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Social Welfare Functions of the Shrine of Bari Imam

How the Shrine Nationalization Policy Backfired

M. Azam Chaudhary

Introduction

This article will discuss the state occupation of shrines in Pakistan, the special focus being its impact upon the pilgrims in the light of the saints' religious thought. The shrine of Bari Imam has been selected as a case study. In a nutshell, my argument views the changes at the shrine after state control as working against Bari Imam's original thoughts and as adversely affecting his "clients," especially those who belong to minority and marginal groups. I further argue that in fact, if not in pronouncement, the very concept of nationalization (constructing mosques, building schools, libraries, or research centers at the shrine compounds) had targeted the educated urban middle class population and not the poor, the illiterate rural people and particularly not those belonging to the marginal and minority groups (prostitutes, transvestites, *malangs* etc., or even women in general). These poorest of the poor had been the "real" clients of many shrines, such as those of Bulleh Shah, Shah Hussain, Lal Shahbaz, and of course the shrine of Bari Imam, all of which were taken into state custody. I would like to go a step further and argue that the way "formal Islam" is propagated and interpreted by the state and reflected in its shrine reforms leaves little space and relevance for the above mentioned marginal groups. In many

cases even their professions (prostitution, singing/dancing of transvestites, mendicants, etc.) were simply incompatible with the formal religion. Saints and their shrines, such as that of Bari Imam, have offered them a space to survive in the fold of Islam.

Instead of engaging in controversial local debates on whether a Sufi at the shrine can give children to the childless or heal ill persons, this article will altogether leave out the issue of superstition and focus on the identity of the visitors to the shrine (their backgrounds, status, and position in the society) and on their motives. Why did they prefer the saint to a doctor or a lawyer? The central issue, however, will be the identity of the saints and their philosophy. In what follows I argue that shrines like that of Bari Imam should be evaluated in the light of their philanthropic contributions rather than being only examined in the terms of the theological discipline.

The Background of Shrine Reforms

Shrines are places in Pakistan where generally poor, weak, helpless, and ill people seek comfort, just as women in general find a legitimate space for the resolution of their multifarious problems in the vicinity of saints. Many of these problems relate to health and may range from very simple headache, infertility, the so-called women's diseases, and spirit (*jin*) possession to chronic cancer. Visitors may also need support in court cases against powerful opponents, success in marriage negotiations, or school and college examinations, or yearn for better crops, the release from jail, etc.[1] Some shrines even become places specialized in the resolution of one particular problem, such as spirit possession, infertility, or success in examinations. Similarly, saints[2] are very often identified as saints of a particular ethnic group, especially in the rural areas.[3] Likewise many saints, such as Bari Imam, are mainly venerated by minority and marginal groups like *malang* (religious mendicants), prostitutes, *hijre* (transvestites), and fortunetellers (Buddenberg 1993; Chaudhary 2011).

The Pakistani intelligentsia including the *ulema* with special reference to the Deoband and Ahle-Hadith denominations, criticize the practices at Sufi shrines and refute claims that shrine can give children to the childless, heal diseases, or resolve other problems. Such convictions of pilgrims are denounced as superstitions and as moral corruption. Different efforts had been made to eliminate such conventional practices from the shrines. Compared to Turkey, where Ataturk banned them to advance the cause of secularism, and Saudi Arabia, where shrines were destroyed to return to a more fundamentalist interpretation of Islam (Ewing 1990: 175), Pakistan adopted a different strategy. President M. Ayub Khan (1958–1969) introduced the West Pakistan Waqf Properties Ordinance in 1959 and created the Ministry of Awqaf. The original idea came from none other than Javid Iqbal, the son of Allama M. Iqbal, the founder of the idea of Pakistan. The son tried to translate the ideas of his father into concrete policy measures (Ewing 1990: 176). He wrote that:

> Awqaf should take into its possession … all the Monasteries (*Khanqhs*, etc.) or tombs of the Saints in Pakistan … There is no denying the fact that the mystical orders produced Saints of a very high quality in the world of Islam. … But now … They have been transformed into centers of moral and religious corruption (Iqbal 1959: 57).

