

SUFISM AND STATE POLICY

Pnina Werbner

Sufi Shaykh Encounters, Sufi Entanglements: Democracy, Patronage, Militancy and Critical Discourse in Pakistan

The point has been made for Islamists, it is often not modernity per se that is rejected but secular modernity and, above all, the secular state. Sufis, by contrast, tend to thrive on the liberalism and pluralism of the secular state, and to cooperate well with its political representatives, extracting boons for their orders in exchange for promised political support. Yet in South Asia, the movement cannot be conceived as merely quietist. It engages in constant critique of the mendacity and hypocrisy of politicians and reformist 'ulama (clerics). On the whole, however, such sentiments remain at a rhetorical and symbolic level. Sufism and its world-renouncing saints are almost everywhere committed to peaceful coexistence and tolerance. It is these which allow regional cults to expand and prosper, despite changes of regimes and local political conflicts. Nonetheless, among the range of Sufi Shaykhs, some are militants, and others highly political, as, for example, Tahir ul Qadri, an eminent Barelvi Islamic scholar also claiming Qadiri Sufi descent and the title of 'pir', who has created a large transnational organisation, Minhaj al Quran, alongside a political party in Pakistan, Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT). Qadri has courageously renounced the Taliban and all they stand for, at a time when Pakistani Taliban have been bombing Sufi shrines and, in 2009, assassinated a leading moderate Sufi leader in Lahore. He has also led a failed revolutionary 'inqilab' march, calling for the overthrow the current Nawaz Sharif government. The paper will consider three different types of Sufi Shaykhs in modern Pakistan.

Rosemary Corbett

Cold War Theories about Mysticism and Modern Islam

This presentation examines how certain Muslim and non-Muslim academics came to view mysticism as a necessary condition for modernizing Islam during the Cold War. Inspired in part by the thinking of Muhammad Iqbal, these academics, particularly Wilfred Cantwell Smith, who is better known as a scholar of comparative religion, believed secularism destabilized Islamic societies, but that a specific kind of Sufism could promote modern, liberal reform. As I discuss, they established programs for studying Islam in connection with growing US involvement in South Asia and the Middle East not just at the McGill Institute of Islamic Studies and at Harvard University, where they were based, but also in educational institutions in Muslim-majority countries—particularly Pakistan—where they hoped to shape the content of Islamic education and, thus, the subjectivity of scholars and citizens.

Zahid Hussain

Pakistan's struggle with violent religious extremism and quest for democracy

Religious sectarianism, the principal source of terrorist activity in Pakistan, presents the most serious threat to the country's internal security. Sectarian militancy has been deeply intertwined with the radicalisation of the state and the society, as minority sects feel increasingly threatened.

The proliferation of jihadist and sectarian organisations in Pakistan had been the result of a militant culture initially espoused by the Pakistani state and funded by foreign money. Saudi Arabian patronage,

especially of more radical seminaries, has played a major role in the spread of sectarian hatred. Successive governments ignored their activities out of political expediency and also because most of the foreigners supporting them were 'brotherly' Muslim countries.

Those seminaries have turned into hubs of religious extremism having had a spillover effect, and now present a serious threat to Pakistan's integrity. The education imparted by traditional madressahs often spawns factional, religious and cultural conflict. It creates barriers to modern knowledge, stifles creativity and breeds bigotry, thus laying the foundation on which fundamentalism — militant or otherwise — is based.

Divided by sectarian identities, these institutions are, by their very nature, driven by their zeal to outnumber and dominate rival sects. Promoting a particular sect inevitably implies the rejection of other sects, sowing the seeds of extremism in the minds of the pupils. The literature produced by their parent religious organisations is aimed at proving the rival sects infidels and apostates. The efforts by successive governments to modernise seminary curricula and introduce secular subjects have failed because of the stiff resistance put up by religious organisations controlling the religious schools. Religions are capable of many different interpretations. The problem occurs when the extremists, the militant religious leaders and groups, appropriate the function of religious interpretation.

