



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Ambiguous traditions and modern transformations of Islam: the waxing and waning of an 'intoxicated' Sufi cult in Mirpur*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:  
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/97211/>

Version: Accepted Version

---

**Article:**

McLoughlin, S and Khan, M (2006) Ambiguous traditions and modern transformations of Islam: the waxing and waning of an 'intoxicated' Sufi cult in Mirpur. *Contemporary South Asia*, 15 (3). pp. 289-307. ISSN 0958-4935

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09584930601098042>

---

(c) 2006, Taylor and Francis. This is an author produced version of a paper published in *Contemporary South Asia*. Uploaded in accordance with the publisher's self-archiving policy.

**Reuse**

Unless indicated otherwise, fulltext items are protected by copyright with all rights reserved. The copyright exception in section 29 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 allows the making of a single copy solely for the purpose of non-commercial research or private study within the limits of fair dealing. The publisher or other rights-holder may allow further reproduction and re-use of this version - refer to the White Rose Research Online record for this item. Where records identify the publisher as the copyright holder, users can verify any specific terms of use on the publisher's website.

**Takedown**

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing [eprints@whiterose.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@whiterose.ac.uk) including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



[eprints@whiterose.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@whiterose.ac.uk)  
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

Seán McLoughlin & Muzamil Khan

Ambiguous traditions and modern transformations of Islam: the waxing and waning of an  
'intoxicated' Sufi cult in Mirpur

Published in:

*Contemporary South Asia*

15(3) September, 2006: 289–307

**Abstract:**

Against current debates about the gradual 'Islamisation' of South Asia by Sufi cults, and the shifting ambiguity and fixity of religious boundaries in colonial India, this article is an account of the cult of the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya saints in the Mirpur district of Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Mirpur is perhaps best known in Pakistan for its diaspora, especially in the United Kingdom where there is a significant literature on the cultural and economic dimensions of that now longstanding presence. However, there is still little specific or detailed ethnography of homeland traditions of Mirpuri religiosity. Based upon research in Mirpur and Britain, this article is an original attempt to fill this significant gap. It focuses on the cult of two 'intoxicated' Sufi saints at Kharri Sharif, the most significant shrine complex in the region, and makes use of textual sources of sacred biography and romantic poetry, as well as first-hand participant observation. In this regard we follow Werbner and Basu (1998) who view Sufi Islam as 'a single, total, symbolic reality'. We also adopt their innovative agenda for study of 'the connections [and, we suggest, the possible disconnections] between Sufi cosmologies, ethical ideas, bodily ritual practices and organisational forms'. Ultimately, it is argued that the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya cult is presently waning, having produced no living saint to act as ethical guide since the beginning of the twentieth century. Moreover, while the popularity of demotic ritual embodying a Sufi cosmology continues unabated in Mirpur, since Partition a neo-orthodox epistemology has (rather belatedly) begun to transform dominant socio-religious discourses in the region. Indeed, Kharri Sharif and the income from its offerings have also come under the control of the ministry of awqaf (pious endowments). Thus, the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya cult appears to lack both the charismatic leadership and organisational autonomy that has allowed other Sufi cults to imagine 'spaces of potential freedom' beyond the stranglehold of the postcolonial state.

\*\*\*

Before the loss of Muslim imperial power confirmed a major crisis in Islamic authority and identity in India, the boundaries of all religious 'communities' in South Asia had been extremely ambiguous, especially in terms of the everyday practices of the masses.<sup>1</sup> Katherine Ewing argues that, among Muslims, shari'at (the 'right way' as embodied in divine law) was linked hierarchically and symbolically to the state and related social classes, rather than to ordinary folk who were often regarded as be-adab (incapable of proper behaviour).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in Panjab for example, Roger Ballard maintains that demotic religiosity generally

focused upon dimensions of panth (following a spiritual master) and qismat (dealing with matters of fate), rather than dharm (rules relating to morality and behaviour).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, unlike 'household', 'village', 'clan' and 'caste', 'religion' was not a significant basis for qaum (community or group). However, by the late nineteenth century, those indigenous elites most exposed to the impact of British colonial rule, including its attempts to impose modern western categories of 'religion' upon Indian society, were disseminating what Harjot Oberoi identifies as a novel religious 'episteme'.<sup>4</sup> At a time of rapid social change, self-conscious neo-orthodox leaderships across the traditions attacked ambiguous religiosity as impure and insisted that, if their fortunes were to revive, all orders of society would have to conform to the purified behavioural norms of a distinctive religious community.

In their ground-breaking volume on South Asian Sufism, Pnina Werbner and Helene Basu follow the historian Richard Eaton in arguing that the dominant characterisation of South Asian Islam in terms of syncretism (combining elements of two distinct traditions) depends very much upon such nineteenth-century constructions of bounded religious systems.<sup>5</sup> Regarding the long-standing debate about the universal and the particular in Islam, historians and anthropologists of the region have tended to emphasise the local persistence of Hindu belief and practice among Muslims, while any discussion of Islamisation has too often been restricted to uncontested accounts of orthodoxy or, indeed, the impact of modern neo-orthodoxy.<sup>6</sup> In her own most recent work, by contrast, Werbner suggests that, while Sufi cults and their sacred narratives do give voice to genuine local diversity in South Asian Islam, they also tend to share certain latent but universal themes—which underlines their historical contribution to the 'Islamisation of the indigenous' in particular contexts.<sup>7</sup> Such a perspective represents an important challenge to the 'false dichotomies' between 'high' and 'low', 'orthodox' and 'popular' Islam that much neo-orthodox discourse and the scholarly literature has 'imposed upon . . . a single, total, symbolic reality'.<sup>8</sup> Rather than maintaining the long-established disjunction between Sufism as neo-Platonic theosophy and the cult of saints as popular syncretic practice, Werbner and Basu propose an agenda that examines 'the connections between Sufi cosmologies, ethical ideas, bodily ritual practices and organisational forms'.<sup>9</sup>

The present article is principally a detailed account of the traditions and transformations associated with a particular Sufi cult in the Mirpur district of Pakistan-administered Kashmir. While the key themes to be explored are best understood in terms of the foregoing discussion, initial motivation for the research actually emerged at some distance from the subcontinent in the UK Pakistani Diaspora. At least two-thirds of British Pakistanis can trace their roots to the northern barani (rainfall dependent) Potohar (literally 'hilly') region of Kashmir, with the majority of these originating from Mirpur.<sup>10</sup> The consequences of specifically Mirpuri contexts of migration for the trajectories of British Mirpuris have been generally well documented over a period of more than 30 years.<sup>11</sup> However, despite the undeniable significance of Mirpuri heritage to the social and cultural capital of large

numbers of British Pakistanis, no ethnography of popular religious literature and tradition in that region currently exists.

Ballard has come closest to accurately characterising the cosmology of popular Potohari Pakistani religiosity.<sup>12</sup> However, his aim is to give a broad overview and, as such, he provides no specific case studies from Mirpur. The suggestion here, then, is that in Mirpur, as in any other particular local context, there is still much that might be illuminated by an exploration of issues concerning the 'Islamisation of the indigenous', ambiguity and fixity of religious boundaries, and 'connections between Sufi cosmologies, ethical ideas, bodily ritual practices and organisational forms'.<sup>13</sup> Based upon both documentary and fieldwork-based research in English, Urdu and Panjabi, in both Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Britain over recent years, the main body of the article is devoted to tracing such an account in outline during the colonial and postcolonial periods.

