Knowing the Shaikh

The practice of tomb shrine pilgrimage, known as *ziyarat*, is under attack on several

fronts. Muslim reformers object to the practice as polytheistic and reminiscent of Hinduism.[192]

Sikh reformers, on the other hand, object to the practice as derivative from Islam and suggestive

of spiritual authority outside that of the Guru Granth (the holy text) and the Guru Panth (the body

of believers).[193] And Hindu reformers have actively targeted *dargahs* in other regions because

they are both Muslim sites and sites of inter-religious encounter.[194] Thus the accounts of Haider

Shaikh, his tomb, and the community of the saint who attend his shrine and transmit his lore are

important expressions of the struggle to maintain the relevance, significance, and existence of the

site. Establishing the veracity of the events described by the various interlocutors of the saint is

secondary to understanding the meaning of Haider Shaikh to his devotees and the residents of the

settlement he founded. Among residents and visitors to Malerkotla the level of knowledge about

the saint ranges widely from those who know multiple stories, recount his miracles, perform his

rituals, and attend his shrine to those who do none of these things. In Malerkotla, nearly every

resident whom I interviewed knew most of the basic outline of the history and hagiography of

Haider Shaikh given above. However, the devotees from outside the town who attend the

festivals for the saint knew few of these stories. The particular types of stories known, the

number known and the variety of stories told are all indicators of the orientation of the teller

towards the saint and the aspects of Haider Shaikh's tradition deemed relevant to community and

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[192] The controversial nature of *ziyārat* will be discussed further in Chapters Four and Six.

[193] The tenth Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh, according to majoritarian Sikh tradition declared that after his death the living guruship would end and the Guru (meaning God) would be enshrined in the Guru Granth and the Guru Panth.

[194] As discussed in the introduction, most recently in the violence in Gujarat in spring 2002, investigative panels list at least 240 *dargāhs* destroyed by Hindu mobs. See, for example, *Dateline Gujarat: Inside Hindutva's Laboratory*, Communalism Combat, 2002 [cited. Available from http://www.sabrang.com/cc/archive/2002/marapril/dateline.htm.

personal life. Thus for some locals, the Shaikh is more important as the town's founder than as a

holy man. The prestige of the marital link to the Sultan Bahlol Lodhi and the ancient heritage of

the kingdom are points of pride for the Muslim community especially. Residents who do attend

the shrine tend to possess a body of additional lore concerning the shrine's past and present role

in community life, the site's miraculous construction, and numerous personal accounts of healing

or fulfilled desires. Devotees from outside Malerkotla often do not know historic accounts of the

Shaikh. Indeed many do not know his full name, Shaikh Sadruddin Sadri Jahan.[195] Whether or

not they know any of the lore of the saint and the town, devotees from outside tend to be more

concerned with communicating the living presence and power of the saint rather than extolling

his past deeds. Given the multiple possible orientations towards the saint, it is not surprising that

different features and variant narratives come to the fore with different tellers and in various

contexts. These nuances, emphases, deviations, and contradictions, reveal how the stories

become key identity markers for the interlocutors, shaping the personal and public meaning of

the Shaikh.

The community of the saint is comprised of his descendents, the ritual specialists who

mediate his spirit and power, and his devotees. This variegated community organizes their

accounts of Haider Shaikh in order to construct his symbolic meaning according to their needs

and interests. One way in which narrators do this is through committing what some would call

an historical "error," displacing Haider Shaikh in time in order to generate a hereditary or

sentimental link. This is consistent with the oral narratives collected by Alessandro Portelli in

relation to the misplacement of a symbolic event in community memories in order to link the

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[195] Shaikh Sadruddin Sadr-i Jahan is written above the entrance to the tomb, but it is written in Urdu script, making it difficult for the mostly Punjabi and Hindi speaking clientele to read.

event with the ideological concerns of the present.[196] Similarly, temporal displacement of the

saint is a common technique in Malerkotla employed to connect him in some way to the

narrator's own history. Thus many local Hindus place Haider Shaikh as a contemporary of Baba

Atma Ram, the Hindu saint whose shrine lies about a kilometer from Haider Shaikh's tomb.

Although by most estimates Baba Atma Ram was active in the early eighteenth century, in these

oral accounts there is a deep friendship between the two. This temporal shift reduces the

dominant shadow cast by Haider Shaikh over the town, placing the Hindu saint as a

contemporary and equal with his own repertoire of miracle stories and entourage of devotees.

The shift also opens up space for Hindus in the devotional cult of Haider Shaikh as a holy man

who was non-sectarian in his own lifetime as evidenced by his friendship with Baba Atma Ram

and sets a precedent for his devotees to likewise supercede religious boundaries in the present.

Haider Shaikh's acceptability as a companion to a Hindu saint provides a resource for Hindus

today who wish to engage in inter-religious dialogue.   This is important because many

Hindus are under increasing pressure from groups like the VHP and RSS to focus their attention

on their own community. Hindutva activists employ various tactics to foster heightened

religious consciousness. In some cases, VHP, Bajrang Dal, RSS and other activists have sought

to wrest control of a shrine and its identity from its Muslim proprietors.[197] For example, there

are frequent calls to boycott Muslim businesses and products, an action that would make life

extremely difficult in Muslim majority Malerkotla.[198] Participation in Sufi cults in the view of

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[196] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories.*
[197] This is most recently exemplified by VHP leader Praveen Togadia's tour of India in which he visited numerous shrines, holding rallies at which he declared that the place would be the "next Ayodhya." Although the focus of these groups is strongest upon three major sites – the Ram birthplace at Ayodhya, the Krishna birthplace at Mathura, and a mosque in Banaras – the thousands of other sites identified as formerly Hindu are often more available and locally vulnerable. One shrine that is most actively contested in this fashion is the jointly identified Dargāh Baba Budhan Shah – Sri Swami Dattatreya Peetha in Chikmaglur, Karnataka. For more on this place see, Yoginder Sikand, *Sacred Spaces: Exploring Traditions of Shared Faith in India*, (New Delhi; Penguin India, 2003).
[198] I have not seen or heard of any such pamphlets or efforts being promoted in post-Partition Malerkotla.

Hindu extremist organizations is a mixed proposition. On the one hand it demonstrates the openness and tolerance of Hinduism. On the other hand, it acknowledges Islam as a valid religion with indigenous traditions and brings revenue to the caretakers of the tomb – often Muslims. Thus the support of Sufi shrines is often viewed as akin to the type of appeasement that the Muslims already enjoy as a minority group in terms of reservations for jobs and places in universities, etc. and financial assistance to underdeveloped communities.[199] Thus Hindus who continue to participate in the cults of Sufi saints do so in the knowledge that their behavior would be objectionable to right-wing Hindu organizations. As such their presence may in many cases be a type of resistance to divisive Hindu politics. For these Hindus, displacing Haider Shaikh in time and condensing his cult with that of Baba Atma Ram strategically resignifies Haider Shaikh's symbolic meaning: he remains a key symbol of inter-religious harmony, but on terms which generate a powerful precedent for non-Muslims.

For the Muslims most closely connected to Haider Shaikh – that is his descendents – a different set of interests emerges from the narratives they transmit. The *khalīfahs* are the principal communicators of Haider Shaikh's history.[200] Many *khalīfahs* live near his shrine and some take an active role in its daily upkeep. Many *khalīfahs* are active transmitters of the lore of the saint. They not only tell the commonly known tale of Haider Shaikh's encounter with Bahlol Lodhi, but also of subsequent miracles and the importance of the saint and the *dargah* in their

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[199] In 1980 a body known as the Mandal Commission sponsored by the central government issued a report in which it was recommended that twenty-seven percent of all government positions and university admissions be reserved for backward and scheduled caste people. In 1990 the Prime Minister of India V.P. Singh announced that he would implement these reforms. The outcry led to his eventual resignation. In certain areas of India Brahman youths immolated themselves in protest. The VHP and BJP took this up as a particular cause. The prevailing anti-reservation attitude in the ascendant Hindu right movement helped to build the militancy in the movement to "liberate" Ayodhya as well. In general, Hindutva literature depicts Muslims as coddled by the government. In particular they object to the continued application of Muslim personal law while Hindus and Sikhs are subject to federal law in personal as well as civil and criminal matters.

[200] *Khalīfah* is an Arabic term for successor. It also contains the notion of being the custodian of the tradition of the one succeeded. Thus the first four leaders of the Muslim community were called the Rightly Guided Caliphs *al-khulafā" al-rāshidån*. Humanity's custodianship of the created world is also referred to as *khilāfat*, or viceregency.

own lives. There are several elder *khalīfahs* in particular who know many stories about Haider Shaikh. In addition to the descendents of the saint, who might be expected to know a great deal about his life and the lore of their ancestor, many residents of Malerkotla tell tales of the saint. Furthermore, among the devotees and pilgrims from outside who come to the shrine, certain tales are quite common. Over the course of a year and a half I solicited accounts of the saint from *khalīfahs*, residents, and devotees both inside the *dargah* and at other venues. Unsurprisingly, the repertoires of stories about Haider Shaikh's life tended to be largest among the *khalīfahs* and smallest among the devotees. However, the entire community of the saint possesses stories about Haider Shaikh's significance in their own lives, and communicated this meaning through stories of blessings received, miracles experienced, and lifestyles changed. Just a few stories of the saint are told with great frequency.

The Repertoire of Stories

The reappearance of certain events in the narratives about Haider Shaikh indicate that these are particularly important signifying moments that reveal certain aspects of the saint's character and identity. By extension and through the act of performing these narratives, these aspects of the saint's character and identity are connected with the character and identity of the town that he founded and with the interlocutor recounting the tale. Thus the historical accounts of Haider Shaikh's life and miracles are stories of the past that are put to use in the present as a way of interpreting and understanding the present. This is a strategy of identity formation and perpetuation that is by no means limited to Malerkotla and the lore of Haider Shaikh. In his study of Mexicano use of "speech of the elders of bygone days," Charles Briggs describes how introducing an account of bygone days – such as the stories of the saint – into the discourse of the present shifts the context of a speech event from a temporally distinct moment. Extending

the moment in time simultaneously extends the meaning, opening up a new range of interpretive possibilities for the narrator and the audience. When speaking of the past, "the present can stand alone no more, bearing a false self-sufficiency and limiting the imagination to seeing what is present to the senses."[201] The present *needs* the past, to give it depth and meaning. The narrators who do the memory work of bringing the past into the present "use their historical force to confront the present with a value-laden interpretation of itself."[202] The mobilization of memories preserved by a community carries the identity of the community forward, allowing old values and truths to metamorphose into shapes that are appropriate in a new context. What Briggs terms "historical discourse" serves several purposes, to validate a cultural action, transmit particular genres associated with the past, and as a source of collective identity. The past "stands as a communicative resource, providing a setting and an expressive pattern for discussions that transform both past and present."[203] The collective memory work involved in passing on accounts of the past is an inherently interpretive process, requiring the communicator and the audience to engage the communicated events and determine their personal and social meanings. Briggs adds that the process of transformation is "intrinsically interpretive: both performers and audience members must deduce the basic principles that generated action in the past and then apply these to the present and future."[204]

This interpretive process, inherent to narratives of historical memories, is also consistent with the appropriate modes of transmission of knowledge in the Islamic tradition. Muslims constantly evoke the model of Muhammad and his companions as an *uswa hasana*, a beautiful model, towards which all later societies should turn in order to know what it is to act morally and

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[201] Briggs, Charles, *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art*, (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), p. 1.
[202] Op cit.
[203] Ibid, p. 99.
[204] Op cit.

faithfully.[205] As one of the bases of prescriptive law, the *sunnah* of the Prophet illustrates, extends, and connects the Muslim community of the present with the exemplary community of the past. Narrative histories and hagiographies about Haider Shaikh and other Muslim leaders and mystics both follow this prescriptive pattern and provide justification for the devotional cults that arise around their tombs.

In this way, the didactic aspect of the stories told about Haider Shaikh and Malerkotla is wholly consistent with the genres of prescriptive literature in Islam that model appropriate behavior in the present on the perfect model of the prophet and his companions. In relating events of moral exemplars from the past, a narrator grounds his or her recommendations for ideal action in the present, effectively extending its significance and opening up a new field of meaning. The narrative technique of evoking the past to interpret the present is therefore quite consistent with the use of didactic exemplars in the transmission of Islamic principles. Thus, oft-repeated tales, their tellers, and the contexts in which the tales are told reveal a great deal about how the popular narratives about Haider Shaikh shapes the identity and culture of the *dargah* and the town. Variations, anomalies, and unique features of the narratives indicate how narratives of Haider Shaikh serve as vehicles for the representation of multiple personal and group identities.

Foremost among the principle interlocutors of Haider Shaikh are, unsurprisingly, his descendents. Not only were elder *khalīfahs* more willing and able to transmit narratives, but also the especially knowledgeable individuals were identified by others, validating his or her status as a competent communicator.[206] Not all *khalīfahs* referenced the same few elders as possessors of

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[205] Qur'an 33:21 says, "Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allāh a beautiful pattern (of conduct) [*uswa hasana*] for any one whose hope is in Allāh and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allāh."
[206] To varying degrees the *khalīfahs*, residents, and devotees who narrate stories of the saint may all be labeled *competent communicators* of the saint's tradition. In Dell Hymes' theory of narrative performance, there are varying degrees of "competence" among the possessors of a particular body of knowledge. Hymes defines a performance as a "cultural behavior for which a person assumes responsibility to an audience." Thus, competent

particular knowledge about the saint, but several people stood out. The range of narratives these elders possessed in their active repertoires far exceeded that of the average resident of Malerkotla and further demonstrated their authority as transmitters. These narrators also demonstrated their expertise and virtuosity by the fluidity with which they folded past and present into one another in these tales. This competence was especially manifest among those *khalīfahs* who were able not only to recount the story of Haider Shaikh's coming to Malerkotla, but also made connections between the events of the Shaikh's life and subsequent events in the area's history and the present day.

