

THE EARLY PERSIAN EPIGRAPHS AND PETROGRAPHS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Persian language enjoyed the status of official language of the subcontinent for centuries. The local took special interest in it and used this language in every sphere of life. It is why that even epigraphs and petrographs were inscribed with this language. Today, Persian epigraphs are found far and wide in Pakistan. But many of them could not bear the climatic effect and lost their original shapes. Only some of them could survive and these survived epigraphs and petrographs are the focus of this article.

Keywords: Pakistani Persian Epigraphy, Pakistani Persian Petrograph, Zinda Pir, Lahore Museum

Persian language apart from its being the language of religion and mysticism, was the official and a widely spoken public language in Pakistan. Thus, it was regarded in high esteem and sanctity. Therefore, even in the present era of its decline and degeneration, Persian is put into use on the tomb stones and memorial buildings. The most ancient Persian inscription is supposed to be the inscriptions of Qubatul-Islam Mosque which dates as early as 587 A.H/1191 A.D. Similarly, another one belongs to the year 608 Hijra/1211A.D, and the other which is located in the city of Badayun in India is the tomb stone of sheikh Ahmed Khandan which bears the date as 683 A.H/ 1284 A.D.(1)

As far as Pakistan is concerned with the basis of our study and research (2), the history of inscription is traced back from forth century Al-Hijra that is 10th A.D. onwards. This fact is only correct if we neglect the inscription of ancient Kuri Mosque in Islamabad which is said to belong to the 2nd century Al-Hijra but does not exhibit any date and also Data Ganj Baksh Shrine which is said to belong to 465Hijri/1072AD and Data Ganj Baksh Mosque which is said to belong to 468Hijri/1072AD.(3)

The earliest text of the epitaph of Zinda Pir's tomb which belongs to 341 Hijra according to the book "Sanadid-e-Sind"(4), but regreably the stone has been removed and is not in its original place, and we don't know where it is now. Our field research shows that the earliest epigraphs are related to a mosque in Dera Ghazi Khan in Punjab province(5) and also in Baluchistan Mosque in770 Hijra/1368AD(6).

According to the research the number of inscriptions is divided into two areas; the first area is Azad Kashmir, Northern Areas of Pakistan, province of Baluchistan, Northwest Frontier Province and Sind while the second area is Punjab province.

The First Area

The first area includes 192 Persian writings. Out of them 161 are marked with the dates and have been recognised, whereas 31 of them do not contain any date. We regret to say that few of these inscriptions are only mentioned in the books. Their texts have been extracted from books and other sources. These include the inscriptions of Makli which is known as the city of Serenity (7).

Following is the table according to their chronological date order:

List of the Early Inscriptions and Petrographs in First Area

<i>Name</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Ah</i>	<i>AD</i>
1- Zinda pir	Shrine	Sakhar Sind	341	952
2-Watta Karl	Mosque	Barkhan Baluchistan	770	1368
3-Khawaja Sharf-ud-din Sheerazi	Epitaph	Makli Thetta Sind	911	1505
4-Begejan	Epitaph	Makli Thetta Sind	941	1534
5- Shehorbano	Epitaph	Makli	950	1543

The Second Area

The second area of research is the province of Punjab. In this province research has been carried out in 18 districts, while the villages lying in the vicinity of these cities have been mentioned under the cities near which they are situated. A brief account of each city like Attock, Chakwal, Islamabad, Bahawalpur, Dere Ghazi Khan, Multan, Lahore, Mianwali, Jhelum etc. has also been given under the relevant heading order. So there are 187 inscriptions and petrographs the dates of which are known. Out of these, 35 inscriptions don't have dates. The total of all of these inscriptions and petrographs comes to 222, of which unfortunately 13 are well-known and they have been mentioned in the historical and literary texts and books (8).

We have mentioned the early ones in this table according to their chronological date order:

List of the Early Inscriptions & Petrographs in Punjab Province in chronological order

<i>Name of Building</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>AH</i>	<i>AD</i>
1. Kori Lamia Masjid	Mosque	Islamabad	189(?)	804(?)
2. Data Ganj Baksh	Shrine	Lahore	465(?)	1072(?)
3. Data Ganj Baksh Masjid (Masjid-i- Qadeem)	Mosque	Lahore	468(?)	1075(?)
4. Makhdoom Jahaniyan Jahangasht	Epitaph	Bahawalpur	758(?)	1356(?)

5. <i>Dera Ghazi Khan</i>	<i>Mosque</i>	<i>Dera Ghazi Khan</i>	770	1368
6. <i>Takht-e-Baburi</i>		<i>Chakwal</i>	932-937	1526-1530
7. <i>Rohtas</i>	<i>Fort</i>	<i>Jhelum</i>	948	1541

Achievements and Surveys of Early Persian Epigraphs and Petrographs in Pakistan

Due to the importance of these documents as a historical evidence, for presenting the Persian language in Pakistan, we show the contents of these epigraphs.