The article begins with some observations about the spread of the 'intoxicated' Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya cult in pre-modern India and Panjab, and especially the sacred biographies of two Sufi saints buried at Kharri Sharif, the most significant shrine complex in the Mirpur region. The first is Pira Shah Ghazi (d. 1743), 'patron saint of Mirpuris' also known locally as 'Dammari Wali Sarkar' (literally, the one 'in charge' who accepts the offering of dammari, a coin no longer in use).<sup>14</sup> He was made famous through the writings of the second saint, Mian Muhammad Bakhsh (d. 1907), the intoxicated Sufi and scholar also known as 'the Rumi of Kashmir'. Both the latter's epic poem, *Saif al-Muluk: Safar al-'Ishq* (The Sword of the Kings: The Journey of Love), and the popular qismatic rituals associated with ziyarah (visitation or pilgrimage) to Pira Shah's shrine must be understood in the context of Sufi concepts of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of existence) and *al-insan al-kamil* (the perfect human).

However, in the absence of a charismatic living shaykh (Sufi master) to succeed Mian Muhammad, the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya cult has waned as a focus for ethical guidance and organisational independence. Indeed, since the 1960s, the government of Pakistan-administered Kashmir rather than Mian Muhammad's family or successors has controlled Kharri Sharif. Finally, then, there is an assessment of the (somewhat delayed) impact of social change and religious transformation in Mirpur, often regarded by outsiders as something of a rural 'backwater'.<sup>15</sup> The influence of neo-orthodox Islamic movements founded in late nineteenth-century India, such as Deobandism and Bareilwism, seems to have been slow to emerge in the region before Partition. Nevertheless, since then, their profile has steadily risen, coinciding with a period of mass international migration from Mirpur to the United Kingdom (UK) and beyond.

Unfortunately, constraints of space mean that the further transformation of Mirpuri traditions in the Pakistan Diaspora must wait to be discussed elsewhere. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest that ethnographically specific discussions of homeland religiosity—exemplified here by the waxing and waning of the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya cult in Mirpur—ought to be a more necessary starting point for discussion of (generally more accelerated) socio-religious change in the diaspora than is currently the case.

### **The ‘intoxicated’ Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya saints of Mirpur and their sacred biographies**

As J. Spencer Trimingham argues in his study of the Sufi orders in Islam, ‘The Qadiri tariqa [doctrine, rule, method] never became popular. Its spread as a Way belongs to the ta’ifa [organization, popular cult] stage’.<sup>16</sup> While named after Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (d. 1166), a sayyid (descendant of the Prophet), ascetic and Hanbali jurist of Baghdad in the early centuries of its development, the Qadiriyya ‘lacked both leaders and any clear attractive Sufi doctrine’.<sup>17</sup> While Qadiri cults first became established in India during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was only in the early seventeenth century that they achieved ‘a new lease of life . . . extend[ing] very far the process of compromise with Hindu thought and custom’.<sup>18</sup> From a centre in Ucch in present-day Pakistan, Qadiris promoted Shaykh al-Jilani as the *pir-i piran* (spiritual guide of all guides, the pivot of all the saints), attributing numerous miracles to him. They are also especially associated with *giyarvin sharif*, a ritual gathering on the ‘eleventh’ of the month to seek assistance from Shaykh al-Jilani, ‘the great helper’ (*ghawth al-azam*). Moreover, Qadiris established direct links with the ruling classes, having close associations with the intoxicated Sufi poet-prince, Dara Shikoh (d. 1659), who was eventually executed by his younger, much more ‘sober’, brother, Aurangzeb (d. 1707), the last of the great Mughals.<sup>19</sup>

Against this context of expansion, new independent branches of the Qadiriyya line proliferated and ‘Wanderers of the qalandari type abounded’.<sup>20</sup> A Qalandar is an ecstatic wandering dervish who is ‘all feeling, emotion, and action’. Routinely labelled as *bi shar’* (outside the religious law) by the *ulema* (religious scholars), the Qalandar is so intoxicated with passionate love of God that all other priorities, including formal religious obligations, are subordinated and even deliberately transgressed.<sup>21</sup> According to pious accounts of *tazkira* (Sufi biography), legends that Marcia Hermansen and Bruce Lawrence suggest are ‘memorative communications’ that lay claim to South Asia as an ‘Islamised’ space, one of the earliest Sufis tracing a ‘Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya’ lineage in the Panjab was Sayyid Baha al-Din, also known as ‘Bahul Sher Qalandar’ (d. 1595).<sup>22</sup> Bahul Sher, a descendant of Shaykh al-Jilani, is said to have been born in Baghdad but travelled to India like many of the great saint’s family. He himself is understood to have wandered as an intoxicated mystic, eventually settling in Okara, and it is to Bahul Sher that Pira Shah traces his spiritual lineage.

Until the availability of the printing press in colonial times, tazkiras were generally written in Persian rather than any regional vernaculars and by urban elites for other urban elites.<sup>23</sup> So it was initially with the main (unpublished) source for Pira Shah's life (*Tazkira-i Muqimi* or *Memoirs of the Saints of Muqim*) written by Mian Muhammad, whose family were long-standing adherents of Pira Shah. Malik Muhammad Takedar Qalandari, one of Mian Muhammad's closest followers, produced an Urdu translation of *Tazkira-i Muqimi* within a decade or so of the saint's death.<sup>24</sup> Nothing is known of Pira Shah's place of birth, childhood or even whether he was a native of Kashmir. However, reflecting a major trope in the tazkira genre, Mian Muhammad suggests that the turning point in the former's spiritual life came after a miraculous 12-year underwater sojourn with Khizr, whom Annemarie Schimmel identifies as the 'prototype of saintliness and patron saint of travellers and seafarers'.<sup>25</sup> Thereafter, Mian Muhammad relates that Pira Shah became totally intoxicated, wandering in the forests and jungles as a longhaired, world-renouncing ascetic.<sup>26</sup> Eventually, in another trope familiar in Sufi hagiography, he was instructed by his pir (spiritual guide) to go into seclusion. In a cave on a hill in the Mirpur region, Pira Shah is reported to have ordered a rock thus: 'kharri ho ja! (rock, stand up!)'. The rock obediently stood up, and Pira Shah would rest against it during the remainder of his 12-year retreat.

In his translation of Mian Muhammad, Qalandari writes how Pira Shah eventually settled, and was buried, in the Mirpuri village now known in his honour as Kharri Sharif.<sup>27</sup> The miraculous rock is still preserved in the cave where Pira Shah secluded himself, and has become a site of pilgrimage in its own right. Qalandari also writes that it was a local ruler, Raja Bandu Khan, who reportedly began the commemoration of Pira Shah's 'urs (death anniversary).<sup>28</sup> Historically, a key social function of Sufi cults has been to temporarily unite groups divided by social hierarchies, and Pira Shah's following in Mirpur is said to have consisted mainly of local Rajputs (the land owning caste) and Gujjars (cattle-herders/farmers).<sup>29</sup> However, many popular fables and legends about Pira Shah, his miracles and his jalali (unpredictable) temperament also relate him coming heroically to the aid of, and supernaturally changing, the qismat of the sincere poor while punishing the pride of the 'well-to-do'. A local Rajput, for example, was reputedly rebuked and saw his fortunes fall after he attempted to outdo the generosity of some local peasants in providing Pira Shah with a splendid meal.<sup>30</sup>

Although Pira Shah had two sons, he nominated his adopted son Din Muhammad, the great ancestor of Mian Muhammad, as his successor.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the family of Mian Muhammad became the *sajjada nishin* (hereditary shrine custodians) of Pira Shah long before the former was born in Chak Takara, a village near Kharri Sharif, around 1830. Sufi biography, again reflecting well-established Islamic hagiographical tropes, suggests that Mian Muhammad was an exceptionally gifted child who, as a member of a religious family, was able to study the traditional Islamic sciences. This he did at Samwal Sharif, a few miles from Kharri Sharif, under the guidance of two brothers, Hafiz Muhammad 'Ali and Hafiz Nasir—'sober' and 'intoxicated mystics', respectively.<sup>32</sup> According to Afzal Pervez, a good source for the

biography of Mian Muhammad and the editor of a compilation of his letters, the saint also had a melodious voice and would sing Sufi epics such as Mawlana 'Abd al-Rahman Jami's (d. 1492) version of the Qur'an-inspired romance, Yusuf and Zulaykha.<sup>33</sup>

