



Khalid Nabi's Shrine and Cemetery

Golestan, Iran, Historical and archeological study

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ABSTRACT:- This paper took from me more than one year to be able to identify from which aspect shall I discuss this site. It's a unique site; unique in its shape, components and location. It retells a complete story from different points of view.

Khalid Nabi's Shrine and Cemetery gather in one site differentness with sacred character that most people know nothing about. Many people are also oblivious to the fact that he is considered a prophet by his followers. Although historians gave us hints about that identity.

While going around the cemetery you will see many artifacts and shapes referred to as "internal organs exhibition" by most authors who wrote about the site. They refer to the practice of venerating the dead and its roots in central Asiatic traditional especially in Turks heritage. With the idea of fertility, reproduction alongside with the system of mythological ideas about the ring relating the life within the death, which could be true of course, this idea is there every where all the time since the humanity exist on planet earth.

To adopt this idea as a research material was much easier work for me, but for many reasons I thought there is something more relevant to the shrine and his owner than some organs here and there. So this paper will discuss another point of view with some new clues related to the paper subject.

Problematic:

The main problem that faces the researcher is the fact that no one has ever written about this site in a direct and subjective way except David Stronach and William R. Royce, of course they adopt the idea of Phallic cult, and they did a good job in my humble point of view and really they helped me starting my own idea. Except their paper; no one else as far as I know wrote a complete research about the site, although they forgot to refer to the Shrine and they only focuses on the artifacts' shapes.

Beside that Khalid Nabi himself didn't take from historians the attention he deserves as a prophet, maybe even if he was buried in a place other than Iran, no one would have noticed that there is a Valie or Imam who deserves building a tomb to retain his memory.

Methodology:

The study of this cemetery will cover the historical and archeological aspects of the shrine. It will also include a detailed analysis of those aspects that will reveal the value and the necessity of studying the symbolism of the tombstone formation and will display the researcher point of view by evidence through analytic method. To eliminate any ambiguity, the research will be divided into many sections, each section will only focus on the idea presented.

Keywords: Phallic cult, Imam-Zadah, Shepherd, Golestan, Turcoman customs, Shrine, Cemetery, Cenotaph, Silk Road.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

This area is considered a remote area, Historians and Orientalists didn't refer to it except with little hints from James Fraser's A Winter's journey, when he describe Turcoman burial customs, he said " the ancient burying ground of the [Goklan] [1] tribe " situated " upon the bank of Attruck" (Fraser, 1838: 363) This cemetery is divided into two main compounds, first is the shrine complex, second is the artifact surrounding the Shrine. This Site with its compounds and its symbols rises many questions about when, who, how and why there is a unique cemetery on this spot of the land at the top of the mountain along with the Khalid Nabi's Shrine that

all surrounding area is named after him. The cemetery is now a national heritage site protected by the Iranian government.

Beyond description, there are always hidden motives behind every human act, and from many sources what we can know about this kind of artifact that it resembles a place of worship. The ancient Peruvians, according to Arriaga, worshipped "very large stones, saying they were once men" (Grant, 1941:12) the Iroquois Indians, looked upon stones as living men, The American report of the bureau of ethnology recount various stories taken from Indian folklore illustrating the metamorphosis of men into stones. Piedrahita also affirms that "The Laches worshipped every stones as a god, as they said that they had all been men" (Grant, 1941:12).

As we study this cemetery it's important to notice the animation of symbols that means the various symbols were treated with greater respect and veneration than if they had been merely conventional signs and characters [2] "Where a goat was unprocurable, the image of human phallus of extravagant dimensions was erected in the temple and worshipped" Priestley, Satyrs, Fauns and Scott said (Priestley, 1799:100) (Scott and Ryley, 1941:29) that when they was talking about the Mendes [3] temple in Delta, Egypt. In another point of view it's a Turcoman shepherd customs [4].

II. LOCATION:

The shrine and cemetery located in Turcomandesert [5] (map 1), the site located in the stunning GokchenDagh hills of Golestan province. Near the tallest peak within the GokchehDagh in north-eastern Iran rises to almost 2,700 feet (810 m.) and stands approximately 70 km. north east of Gunbad-I—Qabus (Stronach, 1981:147).

The summit is called Tangrydaq (Mount of God in Turkish) by Turkmen. GockcheDāgh is surrounded by the low, hearther-clad hills of KopeDāgh, which are referred to by locals as the hezartappheh (thousands hills) This stretch of hills are located between Iran and Turkmenistan (Mehdi, 2016: 73) This area called Attek attributed to Turcoman tripe lived there (Map 1).