Local residents other than the *khalīfahs* also transmit Haider Shaikh's tradition, but their repertoires tended to be smaller, more focused on bare historical details, and highlight particularly famous miracles of the saint and his shrine. Non- *khalīfah* performers emphasized elements of Haider Shaikh's lore that established a personal connection between their own group and the saint, emphasized his popularity and fame, or made a particular point. Among the non-resident interlocutors, the principle competent communicators were the leaders of devotional assemblies who travel from locations across Punjab and North India to attend the shrine for the annual festivals for Haider Shaikh. These individuals are called *chelas*, a Sanskritic term for disciples. They are capable of communicating with the spirit of Haider Shaikh, and thus embody a highly privileged relationship with the saint as his most immediate interlocutors. Rather than looking to the saint's past to demonstrate his ongoing relevance and power, the *chelas* bring the saint into the present, making him available to a gathering of devotees in need of spiritual and material assistance, obviating the need for an extensive received body of lore about Haider

communicators have the inclination, ability, and authority to represent a communicative behavior in a particular context. Other qualities of the competent communication are that it be interpretable, reportable, and repeatable. See Dell Hymes, "Breakthrough into Performance," in *"in Vain I Tried to Tell You": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*, edited by Dell Hymes, (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

Shaikh's worldly life and deeds. The non-resident devotional community of the saint includes not only the groups of devotees who attend the shrine in the company of a *chela* but also those that come independently. These individuals were rarely well versed in the lore of the saint, but most are adept in the appropriate ritual modes of interaction with the saint and the shrine. They attend the shrine for many reasons: long-standing family custom, personal affinity, group solidarity, etc. For these devotees, the particular motivation for attendance most often reported was the efficacy of their prayers. Another significant and almost universally cited collateral benefit was the egalitarianism, lack of sectarian divisions, and general conviviality at the shrine.[207]

For Haider Shaikh's many devotees who were not active transmitters of his historical lore, the opportunity to be present at his shrine afforded them an occasion to express their own interpretations of the saint's traditions and modes of integrating the saint into their lives. This was achieved not through the telling of tales about the saint, but through accounts of the self. For example, for these competent communicators, the principle mode through which the saint is experienced and expressed through highly personal testimonials, whereas the narratives of the *khalīfahs* and Malerkotla residents tend to emphasize the public life of the saint and the shrine.

These personal and historical tales are not fixed in form. Their shape and meaning is determined by the context of their telling, to whom they are told, when, and why. Far from being saved up for wandering anthropologists, these stories are exchanged at the shrine and in the town among people for whom the saint provides shape to the story of their own identity. That these stories develop and are used in interpersonal encounters is important as Briggs asserts that

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[207] At several of the festivals for Haider Shaikh I conducted brief surveys with numerous devotees. By sending out several neighborhood children, as well as myself and an assistant with forms and a list of questions, I was able to obtain several hundred responses at three festival events. Although not particularly scientific given the vagaries of the interviewers and respondents, these cursory responses overwhelmingly validated and repeated the responses I received in more extended interviews.

interpretation of a narrative event is dialogical and that both performers and audiences engage in the interpretation of a story. Alessandro Portelli points out that shifts in the temporal or material structure of a narrative is an interpretive act. Changing the place or time of an event determines the meaning of the event described by defining the parameters of its occurrence and its relations to previous and subsequent events. An example of this interpretive process is the extremely common practice among non-resident devotees of displacing Haider Shaikh from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century and attributing to him the *haa da naara*, Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan's protest against the execution of Guru Gobind Singh's sons. Although historically in "error," as Portelli argues, this act of displacement and condensation of Haider Shaikh with Sher Muhammad Khan reveals a great deal about the interests of those who make this assertion.

Although *khandan* and Malerkotla residents most frequently recounted the story about Haider Shaikh's meeting with Bahlol Lodhi, non-resident pilgrims most frequently cited this mistaken attribution of the *haa da naara* to the saint. This "error" revealed one of the reasons why the Muslim town of Malerkotla and the Muslim saint Haider Shaikh have such significance among non-resident Punjabis, the vast majority of whom are non-Muslim. For example, one devotee, a Sikh from Hathoi explained that the power of Haider Shaikh derived from Guru Gobind Singh's blessing. The blessing given after the Guru heard of the effort to defend his sons endowed Haider Shaikh with the power to grant the wishes of all those who come to pray with sincerity at his tomb. This claim introduces several possible interpretations and narrative intentions for the story of the Shaikh and the *haa da naara*. First, the power of the Muslim saint is described as being derivative from the Sikh Guru, thus establishing a spiritual hierarchy of efficacy. This view provides a theological cover for non-Muslims to attend a Muslim shrine. This is a sensitive point, however. While it does justify non-Muslim presence, such a claim of

derivative power also co-opts the saint for non-Islamic traditions, thereby doing nothing to validate in his own right or through Islam. Second, the Shaikh is credited by extension with the type of ecumenicism and sense of justice that is ascribed to Sher Muhammad Khan because of the protest. This elision is consistent with the prevailing view that Haider Shaikh does not discriminate between his devotees on the basis of religion. The Hathoi devotee and others also explained that they felt Haider Shaikh's multi-religious appeal was due to the fact that not only does the saint fulfill the desires of everyone, but also he does not believe in *jat-path*, or sectarianism. On the contrary, for many devotees, Haider Shaikh is *hamare sanjhe pīr*, "our common *pīr*." For the Sikh from Hathoi and many, many others who expressed similar views, the *haa da naara* is the local paradigm for the human capacity for justice and fairness and to supercede sectarian affiliation. Third, by identifying Haider Shaikh with Sher Muhammad Khan, the saint is linked to an event in which the defenseless are defended and the tyrannical are confronted. In spite of the fact that the *haa da naara* failed – the *sahibzadas* were executed – the symbolic gesture alone carries enormous power for the constituents of Haider Shaikh's tradition, many of whom are from oppressed and disempowered communities themselves. These qualities of justice and courage are emphasized in most of the stories told about the saint, but it is in this conflation of the Shaikh and the Nawab that the most powerful symbolic action in Malerkotla's history is made to resonate with Malerkotla's most integrative institution – the *dargah* of Haider Shaikh.

It is important to highlight the diversity of the community connected to Haider Shaikh. Although the *khalīfahs* are all Muslim, at no other level of association with the saint is there such a singularity of religious affiliation. The residents of Malerkotla who engaged the shrine come

from all faiths, and the pilgrims from outside the town were rarely, if ever, Muslim.[208]

Significantly, this diversity among the saint's community is often cited by visitors as one of the attractions of the shrine and Haider Shaikh's cult. Far from being a negative aspect or even a value-neutral feature, the openness of the tradition and the possibility of encountering devotees and custodians of different religious faiths was clearly one of the most appealing aspects of the pilgrimage. Thus the Muslim *khalīfahs*, the Muslims, Sikh and Hindu residents, and the Sikh and Hindu pilgrims recount their narratives of Haider Shaikh in an environment conducive to multiple interlocutors, a variety of narrative traditions, and inter-religious exchange.

Connecting with the Shaikh

Given the diversity of the devotional community connected to Haider Shaikh, it is not surprising that some narrators omit certain events, or focus substantially on others, or include variant elements in order to communicate a particular interpretation of the significance of the saint for them personally or for the society generally. It is to be expected that the stories known and transmitted will reveal the interests of the tellers. What these interests are and how they overlap and relate to the tales told by others reveals a fascinating narrative web that enlivens the saint's tradition and demonstrates the creativity of his constituency. Of this variety, a few features are relatively universal. For example the entire non-resident folklore community connected to Haider Shaikh consistently portrays him as a saint for *all* people. As mentioned above, many of the devotees who attend the festivals refer to him as *hamare sanjhe pīr*, our common saint. Local and extra-local followers refer to themselves as the *pīrpanth*, the community of the saint, which groups them together around Haider Shaikh, but also connects

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[208] Other than itinerant *faqīrs*, I never encountered a Muslim pilgrim at Haider Shaikh's *dargāh* from outside Malerkotla.

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them with the worshippers of Muslim *pīrs* throughout Punjab and beyond. Another common

theme that emerges in the tellings are personal and group linkages made to the saint not just by

his descendents, the Pathan *khalīfahs* who ruled Malerkotla and continue to manage the *dargah*,

but also by non-Pathan Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. As discussed above, there is a further

distinction between resident and non-resident devotees, the former tending to include historic

tales and both groups recount personal testimonials that authenticate the power of the Shaikh.

For example, a Sikh man now living in Singapore brought his entire family to the *dargah* one

Thursday. He said he comes to Haider Shaikh's tomb whenever he comes back to visit his

family in Punjab. His family had been coming to Haider Shaikh for many generations. In fact,

his father and six uncles were all born after his grandparents had prayed at the tomb. His wife,

who grew up in Singapore, has now taken up the worship of Haider Shaikh and every Thursday

they light lamps and sing songs for Haider Shaikh in their home. Their son and daughter were

born through Haider Shaikh's intercession, thereby continuing the tradition of faith as generation

after generation finds a place for Haider Shaikh in their lives.

The community of descendents and devotees emphasize different aspects of Haider

Shaikh's lore in their tellings of his life and times. The *khalīfahs* tend to highlight the royal

connection, reaffirming Haider Shaikh's power and preeminence. They do this by iterating the

connection to the Lodhi Sultan and by recounting Haider Shaikh's miracles. Hindus also tend to

remark on Haider Shaikh's connection to the Lodhis, but they tend to disconnect him from the

coercive power of the state. Sikhs fixate on a single incident of inter-religious cooperation

between the Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan and their tenth Guru, Gobind Singh. In this way

each element of the broader community symbolically manages the saint, dissociating him from

the aspects of his history and lore that contradict idealized images of the Shaikh and themselves.

Khalīfah Tales

The descendents of the saint do not need to establish a personal connection. Their connection is clear; the concern is to manage the significance of that connection. For the descendents, both from the lineage of *khalīfahs* and the Nawabs, the emphasis of the stories told tended to be on the encounter with the Sultan, the ruler's amazement at the saint's holiness, his subsequent gifts, and the eventual marriage with Taj Murassa Begum. These accounts are standard among all the groups who narrate Haider Shaikh's traditions. For example, the eldest son of the current chief caretaker of the *dargah* known as the *gaddī nishīn*, gave the following rendition of the basic tale when I enquired about what pilgrims tended to ask of the *khalīfahs* when they arrived at the tomb. He responded:

> People ask about his history. He came from Kabul. He was a Sufi saint, a big *buzurg* [pious man]. He came from Kabul to Punjab, Malerkotla. Once at night Babaji [i.e. Haider Shaikh] was inside his hut. From that side [gestures North] Bahlol Lodhi Badshah was going for war, he also put his tents there. Suddenly a storm came and his tents were destroyed but in Babaji's hut, the lamp was still burning. The rest of the people were really surprised that in spite of such a storm the lamp is still burning. They were impressed by him. The king asked Babaji to pray for him so that he should be victorious in the war. Babaji prayed for him and he won the battle. The Badshah out of happiness gave Babaji a horse, but Babaji was a Sufi, what was he to do with the horse? Babaji then gave the horse to somebody else. Somebody complained to the Badshah that Babaji has not accepted his gift. When the Badshah asked, Babaji with his miraculous power lined up a thousand horses just like that one in front of Babaji. Then the Sultan married his daughter to Babaji.

This account is quite similar to the basic outline of the Shaikh's story given above. The encounter with Lodhi in the storm is the key event, followed by his marriage to the Sultan's daughter. Added into this version is the fairly commonly known story of the saint's refusal of the gift of a horse. This episode serves to demonstrate Haider Shaikh's lack of worldly interest and also his miraculous powers as he first rejects the horse and then conjures a thousand more.

Several other members of the *khalīfah* family possess large repertoires of stories related to their progenitor, and from them I heard accounts that were not commonly told by others in the community. These tales tended to emphasize the Shaikh's miraculous powers, and the superiority of spiritual power over worldly authority. Two stories I heard from a *khalīfah* who worked as a *numbardar* (revenue collector), I never heard elsewhere. This middle-aged male *khalīfah* was particularly interested in the lore of the Shaikh and in Sufi practice. His father and grandfather were well-known local Sufis. He did not sit at the tomb or collect money from it. He himself kept horses, and joked that this perhaps reveals an affinity with his royal Afghan forefathers and the gift of Bahlol Lodhi to the Shaikh. He had a reputation for knowing a great deal about Haider Shaikh and many local people referred me to him to learn more about the saint.

The Shaikh as a Warrior

One of the *numbardar*'s stories was an account of Haider Shaikh's motivation in coming to the region. In his rendition, the Shaikh was not just a religious renunciant, but also a military man, a general in the army in Afghanistan who had become increasingly absorbed in his religious practices, and was neglecting his military duties. Completely lost in *zikr* – repetition of the names of Allah – Haider Shaikh ignored the marching orders sent to him by the ruler. However, his negligence of his worldly duties results in the revelation of his high spiritual attainment when the battle is miraculously won, in spite of his failure to lead the troops to war. Here is the *numbardar*'s tale:

> Baba Hazrat Shaikh Sadruddin Sadri Jahan (*rehmat allah*[209]) is his full name. He was a general in the army before, but he was a fakir also. Once the king asked

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[209] *Rehmat allāh*, (may God have mercy) and other such formulas such as *salla allāh* (may God give blessings) invoke blessings upon the souls of the saintly dead in Islamic parlance. The invocation denotes the acknowledgment of an exalted status above that of an ordinary pious person. Mention of the Prophet Muhammad is frequently followed by the phrase *salla allāh 'alayhi wa salam* (May the Blessings and Peace of God be upon him). The phrase is sometimes

him to go somewhere because at that place a revolt was going on. But when the command came to him he took it and threw it on one side – because he was doing *zikr* at that time, in the Lord's name. So his followers who were *jinn*, they picked it up.[210] Those *jinn* who obeyed his command picked it up. And therefore they understood that they were given this command and they went to that place and they conquered it. And they got the booty from the people there and the king asked, "My army didn't go there how were they conquered?" And he inquired [of Haider Shaikh], "If my general was here and my army was also here, who went to conquer that place?" He answered, "Your command came but I was praying and threw it to one side and my followers thought the command was for them so they went there and conquered." So the king ordered that he should not be given any work, he should only rest. But he left [the king's service]. Because his secret was laid open in front of everyone, which is not good. So his *pīr* ordered him to go to Malerkotla and spread Islam there and pray to God. On all sides there was water here, except the place where the *dargah* is now, that was dry, so he sat there.[211]

The *numbardar*'s tale has multiple levels and taps into several themes commonly associated with the advent of Sufism in South Asia. First, Haider Shaikh is depicted as a saint capable of anything, a true *sadr-e jahan*, or master of the world.[212] He wins battles without moving and commands *jinn* without attachment to these powers. The saint also manifests almost complete detachment from his worldly duties. Commands from his overlord and ruler do not disturb his devotions, instead he tosses aside the orders and remains lost in prayer. But significantly, this great Shaikh who ignores temporal authority and has armies of *jinn* at his command, humbly obeys his *pīr*, and goes to work as a simple man of faith, spreading Islam and praying in a place

abbreviated and indicated by the letter s (saud) in parentheses. The infusion of these invocations into one's language is a means of signifying one's piety and manifesting a distinctly Muslim identity.

[210] *Jinn* are one of the three orders of sentient beings created by God, along with angels and humans. *Jinn* are not necessarily demonic creatures, but are often ascribed with the power to possess or attack humans. They do have superhuman strength and powers. It is said in the Sahih Muslim that every human has a *jinn* and an angel as partners. The angels are incapable of free reasoning and embody the will of God. *Jinn* are capable of mischief and evil and are often a temptation against the will of God. To command the *jinn*, as Haider Shaikh does in this example, is evidence of a high degree of spiritual power. Several people in Malerkotla reported to me that they were capable of perceiving the *jinn* and controlling them. One man said that as an experiment he had recited the *Surat al-Jinn* (Qur'an 72) a number of times, which is said to give one power over the *jinn*. At the end of his recitation a *jinn* appeared and asked what was his command. The man responded, "Go, you are free." The man further said that no one should be enslaved and he was wrong to have attempted to bring anything, even a *jinn* under his power.