Although Mian Muhammad did not meet Pira Shah in person, his family cherished the saint's memory and the former eventually came to view the latter as his 'real' pir. In Saif al-Muluk, he writes: 'My pir is Dammari Wali, Pira Shah Qalandar'.<sup>34</sup> While Mian Muhammad underwent what is known as an 'Uwaysi' initiation<sup>35</sup> with the Dammari Wali, he also had a living pir, Sain Ghulam Muhammad, who traced his spiritual genealogy to Pira Shah. Like Pira Shah, Mian Muhammad is said to have spent much of his early adult life wandering in forests as a faqir (mystic), meeting Sufis and visiting shrines in the Panjab. However, again like Pira Shah, he finally settled in Kharri Sharif, where he gave much of his time to asceticism and acted as a pir to his many followers, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.<sup>36</sup>

### **The cosmology of Saif al-Muluk: Safar al-'Ishq**

Mian Muhammad was also a prolific writer on Sufism and, according to Christopher Shackle, 'the last master of the [Panjabi] qissa [mystical romance] genre'.<sup>37</sup> While the author of a number of romances (including Laila Majnun, Sohni Mahinval and Shirin Farhad), his greatest achievement is Saif al-Muluk: Safar al-'Ishq. This classic of Panjabi literature, completed around 1863 and first published around 1870, is written in masnavi (rhyming couplets)-style rhyming couplets. Although much shorter than Jalal al-Din Rumi's (d. 1273) 'Qur'an in Persian', Saif al-Muluk earned the 'Rumi of Kashmir' [i.e. Mian Muhammad] the popular title of 'Qur'an in Panjabi' for this poem.<sup>38</sup> In his comprehensive introduction to a critical edition of Saif al-Muluk, Zhaigham mentions dozens of editions still in circulation. However, some are poorly produced and do no more than capitalise on the popularity of a work that is more famous in Pakistan than either Mian Muhammad or Pira Shah.<sup>39</sup>

Loosely based on a retelling of a story from the Arabic popular classic *The Book of the Thousand and One Nights*, Saif al-Muluk is the tale, set in pre-Islamic times, of an Egyptian prince of that name.<sup>40</sup> On his birthday, Saif al-Muluk receives a portrait of a beautiful woman, Badi'a al-Jamal ('extremely beautiful') from his father. Immediately, he falls passionately in love with the portrait and becomes obsessed with the idea of meeting the woman it portrays. He sets out on a long and arduous journey as far as China, facing countless trials, dangers and temptations, including encounters with jinns (genies), cannibals and Amazonians. Nothing deters him from the quest for Badi'a al-Jamal, a princess whom he eventually marries. At the end of the story, Saif al-Muluk succeeds his father as King of Egypt but, in a bittersweet ending, he dies leaving only his beloved behind.

Mian Muhammad writes of his work: 'A divine mystery concealed in a metaphor/The journey of passionate love, a sword hidden in a staff'.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, like much of the qissa genre per se, Saif al-Muluk can be read as an allegory of the mystic's 'journey of passionate love'. The Egyptian prince at the centre of the tale represents the seeker after fana' (passing away of the ego) and baqa' (permanence in God). 'Badi'a al-Jamal represents God or, rather, is a metaphor for one of God's many names and attributes (beauty), as it is manifest in the visible world'. Thus, the various sufferings and tribulations that Saif al-Muluk faces symbolise the mystical stages and states through which the seeker's soul and identity must pass before reaching God. However, when 'the Lover' finally meets 'the Beloved', ultimately only the latter remains. Such a notion is entirely consistent with the controversial centrepiece of Sufi cosmology, the concept of wahdat al-wujud as elaborated by Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240), the Andalusian Sufi and al-shaykh al-akbar (the greatest shaykh). In an Islamic universe, the seeker after fana' and baqa' can never fully attain fusion with God, the source of all that is; 'there is really only one Essence, that of God'.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, as Mian Muhammad suggests, 'burning' passionately with 'ishq for 'the Beloved' is both a pleasure and pain that can never be extinguished.<sup>43</sup>

While Saif al-Muluk is written in Panjabi (although with Persian subheadings) and, in that respect, is marked by social class as much as creed,<sup>44</sup> Mian Muhammad seems less concerned to locate the sharif (elite) Islamicate (Arabic and Persian) romance traditions in desi (native) Panjab than some of his other work, and the qissa genre more generally.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Saif al-Muluk does not obviously celebrate the 'diffuse conception of South Asian religious identity'<sup>46</sup> seen as another important characteristic of the genre. Nevertheless, the argument here is that Saif al-Muluk still clearly celebrates the 'inner meaninglessness of outward religious and social distinction'.<sup>47</sup>

As both Shackle and Ballard maintain, such a sentiment is commonplace in those 'popular' religious traditions—Tantric 'Buddhist' Sahajiya, 'Hindu' viraha bhakti (devotion) and the 'Sikh' tradition of Nanak—indigenised in Panjab before, during and after the gradual process of 'Islamisation'.<sup>48</sup> While the transcending of formal religious obligations is also at the heart of Qalandari traditions, such traditions are by no means confined to the particular local and regional contexts of Panjabi, or even Indian, Islam. Set in pre-Islamic times, and including accounts of drinking alcohol and merry-making, Saif al-Muluk's subtle treatment of the ambiguity of religious boundaries goes far beyond South Asia to the very heart of a distinctive Islamic identity. Mian Muhammad advances an oblique commentary on the ultimate insignificance of all external religious difference and, perhaps, even a deliberate (and typically Qalandari) transgression of Islamic orthodoxy's sacred myth of origins. He (inevitably) encompasses the great Muslim 'other' of jahiliyya (the pagan period of ignorance of God) within the unity of all existence; a cosmological vision reflected in the 'sulh-i kul' ('peace with all') atmosphere of Kharri Sharif to be described presently.<sup>49</sup>

In Saif al-Muluk, Mian Muhammad acknowledges his debt to earlier Panjabi Sufi poets such as Baba Farid al-Din Ganj-i Shakar (d. 1265), Shah Husayn (d. 1599), Sultan Bahu (d. 1691), Bulleh Shah (d. 1758) and Waris Shah (d. 1798).<sup>50</sup> While Baba Farid, the ‘founding father’ of Panjabi devotional poetry, was a Chishti, Panjabi poets of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tended to be Qadiris—although it was often difficult to separate the two ‘orders’, not least in cults of the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya. Like all the Panjabi poets, Mian Muhammad versified *wahdat al-wujud* in such a way that the mainly illiterate masses could grasp the immanence of God through the everyday world around them; for example, in farming and cattle herding, spinning and weaving. Indeed, highlighting the ‘Islamisation of the indigenous’ in a Mirpuri context, Pervez maintains that ‘the people of the mountains [Kashmir] have become Muslims by reciting the creed of faith but became believers by reading [or, more likely, hearing extracts from] Mian Muhammad’s Saif al-Muluk’.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, in a partial translation of Saif al-Muluk in Urdu, Sayyid Zamir Jafari describes the influence of the poem upon his family in Old Dadyal, Mirpur district: ‘Bai Ji [mother] used to wake early in the morning and after reading *nafal* [non-obligatory] prayers, she would grind some flour for four to six *chappatis* and separate the milk from the curd before the morning prayer. After this she would remain seated on her prayer mat and read on her rosary of a thousand beads and then make supplications in Arabic and Panjabi. As children we could not understand Arabic but we could make sense of some words in Panjabi. The prayers were read in such a beautiful, melodious, way that it seemed to us that it was part of her worship. She had memorised these prayers from our grandmother. As I grew up, I learned that these Panjabi prayers were from Mian Muhammad Bakhsh’s long poem, Saif al-Muluk’.<sup>52</sup>

In adult life, Jafari discovered that epigrams exemplifying the popular spirituality and folk wisdom of Saif al-Muluk were cited not only at home, but in almost every conceivable situation of Mirpuri life. Indeed, before the advent of television, a popular form of informal evening relaxation when people had returned from work in the fields was the recitation of verses from Saif al-Muluk.<sup>53</sup> Men and women would sit together, listening attentively to someone with a beautiful voice who, spiritually immersed in the poetry, might also provide brief commentary on the enlightenment provided by the verses. *Mehfil-i Saif al-Muluk* gatherings were also held in both mosques and at shrines, festivals and *melas* (fairs), among Hindus as well as Muslims.

