Mulla Khairullah, a man known for piety and asceticism among the Zikris. He was a native of Qasr-e-Qand. His poetry, inherited from his scholarly family, reflects deep spirituality.

Sample Verse:

ز سر نفس اماره نگاهم دار یا الله
سوائے غیر خود کل زمن بردار یا الله
به عشا جرم عصیانم توئی غفار یا الله
شکسته دل همی نالد بدرگاه بست نصیرالدین
دل رحمت فراوان کن کرم بسیار یا الله

Save me, O Allah, from the evil of my own self;
Remove from my heart all but You.

My sins are countless, yet You are the Forgiver.
Nasiruddin, broken-hearted, weeps at Your gate —
Bestow abundant mercy and infinite grace, O Lord.⁴⁸

Mulla Na'atullah

Mulla Na'atullah was from Maravan and belonged to the Buzurgzāda tribe. He lived during the sixteenth century CE. Exact dates of birth and death are unknown.

Sample Verses:

غم مخور عاشق که غمخوارت منم
این جهان و آن جهان یارت منم
عاطفه از که غیب آوازی دهد
نعمت الله طلبگارت منم

Grieve not, O lover — I am your consoler;
In this world and the next, I am your companion.
From the unseen comes a voice of mercy:
"I, Na‘atullah, am your intercessor. ”

گر بجنّت می روی بی من مرد
طولی باغ و گل و می ده منم

If you go to Paradise without me,
You will find its gardens barren — for I am the fragrance there.⁴⁹

Zar Muhammad

Zar Muhammad, whose real name was Nur Muhammad, lived in Qasr-e-Qand, Iranian Balochistan, during the eighteenth century CE. He descended from a distinguished Zikri family. His father, Shaykh Jalal, and his uncle, Muhammad Darfishan, were prominent Zikri poets and scholars. Poetry was his family inheritance. His verses blend mystical and devotional themes, and his ghazals and na‘ts (prophetic eulogies) are especially admired.

On Separation:

انتظارم غم بجران نگارم روز شب
بر لطفت انتظارم روز شب
تیر غم بر سینه ام زد آن حبیب
زان جراحت بی قرارم روز شب

Day and night I await my beloved in the sorrow of separation;
I yearn for His grace ceaselessly.
The arrow of grief struck my heart by that Beloved —
And from that wound I remain restless day and night.

Addressing the Heart:

ای دل اندر جهان مثانه باش
در فراق ولبران مردانه باش
از غم بجران آن لیلی صفت
کچه مجبول والله دیوانه باش

O heart, be steadfast in this world,
In separation from your beloved, stand firm like a man.
From the anguish of that Layla-like beauty,
Be consumed — by God, become mad with love.

To the Breeze:

اے صبا ماری دلدارم کجاست
آن حبیب ماه رخسارم کجاست
همچو پروانه بگروش می دهم
عاجز سرگشته ام چون عند لبیب
قامت آن مرد گلزارم کجاست

O morning breeze, tell me — where is my beloved?
Where is the moon-faced friend I long for?
Like a moth I burn in yearning's flame,
Helpless and wandering, drunk with desire —
Where is the rose-garden stature of my beloved?⁵⁰

References

- ¹ (Matla' al-Wilayah, Bandagi Miyan Syed Yusuf, Dar al-Isha'at Kutub Salaf al-Saliheen, Mahdavi Daira, Mushirabad, Hyderabad Deccan, 1374 AH, p. 9)
- ² (Shawahid al-Wilayah, Burhan al-Din Mahdi, Chapter 29, "On the Blessed Names of the Final Khalifah al-Rahman," Dar al-Isha'at Kutub Salaf al-Saliheen, Mahdavi Daira, Mushirabad, Hyderabad Deccan, 1179 AH, p. 333)
- ³ (Insaf Nama, also known as Matn Sharif, Bandagi Miyan Syed Yusuf, Dar al-Isha'at Kutub Salaf al-Saliheen, Mahdavi Daira, Mushirabad, Hyderabad Deccan, 1374 AH, p. 23)
- ⁴ (Haqeeqat Noor-e-Pak by Sheikh Aziz Lari, handwritten cyclostyled manuscript).
- ⁵ (Untitled Manuscript, 1037 AH, p. 30)
- ⁶ Jami' al-Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Fitan, Bab Ma Ja'a fi al-Mahdi.
- ⁷ (Noor-e-Badan, Part 1, Umarani Balochi edition, p. 126)
- ⁸ (Noor-e-Hidayat, p. 118)
- ⁹ (Who Are the Zikris?, pp. 12–13, 42).
- ¹⁰ (Dar Sadaf, p. 119)
- ¹¹ . (Tazkirah Sufiya-e-Sarhad, Ijaz-ul-Haq Qadri, Sindhi Adabi Board, pp. 15–25)*
- ¹² (Binā-e-Mahdi, Muhammad Ayub Shehrad and Baloch, Karachi: Carey Student Organization, Lyari, 1972, p. 110)
- ¹³ (Sana-e-Mahdi, p. 11).
- ¹⁴ (Noor-e-Hidayat, Dar Sadaf, p. 149; Who Are the Zikris?, p. 14; Kitab al-Ashrar, p. 220).
- ¹⁵ (Zikr al-Tawhid, Naukain Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 26)
- ¹⁶ (Noor-e-Tajalli)
- ¹⁷ (Zikr al-Tawhid, p. 1050)
- ¹⁸ (Noor-e-Tajalli, p. 75)
- ¹⁹ (Zikr al-Wahdat, pp. 11–12)
- ²⁰ light.
- (Sana-e-Mahdi, pp. 15–16)
- ²¹ (Who Are the Zikris?, pp. 28–46)
- ²² (Noor-e-Hidayat, pp. 153–173)
- ²³ (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 26)

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- 24 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 26)
 25 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 26)
 26 (Makran ke Farsigo Shu'ara, p. 23)
 27 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 23)
 28 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 64)
 29 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 64)
 30 (Balochistan mein Farsi Shayari)
 31 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 64)
 32 (Sana-e-Mahdi, p. 9; Roznama Aman, Karachi, 25 Dec 1988)
 33 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 25)
 34 (Sana-e-Mahdi, p. 10)
 35 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 65)
 36 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 65)
 37 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 27)
 38 (Balochistan mein Farsi Shayari, Dr. In'am-ul-Haq Kausar, Quetta, 1968, p. 37)
 39 (ibid., p. 37)
 40 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 64)
 41 (ibid., p. 64)
 42 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 23)
 43 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 64)
 44 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 65)
 45 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, pp. 65–66)
 46 (ibid.)
 47 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 65)
 48 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 65)
 49 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 65)
 50 (Naukeen Daur Makran, Quetta, p. 65)