As a consequence, big shrines, especially those not managed by direct descendents of the saint, were taken into the state control. The aim was to turn them into centers of social welfare by building hospitals and schools for poor and rural people. Research centers, libraries, and mosques were set up or planned for several major shrines. The goal was, to encourage a "scholarly" rather than what was regarded as a "superstitious" approach to shrines and Sufism (Ewing 1990: 179 f.). Ewing evaluated the impact of state control of shrines during the regimes of Ayub Khan (1958–1969), Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971–1977), and Zia-ul-Haq (1977–1988) and argued that the traditional cosmology which was congruent with the traditional social, political, and economic structure was replaced by a new worldview that was congruent with the social and political goals of the different governments. She was further of the opinion that despite differences in the policies and goals of Ayub, Bhutto, and Zia, the three regimes administered the shrines in similar ways (Ewing 1990: 176, 186).

Urs Celebration at Bari Imam: Some Observations

The data for this article were mainly collected during the *urs* celebrations of the years 2003–2006. These were the years of General Pervez Mushar-

1 Ewing (1984: 106); Moore (1993: 522); Eaton (1984); Pfeffer (2010).

2 The words saint and shrine are used interchangeable in this article as was also done and explained by Eaton (1982: 46) in the case of Bābā Farīd's shrine: "Indeed, many *murīds* referred to the saint and his shrine in the same terms, sometimes defining themselves as *murīds* of Bābā Farīd, and sometimes referring to themselves as *murīds* of the *gaddī*, or shrine … The shrine *was* Bābā Farīd."

3 Ewing (1990: 170); Gilmartin (1984); and Eaton (1984).

raf's rule (1998–2008) who due to the war against Al-Qaida/Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan had adopted a policy he called "enlightened moderation"[4] in opposition to the religious "extremism" or "fundamentalism." As a result of this policy the *urs* celebrations during Musharraf's years were to some extent resumptions of the pre-Awqaf, more particularly pre-Zia-ul-Haq practices, and, as a result of these new policies, some of the people belonging to the marginal groups came back to perform their traditional roles. The latest situation is that since 2009 no *urs* could be held at all mainly due to the terrorist attacks upon shrines but also because of construction activities at the shrine which in my views fit in very well with state's control policy. The word *urs* is used for marriage and in connection with the shrine it is used for the death anniversary of the saint buried in it. Frembgen (1998: 140) explains it as follows: "For the *wali* (friend of God) physical death marks the entry into the 'real' life embodied in the mystical union (*maqam al-wisal*) with Allah, a moment of unification which is ritually celebrated as a 'holy marriage', an '*urs*' with God."

The *urs* of Bari Imam is celebrated in the month of May. Though people from all walks of life participate, the dominant majority of them are poor, helpless, and those belonging to the marginal groups – *khusre* (eunuchs), *malang* (mendicant), dancers, prostitutes, fortune tellers, and traditional healers. Women of the lower classes also like to attend. I also met a very strange family of Sayyed on the occasion. The members named one another by using the terms for sexual organs like Laure Shah (phallus shah), Kusee Shah (vagina shah), and the like. The persons themselves refused to explain why they had chosen such names. All these groups participate in the *urs* in their own very special ways befitting their occupation and identity. For instance, the *khusre* bring *mehndi*,[5] that is what they also do in their day-to-day life. They participate in *mehndi* rituals at marriages of people and earn money by singing and dancing. During *urs* prostitutes would sing and dance for the saint, just as they would attend to their ordinary calling. *Malangs* would drink cannabis (*bhang*), smoke hashish, and shout Bari, Bari in the loudest possible way.