[211] Personal Interview, January 28, 2001.

[212] It should be pointed out that *sadruddin sadri jahan* is more often an honorific title than a name. Furthermore *sadri jahan* was occasionally the title of an official rank among the *ulema*. As no contemporary accounts or biographical chronicles of the Suhrawardi lineage make mention of Shaikh Sadruddin Sadri Jahan, it is impossible to know what his name might have truly been or signified in terms of his level of education or community standing.

previously uninhabited and apparently uninhabitable, being completely covered in water. This demonstrates his capacity to wield power in both the temporal and spiritual worlds.

Second, the *numbardar*'s narrative also evokes a common trope in the hagiographies of Sufi saints in which the holy man goes to a wild and uncultivated land and establishes himself. In the *numbardar*'s story, Haider Shaikh arrives at a place that was isolated and surrounded by water. In other oral accounts, the area was described as a jungle. In either case, the region is understood to have been uninhabited and uncivilized prior to the saint's arrival. Through the saint's spiritual discipline, charisma, and *barakat*, the region is simultaneously civilized and Islamicized as people are drawn to the saint's teachings and settle around him. In his work *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier*, Richard Eaton describes the "association of Muslim holy men (*pīr*), or charismatic persons popularly identified as such, with forest clearing and land reclamation." These holy men come to symbolize the very process of Islamicization in a region. Eaton continues by asserting that such figures "have endured precisely because, in the collective folk memory, their careers captured and telescoped a complex historical socioreligious process whereby a land originally forested and non-Muslim became arable and predominantly Muslim."[213] Although in Malerkotla the arability of the land is not a feature of the narratives about Haider Shaikh, there is a consistent emphasis in the narratives that the area was wild and unsettled. The saint's coming thus represents the first significant human settlement of the region, and credits him with making the place habitable. Furthermore, Haider Shaikh was able to civilize the area enough to make it an acceptable dwelling place for the daughter of a Sultan. This could not have been a small feat and therefore further aggrandizes his powerful reputation. This harmonizes quite well with the process Eaton describes in which the career of a saint is

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[213] Eaton, Richard M., *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier: 1204-1760*, (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1993), pp. 207-8.

"made a metaphor for historical changes experienced by people." The story of Haider Shaikh, like that of Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi recounted in Eaton's work, "seeks to make sense of the gradual cultural shift," as the area transitioned into Islam and into the structure of centralized Muslim power.

Another common theme in narratives concerning the advent of Sufism that is present in the *numbardar*'s tale is that of the warrior Sufi. According to the *numbardar*, Haider Shaikh had been a general in an unnamed ruler's army. Clearly unsuited to life on a battlefield, he neglects his duty for his spiritual discipline. Nonetheless, Haider Shaikh is depicted as having been a great warrior as he rose to the rank of a general, as well as a great Sufi, capable of performing miracles. Furthermore, he becomes a great ruler, thus establishing him as a master of every realm of human authority. The *ghazi*, or warrior Sufi, is a common feature in stories of the spread of Islam in India. In *Sufis of Bijapur*, Richard Eaton describes the material assistance of the *ghazis* in the spread and stabilization of Islam in India. Contrary to the images of Sufis as quietistic and wholly spiritual, these individuals worked on the frontiers of the Islamic conquest, waging the dual *jihad* of the soul and the sword. Eaton claims that this type of Sufi was a short-lived phenomenon that disappeared as Muslim rule stabilized. Nonetheless, the devotional cults connected to several *ghazis* remain strong, including Sufi Sarmast and Pīr Khandayat. Eaton cites Clifford Geertz's characterization of the warrior saint to describe how this figure so powerfully draws together the dual processes of religious and temporal civilization. Geertz describes the fusion in the warrior saint of "strong-man politics and holy man piety" as an "axial figure," combining in a single person both forces.[214] This fusion seems equally relevant in India as in the North African context about which Geertz was writing. In India, there are many shrines

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[214] Richard M. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India*, (Delhi; Munshiram Manoharlal, 1996 [1978]), p. 38.

to *ghazis*, in particular those who are martyred in battle, that have become objects of veneration

and the centerpoint of a devotional cult. Further, these cults are often multi-confessional. For

example, in Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh at the shrine of Ghazi Salar Mas'ud, the site has been

absorbed into the religious lives of both Hindus and Muslims. This saint is believed to be the

nephew of the infamous eleventh-century warlord, Mahmud of Ghazni. Although Mahmud of

Ghazni has pariah status among many Hindus because of his destruction of a famous Shiva

temple at Somnath in present day Gujarat, his supposed nephew is not tarred with the same

brush. According to some, the Ghazi was so disturbed by the ruthless destruction of the temple

that he gave up the military life. Having abandoned violence as a means of spreading the faith of

Islam, the Ghazi was killed in battle and his burial site became a point of pilgrimage for Hindus

and Muslims.[215] In the case of Haider Shaikh, his identity as a warrior and his connection to

Bahlol Lodhi link him to the ongoing battles for control of Punjab during the period. Arriving a

few years before the Lodhi conquest of Delhi, the Shaikh might easily have been part of the

rising tide of Pathan Afghan power in the region. The possibility that he was a warrior who

would therefore be even more directly associated with the Muslim conquest of South Asia has

clearly not diminished the appeal of Haider Shaikh's cult for non-Muslims. Through the

association, the saint demonstrates his prowess in both the military and spiritual arenas of

authority, possibly expanding his appeal, and allowing devotees and descendents to emphasize

the aspects of his identity as they choose. Haider Shaikh was also credited by many with the

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[215] According to Kerrin von Schwerin, the Ghazi was killed in battle with the Hindu Bhars and happened to be buried at a site that had previously been sacred to the sun god. Thus people merely continued to worship the same point of power that they had always worshiped, with the addition of a growing Muslim population attending the grave. Tahir Mahmood describes the joint worship of the Ghazi as celebrating the saint's abandonment of the path of violence and temple destruction espoused by his uncle, Mahmud of Ghazni. See Tahir Mahmood, "The Dargāh of Sayyid Salar Mas`Ud Ghazi in Bahraich: Legend, Tradition and Reality," in *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance*, ed. Christian W. Troll (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), Kerrin Von Schwerin, "Saint Worship in Indian Islam: The Legend of the Martyr Salar Masud Ghazi," in *Ritual and Religion among Muslims of the Subcontinent,*, ed. Imtiaz Ahmad (Lahore: Vanguard, 1985).

conversion of the local population who gathered around him and helped to establish a firm settlement. Although this places Haider Shaikh right on the cusp of the wave of spiritual and temporal power that was rolling into Punjab in the fifteenth century. Islam had been present in the Punjab since the eleventh century, but significant conversion seems to have begun in earnest in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[216] Haider Shaikh's hagiographical tradition actually incorporates most of the popular explanations for the spread of Islam. These include the conversion by sword, conversion for social uplift, and conversion due to the charisma of a particular saint. Although, as Eaton has convincingly shown, these standard explanations are insufficient, but they have remained very much alive in the active lore of Haider Shaikh and other popular Sufi saints. Thus residents and visitors alike will attribute the success of Haider Shaikh's cult, and by extension the success of Islam, to the saint's charisma and the egalitarian values he embodied.

Relatively few sources also claim that Haider Shaikh was a warrior. Interestingly, the history written by the last Nawab does not assert that the saint came with an army or had ever served in the army. The Nawab, and most others, depict the saint as being deeply pious from a very early age, and he is rarely described as doing any other sort of work. In his history, Nawab Iftikhar Ali Khan writes, "from his very childhood, he was inclined to be religious minded, and on reaching his manhood he roamed throughout Afghanistan in quest of a spiritual leader and it is indeed for the same reason that he is said to have come to India."[217] Such accounts support the popular although overstated theory of Islamic conversion through peaceful persuasion of Sufis, rather than through force. According to this perception, Islam spread in South Asia through the proselytizing efforts and personal charisma of Sufi saints. Many eminent scholars of South

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[216] Richard Eaton, "Approaches to the Study of Conversion to Islam In India," in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, edited by Richard C. Martin, (New York; One World Press, 1987), pp. 113-116.
[217] Khan *History*, pp. 2-3.

Asian Sufism, including Richard Eaton, Simon Digby, Annemarie Schimmel, Carl Ernst, Bruce Lawrence, and Irfan Habib effectively dispel the notion that Sufis in the medieval periods of Muslim expansion were actively seeking to effect conversions among the Hindu population or that they were successful when they tried.[218] However, to this day in many areas of Punjab and Bengal, clans and groups *do* in fact attribute their conversion to the power and appeal of famous Sufi saints such as Baba Farid Shakarganj. Furthermore, for Muslims in Malerkotla today, emphasizing the peaceful spread of Islam through the inclusive and egalitarian traditions of the saints is an important way to counter the prevalent image of Islam as a religion of violence. Such narratives are among the strategies Muslims in India employ in order to preemptively demonstrate their loyalty to the overwhelmingly Hindu nation and to guarantee their safety. This emphasis on the peaceful aspects of Islam, even if exaggerated, are also a means of accomplishing community healing in the aftermath of Partition and other episodes of inter-religious violence.[219]

Faqīr's Tale

The Shaikh as an Apostle of Peace

Haider Shaikh is often depicted as just such a peaceful apostle of the faith, as in this account given by a visiting *faqīr* from Uttar Pradesh. This *faqīr* travels continuously from one *dargah* to another, and the tomb shrine in Malerkotla is one of his semi-regular haunts. Coming from outside the town and even the state, he is one of the rare extra-local competent communicators with a large repertoire of tales about Haider Shaikh whom I encountered.

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[218] For example, Lawrence notes that the famous Delhi based Chishti master Nizamuddin Auliya mentions how infrequently Hindus attended to his instruction. Digby argues that Hindus tend to appear in Sufi *tazkīra* (biographical) literature as foils for demonstrating the spiritual superiority of a Shaikh.

[219] This impulse to either beatify or demonize a religion following a traumatic event was evident in the USA after the destruction of the World Trade Towers by terrorists who were Muslim. Suddenly ubiquitous, Islam was either a religion of terror or a religion of peace, with no middle ground. For a considerable period it was extremely difficult to find a more nuanced and more accurate portrayal of the vast and varied faith.

Although he did not cite the sources of his knowledge of the lore of the Shaikh, he stays during his visits with a family connected to the shrine. The family showed him great respect and affection during their interactions. In his narratives, the *faqīr* depicted Haider Shaikh as a warrior, but in this case, he used the military career of the saint as a classic conversion story in which the past, ungodly life is forsaken and a life dedicated to Allah is taken up. The military life is then made a foil for the life of God, and this dedication results in sufficient charismatic power that results in conversions to Islam.

> At that time he was a major in the military, and he came to see that the world's law was *jutha* (untrue) and that the Lord's law was true. To adopt the rules of God, he did whatever Allah, ^shvar, Prabhu, Bhagwan, Paramatma, he did whatever pleased Allah Most High, and when God was happy then he was God's and God was his. And from then on he resigned from the army and came to Malerkotla, which was a princely state, and this was a region where a lot of other saints were preaching. And when he stopped in this region, after seeing his personality, the people were drawn to pray through him to Allah.

The *faqīr*'s tale emphasized, perhaps unsurprisingly, Haider Shaikh's abandonment of his worldly and military life to take up the pursuit of God's will. As the Shaikh grew in knowledge and devotion to the one true God, who has many names, he came to prefer the company of other saints to material or military rewards. Furthermore, the force of his personality drew people to him and through him to Islam. In this way a wandering *faqīr* from Uttar Pradesh, who had also given up his daily life, work, family, etc. in order to seek God, forged a connection with Haider Shaikh, an Afghan whose royal lineage and saintly tradition are deeply rooted at the tomb and in Malerkotla. The *faqīr* also reinforced the popular, though ahistorical, theory of Islamization through the peaceful persuasion of charismatic Sufis. Finally, he used the story of the saint's taking up a renunciant lifestyle as a vehicle to generalize the identity of God. This is an overt acknowledgment of the multi-religious appeal of Haider Shaikh. Although the performance context of this tale was in the home of the *khalīfah* family with whom the *faqīr* resides during his

visits to the *dargah* and no non-Muslims besides myself (being white it is generally assumed that

I am Christian) were present. Still, the *faqīr* deliberately expanded the appellations of God in

order to include all religious faiths within his purview. This linguistic incorporation and

identification of the many names of God also validates the multi-confessional community of

Haider Shaikh as devotees of the devotee of an all-encompassing, all inclusive God. These

multiple communities may know God by different names, but all are able to reach him through

Haider Shaikh. Thus the *faqīr* affirmed the unity of God and the variety of his names, and

simultaneously asserted the preeminence of Haider Shaikh and his magnetic power.

The Miraculous Shaikh

In other accounts it is not the inclusiveness of the saint's traditions and the unity in

diversity of God, but the supremacy of Haider Shaikh that comes to the fore. In a story told by

the *numbardar khalīfah* mentioned above, Haider Shaikh is shown to be superior in terms of his

spiritually derived power to perform *karamat* (miracles) versus the mere magic of Hindu yogis.

This narrative depicts an encounter between Haider Shaikh and a yogi who tries to draw the Sufi

into a competition of their extraordinary skills. First, the yogi fails in his effort to summon

Haider Shaikh to him and must travel to the Shaikh to obtain an audience. Upon arriving, he

finds that his magical abilities are no match for the Sufi.

> Yes, it is commonly known. Once there was a competition between Babaji
> [Haider Shaikh] with a yogi. He [the yogi] said, "Bring Babaji to me." He sent
> two men to bring Babaji there but they did not return. Then he sent more, they
> also did not return. When the fourth time men were sent he asked them not to sit
> there but to bring the others back. But they were not able to stand [i.e. they were
> incapacitated], so the yogi himself came there. He said, "I am flying. If you have
> some power, pull me back." And he flew with his magic. Babaji put off his
> slippers, they went up and banged on the yogi's head and he came down. Then he
> [the yogi] felt sorry and said, "Do not send me away from here. Please keep me

here." And Babaji said, "You can stand outside this gate." Then he used to stand here and later his children would stand.[220]

The defeat of one religious adept by another is a common trope in tales of saintly encounters. In his work on anecdotes of spiritual competitions between Sufis and yogis, Simon Digby concludes that these hagiographical themes are strategies employed by the faithful to assert simultaneously the autonomy and similarity of two contesting faiths, with the ultimate end of establishing the preeminence of a particular type of Sufi Islam through the universal acknowledgement of the perfection of a Shaikh.[221] Whether the Shaikh outdoes the magic of a yogi, causes the yogi to submit to Islam, or otherwise demonstrates his spiritual supremacy, the Shaikh emerges victorious and the preeminence of Islam is confirmed. The yogi's appearance in the hagiography of a Sufi Shaikh in some cases may reflect a historical event, but the event is rendered into a narrative and recounted in such a way that even as the connection is made between Sufi Islam and yogic Hinduism, the superiority of the former is clearly established.