What the extremists have tried to do is to create a sense of fear and suppress the voices of reason and moderation. The forces of radical Islam have succeeded in infusing religion in the very fabric of the state. Many respected Islamic scholars who challenged the extremists and militants have either been killed or forced to leave the country.

More worrisome, however, is the failure of the state to provide protection to its citizens. The extremists have gained ground because of the moral bankruptcy of our political leadership and criminal abdication of the government in the face of extremist violence. Glorification of a murderer is also incitement to violence.

The atmosphere of fear has shrunk space for liberals and moderates. The government's claim of fighting extremism and militancy is mere rhetoric when the voices of reason are brutally suppressed. That only emboldens the forces of intolerance. Rising incidents of killing on charges of blasphemy is manifestation of religious vigilantism now so rampant in the country. Even if the killers are arrested one is not sure that they will be convicted, leave alone

It is surely not fear alone that is apparently preventing the judges from upholding the law. It is also to do with rising religious extremism in society that condones murder in the name of Islam. There incidence where killers have been greeted by lawyers when produced before the court and the failure of the state to stop thousands of others surrounding the court that has encouraged other fanatics to follow his example. Not surprisingly, there have seen a marked rise in blasphemy-related murders in the country. Suicide bombers are brainwashed and motivated by the false interpretation of religion. Poverty, unemployment, romantic notions of jihad and the growing influence of radical Islamist groups have

been the main reasons driving a young man to become a suicide bomber. The pulpit of the mosque is used by clerics to spread sectarian hatred and incite violence.

Militancy and extremism cannot be dealt with without eradicating their ideological sources. This is not a battle between liberals and extremists, but between those who preach religious intolerance and violence and those championing the cause of rule of law, religious harmony and democracy. It is a battle that will ultimately decide the future direction of the country in a most fundamental way.

Alix Philippon

Sufism as politics in Pakistan : Sufi mobilizations and public policies in the shadow of the War on Terror

As a major repertoire of Islamic language, Sufism has been a major component of identity politics in Pakistan. It has often been tapped as a political resource and instrumentalized as a legitimizing tool by both state and non state actors. As the contested mystical aspect of faith, it has indeed become part of the ideologization of Islam, and its very definition has become increasingly the locus of arguments within the Pakistani public sphere. As a matter of fact, Sufism is a highly ambiguous signifier, an Islamic discursive tradition which most players active in the political arena can never quite manage to supersede. From the reformist Muhammed Iqbal, who reinterpreted Sufism in a more dynamic idiom able to inspire the new Muslim community, to the latest political endeavours of the State-sponsored National Sufi Council, not to mention the doctrinal struggles between the different religious sects like the Deobandis and the Barelwis, Sufism emerges as a relevant symbol to analyze the never ending debate on the identity of a country caught in controversial political contexts, especially since 2001 and the beginning of the so-called War on Terror. The universe of Sufism, deeply embedded in Pakistan's ethos, became the natural ally of power and an ideological weapon of mass seduction. Sufism has been brandished more than ever as an alternative to the most radical versions of Islamic faith. And Barelwi groups have mobilized to defend it in the face of rising sectarian tensions.

SUFI SHRINES: CONFLICT AND COEXISTENCE

Carla Bellamy

What a difference difference makes: religious diversity and the culture of Indian Islamic places of pilgrimage

In this ethnographic study of a Muslim saint shrine in the Mumbai neighborhood of Santa Cruz, I argue that contrary to the popular image of Muslim saint shrines as places where religious difference is subsumed by devotional atmosphere, clearly delineated religious identities actually shape how devotees experience Islamic sacred space, where they go in it, and how they use it. Further, while notions of religious identity as fixed and impermeable are commonly understood to be a source of conflict, my research suggests that they paradoxically infuse the cross-tradition alliances and friendships often developed at Muslim saint shrines with a greater sense of importance and strength by virtue of the fact that religious boundaries are being crossed. As a result of these socially transgressive relationships, devotees feel part of a powerful counterculture or "alternative kingdom" where they have overcome

the discourses of religious difference that have tragically divided neighborhoods, communities, and, ultimately, the subcontinent itself. Thus, the powerful and transformative sense of community that develops at Muslim saint shrines is deeply dependent upon on notions of religious difference.