Most pilgrims come to the shrine in the formation of *dalli*, i.e., a group of people carrying a miniature of the shrine of Bari Imam or the shrine of the saint they revere. These miniature shrines are decorated elaborately and carried on shoulders, almost like the kind of palanquin used in the past for carrying brides. These *dalli* groups are named after the area they come from or the saint they follow. After reaching their destination, they pitch their tents in the compound of the shrine. People accompanying the *dalli* sing, dance on beat drums, shout slogans to hail Bari, collect, and carry gifts like beautifully decorated shrine covers. As soon as the groups arrive they pay homage to the shrine. The places where the *dalli* settle down are called *dera* (generally men's sitting place, here these are tents to stay in). Some *dalli* bring their own food, including animals for slaughter, as well as their own music.

The most important of all is the *dalli* from Peshawar, the arrival of which marks the beginning of the *urs*. Peshawar is at a distance of about 190 km, which the participants cover on foot, most of them even barefooted. It is noteworthy that May is a very hot month in Pakistan, when the temperature exceeds 40 degrees Celsius but "much hotter are the spirits of the believers of Bari than the sun on those days" wrote one of the daily newspapers (Amanullah 2004: 27). The *dalli* is accompanied by the drummers and dancers carrying out *dhamals* (the so-called dervish dance). The participants of Peshawar *dalli* claim that their ancestors were instructed by the saint to carry gifts like *halwa* (sweats), *mehndi*, and *gharoli* (clay pot) to the *urs*.[6] Starting as a relatively small group, it grows after every town on the way and multiplies many times before reaching the shrine. The *urs* begins with the arrival of this procession from Peshawar by opening the doors of the shrine with the keys from the Awqaf official and placing *mehndi*, *halwa*, and *gharoli* inside the shrine to be taken out after five days as a mark the end of the *urs*.

The *urs* celebrations at the shrine are comparable to a marriage ceremony of an important family. The entire settlement of Nurpur Shahan is decorated like a bride. There is a lot of fun fair, swings, music, dance, just as a variety of food is offered.

4 The concept of "Enlightened Moderation" was somehow equated to Sufism especially of the Bari Imam's Order.

5 *Mehndi*, also known as *henna*, is a plant used locally for coloring the hair and parts of the body, like the hands. This is especially done on the occasion of marriage. Friends and family members of the bride and groom would come in groups singing and dancing, following drum beats to bring *henna* paste prepared for this purpose and applied to the hands and feet of the bride or groom. The death of the saint is celebrated like a marriage (details later), therefore, groups of people coming to the shrine on the occasion of the *urs* bring *mehndi*.

6 There are several versions of the story related to the Peshawar *dalli*. One of them is reported by Frembgen (1998: 142): "Chan Agha Badshah [a saint] … from Peshawar who once insulted Barri Imam, not recognising his saintliness. The moment he realised his mistake, Chan Agha's regret was such that he made a vow to journey every year by foot to the saint's *dargah*." For another version see Buddenberg (1993).

Everybody will find something to eat, enjoy, and celebrate. The festivities continue for twenty-four hours on five days, with the nights attracting bigger crowds than the days partly due to the extreme heat of the summer.

A Sketch of *urs* Participants

I interviewed a number of *urs* participants individually or in groups. Here I would like to offer a sketch of some *khusre*, Kanjar, *malang*, and female visitors. Almost all of the participants belonged to the very poor section of Pakistani society. Compared to earlier years less women participated in the *urs*. Skina at the age of more than sixty years was quite prominent among them. My eyes immediately caught her performing *dhamal* (dervish dance) in the middle of an all-male group. Every year she was a regular visitor for all the five days. On enquiry, she explained that as she did not get children after her marriage she was going for help everywhere but to no avail. Finally, somebody told her about Bari Imam. She pledged to come to the *urs* barefooted every year and participate in *dhamal*, if she would be blessed with children. Very shortly after her pledge she became pregnant and in all gave birth to four children. We also met another woman who brought along her destitute son. She had pledged to sacrifice a goat and come to the shrine every year at *urs* if her son became healthy once again. A number of other women told us about similar woes. Some of them showed us the padlocks they had hung to mesh around the shrine of one of saint's *khalifa* (deputy). These locks were to open automatically, if their desires were fulfilled, as they claimed.