### **Sacred place, contested space: ritual practice and the control of Kharri Sharif**

Every year, during the eighth Islamic month of *sha’ban* on the night of *shab-i barat* (night of salvation), around 100,000 people from all over Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir gather at Kharri Sharif to celebrate the ‘*urs* of Pira Shah. Pilgrims process to Kharri Sharif *dargah* (court, the seat of the saint) on foot, carrying gold-fringed banners and flags of green (the colour of Islam, the Prophet and the Garden of Paradise).<sup>54</sup> A man begins playing the *bagpipes*, which joins with the hypnotic beat of several *dhols* (drums) nearby. Four other men are carrying a tinsel-covered miniature of Pira Shah’s *dargah* above their heads, jiggling

the wooden frame that supports it in time with the sticks that the rest of their group is playing. These Qalandars are dressed from top to toe in green satin, and dance around the miniature as they play percussion and periodically give vocal praise to the Prophet's charismatic cousin and son-in-law; 'Ya 'Ali! (O 'Ali!)'. At the entrance to the dargah everything, including the minaret of the mosque, is covered in bright, multi-coloured, flashing lights illuminating the sky. To the sound of the bagpipes and dhols is joined the amplified early-evening azan (call to prayer) and prayers from the mosque, as well as the background hum of supplications. Shoes removed, men, but plenty of women too, squeeze towards the shrine of Pira Shah. Elsewhere, a formal stage decorated with colourful bunting is set up with instruments ready for the evening's qawwali (devotional music). Away from this area, fires light the path to the langar (communal kitchen) where huge empty deags (pots) are strewn across the grass outside a large outhouse building. Inside, rows of male pilgrims sit on the floor and consume tabarruk (sacralised food).<sup>55</sup> At the back entrance, there are stalls selling religious books and cassette tapes of preaching and qawwali, as well as ghilafs (palls for graves), trinkets and calligraphy.<sup>56</sup> Between stalls selling mitai (sweets), dhal-roti (lentils and flatbread) and pakore (deep-fried battered vegetables) is one displaying cakes decorated with iced depictions of Pira Shah to commemorate the anniversary of his death.

This celebration of the 'urs of Pira Shah is perhaps the most widely anticipated religious event of the year. People from all walks of life come with the belief that shab-i barat is when Allah the Almighty commands the names of his creation that will die, be born or receive substance of any kind in the following year. Overnight, destinies can change; a person might come to the dargah as a beggar and leave a wealthy person. In all of this, the role of Pira Shah as intercessor between the unworthy pilgrim, their Prophet and, ultimately, their Creator is crucial. Trimmingham identifies the 'philosophical basis for . . . devotion to saints' in Ibn 'Arabi's development of the concept of an-nur al-Muhammadi, the Muhammadan Light.<sup>57</sup> The most beloved of God, the Prophet Muhammad received God's own divine light from creation and is al-insan al-kamil (the perfect human), the embodiment of truth and perfection through whom God can be known and manifested in the world. However, this light is also made flesh in other Prophets of God and the aqtab (the pivots at the 'invisible hierarchy' of all the saints) which include figures such as Shaykh al-Jilani. Moreover, as awliya' ('friends' who have sought to return to God), all the saints including Pira Shah are advocates at the divine court and have the power to change human destiny through their intercession. Barkat (grace) is particularly associated with their graves, where they remain perfectly preserved and alive in constant prayer and devotion.<sup>58</sup> A tangible point of contact between the temporal and spiritual realms, it is the saints who can make the unworthy believer acceptable for, in a world still dominated by socio-religious hierarchy, 'One does not approach the king [God] directly'.<sup>59</sup>

If the 'urs of Pira Shah is the most significant annual event at Kharri Sharif, then, as for Muslims all over the world, juma raat (Thursday evening, or literally the 'eve' of the day of

congregational prayer, Friday) marks the beginning of the holiest day of the week.<sup>60</sup> Prayers are offered for the deceased, especially family members, and people visit the dargah to make their supplications and offerings. While people may visit different, specialised shrines depending on what they are seeking, Kharri Sharif has, in Mirpur, long attracted the largest number of visitors, including many Hindus before Partition.<sup>61</sup> As soon as pilgrims enter the shrine complex, women cover their heads out of respect for Pira Shah, who is viewed as a grandfather figure. However, there are no attempts to police visitors and, generally, there is a very serene and relaxed atmosphere where all feel at ease. Habiba, age 26, a Mirpuri housewife, explains: 'Everywhere you go people are caught up in their problems. I think that for your own sanity sometimes you have to escape from this vicious circle. Kharri Sharif is the only place I feel is "trouble free". I feel a sense of tranquillity at the shrine'.<sup>62</sup> No demands are made upon the pilgrims; they come and leave of their own free will and no one is there to question their commitment to Islamic orthodoxy.

At the two entrances to the dargah, male and female visitors remove their shoes and some kiss the door out of love for Pira Shah and for barkat. The small opening ensures that all enter with their heads respectfully lowered. Once inside, and unlike many mazars (literally, 'place of visitation' or shrines) referred to in the literature, both women and men can sit opposite one another at the feet of the grave as they make supplications to each holy person.<sup>63</sup> The first shrine is that of Mian Muhammad, whose grave is covered in a green ghilaf. The next shrines to be encountered are those of his mother, grandmother, one of his great ancestors and, finally, the main shrine of Pira Shah himself. Inside Pira Shah's shrine, most people kiss the end of his grave, again as an act of loving devotion, and then rub the crystal balls at the head of the ghilaf before brushing the barkat all over their bodies. Following that, they sit down near the grave and recite Fatiha (the 'Opening' chapter) or Ya Sin (chapter 36) from the Qur'an.<sup>64</sup> They then ask Pira Shah for a range of things from the sacred to the profane. Visitors also make offerings in the box situated at the foot of the grave. The box is intentionally placed here to illustrate that, at the dargah, the economic world is at the spiritual feet of Pira Shah.<sup>65</sup>

When pilgrims have completed their visitation they walk backwards out of the shrine so as not to turn their backs disrespectfully on the grave of Pira Shah. Outside the mazar, attendants sit and give tabarruk to the visitors. This normally consists of sweets but, if nothing else is left from the niyaz (offerings) to the shrine, then a pinch of salt is given; such 'sacred commerce' suggesting that no one should leave the dargah empty-handed. Before departing, some pilgrims light a diya (small clay lamp) or tie rags to a nearby tree to remind Pira Shah of their requests, and themselves of their vows should Allah favour them. No outstanding 'living' shaykh has emerged to succeed Mian Muhammad as a moral exemplar and charismatic head of the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya in Mirpur. As Werbner suggests, Sufi cults 'wax' and 'wane'—and, recalling Trimingham, this has perhaps been especially true of the Qadiriyya.<sup>66</sup> Mian Muhammad's family continue to be venerated by the masses but they have lived in his shadow as Mian Abid, age 46, a descendant of the saint who still lives in

Mirpur, explains: 'The truth is, soon after Mian Sahib died our elders moved away from his pious ways and devoted their energies to attaining material things. They spent their lives fighting over land and property and neglected to bring us up in the proper way. Perhaps someone from the younger people might bring the spiritual legacy back to the family'.<sup>67</sup>

In the initial period after Partition, Kharri Sharif was still managed by the family of Mian Muhammad. However, ultimately, they failed in their belated efforts to fend off the designs of the postcolonial state. Given the poverty of the district, the shrine's income was very small and, in any case, the family had invested very little of its own time or money in the upkeep of facilities. During the early 1960s, however, under the nationalisation policies of Pakistan President Ayub Khan, Kharri Sharif came under the control of the ministry of awqaf (pious endowments). Fortuitously for the state, this coincided with the period of mass Mirpuri international migration to Britain and, as a consequence of the latter, the dargah's income mushroomed with a current annual income of millions of rupees.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, it is said that annual revenue from Kharri Sharif exceeds all the tax collected in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. In the past, the (Hindu) Maharaja of Kashmir would come to pay his respects at the shrine.<sup>69</sup> Today, plaques commemorating official visits made by the prime ministers of Pakistan-administered Kashmir indicate the dargah's continuing importance to politicians.