Anand Taneja

Muslim Saints and Hindu Daughters: Kinship, Ethical Self-Fashioning, and Inter-religious Relations at Firoz Shah Kotla Dargah, Delhi.

Relations between religions in South Asia have been seen as marked by either competition or syncretism. Is there another way of understanding the inter-religious interaction? Turning to the interactions between Muslims and Hindus at the popular Muslim saint-shrine of Firoz Shah Kotla in Delhi, I offer another model in this paper—one of religions opening up new potentialities of ethical life and self-fashioning for the others they interact with, without either “conversion” or the dilution of doctrinal specificity. At Firoz Shah Kotla, the ethics of social interaction are anti-identitarian. People actively avoid asking each other’s names, which easily identify one’s religious community and caste. Instead, people follow an ethic of nameless intimacy, where they become friends and share intimate secrets while, on one level, remaining strangers. The ability to form communities of *hamdardi* (shared pain/empathy) while stepping out of one’s socially determined identity is a major factor in the healing power of Muslim saint shrines such as Firoz Shah Kotla. This healing efficacy can be linked to the Islamic ethic of *gharib-navazi* (hospitality to strangers/others) and anti-patriarchal strands within Islam, which serve as an ethical resource even for the non-Muslims who come to Muslim saint shrines.

Kinship between religious groups in India is often portrayed fraternally—Hindu Muslim Sikh *Isai/ Apas Men Sab Bhai Bhai*, for example—a “secular” reading which elides the theological, ritual, and ethical differences between religious traditions. This secular reading is tied to the project of national integration. How did, and how do, people relate to religious difference in everyday life, at a remove from the exigencies of national discourse? Another model of kinship between religions operates in the popular imagination at Firoz Shah Kotla, a model based not on fraternal bonds but on marital ones, bonds based on embracing difference, distance, and estrangement. The jinn-saints of Firoz Shah Kotla are anti-patriarchal father figures, perceived as the fathers of daughters, and not of sons, and women far outnumber men in this space. In patrilineal and patriarchal north Indic culture, the *Babul*, the father of the daughter destined to go away to another, is a figure of unconditional childhood affection and intimacy. To articulate desires that contradict the normative morality of family and society—women, Hindu and Muslim, and the men who love them—come to pray to and petition the jinn-saints at Firoz Shah Kotla, perceived as a father-figure of daughters.

What makes Muslim saints become such anti-patriarchal figures for women and men across religious divides, when the image of Islam, in the contemporary media-scape, is so thoroughly oppressive, especially of women? The anti-patriarchal potentialities of Islam, which co-exist along with the patriarchal juridical consensus of the *Sharia*, center on the popular memory of the Prophet Muhammad, and his relations with the women in his life, especially the loving relation with his daughter *Fatima*. These memories have continued as affective and ethical potentialities in the popular realm, especially through the figures of *jinn*s and *paris* (fairies) linked to *Fatima*; figures celebrated in eighteenth century *Rekhti* poetry, poetry written by men but celebrating urban femininity, and the early-modern vernacular cityscape.

By offering us a model of Islam as an ethical inheritance as opposed to a religious identity, Firoz Shah Kotla forces us to rethink normative ideas of religion, the role of the popular (as opposed to the authoritative) in the transmission of religious tradition, and the role of Islam in the ethical and religious life of North India.