This area was inhabitant by Turkmen, in which the wandering Turcoman roam with their droves of horses and camels, and their flocks of sheep, spreading their tents along the banks of the mountain streams which flow into the Caspian, or are lost in the sands of the desert; and, in default of rivers, digging wells in the dry steppes, to slake their own thirst and supply their cattle, often only with brackish and salt water (De Bode, 1844: 60). This area is a Sunni [6] are which Qajari Shah had a very hard time to enter it; which is one of the reasons make this area a remote area even of writer and orientalism.

III. DATE:

There is no accurate information about the time of construction of the shrines at the complex. Also there is no date written in any of the 600 artifactstones all over the site; unless some scratch from tourism. Also the cemetery itself is undated, possibly goes back to the Seljuk era in the 6th/12th A.D century according to its architecture.

IV. BIOGRAPHY OF KHALID NABI:

Historians, literature and pedigree books neglect the biography of Khalid Nabi, a few news reach us not fulfilling the need to know who he was, but give us some clue, some hints.

His full name is Khalid bin Sinan bin Ghaith bin Marieta bin Makhzoum bin Rabia bin Aouaz bin Malik bin Ghalib bin Kitya bin Abbas bin Bghayd bin Rith bin Guten (pic 1), He was one of the prominent Arab writers a year before the elephant year (IbnKatheer, 2:68) (Fig 1) (pic. 2) Khalid Nabi who is believed to have been a prophet from Yemen.

It is generally believed that Khalid Nabi was the only prophet between Jesus and Muhammadpbuh and lived in the area approximately 1,600 years ago, so he was called "one of the people of the period" (Masoudey, 1965, 1:175) some other historian said he was just a holy man; man with dignity (Ibn Al Athera, 1979, 1:379).

Khalid Nabi had two different holy stories, one is related to "the Holy fire" that no one was able to extinguish, and was a representation of fire worshipping, but Khalid Nabi did, and he entered and got out from it unharmed to eradicate the fire worshipping. The second holy story is the story of the "Holy Stone" that was believed to have an effect on two aspects of life; the first one during wars, where it was used as a charm to defeat the enemies.

The second use of the stone when it was buried in the shepherding locations in order not to lose the cattlor not to lose the path; all of that as preapprehension to Islam. Otherwise it had been said that one Surat from Holy Quran was written on it [Al-Ikhlās] (IbnShabah, 1991, 2:420-433).

Description:

The description of the cemetery will be divided into two sections; first, the description of the shrines and sacred buildings. Second section is dedicated to the artifact that the researcher will approach and study

through two points of view, the popular one that presents the tombstones depending on sex ideology (fig 1) (pic 3), are shaped as the female or male genital organs, the female tombstones are carved as ovaries and wombs while the male tombstones resemble an erect male genital organ. Then the researcher's opinion that links the stones shape to the society and Turcoman customs [7].

1.1 The Shrine:

There are three different shrines in the area [8], Khalid Ibn al-Sinan (the main shrine in the area), Chupān Atā, Khalid Nabi son in law and Alim Bābā (pic. 2) (fig 1).

All of the shrines have the same plan, planned from square shape, covered with a dome, Khalid Nabi's Dome is semicircular, but Khalid Nabi's son in law dome is conical shape, also Alim Baba's dome is conical. The three domes are green, the largest shrine is the main one attributed to Khalid Nabi himself. Every shrine contains a tomb at the middle of it, that allows people to go around it, providing space to pray.

1.2 The artifacts:

More than 600 stone artifacts are found in several distances from the main shrine, most of them on the high plateau which itself lies south east and east from the Shrine.

There are 2 different types of standing stones in this site, the round type and the pillar type [9] (pic. 3)

Stronach divided the standing stones into two principal classes. The stones of Type 1, the taller variety, have a straight, circular-sectioned shaft with a sometimes tapered, cap-like finial.

The lengths of such shafts vary from 1 m. to an estimated 5 m. (The visible heights of those that remain planted in the ground range from close to 60 cm. to just over 4 m.) Stones of this kind often exhibit one horizontal rib at or near the base of the finial, plus either one rib, or two close-set ribs, or even two pairs of close-set ribs disposed along the length of the shaft. In at least one case, we also find evidence for a more elaborate finial with a ribbed or pleated surface. Here the parallel vertical lines on the upper part of the finial can be seen to change to diagonal lines where they pass over a lower expanded band.

