

“Makli” in Tranquility

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Spread over an area of about fifteen square kilometers, Makli is probably the largest and oldest graveyard in Pakistan. This archaeological wonder is now an internationally preserved world heritage site. It is located ninety-eight kilometers to the east of Karachi, the industrial hub and the largest city of Pakistan in its “Sindh” province. In stark contrast to the noisy hustle and bustle of the vibrant city of Karachi, the Makli cemetery is an absolute tranquility.



The tomb of Merza Esa Khan



Stone work

نقوش حجرية

The silent city of Makli lies in the vicinity of the historical city of Thatta, which remained the capital of Sindh for a long period. From the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries the Samma, Arghun and Tarkhan dynasties ruled Sindh. Their graves reflect the quality of their civilisations. The Muslim dynasties not only buried their dead in accordance with their rituals but also ensured that they left the marks of their cultures for generations to come.

Not all the graves are uniform in size, structure or design yet the cemetery accommodated the dead from all walks of life ranging from kings and queens, saints ▶

قبر الميرزا عيسى خان

and scholars to the common people. One commonality that prevails throughout Makli, is the use of yellow sandstone and the site seems to be a three dimensional presentation in yellow under the clear blue sky.

Exquisite Quranic calligraphy carved in the yellow sandstone forms an integral part of the graves. With the passage of time the engravings seem to have not only sustained but even emerged better by dint of the continual rustling of the winds brushing off any deposits. Some of the graves are even two storied with beautifully engraved floral, geometrical and all sorts of Islamic motifs. Superb craftsmanship reflects from the arches, pillars, balconies, corridors and domes the tombs of the past rulers.

Unlike the Egyptian Pharaohs, the Muslim rulers of Sind did not bury their worldly personal belongings with them. They did believe in the life after death and therefore

tried to do good for their people so that they might lie in peace afterwards. The monochromatic yellow sandstone foreground and middle ground of the Makli scene in blue background enlightens the souls of those who visit it. Greenery is sparse and only some cacti grow here.

Sind, one of the four provinces of Pakistan, derives its name from the river "Sindhu" (Indus) which flows through it. The province was therefore known for its fertile land, historical architecture, cotton and indigo. Sindhology deals with the old history of Sindh and is a recognized discipline. Makli is a permanent chapter of this subject.

"Ajrak" is an exclusively Sindhi printed cloth and used by almost all Sindhis. Whenever I see an Ajrak, I feel that the geometrical and floral motifs of Makli emanating from it. Tourists visiting Sindh visit Makli and Karachiites also visit at long weekends when



تفاصيل

Details of a wall

they tire of metropolitan life. Makli is a permanent tattoo on the soil of Sindh comprising of more than one million pixels on fifteen square kilometers. ■



The tomb of Merza Esa Khan Turkhan (1644 AD)

قبر الميرزا عيسى خان تورخان