Rachana Umashankar

Qawwali—The soundtrack to Indian Pluralism

Qawwali, the form of zikr (ritual remembrance) practiced at the shrines of the Chishti Sufi order can be heard performed in the courtyards of prominent Sufi shrines regularly and frequently in the Indian subcontinent. Penned by renowned Sufi poets, mystics, and saints, and set to a distinct genre of semi-classical music, this form of zikr enjoys considerable cross-religious appeal. Beyond the Sufi shrine, for decades Qawwali has also been a staple of Bollywood cinema. For a while stripped entirely of its sacred content and transformed into secular romantic songs, the past decade has seen the reemergence of Sufi themes in film-Qawwali. This reassertion of the sacred in film-Qawwali has also come with added political implications. Themes of religious multiculturalism, national integration, and a pan-South Asian ethos are echoed in the cinematic presentation of Qawwali. This paper traces this transformation, and the cooption of Qawwalis as 21st century anthems of pluralism both in and beyond Indian cinema.

SUFISM AND POPULAR IMAGINATION

Rob Rozehnal

Reimagining Pakistan: A Sufi Vision of Islamic History, Orthodoxy and Identity

Within the combative discursive landscape of contemporary Pakistan, Sufism remains an emotive, multi-valent and highly contested symbol. Amid the vociferous debate over Islamic authority and authenticity, competing groups—Islamists, reformists, secular nationalists and Sufis themselves—evoke Sufi doctrine, piety and practice to either defend or decry the tradition's Islamic credentials. This paper explores a particular Sufi response to the conundrum of Pakistani identity through an examination of the writings of a contemporary spiritual master (shaykh) within a sub-branch of the Subcontinent's oldest Sufi lineage: Shaykh Wahid Bakhsh Rabbani (1910-1995 CE) of the Chishti Sabiri order. Combining spiritual pedagogy and practice with literary acumen, the Shaykh entered Pakistan's contested public arena to champion Sufism's enduring relevance for postcolonial South Asian Muslims. In his assessment, an Indo-Muslim Sufi identity—grounded in ritual practice and experiential knowledge—offers a sacralized system of selfhood and a communal network which transcends the narrow boundaries of ascribed social, political and religious institutions. In his voluminous political tract, *The Magnificent Power Potential of Pakistan*, Wahid Bakhsh presents a sweeping survey of Islamic military and cultural history. Drawing inspiration and guidance from a reified portrait of a lost Golden Age, he champions the compatibility of Islam, modernity and mysticism as the foundation of Pakistani nationhood and a bulwark against Western (and Indian) cultural and political hegemony. A critical examination of this eclectic text offers insights into postcolonial subjectivity and its relation to religious orthodoxy, ideology and expression.

Helene Basu

Sufi healing practices and psychiatry in India

With the global mental health movement and processes of liberalization in India, relationships between Sufi practices of healing, psychiatry and the state changed. In Gujarat, psychiatrists sought a collaboration with Sufi practitioners of healing occult forms of madness at a famous Sufi shrine. What happens if the 'dominant' institution legitimated by scientific authority and the state - the psychiatric clinic - is placed within the 'dominated' one - the behavioral environment of the shrine legitimated by Islamic knowledge? Institutions of healing such as the shrine and psychiatry reinforce different models of the self and the socially informed body in differently structured spaces and by practices administering distinct types of medicine ('divine' and 'psychopharmacological'). How do people respond to this experiment and distinguish between the two? Do people deliberately reject the psychiatric model, or try to bypass, circumvent or compromise with its suppositions? Does the psychiatric model remain dominant, given its insertion into an arena of ritual healing? And if so, from whose perspective is the relationship between psychiatric and religious healing perceived as dominant? I shall engage with these questions by looking at the making of madness and mental disease within the ritual arena of healing of a Sufi shrine in Gujarat. Ideological asymmetries between 'dominant' psychiatry and 'subaltern' ritual healing, I argue, depend on the spatial separation of the two institutions; when assembled in practice, boundaries between dominant and subaltern discourses of authority become blurred.