The second, usually shorter type of stone (Type 2) is one that is characterized by a rectangular section and by two opposed high-set lobes. In most cases a small, square or rounded projection also emerges between and above the two lobes. The lobes as such are either (in one unique case) pierced, solid or, again in one instance only, complemented by a representation of a human figure in low relief (Stronach, 1981: 147)

As far as it is possible to interpret these monuments, it seems probable that we are dealing with highly stylized representations of people. Where the stones of Type 1 are concerned it is probable that each example represents a male personage who is still "portrayed" with his headgear, be this a cap, helmet or in one case a turban. There is less doubt, of course, about the anthropomorphic quality of the stones of Type 2; here, as two separate carved stones suggest the original model-however unusual such a model may be-is that of a human figure with its arms akimbo. It should be added that, although these last stones tend to be small in size, none show any trait that is necessarily female: even the small figure in low relief should be interpreted as a man clad in a Qajar Coat (Stronach, 1981: 147) (pic. 3,4)

Regarding the researcher's point of view; and through the biography of Khalid Nabi himself, along with his relatives and his followers, they were all shepherds, and one of the tools they needed to drive away wild animals are customs and scarecrow, add to that Turcoman customs (pic. 4,5) which is typically similar to the Type 2 stone (pic. 4,5) another evidence that there are no bones absolutely at the site; Stronach suggests that is because the site has not been in use for two or three generations, or that some stones represent cenotaphs rather than graves (Stronach, 1981:148). In my point of view the reason behind this is that this site was for agriculture and herding sheep, so the shepherd needs those stones to resemble him to defend the sheep and the crops against the wolves and wild animals and birds. Moreover, gravestones always have inscriptions of the names and dates of the buried, but all the stones in this site bear no inscriptions.

As for the Type 1, it is comparable to the local monuments originating from Luristan, and at the same time it's very similar to the gravestone used by Turk in Turkey (Goodwin, 1971: 465) and central Asia. It also recalls some gravestones in Iran dated to the Seljuk era.

V. CONCLUSION:

- The shrine here represents a complex of holy shrines as it contains a number of shrines to a holy man / Imamzadeh
- The artifacts and stones in the place are not gravestones as there are no evidences of bones or bodies remains.
- Even what has been claimed by some historian that Turcoman used to bury their relatives close to the holy shrine, what they really refer to is Zakariy and Yehia shrines, Hence, it's not Khalid Nabi's complex.
- Counter to what had been believed for a long time, the shapes of the stones are not for genital organs of male and female, but it's a Turcoman custom and the scarecrow.

- Although some of the stones are very close in shape to the male or female genital organ, but we have thousands of tombstone everywhere in Turkey and central Asia from the Seljuk era to the ottoman one resemble the shape of this stone and no one refer to it as a genital organs.
- The stones around the Shrine of Khalid Nabi are reflection to the holy story of his holy stone that is buried in an unknown location and brings luck, victory and peace.

Notes:

[1] Turkmenistan is located in the southwest of the Central Asia region. It is bordered by Kazakhstan to the northwest, Uzbekistan to the north and east, Afghanistan to the southeast, Iran to the south, and the Caspian Sea to the west. www.britannica.com. Turkmenistan. When Fraser was talk about the Goklan dead, he said “ ... must be taken to a distance of nearly fifty miles, to the original burying place of the tribe upon the banks of the Attruck, a journey which would require two or three days, and through a country now overrun with their enemies. Fraser goes on saying “A Goklan dies, his body is washed, the earth where this process has been performed is gathered, and together with some scrap of his old apparel, is buried in a conspicuous place near one of the obah -tent group- to which he belonged. But the body is carried to the ancient burial ground of the tribe, which generally is near the grave of some holy man, the former spiritual guide or prophet of the obah, and whose reliques are supposed to hallow the spot” (Fraser, 1838: 369-370)

[2] The idea is very close to what we can call embodiment of the greater by made statues to them in squares and parks in the modern age.

[3] Gardner at faiths of the world's says: " there is no doubt that the terms Mendes was used to describe both the hieroglyphically goat and the holy city of Pan. The worship of Mendes "the he-goat" was afterwards transferred from northern to southern Egypt, and the name of the deity were changed to Mont"