We also met thirty-five-year-old Mustafa, son of a small farmer, who related to have been seriously ill as a small boy of five years, when his father carried him to the shrine and pledging to attend the *urs* every year. The boy recovered and since the last thirty years has fulfilled the pledge. I also interviewed Hakim Rashid, a traditional healer, who mentioned that he had been freed from jail by Bari Imam's intervention, earlier having been interned in a fake murder case. He had no money, he said, for paying a lawyer but he prayed to Bari for support. This freed victim had been coming to the *urs* for the last forty years. The list of interviewees like fortune-tellers, *khusre*, *malang*, Kanjur, food stall holders, entertainers, and musicians is very long. In the following I would like to describe some of them.

Khusre

Khusre, or transsexual people, are one prominent group of visitors affiliated to the shrine of Bari Imam. Almost all of them belong to families of low socioeconomic standing. They were generally forced to say good-bye to their natal families as soon as their identities become evident. Some *khusre* visit their families occasionally, usually at night and by disguising themselves, since their relatives fear losing all respect in the neighborhood and kin groups due to the unspecific sex and the "impure" occupation of these misfits. The latter commonly live from the money earned by singing, dancing, and making music at the time of marriage, childbirth (especially of sons), or other happy ceremonial occasions. Some *khusre* also sell sexual favors.

Khusre had a special relationship to the shrine of Bari Imam. During the *urs* days, in the processions they carry the saint's *mehndi* (henna paste) to his shrine, filling big plates decorated with colorful papers and lights. There is a lot of singing, dancing, and merry-making. They sing songs like "*dekho dekho* Bari Imam *di sawari aa gai* …" (behold Bari Imam is come riding …). They told me that a storm during *urs* every year was a sign of Bari Imam's participation since it was primarily the celebration of the *khusre*.

Their performance at the shrine is comparable to their performance at "worldly" marriage ceremonies. The *khusre* claim that the role was assigned to them by the saint during his lifetime and ever since they celebrate this ceremony they have a room reserved for them, where non-*khusre* are not allowed to enter. By performing their traditional role at the shrine, the *khusre* have apparently made it a part of their practical religion. Bari Imam has assigned them this role, thereby sanctioning it for them in spite of its general social discrimination. Bari Imam as a *wali* (a friend or even a bride) of God, they believe, would help them in obtaining forgiveness before God.

Singers, Dancers, Prostitutes

The attachment of this group to the shrine of Bari also seems to be very old, as it was noted in a British colonial Gazetteer: "About 20,000 persons attend the fair annually, a large number of natch girls always attending" (The Punjab Government 1895: 80). There is an ethnic group called Kanjur that has been involved in prostitution in this part of the world for centuries. Saeed (2002: 6) writes:

The *Kanjar* are a large, clan-like occupational "caste". … most women working as traditional prostitutes in places like Shahi Mohalla have been born into it. From birth they have been socialized to be prostitutes. It is not that they were immoral young women who wanted to do this work.

The connection between prostitution and the performing arts is as old as these professions. Another ethnic group, that does not work directly in prostitution but provides music for the Kanjar when they entertain their customers, is called Mirasi. Members of both these two groups inherit their professions by birth without much choice of a change. Besides Kanjar and Mirasi, other helpless women and very young girls are forced into prostitution as was also noted by the Commission of Inquiry for Women in 1997: "Enforced prostitution of girls from lower-income backgrounds has always been in existence, with very few being able to escape from the net even if they wish to do so" (cited in Rehman 2002: xii). I do not need to elaborate here that the society at large openly displays a dislike for prostitutes irrespective of individual responsibilities which hardly rest with these women.