Noor Zaidi

"A Blessing on Our People": Ritual, Authority, and Contested Sacred Space at Bibi Pak Daman

This paper focuses on the hagiographies and debates surrounding Bibi Pak Daman, a small shrine nestled in Lahore's Old City. It traces the escalating conflicts and the emergence of sectarianism that stemmed from the government's takeover of the shrine in 1967, as part of Pakistan's slew of Auqaf Ordinances, through to the tumultuous early 1980s.

The shrine is said to house the graves of six women from the Prophet Muhammad's household and has long been subject to a range of theories regarding its origins. The most widely disseminated claim is that the main mausoleum in Bibi Pak Daman belongs to Ruqayyah bint Ali, daughter of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, the fourth of the 'Rightly Guided' Caliphs and the first Shiite Imam. These hagiographies and narratives capitalize on transnational collective memories of Karbala and reinterpret their significance to local context, linking Bibi Pak Daman to seminal events of Islamic history. The contention that a daughter of 'Ali was buried at the shrine was not unchallenged, however, especially among the shrine's Sunni visitors.

Yet the entrance of Auqaf officials and local bureaucrats into the everyday governance of the shrine in 1967 and the new dynamics of ritual and authority that emerged exacerbated these differing interpretations. Through interactions between Auqaf officials, local shrine leaders, and pilgrims, Bibi Pak Daman provides a window into the distinct ways that sacred space was used and negotiated in a tumultuous period in Pakistan's history and in how sectarianism is produced on the ground. The shrine exemplifies the growing tensions that emerged between state sanctioned religious rhetoric and local traditions, with the unease with the government's role as religious arbitrator, between nationalism and

communal rivalry, and complex gender dynamics. It became the site onto which these competing ideologies were mapped.

SUFI INSTITUTIONS AND CHANGING MODES OF AUTHORITY

Brannon Ingram

Is the Taliban Anti-Sufi? Deobandi Discourses on Sufi Saints' Shrines in Contemporary Pakistan

In recent years, the Taliban have claimed responsibility for a spate of suicide bombings at the shrines of Sufi saints in Pakistan. It is well known that the Taliban emerged from madrasas affiliated to the Dar al-`Ulum Deoband and its reformist movement. What is less well known, and often overlooked, is the extent to which Deobandis have selectively engaged Sufi traditions and vocabularies, adapting some and critiquing others, as part of a larger project of reform. This paper attempts to provide context for recent attacks on Sufi saints' shrines in Pakistan by examining the writings of key Deobandi `ulama from whose madrasas the Taliban emerged. It focuses on the works of Maulana `Abd al-Haq (1909-1988), founder of the Dar al-`Ulum Haqqania, and his son Sami` al-Haq (1937-), who currently directs the madrasa, as well as the Dar al-`Ulum's collected fatwas, the Fatawa Haqqania. After addressing whether and to what extent these forms of textual production represent the Taliban as a whole, it seeks, in particular, to discern whether these texts depart from other Deobandi positions on the place of Sufism and the status of Sufi saints' shrines.

Usha Sanyal

Sufism in the Madrasa? Creating a Counterpublic at a Barelwi Girls' Madrasa in Shahjahanpur, U.P.

Marcia Hermansen

Beyond Barelviism: Tahir ul-Qadri as an Example of Trends in Global Sufism

In this presentation I will consider how episodes and shifts in the career of well-known Pakistani religious leader, Tahir ul-Qadri, founder of the Minhaj ul-Quran Movement, illustrate trends in global Sufism that have emerged in recent decades.

The shift from tariqa-based Sufism to Sufism as "traditional Islam" has enabled conceptual and cooperative connections to be built and maintained across diverse scholars and Islamic institutions that espouse similar views and increasingly face Islamist and literalist opposition.

Particularly salient in the light of the workshop topic, "Rethinking Islam, Democracy, and Identity in Pakistan and India: The Role of Sufism" is Qadri's prominent role during the Inqilab March on Islamabad in August 2014. His 2010 London launch of the well-publicized book-length Fatwa against Terrorism also signaled Qadri's emergence as an activist on a global scale.