In this case, the *numbardar*'s tale demonstrates Haider Shaikh's superiority to the *jadu* [magic, usually black magic] of the magician. It also demonstrates Haider Shaikh's magnetic power over the yogi's retainers who were unable to return from their assigned task. The mode of defeat is particularly humiliating as the negative association of shoes is widely perceived in South Asia. In particular, the depiction of the shoe as the instrument of conquest exposes Hindu prejudices surrounding pollution that are often stereotyped in Islamic polemics. However, above all this story is a discursive defeat of Hinduism by Islam. The faith and practice of the Sufi saint allow him to effortlessly defuse and expose the yogi's tricks. Although I never heard this story or any like it from non-Muslim interlocutors, it is not unreasonable to assume that these

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[220] Interview, August 2, 2001.
[221] Simon Digby, "Encounters with Jogis in Indian Sufi Hagiography," unpublished paper presented at the School for Oriental and African Studies, January 1970.

potentially inflammatory, clearly partisan stories are known outside Muslims circles, though they

do not appear to be an incitement to the Hindus.

Hindus and the Shaikh

Hindus not only figure in the stories told about Haider Shaikh, but Hindus also *tell* stories

about Haider Shaikh. The content of these narratives often establishes a direct link between the

saint and the non-Muslim community in Malerkotla. The performer may use a story of the saint

to make a social commentary on the quality of Muslim authority. For example, an elderly Hindu

mistri (carpenter) recounted one of the most detailed renditions of the tale of Haider Shaikh's

meeting with Bahlol Lodhi I ever heard.[222] This *mistri* was also the president of the committee

that manages the Vishvakarma Mandir in the Bhumsi neighborhood, very close to Haider

Shaikh's *dargah*.[223] In Malerkotla, as in most areas in India, these *jatis*, or caste groups are

among the lower echelons of society. This *mistri* took obvious pride in his professional skills,

but no longer worked, dedicating himself mostly to the temple. I encountered him during an

interview with a local Jain historian. The *mistri* was among the small group (about five) of

Hindus and Jains present. He was the oldest member of the gathering, thus deserving of respect,

but was also the lowest caste, the remainder being Aggarwal Hindus and Jains. The conversation

was a joint effort to recount the history of their *gotras* (clans) in the region.[224] The subject of

Haider Shaikh came up early on in our conversation, although the men did not know that I was

specifically interested in Haider Shaikh or in Muslim saints, only that I was interested in

Malerkotla's history. Up to this point, those assembled had showed an impatient deference as

the elderly *mistri* had frequently interrupted the published Jain historian to interject his own

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[222] Personal interview, March 10, 2001.
[223] Vishvakarma is the deity worshipped particularly by carpenters, ironworkers, builders and others who do skilled, manual labor.
[224] In this region the relations between Hindus and Jains are very close, and some people jointly themselves as both

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opinions. The initial discussion focused on the first Jain presence in the area, and then turned to

an event in which the last Nawab of Malerkotla came to meet a famous Jain *muni*, or ascetic.

This meeting clearly stood out for the Jains as a significant moment when the Muslim authority

of the town took the time to acknowledge the importance of the Jain community and their

religious leader. At this point, in a kind of *non sequitur*, the *mistri* broke into the historian's

account and launched into an extended narrative of the arrival of the most famous local resident,

Haider Shaikh. He began the story of the saint's encounter with Sultan Bahlol Lodhi in a

standard fashion:

> When Bahlol Lodhi's army came there, they were on the march, and at once a
> storm came and all the tents blew up. The King saw that all the tents had blown
> up except one a long distance away and in it a light was burning. He stopped and
> went to him and said, give me a blessing that I should conquer Delhi. As the
> saint's work is to give blessings, he gave it, but the King put him in a fix as he
> gave him a horse. Baba said, "I am a saint, I do not need a horse." But he [i.e.
> Lodhi] said, "I have come to a saint, so I should give something," and he forcibly
> gave the horse.

Before giving the extended narrative which continued at some length, it is worth pointing out

several features in the *mistri*'s telling of the tale. First, Haider Shaikh is portrayed as not

particularly interested in whether or not Lodhi should conquer Delhi. He blessed him as a matter

of course, because "the saint's work is to give blessings." Second, the *mistri* emphasized the

resistance of the *faqīr* to such an ostentatious and useless gift as a horse. This shows that the

narrator chose to emphasize Haider Shaikh's poverty and nonattachment to worldly things above

any other qualities of a saint, such as bestowing boons or fulfilling wishes. Finally, as the *mistri*

placed the blame for this gift firmly upon the king who refused to take no for an answer, he

clearly asserts a rather negative opinion of the Sultan. Rather than establishing a personal link

with a powerful lineage, the meeting of Haider Shaikh and Bahlol Lodhi provided the *mistri* with

an opportunity to demonstrate the profligacy and obstinacy of the Afghan ruler and the more

genuine authority of those who renounce the world. He continued this theme with a protracted

parable explaining that it is in fact the king's nature to be so obstinate,

> We [i.e. people] have three kinds of stubbornness or rigidness. One is the king's
> stubbornness or rigidness, one is the woman's stubbornness, and the third is the
> child's stubbornness and in front of these even God has to bow. No one can
> speak in front of the king's stubbornness. We have a lot of examples of the
> stubbornness of women. Ram Chandra went into exile because of his
> [step]mother's stubbornness.[225] The example of a child's rigidness occurs [in a
> tale] from Babur[226] and Birbal who were sitting and Babur said, 'I have seen the
> king's and the woman's stubbornness. The king's example is me, the woman's in
> the *Ramayana*, but what is the stubbornness of a child?' Birbal said, 'I will show
> you just now.' He brought a child from somewhere and soon the child started
> crying. The king asked what do you want? The child said a small pot. He was
> given it. He became quiet, but again started crying. The king again asked what
> do you want? He said an elephant. He was given it, then again he started crying
> and said I want to put this elephant into the pot, which was impossible so the king
> has to bow. So the king [i.e. Lodhi] because of that nature, tied the horse there
> and went.

This digression into the parable of the king illustrates the *mistri*'s opinion of rulers in

general. Clearly unimpressed by royalty, the *mistri* depicted Lodhi's behavior as

inappropriate in foisting a horse on a *faqīr*. He expressed his displeasure through a

protracted tale in which Babur's stubbornness received its comeuppance. However, in the

case of Bahlol Lodhi, the stubborn king is rewarded, at least initially. The *mistri*

continued:

> He won in Delhi. In the meantime Haider Shaikh gave the horse to one of his
> disciples, somebody complained to the king that he [Haider Shaikh] did not
> accept your offer and gave it to somebody. So the king came and asked, 'Where
> is the horse?' So he said, 'I told you before that I do not need it, so I gave it to
> somebody.' So Haider Shaikh made [i.e. miraculously] a horse and gave it to the
> king, but the king said, 'I want my horse.' So Haider Shaikh said, 'You are
> arrogant, but I will give you your horse. You just close your eyes.' Bahlol Lodhi
> blinked his eyes and saw there were thousands of horses more beautiful than his

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[225] In the *Ramayana*, one of Ram's stepmothers [i.e., one of his father's other wives] insisted on her husband
granting her a boon that her son be placed on the throne instead of Ram, the eldest son and rightful heir.
[226] Actually, Birbal was the minister to the emperor Akbar, not Babur. He was a very wise Hindu advisor, and the
stories of his discussions with the ruler are among the best-loved and most popular fables and morality tale cycles in
India.

horse standing there and his horse was standing behind them all, and was eating the shit of all the other horses. He saw the miracle and cooled down. He apologized and said "I will marry my daughter to you." His daughter was thirty-five years old. She gave birth to two children. [Lodhi] gave them fifty-five villages in dowry. Faith in [Haider Shaikh] was endless. When he expired he had two sons. His younger son took the offering. This is the Nawab family. They are first Pathans and later Mughals. In Malerkotla there was never a Mughal rule, there was not even the rule of Aurangzeb. Malerkotla's Nawab was called *jagirdar*, he was not called Nawab earlier. Aurangzeb gave Sher Shah [Sher Mohammad Khan] this status for the first time 300 years back.[227]

In one sense, the Hindu *mistri*'s account of Haider Shaikh's meeting with Sultan Bahlol Lodhi followed the standard structure for this tale: the Sultan's army caught in a storm, the undisturbed saint, the request for a blessing, victory in battle, miracle of the horse, marriage to the ruler's daughter. However, the *mistri* also inserted a number of narrative elements that vary from the dominant structure. By embedding his perspectival variations in the standard framing tale of the meeting of the Sultan and the Shaikh, the *mistri* demonstrates his proficiency in the lore of the saint and establishes his right to render the tale meaningful in his own idiom. Highlighting these variations clarifies his particular perspective on Haider Shaikh, the Muslim ruler Bahlol Lodhi, and the moral significance of the foundational narrative of Malerkotla. Rather than emphasizing the link between the royal and spiritual lineages as is done by the *khalīfahs* and many Muslim residents, this Hindu narrator highlights the superiority of spiritual over temporal authority. He uses the story of Haider Shaikh's arrival to critique autocratic and imperious rulers who insist on having their own way.[228]

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[227] The first Nawab to actually be given that title was Bayzid Khan, not Sher Mohammad Khan.
[228] It would be presumptuous to conclude from this narrative alone that this represented the *mistri*'s sentiments about the Muslim leadership in Malerkotla during and after the time of the Nawabs. Nonetheless, his criticism of those who fail to properly respect a holy man was vividly apparent.

The *mistri*'s tale of Haider Shaikh and the Sultan exemplified what Dell Hymes calls a "breakthrough into performance."[229] This is a moment in which a competent communicator makes a qualitative shift from everyday modes of expression to one in which he or she signals his or her assumption of responsibility for the transmission of a cultural behavior, such as the identity shaping narrative of Haider Shaikh's arrival in Malerkotla and his encounter with Bahlol Lodhi. Although himself not a Muslim, the *mistri* did not express or experience any restriction on his ability or his right to transmit the lore of the Muslim saint and the Muslim ruler. Thus the criteria for judging the authority of his narrative does not derive from his religious identity. Rather, by demonstrating his mastery of the core elements of the tale and of other narrative traditions such as the *Mahabharata* and the tales of Birbal, the *mistri* establishes his expertise. In this case, the *mistri* also indicated his authoritative speech mode through several shifts. First, he changed the focus of his address from the group in general to me in particular, as the recording and preserving agent. In addition he shifted his language from a conversational and fragmentary style to a declamatory mode employing lengthy and extended sentences that allowed for the growth and development of a narrative arc and discouraged interruption. He also used a richer and more symbolically dense narrative style employing both didactic fables and local hagiographical tales to illustrate his point. His mastery of multiple genres and his integration of these genres also reinforced his authority to transmit the history of Haider Shaikh. His authority was acknowledged by the response of the audience, none of whom spoke or interrupted for the

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[229] Dell Hymes defines a performance as a "cultural behavior for which a person takes responsibility before an audience." In a performance, "known cultural material" is realized. In the *mistri*'s tale, the depth of the performance is significant as he draws from a well of tales in the Birbal cycle which serve as didactic fables with clear moral messages. Another significant feature of a performance is its emergent quality, signifying the way in which the signifying act comes forward into the communicative event, revealing the structures of the cultural context in which it is embedded. Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1977). Dell Hymes, "Breakthrough into Performance," in *"in Vain I Tried to Tell You": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*, ed. Dell Hymes (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

duration of his narrative.   Such deference was rarely on display in the conversation either before or after.

The *mistri*'s performance of the tale of Haider Shaikh demonstrated his expertise as a storyteller and revealed his interpretation of the events described and established his belief in the importance of telling the tale. Commencing his account in the middle of a discussion about the origins and contributions of Jain society in Malerkotla, the *mistri* represented the figure of Haider Shaikh in such a way as to demonstrate the general superiority of religious renunciants over worldly authorities, and the particular superiority of the hometown saint Haider Shaikh over the Delhi Sultan Bahlol Lodhi. Interestingly, some local Jains believed that they first arrived in Malerkotla at the behest of Haider Shaikh in order to urbanize the undeveloped region for the needs of his royal bride and his growing community of followers. The *mistri*'s tale established the moral and temporal independence of Haider Shaikh and Malerkotla from the Lodhis and the subsequent Muslim rulers. This distance from central Muslim authority created a new sphere of authority under the lineage of the saint in which Jains and Hindus were acknowledged and supported as valued members of the community.

In his performance of Haider Shaikh's tale, the *mistri* made several very interesting narrative shifts, each signaling the introduction of a new element of meaning. The first switch introduced his story into the conversation on Jain origins in Malerkotla. He began by recounting the time when the last Nawab had come to pay respects to a visiting Jain *muni* (mendicant) and told him about Haider Shaikh.[230] Setting up his story with this anecdote, established the hierarchy of power that is consistent throughout his narrative as the spiritual leaders consistently

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[230] Jain *munis* travel from one Jain community to another, often on foot, with their noses and mouths covered, sweeping the ground in order to avoid inadvertently harming any living thing. When this important *muni* came to Malerkotla, the Nawab paid his respects as a matter of course. The Jain community in Malerkotla, as elsewhere in India, is quite wealthy and wields power far beyond their small numbers.

took precedence (being visited rather than visiting) over worldly ones. Next, he switched from the tale of Bahlol Lodhi's insistence on giving Haider Shaikh the horse to the story of Birbal and the various types of stubbornness encountered in humans. This exemplary tale emphasized the overbearing nature of rulers, and, in this case perhaps not coincidentally, Muslim rulers. The narrative then switched again to Haider Shaikh's shaming of the Sultan. The saint casually made horses appear, thereby demonstrating that if he had need or desire of a horse, he did not require any sultan to give it to him but was perfectly capable of producing it himself through his miraculous powers. Even this is not enough of an admonishment to the ruler whom the *mistri*, through Haider Shaikh, represents as 'arrogant.' The horse given by Lodhi was not only unnecessary and unwelcome, but was so inferior to the saint's miraculous horses that it consumed their excrement. This is an interesting strategy that, in the broader context of the conversation, clearly undermined imperial Muslim authority.   The *mistri* had previously recounted the widely told tale of Malerkotla's pre-Muslim origins. In this view, Malerkotla was the province of a Hindu king descended from one of the central protagonists of the epic *Mahabharata*. After the extended narrative of Haider Shaikh and Bahlol Lodhi, the ironworker and the others present engaged in an extended discussion of Muslim oppression. Combined with the preceding account of the Nawab's visit to the Jain *muni*, the context of the *mistri*'s performance of Haider Shaikh's tale was one in which the myths of origins of the settlement and the community are linked to the present state of the social, political, and religious environment. The overwhelming and repeated emphasis on the superiority of saints over the Muslim rulers allowed minority Hindu and Jain populations to find space for themselves in the foundation narrative of the region. By signifying his approbation of the saint's behavior over that of Bahlol Lodhi, the *mistri* indicated a shared value structure prioritizing spiritual poverty over material wealth. By invoking more recent

events in which the Nawab placed himself in the subservient position to a Jain mendicant by visiting *him* rather than requiring the *muni* to attend his court, the narrator set forth his own view of the right order of things. Thus the narrative tradition of Haider Shaikh provided a structure through which a wide range of opinions, ethical values, and personal agendas were expressed with authority and enormous creativity.