While not a member of Mian Muhammad's family, one figure who is viewed as a successor of sorts to the saints of Kharri Sharif is Baba Dawud (age 67), a wandering Qalandar who claims that Mian Muhammad guides him spiritually. Baba Dawud has been visiting Kharri Sharif for nearly 20 years and has developed close ties with Mian Muhammad Iqbal, a descendant of Mian Muhammad's brother. He is keen to guide Mian Iqbal's family back to their original position as sajjada nishin—so much so that, rather ironically for a Qalandar, he has insisted that (displaced from the shrine) they put a plaque on their Toyota 'Land Cruiser' proclaiming 'Sajjada nishin of Kharri Sharif.' According to Mian Ilyas (age 47), the son of Mian Iqbal now based in Burnley, UK, Baba Dawud commands great authority among his own family and the Rajputs nearby Kharri Sharif.<sup>70</sup> Baba Dawud is constantly on the move and it is difficult to know when and where he can be found. However, by chance, we met him on the way to our first visit to Kharri Sharif. Baba Dawud does not approve of the Pakistan-administered Kashmir Government's management of the dargah, which leaves the legacy of Pira Shah and Mian Muhammad open to exploitation by greedy politicians for whom 'paisa rasul Allah' ('money is the Prophet of God', a play on the second half of the shahada, the Muslim profession of faith). As a free-spirited Qalandar, he is unwilling to be incorporated by the bureaucrats that manage the shrine and govern the country. However, Baba Dawud is also critical of the disposable approach to 'ishq among the modern masses: 'Sir, we people are like the smoker who, when he has the urge, lovingly kisses the cigarette, then sets it alight. But, when he sucks the life out of it and he sees no further benefit in it, he disposes of it by trampling it under his feet. Sir, I have been everywhere, I have become

free of everyone. As God is independent from all His creation, I have become independent of people'.<sup>71</sup>

### **The end of ambiguity? The late arrival of 'neo-orthodoxy' in Mirpur**

Unlike the earlier Panjabi Sufi poets who were writing at a time and in a place of growing political crisis, Mian Muhammad, even a century or more later in a remote region like Mirpur, generally steered clear of any outspoken criticism of opponents in his work.<sup>72</sup> An exception is his only polemical work, *Hidayat al-Muslimin* (Guidance for the Muslims) of 1877, where he strenuously refutes the ideas of both the Arabian anti-Sufi reformer Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792) and the Indian Ahl-i Hadis (the People of Prophetic Tradition) movement.<sup>73</sup> Arguing from a *zahiri* (plain or literal) approach to interpretation—as opposed to a *batini* (hidden or gnostic) approach typical of a mystic—both movements vested authority in the Qur'an, hadis and the first generation of pious ancestors, rejecting *bid'a* (innovation) such as the veneration of saints, which, they maintained, compromised God's absolute oneness with *shirk* (polytheism). With the emergence of the modern printing press, the railways and a postal service in British India, the Ahl-i Hadis critique of Muslim devotions would have eventually reached even as far as Mirpur.

In *Hidayat al-Muslimin*, Mian Muhammad defends the Ahl-i Sunnat wa'l Jama'at (the People of Prophetic Custom and the Community) in a similar fashion to his contemporary, Mawlana Ahmad Riza Khan of Bareilly (1856–1921). The founding figure of Barelwism and an 'alim (religious scholar), Mawlana Riza used his learning to justify many of those traditional Sunni ideas and practices that were increasingly coming under attack from anti-Sufis and Sufi reformers.<sup>74</sup> Both Mian Muhammad and Mawlana Riza belonged to the Qadiriyya, revered the Prophet and sayyids, and regarded Shaykh al-Jilani as superior to all the other saints. They supported the commemoration of *milad sharif* (the Prophet's birthday), *giyarvin sharif*, and so on. Despite their similarities, however, the argument here is that Mian Muhammad and Mawlana Riza actually represent, in Oberoi's terms, very different religious epistemes.<sup>75</sup> The two may have shared a commitment to the content of certain devotional beliefs and practices, but Mawlana Riza exhibits a disciplinary form of thinking that ultimately locates him inside the logic of the neo-orthodox discourses he seeks to resist. He is a believer in *wahdat al-wujud*, but insists that it should be confined to the learned. Mawlana Riza also finds outwardly ambiguous religiosity problematic, seeking to police individual behavioural conformity to the Prophet's *sunna* (custom).

At a time of rapid social change, Mawlana Riza's major achievement was creating a bounded *qaumic* identity for the expression of Sunni devotional belief and practice, which is naturally diverse and fragmented. However, as a consequence of this, his writings, including some of his devotional poetry, are fiercely polemical and sectarian in character, and take every

opportunity to brand Muslim others—especially the Sufi reformist Deobandi movement—as kafirs (unbelievers).<sup>76</sup> This can be contrasted with the cosmology of *wahdat al-wujud* in Saif al-Muluk and the ethic of ‘peace with all’ evident at Kharri Sharif.

Mian Muhammad and Mawlana Riza never met or had any correspondence. That the former does not mention any Barelwi or Deobandi personality in his writings suggests that, unlike the Ahl-i Hadis, these two more influential movements had not reached Mirpur during his lifetime. Indeed, even a recent account of Mirpur’s history up to Partition does not mention their presence.<sup>77</sup> Pir Maruf Husayn Shah, a British-Mirpuri pir now resident in Bradford, UK, admits that, despite coming from an educated family, he himself was not familiar with the Barelwis or Deobandis during his childhood spent in Chak Sawari, near Mirpur town, during the 1940s.<sup>78</sup> It was only during his studies outside Mirpur in the late 1950s that Pir Maruf was introduced to the debates between these movements. ‘If I did not know of these debates then I am sure that most people in this area would not have heard of them’.<sup>79</sup>

After Partition, centres of the Barelwi movement migrated north from India and began firmly establishing themselves for the first time in the Panjab. It was a short step to Mirpur and, by the early 1960s, Barelwi ulema had come to hold the position of imam in two of the town’s mosques and many others in the district. Initially, their presence was seen as a blessing by local Qadiriyya- Qalandariyya pirs who lacked the education to counter the activities of the Ahl-i Hadis and the Deobandi popular preaching movement, Tablighi Jama’at (the Faith Movement).<sup>80</sup> However, the Barelwi ulema did not seek only to defend local pirs and mazars; rather, they also promoted the narrowed agendas of Mawlana Riza, whom they viewed as the *mujaddid* (renewer) of the fourteenth Islamic century. Today, the Barelwis control almost all the mosques in Mirpur, including one recently completed just inside the entrance of Kharri Sharif dargah.