In the following, the view is presented that the shrine of Bari Imam offers a place in the fold of Islam to people like the *khusre*. In a somewhat exotic personal experience during the *urs* I participated in a *mujra*, a female singing and dancing performance, during the night of May 24, 2005. In the midst of people a *pir* (saint) had arrived together with some notables of the city and taken his seat on a relatively simple stage. He was sporting long hair, a fully-grown beard, and big moustaches, while rings decorated almost all his fingers and a number of *tasbees* (prayer beads) his neck. A small group of musicians had also arrived along with two dancing girls. All the members of the group, particularly the women, bowed down to touch and kiss hands and feet of the *pir* sitting on a carpet leaning against a cushion. The performers were a Kanjar family of prostitutes from Lahore and *mureeds* (followers) of the saint. The group prepared their few rather simple instruments, i.e., a drum, loudspeakers, and a harmonium, and when the instruments had been tested for the performance, an occurrence startled me. After a man had recited some verses from the Holy Quran, the two girls wearing *gungrus* (ankle bells) touched the feet of the *pir* once more to commence with singing and dancing. The songs were taken from rather ordinary Indian and Pakistani films and the dance, too, was in no way exceptional.

This *mujra* performance took place at the shrine of one of the proclaimed *khalifas* (close followers) of the saint located at a mound to the southwest about 150 meters away from the main shrine. During the *urs* days this mound was mainly occupied by groups of singers, dancers, prostitutes, and male homosexuals having pitched their tents in that zone, as well as their respective customers. In the immediate vicinity of this shrine, some people, apparently intoxicated by drugs, were performing *dhamal* to the beat of drums. Some of them would fall down on the ground and after a while recover to start dancing again. *Bhang* (cannabis) was available in large amounts, being openly prepared and sold very cheaply or even offered free of cost.

The Kanjar, on being questioned why they prostrated themselves in front of the *pir* or the shrine of Bari Imam, answered: "We do not know much about religion we only know that Bari Imam is everything for us and that he will help us." The answer of the saint present at the *mujra* was slightly more complex. On being asked, why the presentation had started with a recitation from the Holy Quran, he posed the counter question of whether this had been a problem for me. Did not all presentations start with such a recitation – did we at the university not proceed in this manner? Our dialogue continued. When I mentioned singing and dancing, he enquired about the content, when I referred to the vulgar low standard of love songs from film, he considered this to be a question of perspective, since for him they were praising God by praising his creatures.

Malang

Malang (religious mendicants) are the other prominent group of participants in the *urs* of Bari Imam. Several well-known classes of *malang* may be distinguished by their very bright clothes of different colors, their rings on ears and fingers, their big necklaces, or their richly decorated clubs and begging bowls. They, too, drink *bhang* on the occasion and at other times. Being usually from the poor sections of society, many reported that because of their lifestyle their families had thrown them out. A *malang* with mutilated arms related that he had been adopted by his group after having lost his arms in a factory accident and on being left alone by everybody else. Another informant claimed to have inherited the dedication to this kind of existence from his father. For most Pakistanis *malang* are dirty, illiterate, and even irreligious, drug addicts, to say the least, and at best social outcastes or exotic folk living on the margins of the society.

We can say that *malang* follow Islam according to their own lifestyle. Those at the shrine of Bari Imam regard themselves as the servants of Bari

(*sarkar de naukar*). They claim to get orders (*hokum*) from him in their dreams. Such a notion of experience through dreams is a general claim of all *malang*. They themselves were perfectly convinced that *bhang* (cannabis) and *dhamal* (dance) are the source of communication with their *murshid* (spiritual guide). Alcohol, on the contrary, is forbidden, disgusting, and bad.[7] When a *malang* takes excessive amount of hashish and *bhang* he tends to fall into trance and start dancing. Sometimes, he continues to do so until falls down to the ground in utmost exhaustion.

For an outsider, the *malang* almost seem to worship Bari Imam. This was most clearly demonstrated as one group approached the shrine. Members touched the ground with their foreheads, which according to the orthodox Muslim belief is permissible only in regard for God and conducted in the five regular daily prayers in the mosque. Thus, in conclusion the *khusre*, *malangs*, and Kanjar, forming marginal groups of the Punjabi society, utilize their freedom to practice Islam in their own way at the shrine of Bari Imam.

Why Did this Shrine Attract these Particular Pilgrims?