Perceptions of Qadri's relations with power and the state in Pakistan, the causes and themes which he has espoused during his career, the expansion of Minhaj ul-Quran in the West, and the manner in which

his image and religious discourse are projected, can all serve as taking off points for rethinking Sufism in contemporary Pakistan.

BOUNDARIES OF IDENTITY

Thomas Gugler

Barelvis in Pakistan: The Case of Dawat-e Islami

American analysts of the RAND Corporation advised in 2003: “Encourage the popularity and acceptance of Sufism” to support the traditionalists against the fundamentalists. In 2009 a Heritage report concluded that the US should help to revive Pakistan’s pluralist traditions to fight extremism. Although Barelvi theologies can hardly be considered “pluralistic”, Barelvi organizations formed a Sunni Ittehad Council launching the Save Pakistan Movement and the parliament formed a Sufi Advisory Council to fight Talibanization in 2009. The TTP in turn intensified attacks against popular Sufi shrines. Sufi(esque) groups such as the Barelvis may, as Sedgwick observed, be the natural enemy of Salafism, but this does not mean that they are “the natural ally of those who are opposing Salafism, especially when they are opposing Salafism for their own reasons.” Fundamentalism is, according to Weismann, one Islamic form of modernity – embraced by Sufis and Salafis alike. In January 2011 Salman Taseer, the then governor of Punjab, has been shot with 26 bullets in the heart of Islamabad by the elite police officer Mumtaz Qadri, a follower of the Dawat-e Islami, for calling the blasphemy law kala qanun. Dawat-e Islami (DI) is a Barelvi counterorganization formed after the model of the Deobandi-affiliated Tablighi Jamaat in 1981. It has officially become the largest religious jamaat in Pakistan with a massive network of marakiz and madaris and its own TV channel “Madani channel”. The Indian Barelvi ulama started in 2009 to issue increasingly critical fatawa against DI and one Indian split-off, the Sunni Dawat-e Islami (SDI). Some called the green imamah bida and Akhtar Riza Khan issued a call for boycott, declaring their prayers invalid. The new Barelvi organization All India Sunni Tablighi Jamaat circulates several Barelvi fatawa declaring DI and SDI maslak-e alahazrat ke mukhalif and dushmani. Fatawa-e kufr followed and watching their TV channel has been declared haram by the Indian Barelvi ulama. The internal debates about what Barelwiyyat means have become abusive between Barelvis from India and Pakistan.

Jamal Malik

Sufis and Salafis in the Politics of Pakistan (Jamal Malik, University of Erfurt)

Sufism has been perceived ambiguously throughout its history, and most recently Sufis have been viewed by Muslim and non-Muslim governments as potential allies, particularly in combating Islamists. Such a view, however, fails to take into account the affinities which Salafi movements share with some Sufi reformists. The common characteristics among these “neo-Sufis” also have some overlap with Salafi ideals, and when the major traits of modernity are taken into consideration the discursive reciprocity between Sufism and Salafism becomes even more apparent. Perhaps the most significant parallel is that both groups seek a return to the time of the Prophet, a Sunnatizing of life-worlds. With such correspondences one could surmise the possibility of a Salafi Sufism and among the best candidates for this title is the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, one branch of which is discussed herein.

Sarah Ansari

'A way of life rather than an ideology?': Sufi Saints and the Politics of Identity in Sindh

In the context of present-day Pakistan, Sindh is often described as the 'land of Sufism', and sometimes of secularism. As a newspaper report entitled 'Can Sufism Save Sindh?' that followed the attack on the Shikarpur imambargah in late January 2015 put it, 'The Sufi ethos of Sindh has long been cherished as the panacea for burgeoning extremism in Pakistan'. Such statements, however, need to be assessed in the light of the space occupied by local pir families - the gaddi nashins or hereditary guardians of Sufi shrines - within the province's religio-political life. This paper accordingly explores what in practice has proved to be a far from straight-forward relationship between Sindhi pirs and the politics of identity, contextualising and complicating current debates about the potential role of Sufism in the region.