Undoubtedly, the void left by Mian Muhammad’s demise has made it easier for competing ulema-led reform movements, including the Barelwis, to gradually increase their influence in Mirpur. Interestingly, in the neighbouring Kotli district, the waxing of a contemporary Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya Sufi cult led by Hadrat Qadi Muhammad Sadiq (b. 1921) means that the expansion of the Barelwis has been more restricted there. Indeed, the reformed Sufism of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya is arguably better adapted than the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya to an environment where the local/global pervasiveness of neo-orthodoxy is increasingly apparent. To the ethical example of a living saint is added here the more sober cosmology of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi’s (d. 1624) doctrine of *wahdat al-shuhud* (the unity of witness), as well as an interiorised, silent, ritual practice and highly rationalised and bureaucratic framework for organisation. The Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in Kotli also has the added attraction of exerting its independence from the postcolonial state, and provides educational, medical and welfare services in its own right.<sup>81</sup>

In the absence of a living saint like Hadrat Qadi Muhammad Sadiq, and despite the efforts of the Barelwi ulema, the Ahl-i Hadis and, especially, the Tablighi Jama'at have reasonable constituencies among the more educated and socially mobile classes in contemporary Mirpur.<sup>82</sup> Youths are commonly accused of taking advantage of the relaxed atmosphere at Kharri Sharif and making it a 'lovers' point' or 'hangout for druggies',<sup>83</sup> a contested ritual space where unacceptable ludic or playful behaviour persists alongside intense popular spirituality. This is something, it is argued, that would not be tolerated in any other (i.e. more morally regulated) 'religious' setting.<sup>84</sup> Occasionally, public controversies arise. For example, Z.H. Mirza (age 67), a former lecturer at Mirpur College and member of Ahl-i Hadis, published a book attacking Hindu-like 'idolatry' at shrines such as Kharri Sharif.<sup>85</sup> However, he was charged with blasphemy for his public criticisms, and is currently serving a sentence in Mirpur jail. Notably, despite the best efforts of the Ahl-i Hadis to engage a top defence on his behalf, they have failed because, like the masses, important political figures in Mirpur still value and respect the power of the saints at Kharri Sharif.

## Conclusion

By way of conclusion, we return briefly to Werbner and Basu's agenda for the study of Sufism as 'a single, total, symbolic reality'.<sup>86</sup> Rather than simply documenting qismatic rituals characteristic of regional Sufi cults, we have considered such practices alongside popular Sufi textual genres such as tazkira and qissa.<sup>87</sup> Such an approach can begin to illuminate the role of so-called 'intoxicated' and 'transgressive' traditions in a more gradual and ambiguous 'Islamisation of the indigenous'<sup>88</sup> among South Asian Muslims. However, unlike Werbner's own account of the successful trans-national cult associated with a 'sober' Naqshbandi living pir, the present article is the story of a cult that, in some aspects, is experiencing a period of relative decline. Nevertheless, the waxing and waning of the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya can still usefully be seen in terms of Werbner and Basu's 'connections [and, we suggest, the possible disconnections] between Sufi cosmologies, ethical ideas, bodily ritual practices and organisational forms'.<sup>89</sup>

In Mirpur, the Islamising meta-narrative identified by Werbner is readily identifiable when the tazkira of Pira Shah is considered alongside ethnographic descriptions of his annual 'urs and weekly visitations to his grave on juma raat.<sup>90</sup> Recall that Pira Shah was an intoxicated wandering mystic who, having spent 12 years underwater with Khizr and another 12 years secluded in a hillside cave, became so powerfully close to God that it is believed, in life and afterlife, he can alter the fate and destiny of people in this world, not least the pious poor. For this reason, offerings of dammari are still made at Kharri Sharif, with pilgrims literally placing their worldly wealth at his spiritual feet. In the qissa of Saif al-Muluk, Mian Muhammad elaborates the cosmology of wahdat al-wujud (and, for that matter, al-insan al-kamil) underlying such narratives and embodied ritual practices, thus locating the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya clearly in terms of a sharif Islamicate heritage for all its approximate convergences with desi traditions.

Compared with other Islamic spaces such as most mosques, in many ways everyday activity at Kharri Sharif still embodies the ethic of 'peace with all' associated with the 'unity of existence'. The shrine retains a relaxed sense of ambiguity about the need to mark boundaries between visiting men and women, Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as providing a langar that converts the 'capitalist, commodity economy . . . into a good-faith, moral economy through altruistic giving'.<sup>91</sup>

However, despite the living power and protection of Pira Shah beyond the grave and the expression of closely connected ethical ideas in Saif al-Muluk, the failure of the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya to produce an exemplary successor to Mian Muhammad has left the cult without a charismatic source of personal guidance since early in the twentieth century. This period has been one of unprecedented social change and stress in South Asia; a late colonial/postcolonial context in which the dominant public discourse about religion has increasingly become one of conformity to external behavioural norms as markers of authentic qaumic identity.<sup>92</sup> However, while the disciplinary thinking of neo-orthodox epistemology had little impact on demotic practice in Mirpur during Mian Muhammad's lifetime, since the 1950s, in the form of the Ahl-i Hadis at one extreme and the Barelwis at another, the new episteme has increasingly come to dominate the discourse of the influential classes.

Thus, while Werbner and Basu's connection between cosmology and embodied ritual remains manifestly alive in the embodied rituals of the cult of the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya saints, ethical ideas associated with the tradition do not find obvious expression in a thriving organisation. Following Partition, control of Kharri Sharif and its offerings was eventually assumed by the Pakistani state, which has struggled with the question of how best to renew the relationship between Islam and political power in the postcolonial period. In this regard, Werbner and Basu propose that the continuing relevance and popularity of Sufism in modernity can be explained partly in terms of the alternative 'spaces of potential freedom' it imagines beyond the stranglehold of authoritarian governing regimes.<sup>93</sup> However, while government responsibility for the organisation of Kharri Sharif has not compromised the shrine's attractiveness to individual pilgrims as a demotic space that is both tranquil and 'trouble-free', the absence of a living saint does mean that, such as it currently exists, the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya cult lacks sufficient autonomy and independence to mobilise an alternative to the discourses of the dominant religio-social order.

### **Acknowledgements**

Seán McLoughlin, who prepared this article for publication, would like to extend his thanks to the guest editors for inviting a contribution to this special edition of Contemporary South Asia. It has enabled him to find an appropriate home for the publication of research that

began formally when the Society for South Asian Studies funded a 3-week field-trip to Pakistan-administered Kashmir in April 2000. Muzamil Khan, a part-time doctoral candidate at Liverpool Hope University College, UK, under McLoughlin's supervision, accompanied him as research assistant. Khan's contribution in terms of the translation of sources in Urdu and Panjabi, the conduct of interviews in both Mirpur and the United Kingdom, as well as some initial drafting, sees him rightly recognised as co-author. Mian Ishtiaq from Burnley, UK, who is related to the family of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, provided accommodation at Kharri Sharif and suggested respondents from his family, local government officials and academics. The support of all mentioned here, plus the helpful suggestions of reviewers, is gratefully acknowledged.

### Notes and references

1. K.P. Ewing (ed.), 'Ambiguity and Shari'at: a perspective on the problem of moral principles in tension', in *Shari'at and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
2. Ibid, p 6.
3. R. Ballard, 'Panth, dharm, kismet te qaum: continuity and change in four dimensions of Punjabi religion', in P. Singh and S. Thandi (eds), *Punjabi Identity in a Global Context* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
4. H. Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p 379.
5. P. Werbner and H. Basu (eds), *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality, and Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults* (London: Routledge, 1998), p 18. See also R. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); collections of his other work include R. Eaton, *Essays on Islam and Indian History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).
6. Werbner and Basu, *ibid*, p 17f. See also P. Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love: The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult* (London: Hurst, 2003); and R. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300–1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). Neo-orthodoxy must be regarded as deviating from classical orthodoxy in its attempts to redraw religious boundaries and reinvent religious traditions in such a way that large parts of the ambiguous historical experience of 'communities' is rejected as 'innovation'.
7. These themes Werbner summarises thus: 'World renunciation (asceticism) = divine love and intimacy with God = divine hidden knowledge = the ability to transform the world = the hegemony of spiritual authority over temporal power and authority'. See Werbner, *ibid*, p 290. See also Eaton 1993, *op cit*, Ref 5.
8. Werbner and Basu, *op cit*, Ref 5, pp 3–4.
9. Ibid, p 4.