Before giving an answer, I would like to ask another question: What was the common denominator of a woman who did not conceive, a man who was ill, or the members of the despised marginal groups of *malang*, *khusre*, and Kanjar? All of them were very poor, weak, and markedly excluded from society. The term "outcaste" would not be too strong. The woman who did not conceive feared divorce, which endangered her social existence. Alternatively, she might be forced to live with a younger co-wife. In Pakistan, women without children, irrespective of the physical causes of infertility, are held responsible for not conceiving. For a woman, her primary cause of existence is seen in her giving birth to children, especially male children. Those unable to fulfill this responsibility face the above-mentioned sanctions without fail.

The poor man who could not afford the fee of a doctor or the price of medicine, the innocent accused unable to pay for the aid of a lawyer, the prostitute who was born in a Kanjar family, and the person who was born a transvestite or a transsexual *khusra*, all of these shared the fact that they had no option to improve their outcaste position in the given society. With means, the ill persons would consult a doctor and buy medicine, if acknowledged by his family, a *khusra* would live at home in ordinary circumstances. All of the pilgrims described above had to suffer for faults not of their own making. The saint, as Pfeffer (2010: 1) noted: "does not reject an elderly woman or a child of twelve years. Those who are injured and insulted, ruined and rejected will be accepted by the saint." The saint may not give them sons or cure a disease, but he gives them food, a sense of belonging, a solace for salvation in the life hereafter, and a feeling of being able to act rather than just suffer passively. During his lifetime, the saint, and later his shrine, had been a source of compassion and social welfare by providing shelter, food, and religious space, somehow comparable to what the modern welfare state is expected to provide for the citizens. By removing these regular devotees from such shrines without any alternative arrangements, the modern state not just ignores the own primary welfare obligations towards the citizens but, on top of such a failure, excludes those rather harmless compensations that had been available to the destitute in past centuries.

The Identity of Bari Imam: The Saint and His Shrine

Bari Imam's family was Qazmi Syeds hailing from Bagdad like Sheikh Abdul-Qadir Gilani the founder of Qadiria School. Besides inheriting the Qadiri *silsila* he also seems to have confessed to Qalandari order. According to his hagiographers, Bari Imam left the normal life and started wandering in forests and remote areas and finally reached the place where his grave is found. This place, according to his hagiographers, "was the abode of thieves and robbers called *Chor* in Urdu therefore known as *Chorpur*" (Naqshbandi 2004: 50) In my view, *Chorpur* should not necessarily be taken in literal sense as place of thieves but perhaps a place of the minorities and marginal people.[8] That he became a *mujzub* is also reported by Syed Hassan Shah Peshwari (this is the same Syed family that brings *dalli* from Peshawar already mentioned above) who explained as follows: "When I reached the area of Po-

7 Ewing (1984: 363) also made similar observations: "The *malangs* I spoke with made no effort to hide their use of hashish and marijuana, but spoke with contempt of the ordinary man's use of alcohol. … Once in a hashish-induced state of intoxication (*nasha*), the *malang* enters into communion with God and receives His commands."

8 Buddenberg reports the evidence of Goraknathis (a Hindu religious sect) and Fussman and Schimmel hinted at the presence of Zoroastrians at the site of shrine (for details see Buddenberg 1993: 184).

tohar I saw Shah Latif Mujzub. He is a great mast (intoxicated) *majzub*"[9].

The Qadiria order was initially very close to the Sharia but later influenced by other mystical developments especially by the *waḥdat al-wujūd* philosophy the founder of which was Ibn Arabi, who himself initiated "into the *Qadiriyya* order [and] had made all the *Qadiriyyas* staunch supporters of his controversial *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* philosophy" (Rizvi 1978: 54 f.). The basic idea of the *Wajudi* philosophy was that:

> [T]he whole world consists of nothing but this or that particular self-manifestation of the Absolute. … Ibn ʿArabi does not consider idol worship or polytheism objectionable in so far as the object of a man's worship is God Himself (Rizvi 1978: 50 f.).