1. Epitaph of Shrine of Hazrat Khawja Khizar known as Zinda Pir.

This shrine is located on the rock of one of the western banks of Rohery River, Sind. The writing is ⁽⁹⁾; چواین درگاه والا شد هویدا

2. The Shrine of Hazrat Makhdoom Jahanian Jahangasht

This shrine is located in Uch Sharif, Bahawalpur by its stanza showing date (ماده تاریخ) we can understand his death date through it which is 758Hijri. Meanwhile an epigraph was available with this date, but the exact place is not known. This date exists in his Khaneqa. The content of it is as in the following ⁽¹⁰⁾;

از ماه شعبان المعظم بود چارم اصطفی
758 رفت چون این پادشاه دین پرور از جهان

3. The earliest and most important epigraph in Pakistan which is kept in *Ganjine Lahore Museum* is the *Epigraph of a Masjid in Dera Ghazi Khan in Pujab province*. This stone has date, the writer's name and the type of writing shows that it belongs to 770Hijri/1368AD which belongs to the *Reign of Feruz Shah Tughlaq* the third dynasty of rulers who ruled over Delhi(720-814AH/1320-1414AD). The writer of this epigraph is Hassan Jorjeen. In Persian it is pronounced as Hassan Gorgin. The name of the stone carving is; Rawal Sindi Zargar whose job was both stone carving and goldsmith. This writing is a carving on stone and the style is Early Naskh Calligraphy. There is an explanation of the building date of the Mosque, its founder and a poem quarter or quadriliteral (رباعی) in Persian language.

It is interesting to know that this poem was carved on many stone tombs later.

The content of the text is as the following ⁽¹¹⁾;

The first line الله
 The second line بناشد مسجد از آن ملک
 The third line بو باتور ترینی از خیل
 The fourth line لوسیانی در عهد سلطان
 The fifth line فیروز شاه شانزدهم از ماه
 The sixth line ذالحجه روز دوشنبه نقل
 The seventh line کرد و بیستم از ماه ذالحجه
 The eighth line روز آدینه مسجد برآورده
 The ninth line شد سینه سبعین و سبع مایه
 The tenth line خدای بر آن بنده رحمت کند
 The eleventh line هر که درین مقام رسد فاتحه
 The twelfth line با اخلاص مدد نماید حسن جرجیس دستخط
 The thirteenth line سنگ کاویده است راول سنده زرگر بتهابور
 The fourteenth line تمت
 The fifteenth line در داریکی کوکب رخشنده نماند
 The sixteenth line زان خواجه پیشینه یکی زنده نماند
 The seventeenth line آن کره آتشین که پرتوده لیل
 The last line is خواهند کجا رود که بخشنده نماند

In the fifteenth line of this quadrilateral the word کوکب which shows کفکف doesn't have any meaning in Persian.

4. *Persian Epigraphy in Wattaqari (MOSQUE) Adjuncant Lagari Barkhan.*

There is no information about this actual location of this epigraphy. It is not available in the original place. In the book of Tarikh-Baluchistan the following information has come. The calligraphy goes back to the reign of Sultan Feruz Shah Tughlaque. It was built by Malik Boya Toraini from the tribe of Musiani. It was built on Friday 20th of Zilhajjah the 770 AH. The Persian text is as following (12):

بنا شد مسجد از آن ملک بویا تورینی از خیل
 موسیانی در عهد سلطان فیروز شاه شانزدهم
 ماه ذوالحج روز شنبه نقل گردید و بیستم از ماه
 ذوالحج روز آدینه مسجد برآورده شد سبعین و
 سبع مایه سنه 770 هجریه خدا بر آن بنده رحمت کند
 هر که در این مقام رسد فاتحه با اخلاص ورد نماید
 در داکه یکی کوکب رخشنده نماند زان خواجه پیشینه یکی زنده نماند
 آن کره آتشین پرتو ده لیل خواهند کجا رود که بخشنده نماند

5. *Epitaph of Khawaja Sharaf-ud-din Sheerazi* located in graveyard of Makli, Thatta, Sind. It was built in the era of Sultan Jam Nazam-ud-din. According to the writing of Maklinama this tomb had a stone carving by the date of 911 Hijrah, The text is (13) ;

وفات مرحوم الواصل الى رحمه الله
خواجه شرف الدين شيرازى
فى تاريخ شهر جمادى الاول سنه 911

6. *Takht-e- Baburi or Thorn of BABURI*. Fortunately this thorn still exists on a rock amidst the high hills of kalar Kahar distric of *Chakwal*. Though it doesn't have date, it is said that Zahirudin Babur (932-937A.H) ordered to carve this poem on stone. Since this poem has pen name of Babur, it shows that it belongs to his reign(14).

نوروز و نوبهار و مى و دلبرى خوش است
بابر به عيش كوش كه عالم دوباره نيست

7. *Qila-e-ROHTAS (the fort of Rohtas)*. This inscription is fixed on the glass door (shishadarvaza) of the fort. It belongs to Sher Shah Suri in 948 A.H. It was ordered by Shah Sultani to relief on marble with the style of Tholth .

The following is the Persian calligraphy(15):

The first line is; ز هجرت گذشته تواريخ و سال
The second line; نهصد و چهل و هشت امد جلال
The third line; نصب شد در آن وقت قلعه كهار
The forth line is; شهنشاه شير است عالم قرار
The fifth line is; ز بخت سعادت عيان شد ثانى
The sixth line; تمامش كنانيد شاهو سلطانى

Conclusion

In the light of above research we come to this fact that the most important protected Persian Epigraphy is in the Lahore Museum of Pakistan which goes back to 341 A.H. No other epigraphy exist till the 8th A.H. After this date, in 10th and afterwards numerous epigraphs are available.

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