10. R. Ballard, 'British Pakistanis', paper presented at the Conference on the Census Ethnic Volumes, held in Leeds, 5–6 September 1994. The 2001 UK Census, which included an ethnic question as in 1991, showed 747,285 'Pakistanis' in Britain, a 64% increase in the last decade. See National Statistics online, ([www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=455](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=455)), accessed 10 February 2006.
11. See V. Saifullah Khan, 'The Pakistanis', in J.L. Watson (ed.), *Between Two Cultures* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977); and the work of Roger Ballard—for example, R. Ballard, 'The context and consequences of migration: Jullundur and Mirpur compared', *New Community*, Vol 11, Nos 1/2, 1983, pp 117–136; and, more recently, R. Ballard, 'The South Asian presence in Britain and its transnational connections', in H. Singh and S. Vertovec (eds), *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2002).
12. R. Ballard, 'Popular Islam in Northern Pakistan and its reconstruction in urban Pakistan', in J. Malik and J.R. Hinnells (eds), *Sufism in the West* (London: Routledge, 2006). This builds on Ballard, *op cit*, Ref 3. Elsewhere, Philip Lewis is excellent on the background of South Asian Sufism *per se*, although, despite being principally a study of Bradford, a UK Kashmiri stronghold, his book has little specific to say about Islam in Mirpur. See P. Lewis, *Islamic Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994).
13. Werbner and Basu, *op cit*, Ref 5, p 4.
14. The origin of this popular offering given in the name of Pira Shah throughout Mirpur and the Panjab region is unclear. It is said that Pira Shah had a vision of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani who granted him the sum of 125,000 dammari as a gift. Pira Shah would receive this amount as an offering from the Mirpuri people each month. For a different version see, for example, Chowk online, ([www.chowk.com/show-article.cgi?aid=00002221&channel=leafyglade%20inn](http://www.chowk.com/show-article.cgi?aid=00002221&channel=leafyglade%20inn)), accessed 10 February 2006.
15. Never formally under the British Raj, Mirpur was located on the periphery of the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir, infamous for the high taxes imposed by its maharajas and its poor infrastructure. Its underdevelopment has continued as part of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, which is effectively under the control of Islamabad. See Ballard 1983, *op cit*, Ref 11.
16. J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998 edn), p 43.
17. *Ibid*, p 97.
18. *Ibid*, p 97.
19. See A. Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), pp 96–105.
20. Trimingham, *op cit*, Ref 16, p 98.
21. *Ibid*, especially Appendix B, p 264f. See also Schimmel, *op cit*, Ref 19, p 34; and C.W. Ernst and B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p 17.

22. M.K. Hermansen and B. Lawrence, 'Indo-Persian Tazkiras as memorative communications', in D. Gilmartin and B. Lawrence (eds), *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), p 168. On Bahul Sher, see, for example, G.S. Lahuri, *Khazinat al-Asfiyya [Treasures of the Pious]* (Lahore: Maktaba Nabawiyya, 1990).
23. Hermansen and Lawrence, *ibid*, p 149.
24. M.M.T. Qalandari, *Bustan-i Qalandari [The Garden of Qalandars]* (Jhelum: Maktaba Nasim, 1985). An account by a British-based Muslim is mainly derivative of Qalandari; see T.M. Jhelumi, *Tazkira Ghazi Qalandar [Biography of Pira Shah]* (Jhelum: Sultaniyya Publications, Mazhar Umar Market, 2000).
25. Schimmel, *op cit*, Ref 19, p 137. Schimmel also identifies him as one of the panj piriya, a cult of five saints common in South Asia. Mentioned in a wide variety of literature, Khizr (Arabic Khidr) can be given both 'indigenous' (Hindu) and 'Islamic' names.
26. Qalandari, *op cit*, Ref 24, p 35.
27. *Ibid*, p 42. See also Jhelumi, *op cit*, Ref 24, p 33.
28. *Ibid*. An 'urs, in literary terms, is a 'wedding'. For the saint, death is the culmination of a life-long yearning to meet God and the Prophet.
29. Compare this with, for example, Eaton 1993, *op cit*, Ref 5.
30. Jhelumi, *op cit*, Ref 24.
31. A.S. Afaqi, 'Mian Muhammad Bakhsh Qadiri Qalandari', *Awliya-i Kiram Number: Saiyyra Digest* (Lahore: Rives Garden, 1986), p 472. *Saiyyra Digest* is an Urdu monthly that published this special edition on Sufi saints.
32. *Ibid*.
33. A. Pervez, *Chitthian (Letters of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh)* (Islamabad: Lok Virsa, 1985), p 17. Most of the letters were addressed to Mian Muhammad's follower, Qalandari, author of *Bustan-i Qalandari* (*op cit*, Ref 24), whose daughter agreed to their publication.
34. S. Zhaigham, *Qissa-i Saif al-Maluk [The Tale of Saif al-Maluk]* (Lahore: Packages Ltd, 1993), p 35. This is probably the best critical edition of *Saif al-Muluk* available. For a partial scholarly translation in Urdu, see also S.Z. Jafari, *Man Mela [Union of the Heart]* (Islamabad: Lok Virsa, 1987).
35. A spiritual rather than face-to-face initiation known as such because of a contemporary of the Prophet, called Uways, who was said to communicate telepathically with Muhammad. See J. Baldick, *Mystical Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1989), p 199.
36. Jhelumi, *op cit*, Ref 24, p 64.
37. C. Shackle, 'Beyond Turk and Hindu: crossing the boundaries in Indo-Muslim romance', in D. Gilmartin and B. Lawrence (eds), *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious*

Identities in Islamicate South Asia (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), p 60. Shackle appears to be the only western scholar to discuss Mian Muhammad's poetry in any depth. In her survey of Panjabi Sufi poetry, Schimmel neglects to mention him. See Schimmel, op cit, Ref 19, pp 144–145.

38. Dawn online, [hwww.dawn.com/2003/06/28/fea.html](http://www.dawn.com/2003/06/28/fea.html), accessed 10 February 2006, reports that a recent 'Evening with Mian Mohammad Bakhsh' in Lahore was extremely popular, and that editions of Saif al-Muluk have been produced in Gurmukhi from places such as Patiala. See also Chowk online, op cit, Ref 14.

39. Zhaigham op cit, Ref 34. Today, the popularity of Saif al-Muluk is due in great part to the availability of cassette tapes and CDs sung by famous Pakistani recording artists such as the late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Shawkat Ali.

40. These stories and their characters would have been very familiar to Mirpuris, having come to South Asia via Persia. R.F. Burton's English translation in volume seven of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* is accessible at eBooks@Adelaide, The University of Adelaide Library, (<http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/b/burton/richard/b97b/part78.html>), accessed 4 September 2006. No English translation of Mian Muhammad's version of Saif al-Muluk yet exists.

41. Zhaigham, op cit, Ref 34, p 21.

42. Baldick, op cit, Ref 35, p 84. Moreover, as Baldick suggests: 'Ibn 'Arabi declared that there is only one ultimate Reality in the whole of existence. This is certainly monistic, but not the same thing as pure monism, which maintains that there is only one entity . . . So paradoxes arise: the Truth simultaneously is creation and is not . . . the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi is not pantheism (the belief that all is God and God is all)'. See Baldick, op cit, Ref 35, p 83.