[4] Islam came to the Turkmen primarily through the activities of Sufi shaykhs rather than through the mosque and the "high" written tradition of sedentary culture. These shaykhs were holy men critical in the process of reconciling Islamic beliefs with pre-Islamic belief systems; they often were adopted as "patron saints" of particular clans or tribal groups, thereby becoming their "founders." Reformulation of communal identity around such figures accounts for one of the highly localized developments of Islamic practice in Turkmenistan. Integrated within the Turkmen tribal structure is the "holy" tribe called övlat. Ethnographers consider the övlat, of which six are active, as a revitalized form of the ancestor cult injected with Sufism. According to their genealogies, each tribe descends from the Prophet Muhammad through one of the Four Caliphs. Because of their belief in the sacred origin and spiritual powers of the övlat representatives, Turkmen accord these tribes a special, holy status. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the övlat tribes became dispersed in small, compact groups in Turkmenistan. They attended and conferred blessings on all important communal and life-cycle events, and also acted as mediators between clans and tribes. The institution of the övlat retains some authority today. Many of the Turkmen who are revered for their spiritual powers trace their lineage to an övlat, and it is not uncommon, especially in rural areas, for such individuals to be present at life-cycle and other communal celebrations.

[5] Among the Turkoman tribes there are four distinct from the rest, supposed to be descended from the four first caliphs. They are equally respected by the Yamuds, the Goklans, the Tekke, the Salurs, and the Sariks, and are not touched by those rival tribes. The names of these four families are the following: -The Khoja, descendants of Ali; the Atta, descendants of Omar; the Shikhs, descendants of Osman; and the Makhtum-Kuli, descendants of Abubekr (De Bond, 1848:67).

[6] It is attributed to Prophet Muhammad pbuh that he said about Khalid that he is "a prophet who lost by his people" because they didn't obey him (Zarkali, 2002, 2:296) some of historian said that the daughter of Khalid Nabi met Prophet Mohamed pbuh. Imam Ibn Abbas said “ Bint Khalid bin Sinan came to the Prophet pbuh, and he spread out his dress and said about her : “she is the daughter of a prophet lost by his people” (Al-Tabarani 2008 :12250). At the delegation year, when prophet Mohamed pbuh receive people to believe in his call, his friend asked where is Khalid Nabi, prophet Mohamed pbuh reply “ he is a prophet lost by his people” (IbnSa'd, 3:25)

[7] According to Irons, two tombs at the shrine of Khalid Nabi serve as places of pilgrimage for the Yomut: the higher one is said to be that of Khalid Nabi, the lower tomb is said to be that of Ata Chofun, Khalid Nabi's son-in-law (Royce, 1981:150).

[8] Fraser's assertion that the Turcomans did have shrines to holy men whom they specially revered is supported by later travellers. (Yate, 1894: 257) writes of the mausoleum of the prophet Zakariya, located on the south bank of the GurginRiver, a shrine cared for by the YomutTurcomans. (Rabino, 1928:92) notes three Turcoman shrines built to commemorate three brothers, Qarangi Imam- black Imam ", outside the old city of Gurgan, “ an old domed mausoleum mostly underground, ... which is generally believed to be the tomb of Imam Yahya who was slain in battle outside the city in about 125/742-3 Qizil Imam – red Imam- near QaraQal'ainRussian territory , Aq Imam - white Imam - on the summit of a hill of the village of Nili in Findirisk, In the absence of detailed descriptions of the above mentioned shrines. After all what the author wrote

above he confess that no physical comparison can be made with the structures at the Khalid Nabi shrine (Royce, 1981:149)

[9] The cemetery according to legend contains stones of people who were cursed by god for their sins and belonged to people who believed in fetishism centuries ago. (Moye, 2010) The local myth about the cemetery and its occupants is that following the departure of Khalid Nabi, the inhabitants of the area began worshipping the sun and as a result, and as punishment, they were all turned to stone. <http://historicaliran.blogspot.com>

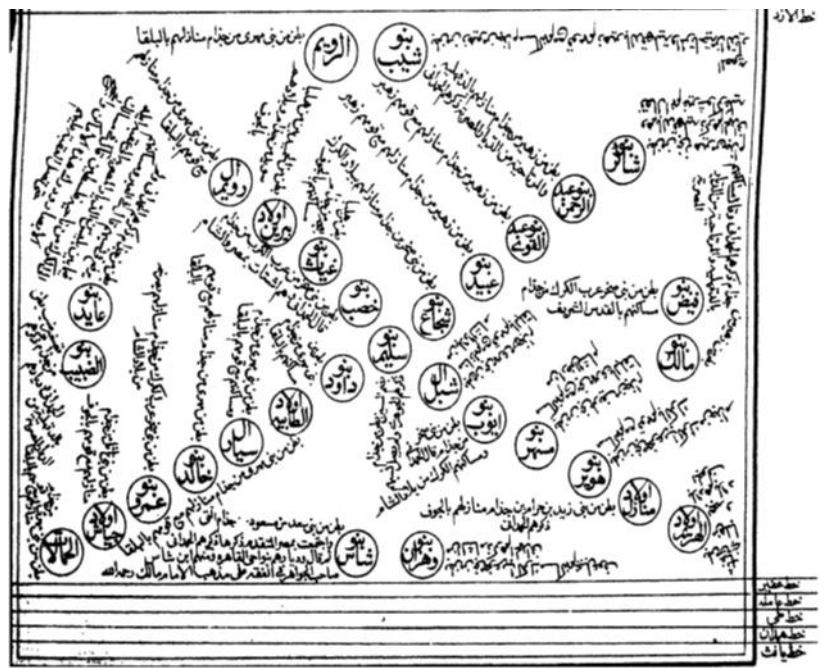
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Pictures and figures:



Map (1) Khaled Nabi & the province of Golestan (Mehdi, 2015, 74)



Pic (1) Khalid's tribe. By (Suweidi, 1396:50)

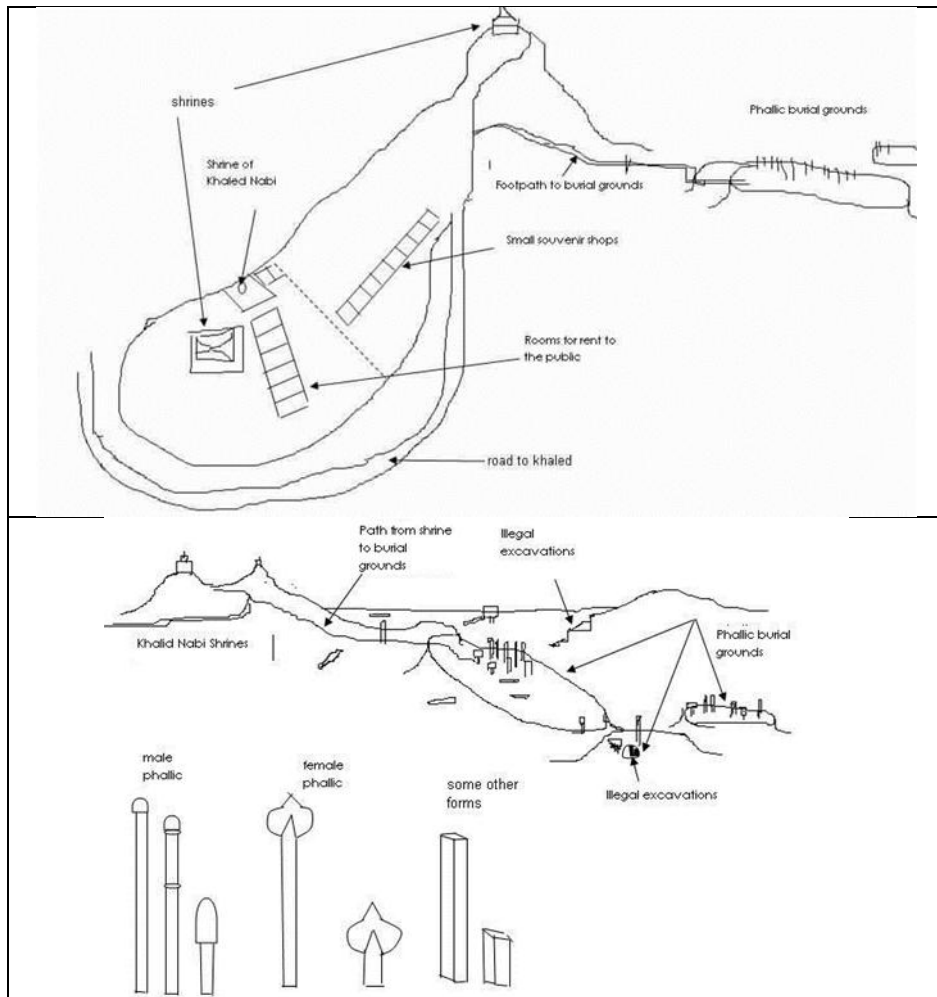


Fig (1) location and distributions of the shrines and artifacts <http://historicaliran.blogspot.com/2009>



Pic (2) Khalid Nabi and his son in law shrine <http://historicaliran.blogspot.com/2009>



Pic (3)Historical cemetery of Khalid Nabi, from Iranian culture and tourism.



Pic (4)archive photo of a shepherd, show the shepherd customs. Www. Google.com/ image



Pic(5)Turcoman shepherd's customs (Aşkıçingelmisiz movie, KültürveTurizm, Bakanlık, www.yotube. com)