The second order of Bari Imam is known as *qalandaria*. *Majzub*, *qalandar*, *malamati*, dervish even *fakir* and *saien* seem to have the same qualities, perhaps different names for the same or, at least, for the identical being. According to the "'Awarifu'l Ma'arif" there are (see Rizvi 1978: 301–319):

> two types of dervishes, the Qalandariyya and the *malmatis*. The former were so seized by the intoxication of "tranquillity of the hearts" (*qalb*) that they rejected normal social pleasantries and the *mores* of personal relationships. … The Qalandariyya sought to violate orthodox features in their behaviour (301 f.). … The contact of *qalandar* with *nath-yogis*, also wandering throughout that part of the world, influenced them to wear ear-rings. Another custom they shared with the yogis was the consumption of grass, probably Indian hemp, and some other drugs … The most perfect among them went naked. … However, they sat before fires to keep them warm (319).

Frembgen describes *majzub* as a person who is: "many-faceted … he can be a thorough ascetic at one time and a complete pleasure-lover at other times, indulging in gluttony and seeking the company of dancing girls and prostitutes" (1998: 144). Nurpur Shahan more popularly known by the name of Bari Imam continued with the tradition of *majzub* saints and their way of life ever since. A comparatively recent example of this is the saint "Hazrat Gul Warith Khan (Pia) al-marʿuf Mama Ji Sarkar *Majzub Qalandar*. Like his *murshid* (spiritual guide) Bari Imam he belonged to the Qadiriyya and Qalandarya brotherhood. He was a follower of Bari Imam. He died "on the 27th of the Muslim month of Ramadan AH 1411 (12 April AD 1991)" and is buried in Nurpur (Frembgen 1998: 151). According to Hashmi (2010) who owns the first-hand written sources about the shrine from around 1780, the *khalifas* and their descendent were called *saien* or *fakir*. Further, he also mentions the institution of *balkas*, who wore colorful clothes, their shaven heads, earrings and that they had begging bowls to live by begging. To conclude, the affiliation of the marginal groups mentioned above with Bari Imam was not a later or recent development.

Due to questions of space I cannot go into the full length details of this order, but it is important to mention that this Sufi representative could be called the saint of the marginal and minority population. We know from other sources that many Sufis belonging to this order mingled with the lowest of the low and even, at least symbolically, adopted their professions. We know, for instance, about Bulleh Shah (1680–1757) a very prominent Punjabi saint and poet that he "… apprenticed for 12 years with women in a *kanjar* community of courtesans, musicians, and dancers" (Wolf 2006: 253). Accordingly, at the time of his death in 1758 "the mullahs disputed his right to be buried in a communal graveyard" (Rafat 1982: 1). We similarly know about Shah Hussain (1538–1599), "the patron saint of Lahore, that he … adopted a life-style of roaming about in the streets of Lahore with a flask of wine in his hand, drinking, dancing, and reciting his *kafis* (mystical modes)" (Malik 2008: 40). The full name of the saint is Madho Lal Hussain, the first part of the name "barely concealed sexual side of the saint … who shares his burial place with a Brahmin boy, Madhu, with whom he is said to have been deeply in love" (Wolf 2006: 253). "He is acknowledged as the first and foremost *pir* of the *Malamatiya* tradition in the Punjab" (Malik 2008: 40 f.). There are several other saints of this order, the most famous one being Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.

The Shrine of Bari Imam: Before and after Awqaf Control

The shrine of Bari Imam is in the final stage of its reconstruction and once finished, it will be a very impressive modern mausoleum visible from a far distance, dominating the entire surrounding. Besides the tomb, the whole complex consists of a courtyard, verandahs, a prayer hall, a multipurpose hall for colloquia, a library, a seminar hall, and a dispensary. In addition, there are the state trust Awqaf and security offices, the *langer khana*, or cooking and food distribution area as well as storage facilities, blocks for ablution, toilets and *samma* (may be translated as religious music) area. The new shrine complex is spread over approximately 100 *kanals*

9 The text is a translation by Naqshbandi from the Urdu original (2004: 78).

(approximately two thousand square meters). There will be attendants like at the shrine of Data in Lahore, who will guide visitors in paying "properly" homage to the shrine.