43. See Ernst and Lawrence, op cit, Ref 21, p 15.

44. Shackle, op cit, Ref 37, p 56.

45. Ibid, p 56.

46. Ibid, p 57.

47. Ibid, p 57.

48. Ibid, p 57. Ballard also argues that, prior to their gradual 'conversion' to Islam, 'the great majority of Panjabis were primarily inspired by mystically and ecstatically oriented Sahajiya cults of one kind or another'. See Ballard, 2006, op cit, Ref 12, p 169. The cosmology and practice of intercession among such cults converged with the Sufi orders' popularisation of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*. However, such a reading perhaps underplays the monotheism of Ibn 'Arabi—as it does the incorporation of some later Chishti pirs by courtly politics. See Baldick, op cit, Ref 42 and Schimmel, op cit, Ref 19.

49. As Shackle acknowledges, Schimmel underlines that 'the negation of the Turk-Hindu distinction is no more than an expansion—albeit one with a particular local relevance—of

such already well established denials of difference as the equations between ka'ba and idol-temple'. See Shackle, *op cit*, Ref 37, p 69.

50. On Panjabi mystical folk poetry, see Shackle, *ibid*; Schimmel, *op cit*, Ref 19, pp 25–28, 141–149; Ballard, 2006, *op cit*, Ref 12; and, for examples, see Apna Org online, ([www.apnaorg.com/poetry/](http://www.apnaorg.com/poetry/)), accessed 28 February 2006.

51. Pervez, *op cit*, Ref 33, p 5. Elsewhere, Ballard underlines that popular culture is a major vehicle for the transmission of religious ideas in South Asia. See Ballard, 2006, *op cit*, Ref 12.

52. Jafari, *op cit*, Ref 34, p 13.

53. Interview with Inayat (age 69), originally from Kotli, a district neighbouring Mirpur, but now living in Bury, Lancashire, UK. Interviewed in Bury, UK, in November 2000.

54. This account of the 'urs of Pira Shah is based on video-recorded observations made by article co-author Seán McLoughlin during Economic and Social Research Council-sponsored doctoral fieldwork in Mirpur during winter 1995.

55. At Kharri Shari, dal-roti (lentils and flat-bread) or pilau (rice and meat) is served to large numbers of pilgrims daily, including many Afghan refugees. Even the wealthy will send their servants to collect food from the langar because it is tabarruk and said to have miraculous healing powers.

56. The Qadiriyya is generally opposed to devotional music, and the formal inclusion of qawwali at Pira Shah's 'urs identifies the Qadiriyya-Qalandariyya tradition closely with the Chishtiyya. See Ernst and Lawrence, *op cit*, Ref 21.

57. Trimmingham, *op cit*, Ref 16, p 161.

58. U. Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmed Riza Khan Bareilwi and his Movement, 1870–1920* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

59. D. Pinto, 'The mystery of Nizamuddin Dargah', in C. Troll (ed.), *Muslim Shrines in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p 122.

60. M. Gaborieau, 'Introduction to the new edition', in C. Troll (ed.) *ibid*, pp xv, vii.

61. Qalandari, *op cit*, Ref 24, p 35. In Mirpur, if someone suffers from an eye ailment then the Pir Ghanoi shrine near Chak Sawari is believed to have the cure for this illness. For skin ailments, Bin Sain shrine near Dadyal is visited.

62. Interviewed in Mirpur in September 2001.

63. See, for example, M. Gaborieau, *op cit*, Ref 60, p xv.

64. Both are recommended as readings for the deceased in the Prophetic traditions.

65. Compare this with Werbner and Basu, *op cit*, Ref 5, p 15.

66. Werbner, *op cit*, Ref 6, p 50; and Trimmingham, *op cit*, Ref 16.

67. Interviewed in Mirpur in April 2000.

68. On the importance of Persian Gulf remittances for the shrine of Mu'in al-Din Chishti at Ajmer, compare this with Ernst and Lawrence, *op cit*, Ref 21, p 103.
69. Zhaigham, *op cit*, Ref 34, p 11.
70. Interviewed in Burnley in April 2000.
71. Interviewed in Mirpur in April 2000.
72. For example, Bulleh Shah writes: 'Bulleh, the cleric and torch-bearer are from the same breed/They give light to others, yet themselves remain in the dark'. See M. Faqir, *Kulliyat-i Bulleh Shah [The Complete Works of Bulleh Shah]* (Lahore: Kutubkhana Khurshidiyya, Urdu Bazar, no date), p 367.
73. M. Bakhsh, *Hidayat al-Muslimin [Guidance for the Muslims]* (Muzaffarabad: Nizamat-i Awqaf, 1980). On Wahhabism in the Indian context, see M. Gaborieau, 'A nineteenth-century Indian 'Wahhabi' tract against the cult of Muslim saints', in C. Troll (ed.), *op cit*, Ref 59.
74. 'Barelwism' takes its name from Bareilly, the town in Uttar Pradesh where Mawlana Riza was based. See Sanyal, *op cit*, Ref 58.
75. Oberoi, *op cit*, Ref 4. The literature sometimes refers to Barelwism as drawing much of its support from the rural masses. However, its leadership consisted mainly of ulema and only those pirs who were self-consciously reformist. This leadership was drawn mainly from the old aristocracy, the newer professions and those working in the British administration. Mawlana Riza was also part of a long tradition of reformed Sufism that condemned those elements of 'folk' Islam which transgressed shari'at or exhibited 'Hindu' influence. See Sanyal, *op cit*, Ref 58.
76. The founders of the Deobandis, another ulema-led movement, were Chishtis but, like the Ahl-i Hadis, rejected the majority of the order's devotional practices. In Deobandi seminaries, many teachers initiated students into spiritual guidance and zikr (ritualised 'remembrance' of God). Their emphasis was therefore more in the 'sober' Naqshbandiyya tradition. See B.D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband. 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). Deobandis criticised Barelwi doctrines of the nur-i Muhammadi, his 'ilm al-ghayb (knowledge of the unseen), and continuing living presence in the life of Muslims (hazar o nazar).
77. S. Shah, *Mirpur 47 se qabl [Mirpur Before 1947]* (Mirpur: Kazmin Publishers, 1995). The author is a British Mirpuri from Surrey, UK.
78. Interviewed in Bradford in December 2002.
79. *Ibid*.
80. On Tablighi Jama'at, see M.K. Masud, *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

81. Compare the similarities with Werbner's study of a Naqshbandi living shaykh; see Werbner, *op cit*, Ref 6. On the Naqshbandiyya in India, see A.F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998).
82. While both the Ahl-i Hadis and Tablighi Jama'at seek to reform devotional practices characteristic of Sufi shrines, the former deny the existence of pirs while the latter would say there are only a few 'genuine' pirs.
83. Khalida (age 30), former teacher and housewife, interviewed Mirpur, April 2000.
84. On the Sufi shrine as a 'playful', counter-structural space, see Werbner and Basu, *op cit*, Ref 5, p 14; and Oberoi, *op cit*, Ref 4, pp 153–154.
85. Z.H. Mirza, *Ahl-i Haram ke Somnath [The Idols of Muslims]* (Mirpur: A66 Sector C3, 1989).
86. Werbner and Basu, *op cit*, Ref 5, pp 3–4.
87. Such an approach is therefore methodologically in sympathy with Gavin Flood who defends religious studies as a unique interdisciplinary space where the study of anthropology and literature, practice and text, can be integrated, not least by teams of researchers with complementary skills. G. Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 1999).
88. Werbner and Basu, *op cit*, Ref 5, p 17f.
89. *Ibid*, p 4.
90. Werbner, *op cit*, Ref 6, p 290.
91. Werbner and Basu, *op cit*, Ref 5, p 15.
92. Nevertheless, Ewing concludes that, ultimately, 'the everyday practices of Muslims changed less than did their way of conceptualizing and labelling these practices'. See Ewing, *op cit*, Ref 1, p 16.
93. Werbner and Basu, *op cit*, Ref 5, p 21.