The Shaikh as Protector and Integrator

The above discussion established some of the narrative techniques through which Haider Shaikh's descendents and devotees, and the residents of Malerkotla express their connection to the saint. These techniques are important, as they are one of the major ways in which Haider Shaikh has become a meaningful symbol of community identity. Because people from all walks of life can locate themselves within his tradition are able to communicate their values and concerns through the structuring pattern of his life story, they generate a community of those for whom Haider Shaikh is a meaningful symbol. This role as a shared point of reference contributes to Haider Shaikh's exalted status among Malerkotla's various saints and holy people, both living and dead. By far more people are familiar with Haider Shaikh's historiography than any other holy person in Malerkotla's environs or history. That these narrative traditions are non-exclusive to Sikhs, Hindus, or Muslims, rich and poor, men and women, also validates the practice of pluralism and the existence of multi-confessional cults and communities. Haider Shaikh's significance to all the communities connected with him (*khalīfahs*, Malerkotla residents, and pilgrims) is most especially intensified by the frequent attribution of Malerkotla's peace during and since Partition to the saint's blessings. Haider Shaikh's protective power is one of the two most commonly given reasons for Malerkotla's stable multi-religious community, the other being the blessing of the Guru. This explanation is so pervasive among *khalīfahs*, residents, and

pilgrims that the popularity of Haider Shaikh clearly draws significantly from the widespread

conviction that his *barakat* (spiritual power) preserved the town during the chaos of 1947 and in

later periods of tension. This is reinforced by older residents and *khalīfahs* who reported that the

popularity of Haider Shaikh has grown substantially since pre-Partition days. The belief that the

saint has preserved the town through troubled times in the past is eagerly and frequently offered

as an explanation for Malerkotla's harmonious community in the present. For example, the

numbardar khalīfah cited above claims that the many *buzurgs* [pious elders, often synonymous

with saints] are the reason for local peace. I inquired why Malerkotla had not experienced

violence during Partition. The *numbardar* replied,

> *Numbardar*: It is only due to the blessings of the *buzurgs*. Here people have
>   never fought for caste and religion. All people have lived in unity in time
>   of joys and sorrow, marriages and death.
> ABB: Why?
> *Numbardar*: The love between people is so strong that they never thought that
>   they were Hindu, Muslims or Sikhs. At the shrines of the *buzurgs* people
>   exchange love (*aapas me muhabbat bante*) with each other
> ABB: But why is this is only possible here and other places it is not?
> *Numbardar*: The main thing is the blessing of the *buzurgs*. On all four sides
>   there are *buzurgs* and *buzurgs* here. All around the boundary of
>   Malerkotla there are *buzurgs*. It is only through their blessing that all
>   Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs are one.[231]

Although the *numbardar*'s explanation incorporated all of the saintly dead into the explanation,

generally the Shaikh was acknowledged to be the chief of all the saints. For example, the

mutawalli (caretaker) of a smaller *dargah* explained the relationship between Haider Shaikh and

the other local saints in the following way, saying, "Baba Haider Shaikh is the emperor of all of

them, he is a big *buzurg*." At the tombs of the pious dead one of the material blessings is that at

their shrines "people exchange love." Because of this daily opportunity for positive, peaceful

interaction, Malerkotla is able to remain free of significant conflict. Importantly, residents such

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[231] Interview, January 28, 2001.

as the *numbardar* recognized the value of such encounters and attributed the peace in town to the large number of saints' tombs and the way in which these places facilitate positive inter-religious exchanges. A local Hindu leader from the scheduled caste community likewise claimed that the peace in Malerkotla was due to the strong faith of the people in these saints. He stated, "This place is safe because people believe deep in their hearts in these saints and through the strength of their belief they have remained peaceful." But he also claimed that he himself primarily attended Haider Shaikh's *dargah* for social purposes, in order to show that he is not prejudiced in any way against the Muslim community. For him, shrine attendance is less about personal faith in Haider Shaikh and more about a perceived value in the chance to encounter one's neighbors and publicly manifest an open and non-sectarian attitude. Thus, surrounded by *buzurgs*, Malerkotla is surrounded by venues of opportunity for inter-religious connections to be forged. The blessing of the saints is perceivable in the relationships these interactions promote between residents and pilgrims of all religious faiths. As with the *haa da naara* and the blessing of Guru Gobind Singh, it is not necessary to form a judgment about the mystical power of Haider Shaikh or the spiritual efficacy of pilgrimage. For many in the community of the Shaikh the power of the shrine is fairly mundane and is predicated upon the practical dynamics of shrine worship, which almost inevitably entails inter-religious engagement.

For some interlocutors, this type of *bhaichar*, brotherly spirit, was possible only in Malerkotla. A member of the *khalīfah* family who does not sit at the tomb but does pursue the Sufi path and is himself a *murshid* (spiritual guide) with *murīds* (disciples) of all religious faith expressed Malerkotla's special status in the following way:

> *Murshid*: Yes, it is special, all the other places here or there they have some kind of problem or trouble, but there is nothing in Malerkotla. This is because of these *pīrs* who are in such a big number in Malerkotla. The other places don't have this. This is the problem.

ABB: So it is only because of the blessing of Haider Shaikh or of all the other *pīrs* (saints) as well?

Murshid: Because of all the *pīrs*. Baba Haider Shaikh is the head [*sadr*] of all. Shaikh Sadruddin Sadri Jahan – the head of religion [*dīn*] and head of the world [*jahan*] also.[232]

The *murshid*'s view of Malerkotla's peace closely echoed the *numbardar*'s. For both it was the vast number of *buzurgs* that allowed the town to avoid the type of divisions and violence that other areas experienced. The *murshid* added in relation to Partition, "No murders were done here. No Hindu killed any Muslim, neither were Sikhs killed. No one felt it necessary. These all are his [Haider Shaikh's] blessings." For this descendent of the saint, Haider Shaikh is the chief of the *buzurgs*, a first among equals, but it requires the combined efforts of all the local saints to maintain the peace.

The view that Haider Shaikh alone preserved the town was given by a Hindu pilgrim from outside Malerkotla. This Hindu gentleman is also a *chela* – one who is possessed by the spirit of the saint and communicates Haider Shaikh's counsel and wishes to his devotees. I asked the *chela* if he had heard the story that Malerkotla was a zone of peace where no one was killed in Partition. He replied,

Chela: Yes. No Sikh was killed and no Muslim was killed. In its boundary no one was killed.

ABB: Why?

Chela: Because of the power of Babaji [i.e. Haider Shaikh] and I can't explain that.

ABB: No other reason?

Chela: No, if there had been some other reason than this would have been the case in other places as well. Other places men and women were murdered.[233]

For the *chela*, not only was Malerkotla's reputation as a peaceful place true, but it was the uniqueness of this status that proves the power of Haider Shaikh. Recalling that hundreds of

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[232] Interview March 8, 2001.
[233] Interview, May 31, 2001.

thousands of people died during the transfer of population, including in the area from which this *chela* had come, Malerkotla does stand out as one of very few places in Punjab that was able to prevent the violence from entering its borders. In the *chela*'s view, this was further evidence of Haider Shaikh's greatness, as the most unique and important feature of Malerkotla *is* Haider Shaikh.

Another local Muslim who is related to the Nawabi family (and so also to the saint) extended Haider Shaikh's protective power from the time of Partition to other times of conflict and even natural disaster. He stated:

> Before there was the Partition in the country in 1947, Muslims used to live here. There were a lot of majority Muslim areas and Punjab was one of them. In Punjab, from Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Sirhind, Amritsar, Faridkot, Bathinda a lot of migration took place. Because of that migration a lot of fighting broke out between these two communities. Here in India Muslims and there in Pakistan Sikhs were slaughtered, but not a single person was killed in Malerkotla. Thus people say that this is a sacred place because a lot of saints are here. Ten years back when terrorism was at its heights, the Sikh people who wanted a separate Punjab, everywhere people were killed, but not in Malerkotla. And there was no clash between the communities. They were living just like brothers. People say that Hazrat Shaikh was a pious person who for years prayed to God and due to his blessings there is no war in Malerkotla. Even during the First World War and Second World War there was no person lost from Malerkotla, never an earthquake has come in Malerkotla and no flood has come in Malerkotla.[234]

Although this Muslim gentleman distanced himself from this account somewhat with the formula "people say," rather than claiming that belief for himself, still the account places the responsibility for Malerkotla's peace upon Haider Shaikh and the many other saints in the region.

An important feature in many of these narratives is the way in which it is not merely the presence and the spiritual power of the narrative traditions connected to Haider Shaikh and the other *buzurgs* that sustain Malerkotla's peaceful plural culture, but the interactions occurring at the shrines. These opportunities to "exchange love" at shared sacred sites are critical resources

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[234] Interview, October 5, 2000.

in forging a positive relationship with people from multiple religious systems. At the shrines, not only are people coming together for their own personal reasons and agendas, but also almost inevitably encounter practitioners of other religious traditions. This is especially true of the *dargahs* in Malerkotla where the likelihood of meeting Muslims is exponentially greater than at any other place in Indian Punjab. Such interactions allow people to observe the commitment and devotion of members of other faiths, to note similarities and differences, and to engage in dialogue, if so desired. At the very least, it is possible to form a positive impression of other religious believers, and on occasion long lasting friendships may be born.

Such relationships are possible at shared shrines because the shrine itself provides a common ground, shared vocabulary of belief and practice that facilitates exchange. In his study of sites shared by Muslims and Christians in Palestine, Glenn Bowman describes such shrines as *semantically multivocal*. Semantic multivocality allows multiple users to maintain relations with a site that is central to their local and/or religious identity without over-determining the site and rendering it fixed and unavailable to contradictory uses and interpretations. In Bowman's study in Palestine, as in my study in Punjab, the openness of a shrine is deliberately maintained through actions and interactions among the constituents that are keyed to allow for a lack of uniformity of belief and practice. Indeed, the communities in which such places are situated often value shared sites precisely for their quality of openness. As Bowman puts it, "while the miraculous power seen to be resident there served as a general pretext for the gathering of local persons of Muslim and various Christian persuasions, the specific reasons people gave for attending ranged from the need for cures through the demands of religion, to the pleasures of

conviviality."[235] Thus a common primary motivator for allegiance to the shrine – its miraculous

power – facilitates and perhaps even draws from another powerful factor in the site's appeal: its

multi-religious constituency.

At the *dargah* people of all faiths exchange stories about Haider Shaikh and testimonials

of personal experiences of Haider Shaikh's power and benevolence. These conversations are

crucial to establish the possibility of deeper relationships. By sharing personal experience,

giving and receiving advice and imparting knowledge about Haider Shaikh build a sense of trust

between devotees. Not only do they witness one another participating in similar rituals but

through testimonial exchanges the commonality of the problems brought to the shrine is

recognized as is the shared human frailty of the supplicants. That this is a mutually humanizing

experience for devotees from all religious backgrounds is apparent in the circles of people, small

and large, who gather around the tomb and in the streets of Malerkotla during the saint's

festivals. Whereas during the possession rituals, to be discussed later, devotees have the

opportunity to formally and publicly declare their afflictions such as the lack of a child,

employment, sobriety, sanity, and so on, these informal exchanges are also an important element

of the shrine cult. Wandering through the streets between crowds of people sitting and standing I

heard many, many discussions testifying to the power of Haider Shaikh. In those conversations

that I initiated or became involved in this topic was often introduced and would usually result in

numerous participants and passersby offering their own experiences, their sympathy for the

situations of others, and their advice.

In a typical example of such an exchange of personal testimonials, I was visiting with a

Muslim resident of Malerkotla who is a *murshid*, or spiritual guide, whose intimate connections

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[235] Glenn Bowman, "Response to Robert Hayden" cited in Robert Hayden, "Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive
Sharing of Religious Sites in South Asia and the Balkans". See also Glenn Bowman, "Nationalizing the Sacred:
Shrines and Shifting Identities in the Israeli-Occupied Territories," *Man* 28 (1993)."

to Haider Shaikh have brought him numerous disciples who look to him to mediate the saint's power in such a way as to ameliorate their situations. This *murshid* recommended that those of his followers who were in some difficulty come to him and pray with him, then bring him to the tomb, return to their homes and pray further. This method, he claimed, had always proved successful. During our discussion several disciples arrived, one Muslim and two Sikhs and provided their own testimonials to the power of the Shaikh and the *murshid*. One Sikh explained that his sister had become possessed by a malign spirit and that after praying to the Shaikh and consulting the *murshid* she had been cured. Furthermore, they had brought the Baba to their fields to bless them and since had experienced improved harvests. The other Sikh contributed his account which the *murshid* completed for him, saying

> Once, his wife was at death's door. They took her to Patiala for treatment, but she did not improve. So they came to me. I did some things, asked them to take the name of Babaji [i.e. Haider Shaikh] and she became well, so they started coming to me. I said first go to Babaji [i.e. Haider Shaikh], then come to me. Since then he is coming for the last ten years.

These types of personal testimonials are told throughout Malerkotla in proximity and relation to Haider Shaikh. Generally, such accounts resulted in numerous signs of approbation from the group and another member of the assembly would often pick up the stream and introduce his own experience in all its variations and nuances. As in the example above, these supportive networks of exchange include people of all religious faiths, ages, genders, etc. Perhaps most important is the seemingly inexhaustible appetite of the pilgrims for such stories. I often had to extricate myself from conversations that seemed likely to continue long after I departed. The fascination for testimonials among believers is extraordinary and is an important element in building community.

The narratives about Haider Shaikh illuminate several ways in which the saint functions within the tomb cult and among the residents of Malerkotla. These functions illustrate the four major roles of Haider Shaikh as founder, protector, integrator, and exemplar for the territory of Malerkotla and its ethos. First, the basic tale of the saint's arrival in Malerkotla is widely known, but differently understood and told, allowing multiple interlocutors to make the tale meaningful to themselves and their communities. Sufficient continuity between certain core narrative elements maintains the coherence of the wider community of the saint and the tradition, but do not preclude variation and innovation. Second, the form and content of these multiple narratives depends upon the expressive intentions of the performer and the particular performance contexts. Hindus, Muslims, residents, and pilgrims all key their performances to suit their own agendas and to communicate with a particular audience. Third, the central importance of the saint is not dependent upon the religious identity or a direct relationship with the saint. Rather, Hindus and non-resident Muslims also recount the story of the saint, thereby establishing discursive and ideological links where hereditary connections may be absent. This also validates them as competent communicators of Haider Shaikh's lore. Fourth, the efficacy of Haider Shaikh's tradition as a binding force in the community does not depend solely upon belief in Haider Shaikh's salvific or benefactory grace. Instead, many interlocutors claim that their interest in the shrine derives from their interest in the community and the opportunity to meet and engage with adherents of other religious faiths and to publicly manifest their lack of sectarian prejudice, their common experiences, and shared concerns.

The Partition and the Shaikh

Written accounts of Haider Shaikh and Malerkotla reveal something that does not emerge in the mostly oral accounts cited above – all of which obviously antedate Partition in 1947.

There is a marked difference between the pre- and post-Partition narratives. The textual sources on Haider Shaikh's life and times from before Partition focused on two things: his link with Bahlol Lodhi and the multi-religious appeal of his tomb shrine.[236] The oral and written narratives from after the Partition shift to focus on the protective power of the saint and the positive impact of his tomb, cult, and the establishment of Islam in the region. They overwhelmingly emphasize the multi-religious appeal of the Shaikh and the positive inter-religious relations in Malerkotla. From newspaper articles to a history written by the last Nawab Iftikhar Ali Khan, to scholarly dissertations, to chapbooks, the multi-religious appeal of the Shaikh surges to the forefront. This change reflects a need to come to terms with Malerkotla's escape from the devastation that surrounded it in 1947 and to establish strong basis for their continued existence by depicting positive inter-religious relations, fostering the goodwill of the majority, and generating Muslim pride and solidarity. It also reveals the subtle ways in which the history and hagiography of Haider Shaikh is crafted to incorporate the unfolding of current events into the constellation of narratives associated with him. In this section I will review the ways in which Haider Shaikh is depicted in textual sources from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and contrast the themes and aspects of his lore emphasized then to the more recent accounts in which the integrative and protective qualities of the saint come to dominate.

One of the oldest available textual accounts of Haider Shaikh is in an 1882 chronicle of the ruling clan, *A Description of the Principal Kotla Afghans*, by Inayat Ali Khan, the brother of Nawab Ibrahim Ali Khan. Inayat remarks upon the saint's piety but is primarily concerned with

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[236] Griffin, Lepel, *Rajas of the Punjab*, (Delhi; Low Price Publications, 2000 [1870]), Ibbetson, D., E.D. MacLagan, and H.A. Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province*, (Lahore; Government Printing House, 1919 (1883)), *Maler Kotla State Gazetteer*, (Lahore; The Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1904),
"Malerkotla," in *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, edited by W.W. Hunter, (London; Trübner & Co, 1881), "Malerkotla," in *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, (London; Trübner & Co, 1886), "Malerkotla," in *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, (London; Trübner & Co, 1908),"Malerkotla State," in *Yadgar Tajposh*

the saint's failure to divide his property properly at the time of his death. In his view, this sets an unfortunate precedent resulting in generations of internecine disputes in which Inayat was deeply involved.[237] Another late nineteenth century text mentioning the Shaikh is the 1883 encyclopedic ethnography of Punjabi culture, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab* written by British civil servant, Sir Denzil Ibbetson. Every *Gazetteer* – the historical, economic, and cultural almanacs kept by the British in India - from 1881, 1883, 1891, and 1904 mentions Malerkotla State. Most refer to the Shaikh as the progenitor of the ruling lineage.

A historical chronicle in Urdu, *Hayat-e Lodhi*, by Israr Afghani was published in 1907 and contains a section on the Malerkotla Afghans in which little is said about Haider Shaikh's piety and nothing about his ongoing cult. The history *Hayat Lodhi*, was written by a Muslim, Israr Afghani, ca. 1904 does highlight the encounter with Lodhi but discusses at greater length Haider Shaikh's family heritage. The section on Malerkotla begins with recounting the route taken by Haider Shaikh to get to the area where he settled. Then Bahlol Lodhi is encountered and the marriage with his daughter takes place. Afghani writes:

> Lamih Qatal's great grandson [Haider Shaikh] was Ahmad Zinda Pir's son. He
> arrived in Hindustan on a voyage from Daraban and then arrived there at that
> settlement called Maler that was on the bank of a branch of the Sutlej. And on the
> bank a village Bhumsi was settled (this village was here from when Raja Bhim
> Sen was living here). He made his dwelling place in the open and remained
> absorbed in remembering Allah. One day in about 1450 Hamid Khan Wazir had
> summoned Bahlol Lodhi to come to Delhi from Sirhind, and his encampment was
> near the dwelling place of the saint. Having heard about the piety of the saint, he
> came before him to pray for victory and when he went to leave he made the vow
> that if he became the Badshah of Delhi he would marry his daughter to him.
> Arriving in Delhi his desire was fulfilled. The Sultan in his satisfaction married
> his daughter to the saint; by way of a wedding gift he gave her fifty-six small and

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[237] Khan, Inayat Ali. *A Description of the Principal Kotla Afghans*, (Lahore; Civil And Military Gazette Press, 1882). Khan devotes the last third of this work to his dispute with his brother and the British for land rights to his brother, the Nawab's, share of the land they inherited from their father. As Ibrahim Ali Khan was adopted by his uncle Nawab Sikander Ali Khan (d. 1871), Inayat argues that he forfeits his inheritance from his father as he obtained all the land and revenue from the throne upon his ascension.

> twelve large villages. After the wedding he [i.e. Haider Shaikh] went to one of
> the villages and settled it and named it Maler.[238]

This is a fairly unembellished account of the meeting between Haider Shaikh and Bahlol Lodhi

that we encountered before. In this version no storms come up, no horses are given, and no

miracles are performed at all (unless you count Lodhi's victory at Delhi). Instead the focus is on

the genealogy of the saint, which establishes him as a Pathan Afghan and thus suitable for

marriage with Lodhi's daughter. Afghani makes explicit reference to the commonly held view

that this region was once connected to Bhim Sen, a hero of the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*. This

reference also establishes the powerful and important pedigree of the territory. From the

wording, Afghani is merely chronicling the epic history of the region, listing it among a variety

of local features. He does not seem to be using the moment either to establish Muslim

domination over the greatest of Hindus or to demonstrate the ecumenical history of the region.

He simply remarks upon the connection as a point of distinction worthy of mention.

Interestingly, following this Afghani goes into great speculative detail about the name of

Maler and its possible origins. He debunks several theories, which must have been extant at the

time, in particular, the assertion that Maler comes from a previous ruler's name, identified as

Malher Singh. Afghani states that this is "an invention of people's minds," as "Malher Singh was

imaginary, if he had been real then would Shaikh Sahib have settled here and named it Malher?"

This logic is hard to dispute, as it would be unusual for a conqueror to name his new territory

after his predecessor. Following this note on the naming of the settlement, Afghani returns to the

history of the saint.

> After the daughter of Bahlol Lodhi married him it is said that his second *nikah*
> [marriage] was with the daughter of Rai Bahram, the ruler of Kapurthala. From
> the Shahzadi [daughter of the king] Hassan and from Bahram's daughter ʿIsa and

[238] Afghani, Israr. *Hayat Lodhi.* Saweem, Pakistan: Tarikh Jamiat, 1907.

Musa were born. Shaikh Sadruddin died at the age of sixty-one in 1515/941 h. and it is because of him that Maler is a pilgrimage place for the common people and the elite. After the death of Shaikh Sadruddin his son Hassan took up the *faqīri* life like his saintly father. He chose to do the service of the mazar. 'Isa and Musa administered the kingdom.[239]

The overall emphasis in Afghani's account is the details of the family's heritage, marriages, and lineage. As a chronicle of the entire Lodhi clan this is not surprising. However, the references to Haider Shaikh's saintly qualities and the identification of Maler as a place of pilgrimage are significant as the only proof offered of his saintliness is the victory of Bahlol Lodhi after their meeting.

A similar emphasis on family heritage is central to the narrative of Haider Shaikh that appears in *The Description of the Principal Kotla Afghans* (hereafter the *Description*) written by Inayat Ali Khan, the younger brother of Nawab Ibrahim Ali Khan in 1882. Khan gives a great deal of information about the Nawabi lineage, and the connection with Bahlol Lodhi. However, in Inayat Ali Khan's estimation Lodhi is not a great ruler, pious Muslim, or particularly praiseworthy character. Rather, Khan takes special note of Lodhi's superstitious faith in saints. He writes,

> About the year 1450 when Bahlol Lodi, at the suggestion of Vazier Hamid Khan, was on his way down to Delhi to assume the direction of the Government of India, a country too extended to remain long under one head, he happened to halt near the hut of the Seikh (sic), whose devoted piety so much impressed him that he asked for an interview, which was granted to him by the Saint. Accordingly, Bahlol visited the Seikh, and implored him to invoke the aid of the Supreme Being for his success; and of this, in reply, he was assured by the Saint, whose words were taken as those of God, under the prevailing belief of his possessing miraculous power. Though to all appearance this agreeable assurance seems to have been framed on the past triumphs of Afghan invaders over the weak Princes of India whenever the former took up arms against them, yet, at any rate, Bahlol departed quite rejoiced, and positive of winning the prize of the Empire—after the wont of Afghans, who rely more upon the prayer of a Saint than upon their own energy and action; and at the same time avowed in his heart that should he

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[239] Afghani, p. ???

succeed in his enterprise he would marry one of his daughters to the Seikh. Bahlol did not forget his vow. No sooner had he declared himself the King of Delhi, than he duly fulfilled it, and gave twelve large and fifty-six small villages by way of dowry into the bargain.[240]

Here, although Haider Shaikh is depicted as a pious saint and worthy of respect, Bahlol Lodhi's faith in him is dismissed as typical of Afghans who fail to show initiative (though clearly Lodhi *did* take some initiative in attacking Delhi) and depend on miracles and saintly intervention instead. It seems clear that Khan gives little credence to the notion that saintly persons have miraculous powers. His concern in this narrative is to establish the land grant of the Sultan to his ancestor, no matter how misguided that *jagir* might have been.

Khan also takes particular note of the "cupidity" of other regional chieftains such as Rai Bahram of Kapurthala, who ingratiated themselves to Haider Shaikh after his marriage with the princess:

> The marriage of a King's daughter to a Saint whose name had scarcely been known but in the neighbourhood of his own hut, was a matter which naturally could not remain hidden; it spread far and wide, and a man, in the person of a Bhatti Rajput of Kapurthala, calling himself Bahram, appeared on the scene to offer his daughter in marriage to the Seikh, who readily accepted the liberal gift and thus added to the former matrimonial present received by him. There can be little doubt that Bahram's cupidity was aroused and excited by the Seikh's newly acquired wealth, and that he had no other object in view than that of procuring the means to reap the benefit of the Seikh's *jageer* while the latter was engaged day and night in religious meditations.

Although there is no evidence that Bahram took advantage of Haider Shaikh's religious preoccupation to gain from his wealth, the tone of Khan's narrative indicates enormous suspicion and a rather patronizing attitude towards the Shaikh. The reason for this becomes clear as Khan's greatest concern in the writing of the book becomes apparent, and he essentially takes the saint to task for failing to clarify the rules of inheritance at the time of his death. Khan writes:

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[240] Khan, Inayat Ali, *A Description of the Principal Kotla Afghans*, (Lahore; Civil And Military Gazette Press, 1882).

> The Seikh died at the mature age of seventy-one, leaving three sons—Hassan, Isa, and Musa, the former of whom was born of the first marriage and the two latter of the second. The death of Sadr-ud-deen gave rise to a series of dissensions amongst his sons regarding the succession to the patrimony, as may easily be understood from the character of the age, when the people were indifferent to a testamentary disposition of property, either by nature or through being over-occupied in religious matters or forays, an occupation of generally followed in and characteristic of the state of India under the Mahommedan rule even when it was at its highest pitch.

Inheritance rights would remain an issue in Malerkotla, plaguing the ruling family throughout its history and taking up the latter third of the *Description*. In establishing the ontogeny of irregular inheritance practices in his clan, Inayat builds his case that his brother's personal property should be made over to him after Ibrahim was named successor to the throne.

Overwhelmingly, the pre-Partition accounts of Israr Afghani and Inayat Ali Khan focus on the Shaikh's function as the founder of the state's dynasty who is therefore primarily responsible for the validity and continuity of the lineage. The primacy of these elements serves to bolster the authority of the Nawab's lineage and the integrity of the territory of the kingdom. Neither author is particularly concerned with Haider Shaikh's spiritual prowess or the reception of his charismatic power by the local community. Inayat Ali Khan negatively compares Haider Shaikh to his *murshid*, or spiritual preceptor. The comparison seems intended to highlight the fact that Haider Shaikh did not gather a following of initiates who could, after his death, carry on his spiritual teachings and provide a reliably supportive constituency to their royal benefactors. Khan writes,

> The Seikh bore a different character to his spiritual guide in one respect, that is, he did not exert himself during his lifetime in making a band of disciples; which system is a first-rate machine to establish the reputation of *sufees*. Moreover, these disciples, who eternally mutter their litanies and tell their beads, are under particular circumstances bound to pray for the stability of their co-religionist patron.[241]

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[241] Khan (1882), p. 6-7.

This rather curious account minimizes Haider Shaikh's reputation as a great spiritual master. Instead Inayat Ali Khan focuses on the failure of the saint to establish a Sufi center to provide social stability and support that might have strengthened generations of Malerkotla's rulers. How this would have materially benefited the clearly self-interested Inayat Ali Khan is unclear. In the absence of an active Sufi *khanqah*, it is clear from British writings contemporary to Khan that there was a significant multi-religious tomb cult in the late nineteenth century. These records indicate that the shrine was enormously popular. Sir Denzil Ibbetson remarks in his *Glossary of Punjab Castes* of 1883 (just one year after Khan's book was published) that Haider Shaikh's "fair, held on the first Thursday of every lunar month, is largely attended by Hindus and Muhammadans from the State as well as from distant places."[242] It seems likely that Khan's comment is more specifically referring to the lack of an ongoing *khanqah* or Sufi retreat where the practice of Sufism would be taught and transmitted to future generations. On this point, he would be correct, there is no active Sufi center at Haider Shaikh's *dargah*, though there are many Sufis in Malerkotla who identify closely with Haider Shaikh such as the *numbardar* and *murshid* cited above. Thus the pre-Partition materials on Haider Shaikh emphasize his role as a lineage founder and his establishment of the settlement of Malerkotla. Only the British seem to note or care about the multi-confessional nature of the shrine.

By contrast, the accounts written after Partition call attention to a different set of issues. In this section I will examine three narratives written after 1947 that highlight these issues. The first is a chapbook about Haider Shaikh, the second is a history of the ruling lineage written by the last Nawab, and the third is a hagiographical dictionary or *tazkira* written by a local Sufi

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[242] D. Ibbetson, E.D. MacLagan, and H.A. Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province,* (Lahore; Government Printing House, 1919 (1883)), p. 644.

teacher. In these accounts three aspects of Haider Shaikh's persona are emphasized. The first

aspect is the enormous piety and power of the saint. The second is the multi-religious appeal of

the saint. The third stresses the unique Muslim community of Malerkotla and its chosenness by

God. As with the pre-Partition texts, all three of the post-Partition accounts I will examine are

authored by Muslims, and as such they represent the range of dominant views of Haider Shaikh

and his role in Malerkotla's history. Nonetheless, each writer is situated differently in relation to

the saint, revealing various perspectives and agendas in recounting his tale. The first is by the

current *gaddī nishīn* of the *dargah*, Anwar Ahmad Khan. The second is the *History* by the last

Nawab Iftikhar Ali Khan that was written about fifty years previously but recently edited and

published in 2000. The third was written by a local *maulvi*, Sufi Mohammad Ismail. It is

significant that in terms of extended histories of Malerkotla and Haider Shaikh, the only

published writings available are by Muslim residents of Malerkotla.[243] Although Malerkotla

features in Sikh and British histories, the exclusive histories are all locally produced. This may

well reflect Malerkotla's situation as the only Muslim principality in East Punjab and as a small

territory totally dwarfed by its neighbors, Patiala, Nabha and Jind. Nonetheless, these three

accounts give three very different views of Haider Shaikh and, in combination with oral

narratives from residents and devotees, provide a well-rounded picture of the range of

perspectives in the saint and his shrine.

Anwar Ali Khan is the current *gaddī nishīn* or head of the *dargah* of Haider Shaikh. At

some shrines this role also entails a spiritual component, and the *gaddī nishīn* is a *murshid* or

spiritual guide to a number of *murīds* (disciples). Here the role is largely symbolic and

managerial. Khan no longer spends time at the *dargah* himself and in December of 2000 did not

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[243] One of the master's theses about Malerkotla in the Punjabi University library is by a Sikh woman, Satinder Kaur, "History of Malerkotla State." MA, Punjabi University, 1977.

attend the *'urs* of the Shaikh. Some time ago he wrote a small chapbook (undated) that was printed, but not widely distributed locally.[244] It is available in Hindi and Punjabi, but was likely originally written in Urdu.[245]

The chapbook includes the two most commonly known stories about Haider Shaikh– the story of the storm and the gift of the horse, both of which establish Haider Shaikh's privileged relationship with Bahlol Lodhi.[246] Yet the focus of the chapbook is much more on demonstrating Haider Shaikh's pious character and his miraculous powers and providing a guide to the proper etiquette for his followers. These followers are understood by Anwar Ali Khan to be Sikh and Hindu as well as Muslim, and the real index of their right to participate in the tomb cult is the purity of their hearts in approaching the Shaikh. Thus this chapbook incorporates all four functions of the saint's symbolic persona as the founder, protector, integrator, and exemplar for his communities of faith and territory. The etiquette that is laid out in the text is defined through descriptions of Haider Shaikh's temperament. Anwar Ali Khan portrays the Shaikh as easily angered. The very first paragraph of the text ends with the observation that the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs of the region come in *lakhs* [i.e. in the hundreds of thousands, *lakh* = 100,000] to Haider Shaikh's *mela* (festival) because "it is their belief that if Baba Haider Shaikh

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[244] I never received a clear response as to the date of publication, but it was likely printed some time in the early 1980's.

[245] This is especially apparent in Khan's vocabulary choices. For example, the common terms in Punjab for desires and wishes presented at a shrine are *mang* (from the Hindi, Punjabi *mangna* – to beg, demand, request) or *iccha* (Hindi - desire) or sometimes *kam* (Hindi, Punjabi – work). In this text the Arabic term *murad* (desire) is also employed. However, there is evidence of an effort to be intelligible to a wide audience in spite of greater facility in Urdu.[245] For example, 'to offer' is alternately signified by the terms *cadhana* (Hindi) and *pesh karna* (Persian derived Urdu).

[246] Another story included here is commonly told and widely known in town. In this tale, once while performing *wuzu* [ablutions before prayer], the Shaikh's shoe fell into the river. Although his disciples were alarmed, Haider Shaikh simply told the river to return the shoe, and the river shifted its course towards Ludhiana. Still today there is no river flowing through the town, but residents explain that the *dargāh* is located in a high place because in the time of the Shaikh there had been water there. Indeed British accounts also reference an ancient waterway that is still apparent because it is a flood zone in the monsoon. In this tale, Haider Shaikh's presence in the area has left an indelible impression on the natural environment of Malerkotla. There are also a few minor tales in the chapbook that I never heard performed orally.

became angry [*naraz ho gaye*], then they will fall into trouble."[247] Again in the following paragraph the crowds of devotional groups, called *chaunki*, are described as coming to *dargah* to pay respects and then taking leave, they return [*salam karke unke agya lekar vapas ate hain*]. They must observe the proper procedure, or else they will suffer serious consequences. "The belief is that unless they observe every prescribed rule, then Babaji will become angry at them [*un par naraz ho jayenge to unki murad bhar na hon ayenge*] so their desire will not be fulfilled."[248] This emphasis on Haider Shaikh as a *jalali* (terrifying and awe-inspiring) *pīr* is not found in any other texts, but it is a common belief among the visitors to the *dargah* and the *khalīfahs*.[249] Such displays of wrath, he asserts, are at root shamanistic, and are evidence of central Asian Indo-Buddhist culture with a thin veneer of Islamic learning overlaid.[250] One of the main *khalīfahs* (the son of the chapbook's author) also claims that Haider Shaikh's disposition tends to be angry with devotees who fail to observe the proper etiquette at his tomb. He said, "If somebody does not keep his dress properly, then Babaji gets annoyed. Otherwise he is a gentle [*naram*] natured *buzurg*. But if somebody makes a mistake, then he shows his power, he gets annoyed." The chapbook stresses these two themes, the connection with Bahlol Lodhi and the saint's miraculous powers. The first supports the saint's role as the founder while the second demonstrates Haider Shaikh's protective power for his devotees – if they behave properly. This

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[247] Khalīfah Anwar Ahmad Khan, *Hazrat Sadr Udin Sadare Jahan (Rehmat) Urf Baba Hazrat Sheikh Ji Malerkotla Di Puri Jivani* (Malerkotla: Jivan Glass House, n.d.).

[248] Ibid.

[249] This notion of *jalāli pīr* is contrasted with the *taÖ·a pīr*, or cool *pīr* who is not easily angered and less flamboyant in personality and habits. This is also evocative of a pattern Simon Digby claims derives from Central Asian shamanistic practices which carried over as Sufis and holy men migrated into South Asia. What transfers from the Central Asian context, according to Digby, is "an uncompromising arrogance despite professions of humility in the advancement of personal claims to spiritual eminence, and examples of the display of *jalal*, 'splendour' but in practice the 'wrath' which led to the discomfiture, misery and often death of those who presumed to oppose the Shaikh."See Simon Digby, "The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Mediaeval India," *Purusartha* 9 (1986).

[250] This pattern is also described by Richard Eaton in *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier: 1204-1760*, (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1993), pp. 71-72. "Migrating Turks also grouped themselves into Islamic mystical fraternitites typically organized around Sufi leaders who combined the characteristics of the 'heroic figure of old Turkic Saga,' the *alp*, and the pre-Islamic Turkish shaman- that is, a charismatic holy man believed to possess magical powers and to have intimate contact with the unseen world."

proper behavior is delineated through two narrative elements. The first is a description of the kind of disrespect that might incur such anger. The second is a list of proper behavior that is given as a sort of appendix. Through the body of the text it is made abundantly clear that these rules and the traditions of Haider Shaikh are not exclusive to Muslims the short index of rules, however include several recommendations specific to Muslims regarding prayer, but others can easily apply more generally.

Khan only briefly discusses the Shaikh's childhood, primarily to establish the saint's pious character. Several tropes typical of many hagiographies are repeated here. For example, before his birth his mother is said to have had a dream in which a wondrously strange light burned throughout the house and then flew away to another place. A wise man (*mahanpurush* – a highly Sanskritic term) interpreted the dream that a child would be born in whose name lamps would be lit in other countries. This of course came true.

Anwar Ahmad Khan gives several reasons for Haider Shaikh's coming to India. First, he asserts that the saint's fame had proliferated and so he was called by the residents who longed for his spiritual guidance. Another possibility Khan puts forward evokes the theory that Islam spread in South Asia primarily through state support of Sufis. Khan writes, "In those days with the foreign Muslim rulers came a great number of pious people of the new religion. They continued to come and they spread the religion of Islam."[251] As with the *numbardar* and the Muslim Baba's stories of Haider Shaikh given above, Sufi saints are the agents of the spread of Islam.[252] The warrior Sufis traveled and sometimes fought along with conquering armies. As these spiritually inclined Muslims settled in areas they were also the most readily available

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[251] Khan, *Hazrat Sadr Udin Sadare Jahan (Rehmat) urf Baba Hazrat Shekh Ji Malerkotla Di Puri Jivani.*
[252] This is the paradigm of Sufi penetration outlined by Richard Eaton in which he presents a progression of warrior Sufis into the frontier areas of Muslim authority to be followed by Sufi reformers, literati, and landed elites. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur* 1996 [1978], p. 36.

representatives of the central powers and received land grants and certain responsibilities for law, order, and governance as the local leaders were defeated or deposed. The local population was then drawn into the temporal and spiritual orbit of the Sufi leader and center as the new locus of power in a region. However, in the *gaddī nishīn's* account, there is noticeably little reference to conversions occurring due to Haider Shaikh's presence. Haider Shaikh is said to have come for *tablīgh karne* – to spread the faith – also known as *dawa"* or proselytizing. The fame of his piety quickly spread, drawing people like Bahlol Lodhi to him. However, there were no high profile or mass conversions reported such as are common in stories about other Sufis.[253]

The section of the chapbook headed "His teachings and advice," is fairly general, and does not reveal a particular sectarian affiliation or any very complex Sufi principles. No precedents for the practices enjoined are given, such as a Hadith of the Prophet, or a verse from the Qur'an. In most guides to Muslim living, such injunctions derive their authority and legitimacy from a laundry list of canonical references, without which the behavior or practice would be open to criticism as *bida#* (harmful innovation)[254]. Subjects such as silent or audible repetitive prayers or *zikr*, the permissibility of the musical audition called *sama#*, and other commonly addressed issues are not mentioned. There are several rules directed towards women, advocating their education and instruction in religious matters and enjoining their obedience to their husbands. These directives are mostly geared towards a Muslim audience as they refer to the importance of constant remembrance of Allah, the importance of the five pillars, and a reminder of the Prophet's injunction to seek knowledge.

Hazrat Shaikh's teachings and advice

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[253] Simon Digby, "The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Mediaeval India," *Purusartha* (Volume 9, 1986).
[254] See for example the Abu al-Najib Suhrawardī, *A Sufi Rule for Novices: Kitāb Adāb al-Muridīn*, translated and edited by Menahem Milson, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) or 'Umar ibn Muhammad Suhrawardī, *The 'Awarif ul-Ma'arif*, translated by H. Wilberforce Clark, (Lahore; Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1973).

1.   Remaining in the company of the people of God (*ahl-e allah*) is an excellent practice for improving the mind.

2.   With every breath remember God (*bhagvan*). No one knows when the breath will stop and only with constant repentance will you be able to remember God.

3.   At two times give total attention to yourself, while speaking and while eating.

4.   Let such prayers come constantly from your tongue such that you will not commit sins and thus your prayer will be accepted (*qabål*).

5.   For every Muslim it is a duty that they must seek knowledge: knowledge, faith, *namaz* (prayer, Arabic = *salat*), *rauza* (fasting), *hajj*, service of [one's] mother, father and neighbors, the knowledge of buying and selling, *haram* and *halal* [the forbidden and the permissible]. Without knowledge of these, humanity becomes corrupt.

6.   Advise your women that along with these duties there are five good qualities of character:
    1. Remain pious and chaste
    2. Be frugal
    3. Look to your husband with respect
    4. Obtaining your husband's permission will preserve you from discord.
    5. Proclaim the Lord's goodness with joy.

7.   Hazratji recommends that pious women be loving and affectionate like a mother and patient and subservient like a maidservant.

8.   You inquired what path should be followed in order to be accepted by the people. It is recommended that you're your generosity and justice you will be popular with the people and will arrive near to the Lord.

9.   Do not make friends with ignorant people. They will lead to your downfall.

10.   It was asked of Hazrat, who is an improving influence? He replied that there is only Hazrat Mohammad Mustafa (*salla allah #alayhi wa salam*) and who else could there be?

11.   In very single, tiny thing of this world the Lord's enormous generosity and the influence of his presence is found. Those who do not understand this are blind and deaf.

12.   He recommended that the dervishes and God-fearing people be given more attention even than one's own brother and that supporting the *#ulama"* is the duty of every Muslim.   I direct you to support the people of knowledge.

However, other than this brief section at the end of the text, the pamphlet is noticeably devoid of

Islamic phrasing and references. The saint's Muslim identity *is* a pervading theme, but the text

lacks even the standard invocations of mercy upon the saint. Such blessings are only once called

down even upon the Prophet. That Haider Shaikh came to the region at the behest of his

unnamed *pīr-o-murshid* to spread Islam is mentioned only in passing. These directives advocate

obedience and observance of the strictures of Islam, but the overwhelming emphasis is on the

necessity of keeping and *supporting* (presumably financially) the company of the people of God.

The text in general stresses the connection with Bahlol Lodhi and the saint's miraculous powers.

The overall impact of the work is a non-sectarian affirmation of the sanctity and greatness of

Haider Shaikh, the importance of appeasing the saint, and respecting and supporting those who

dedicate their life to God.

The second extensive account of Haider Shaikh comes in the last Nawab Iftikhar Ali

Khan's history of his own lineage, which is appropriately titled in its recent publication *History*

of the Ruling Family of Shaikh Sadruddin Sadar-i-Jahan of Malerkotla (1449 A.D. to 1948

A.D.). In this text a great deal more attention is given to the clans and heritage of Haider Shaikh,

including a lengthy discussion of the Sherwani and Lodhi clans, tracing them back to a twelfth-

century Afghani chief, Shaikh Hussain Ghori. The encounter with Bahlol Lodhi and Haider

Shaikh's subsequent marriage to the Sultan's daughter are recounted in great detail. The incident

with Bibi Mango's doomed marriage is also described at length as part of a larger explanation as

to why the descendents of Bahlol Lodhi's daughter are not rulers of the state. "Some historians

criticise him [Shaikh Sadruddin Sadri Jahan] for not recognizing the claim of his eldest son to the

gaddī of the State. They probably lose sight of the fact that he had lost the goodwill of his father

and incurred his displeasure by refusing to go to the help of his sister at Tohana."[255] This

emphasis on the Shaikh's ethics and principled manner of his rule sets a strong precedent for his

descendents and is repeatedly referenced throughout the text.[256] But Iftikhar Ali Khan also

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[255] Iftikhar Ali Khan, *History of the Ruling Family of Sheikh Sadruddin Sadar-i-Jahan of Malerkotla*, page 8.
[256] As noted above in relation to Inayat Ali Khan's history of the lineage, the issue of succession does become a
complicated issue for the ruling family at several points. Early on a practice of sharing the inheritance and dividing
up properties among the heirs of a deceased ruler led to the decentralization of authority and a reduction in

makes extensive comments on the piety of the saint and upon the continuing power of his tomb. He especially highlights what for him would be a central issue – the possibility of being both a worldly and spiritual leader.

Similar to the oral accounts given above, Iftikhar Ali Khan regards the Shaikh's decision to accept the daughter of a Sultan in marriage as requiring justification. After all, he was a *walī Allah* or friend of God, a renunciant holy man who had come to India to spread Islam and perform his own religious devotions. Marrying a princess would require a substantial change of lifestyle. Accepting the *jagīr* entailed responsibilities as a landlord, judicial, and military leader.[257] Often, examples of a saint shunning temporal authority are held up as evidence of moral superiority, especially by the Chishtīs.[258] Indeed the attitude of Sufi orders towards worldly power is one of the key points of difference between them. In this vein, some oral accounts assert that Haider Shaikh did not give up his *faqīrī* life of asceticism and austerity. Instead, Taj Murassa Begum, Lodhi's daughter, joined him in his spartan habits.

The Nawab's history, rather than denying that Haider Shaikh took up the lifestyle of a ruler, avers the possibility of being both a worldly and spiritual leader. After the marriage, the

revenues, problems in raising armies and funds, and internecine quarrelling. At one point Nawab Ghulam Hussain abdicated in favor of his brother Jamal Khan. Five sons of Jamal Khan held the *gaddī* serially due to lack of an heir or the young age of the heir. Another childless Nawab, Sikandar Ali Khan, adopted two nephews and this led to another property dispute. Eventually in 1810 after Malerkotla had become a British protectorate, the British government was petitioned to resolve the matter, and judged in favor of primogeniture in succession and set certain guidelines for the distribution of properties.

[257] On the nature of land settlements and the rulers and authorities in India, see: Rita Brara, "Marriage and Kinship" (PhD, Delhi University, 1989), Robert Frykenberg, ed., *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), Iqtidar Husain Siddiqi, "Rise of the Afghan Nobility under the Lodi Sultans (1451-1526)," *Medieval Indian Quarterly* IV (1961), Iqtidar Husain Siddiqi, "Wajh'-i-Ma`ash Grants under the Afghan Kings (1451-1555)," in *Medieval India: A Miscellany* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1972).

[258] This is exemplified by the famous story in which the great Chishti Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya was said to have several times refused to call upon the seven rulers at Delhi who tried to contact him and draw him into their affairs. Indeed, he is reported to have said that his *khanqah* having two doors, if the ruler comes in one, he would leave through the other. The Suhrawardiyya lineage, on the other hand, was much more inclined towards the worldly and did not repudiate those in authority. From the origins of the lineage in Baghdad to its arrival in India, the Suhrawardiyya often brought censure on them for maintaining palaces and lifestyles that rivaled or exceeded the rulers. Digby, "The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Mediaeval India."

"hut life was renounced and in consonance with his dignity and position proper buildings were erected."[259] But this adoption of a kingly standard of living ultimately in no way compromises his saintliness:

> The career of this remarkable man serves to remind us of the old adage 'that it is possible to be engaged in worldly pursuits and yet remain Godly.' It was his piety that gave him a distinguished position even after his death. He was buried in Malerkotla and his grave promptly became a shrine to the glory of the sophisticate. But although the Eastern mind is by nature inclined to be impressed by supernatural manifestations and raises many happenings to the pedestal of miracles, yet the faith of the people to regard Sadar-i-Jahan's tomb as holding curative properties was in a way justified. That certain cures have been affected is not a wild story. Even in the light of new experience of spiritual thinkers a certain section admits that spirits have decidedly an influence on the human mind.[260]

Here Haider Shaikh is no hut-dwelling *faqīr*, but a 'sophisticate' whose source of spiritual power was his piety, not his austerity. The Nawab goes on to describe the tomb as a center for healing. He asserts that claims of miracles are not merely the inventions of the impressionable 'Eastern mind' but are documentable and potentially scientifically verifiable. Iftikhar Ali Khan strikes an interesting balance between emphasizing the regal nature of Haider Shaikh and his saintly power, his integrative force and his enormous piety.

The author of the third text, Sufi Mohammad Ismail, takes a somewhat different approach. It is a modern *tazkīra* (biographical index) of Punjab's saints called *Bagh al-anbiya″ punjab* (The Garden of the Saints of Punjab). The author is a local maulvi in Malerkotla whose primary devotion is to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, which is reflected in the considerable space devoted in the text to Sirhindi.[261] This book, in the standard format of *tazkīra* literature, gives

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[259] Khan, 2000, p. 6
[260] Ibid, p. 8.
[261] Sufi Ismail has written several books on Islamic and Sufi subjects, focusing on death, preparation for death and the life to come, and collections of prayers. Ismail is a sober man, and rather intimidating. I met with him, but he was terse and unforthcoming and the interview quickly ended. Sufi Muhammad Ismail, *Bagh Anbiya Punjab*, (Malerkotla; Janab Doctor Muhammad Nizamuddin Sahib, 1995); *Kabr Ki Pahali Rat*, (Malerkotla; Kutub Khana

brief biographical details on thirty-two saints of Punjab and Haryana, including West Punjab, now in Pakistan.[262] This text bears resemblance to standard South Asian *tazkīra* texts, such as the *Akhbar al-akhyar* (Tales of the Great Ones) of Shaikh #Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawi (d. 1642) and the *Siyar al-#Arifīn* of Shaikh Jamali (d. 1536), in terms of structure, language and thematic choices. The entry on Haider Shaikh opens with the saint's parentage and his taking of *bay#a* (Sufi initiation) from Shaikh Baha'ul Haq Zakariyya at Multan. As previously mentioned, the dates make this meeting impossible, as Haider Shaikh died in 1515 and Baha-ud Din Zakariyya in 1262. Still, it is not uncommon to draw links to a more famous *pīr* for the purpose of increasing the prestige of another. The discussion, though brief, of the Shaikh's time in Multan contrasts sharply with the account of Anwar Ahmad Khan (the *gaddī nishīn*) who did not name Haider Shaikh's *murshid*, nor describe his training in his chapbook. Another remarkable difference between the accounts is that, unlike the *gaddī nishīn*, Sufi Ismail does not emphasize miracles or Haider Shaikh's encounter with Bahlol Lodhi. The meeting with the Sultan is given as evidence of the ruler's piety and interest in seeking out and supporting men of religion. His description of Bahlol Lodhi contrasts sharply with that of Inayat Ali Khan who berates him for his superstitiousness. Sufi Ismail, on the other hand, highlights Lodhi's piety: "Sultan Bahlol Shah Lodhi had a very pious heart, he greatly respected the *#auliya" allah* (friends of God) the saints (*buzurganedin*), the noble men of learning (*#ulama"*), and pious people and he was constantly desirous [*arzomand*] of their prayers."[263] This account of Bahlol Lodhi leads to a brief rundown of the Lodhi dynasty and their ultimate defeat by the first Mughal Emperor Babur.

Ibrahimiya, 1996); *Kabr Kya Kahti Hai*, (Malerkotla; Maktaba Rahimiyan, 1971); and *Na'atun Ka Bagh*, (Malerkotla; Kutub Khana Ibrahimiya, 1965).

[262] On Sufi *tazkira* see Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, (New York; Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) and Marcia Hermanson, "Religious Literature and the Inscription of Identity: The Sufi Tazkira Tradition in Muslim South Asia." *The Muslim World* 87, no. 3-4 (1997).

[263] Ismail, 1995, p.167.

The mention of Babur opens the way for Sufi Ismail to mention Mir Baqi's building the mosque in Ayodhya in his master's name.[264] In his discussion of the Shaikh, Sufi Ismail focuses on his mission to spread Islam, and his success in doing so in the region. He writes, "at that time Maler was a Hindu Rajput settlement. Settling in this place, he spread the religion of Islam and called people in the way of the path of righteousness."[265]

Haider Shaikh's character as a perfected saint (*walī kamil*) is repeatedly mentioned and it is this incredible piety and closeness to Allah that brings him to the attention of Bahlol Lodhi. The account of Haider Shaikh's prayer for Bahlol Lodhi's victory in battle is keyed in a markedly different way from that of the *gaddī nishīn*. "And he implored [*darkhwast*] a prayer for his victory in battle. He [Hazrat Shaikh] gave the request that he be victorious, issued a prayer that was accepted by Allah most High was granted and the Badshah was successful [*kamiyan*]. From this the Badshah believed from his heart."[266] Rather than depicting the Sultan's victory as coming from Haider Shaikh himself, the entire event is interpreted as the particular will of Allah. Haider Shaikh's prayer was merely acceptable to Allah, and it was Allah alone who fulfilled the goal. It is not that Sufi Ismail is disavowing the possibility of miracles. On the contrary, Haider Shaikh, among other saints, is described as a miracle worker – *kashf o karamat* – and victory giving holy man – *buland paye buzurg*. But the supremacy and omnipotence of Allah is constantly reaffirmed. This contrasts notably with the *gaddī nishīn*'s own account of Haider Shaikh in which Allah is mentioned rarely and no *ayat* of the Qur'an, not a single Hadith or even the simplest *du'a* (prayer) is given as means of relating Haider Shaikh's tradition to orthodox Islam. For the *gaddī nishīn*, Haider Shaikh is a saint of action, *jalali*

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[264] Ismail goes no further with this commentary, but the mention of it, so completely out of context cannot be accidental. It is certainly consistent with his overall emphasis on the spread of Islam.
[265] Ismail, p. 166.
[266] Ismail, p. 167

(awesome) and full of *karamat* (miracles). The Shaikh's relationship with the Sultan is personal and intimate, and his blood descendents likewise possess all the power and charisma of this royal connection. Sufi Ismail, like the pre-Partition authors, makes no mention of the multi-religious appeal of the tomb cult.

For Sufi Ismail, the saint's real importance is as a foundational figure who brought Islam to the region. While going into some detail regarding Haider Shaikh and the history of the Lodhis, the bulk of the section on Haider Shaikh focuses on the subsequent rulers up until the present day and their role in spreading and supporting Islam in the area. Although Haider Shaikh is an important saint and is credited with establishing Islam in Malerkotla, the narrative really takes off at the time of Partition. Sufi Ismail goes into great detail about Malerkotla's unique status as an island of peace and an island of Islam during the chaos of 1947. This account will be discussed in greater detail in the next section, but it is relevant to the present discussion that Sufi Ismail primarily attributes the special status of Malerkotla to God's will rather than to Haider Shaikh or any other cause.

All three authors are Muslim, but Islam itself is central only in Sufi Ismail's *Bagh Anbiya' Punjab*. The Hindi-Punjabi chapbook and the English *History* are written for much wider audiences, whereas the Urdu *tazkira* would appeal almost exclusively to a Muslim readership. Their different audiences, agendas, and identities require each author to establish their authority in different ways. The *gaddī nishīn* evokes Haider Shaikh's miracles and lineage to produce a popular hagiography meant to be accessible to non-Muslims and Muslims alike. The Nawab cites historical works such as the *Ain-i Akbari* and Lepel Griffin's *Chiefs of Punjab*, crafting a narrative modeled on standard European history writing, but incorporating elements of hagiographical writing as he reports the saint's miraculous powers both past and present. Sufi

Ismail operates within the world of Islamic hagiographical writings. Drawing on Qur'anic formulae and passages, frequently invoking God and calling for his blessings, Sufi Ismail's test is written for a Muslim audience, even a specifically Malerkotla Muslim audience. Both Iftikhar Ali Khan and Sufi Ismail dwell very specifically the nature of Malerkotla society and its special role in Punjab history. For Iftikhar Ali Khan Malerkotla is a pluralistic utopia. For Sufi Ismail, Malerkotla is divinely ordained to preserve and spread Islam.

Conclusion

These narratives about Haider Shaikh and others about Malerkotla more generally demonstrate the role the saint plays in giving shape to Malerkotla's primary symbolic identity as a zone of peace takes shape in the public imagination. In this chapter we have seen how oral and written narratives about Haider Shaikh create space for all the local religious communities to identify with him and his tradition. These narratives establish the four functions of Haider Shaikh's persona as a founder, protector, integrator, and exemplar. This generates a powerful resource in the forging of a local identity grounded in an ecumenical ethos. The narratives from the *khalīfah* family emphasize the aspects of Haider Shaikh's history that maximize his stature in relation to Bahlol Lodhi, as a worker of miracles, and as a former military man. These stories are keyed to emphasize the superiority of spiritual over worldly power, but do not undermine the significance of Haider Shaikh's being both a powerful chieftain and a holy man. By contrast the *mistri*'s tale gives a slightly different twist to the same dynamic. Although he also expresses the supremacy of spiritual authority, he goes much further to undermine the power of the worldly ruler in his account, depicting him as arrogant and stubborn. The *mistri* also embedded his narrative about Haider Shaikh's coming to the region into a broader context that encompassed relations between the local Muslim rulers and the non-Muslim population. This narrative

strategy maximized the links between the past and the present, exalting the saint for his spiritual

prowess, praising the Nawab for his ecumenical attitude in visiting the Jain *muni*, and

challenging the character of the Sultan and by extension the institution of Muslim rule.

Another important feature in these narratives that comes to the fore is the shift in

emphasis in the written accounts before and after Partition. Prior to 1947 only the British

account of Haider Shaikh makes mention of his ongoing inter-religious appeal. Both Inayat Ali

Khan and Israr Afghani focus on the ruling lineage. The post-Partition narratives of the *gaddī*

nishīn and the last Nawab both highlight this quality, although for slightly different reasons. The

gaddī nishīn obviously has some stake in maximizing the ecumenical nature of the shrine. The

Nawab, on the other hand, is attempting to extend the present success of Malerkotla in managing

inter-religious strife into the past. By contrast, Sufi Ismail's 1993 *Bagh Anbiya' Punjab* credits

the saint primarily with bringing Islam to the region, making no mention of other religious

groups.

This range of narratives about Haider Shaikh demonstrates the malleability of his

tradition. The saint's character gives shape to the stories of the communities connected to the

shrine, generating a multivocalic space in which differing religions locate themselves in relation

to the saint. Haider Shaikh is a key symbol serving to establish the town and tomb cult, protect

them, integrate their constituent populations, and model proper piety which often includes inter-

religious tolerance. Through strategic uses of the framing narratives about the saint – the

meeting with Bahlol Lodhi, his miracles, his warrior past, etc. – residents and devotees craft

stories that create connections to the saint, express their interests and concerns about the tensions

between worldly and spiritual life, and establish a precedent for non-sectarian ethic of harmony.

Situated in a context of highly politicized religious identities, all of these groups engage the

tradition of the saint, including those who do not themselves advocate pilgrimage. Each finds a way to relate to Haider Shaikh and to give their particular shape to his story and form to their own identities.