All monuments, structures, and practices which did not go in conformity with "formal Islam" have already been, or are being, eliminated in the shrine with a new look. Thus, no space has been reserved for *mutch* (a huge fireplace said to be burning from the times of saints life). *Mutch* has been an essential and integral part of Bari Imam's shrine where the visiting people ate and took with them the ashes for those at home from this fire which was known as *khake shifa* (ashes of healing). Similarly, the spring known as *Chashmaie Shifa* (healer spring) has been demolished. Believers at the shrine and members of *khulfa*' families will tell a number of miracles relating to the healing of chronic illnesses with ashes from the *mutch* and the water of the water spring. The *banian* tree, adjacent to the grave where the saint had meditated and where people used to light oil lamps, recite the Holy Quran and say that their prayers no longer have a place in the new design of the shrine. *Dhamalkhana* (room for dervish dance), *niqarkhana* (place of huge beating drums) and other such monuments were already eliminated during president Zia-ul-Haq's "clean and construction" drive of the 1980s.

Buddenberg wrote about the changes in the shrine at that time: "any ecstatic practices have been forbidden (dancing, use of drugs, etc.), and the groups of participants have been curtailed. During the past years, the number of women participating decreased considerably and the fakirs are conspicuous by absence" (Buddenberg 1993: 86). All these developments contrast very sharply with the life of the saint himself who was a *majzub* and chose to live in, at that time, a remote village, where people belonging to the marginal and minority groups lived. The early period after the death of Bari Imam is like a dark spot. The earliest written record of the shrine was created around the year 1780. These entries show that it must have been a very small affair. As we know about the shrine of Baba Farid (Eaton 1984), this shrine, too, must have taken some time to be among the established ones. Perhaps this is the reason this shrine is not mentioned in the Mughal records of the years 1526–1857.

The situation changed considerable after the British occupied the area and made nearby Rawalpindi a garrison city and even more drastically since the early sixties when Islamabad was made the capital of Pakistan. The shrine of Bari Imam is located almost like in the backyard of the Presidency. The data about income and expenditures (Hashmi 2010) from shrine records show that by the end of the nineteenth century the shrine, especially the annual *urs*, had grown considerably. The grown importance of the shrine was clear from the reports that the British deputy commissioner and local police helped in the management of the *urs*, even sending *sarkari mehndi* (official *mehndi*) as was reported in the local newspapers.[10] In the Census Report (1895) it is reported that: "About 20,000 persons attend the fair annually, a large number of *natch* girls always attending. The last Thursday of the month of *Jeth* is the chief day of the fair which is attended by many Hindus as well as Muhammadans" (The Punjab Government 1895: 80 f.). Besides the growing importance of the shrine, this quote is also an evidence of the fact that minority and marginal groups like dancing girls and Hindus visited the shrine. This was also confirmed by Buddenberg: "Till recently, the Kanphatas or Goraknathis also attended the festival … Drugs, dancing, and ecstasy have always been part of the rites of the Goraknathis" (1993: 185).

Awqaf Control: How a Saint Was Converted!

The state followed a uniform policy of reforms towards shrines. The guiding idea for the state reforms, for instance, during Zia-ul-Haq's time in the 1980s, was that "the original saints were themselves *'ulama*, trained religious scholars who followed the *shari'at*" (Ewing 1990: 169). The Sufis, on the contrary, varied not only from the "formal Islam" but also from one another in their views and approaches towards Islam. On the Indian subcontinent four *silsilas* (mystic orders) of Sufis called Qadri, Suharwardi, Chishty, and Naqshbandi were the most famous. Moreover, relatively smaller and less known Sufis orders like Qalandaria had their followers, too. The Sufis belonging to all of these orders had their own very different mystical approaches. They were certainly not like *'ulama* (or theologians), at least not of the puritan Deo-bandi type, as favored by the state. By reforming these shrines with the state agenda the Sufis themselves seem to have been converted to an Islam which, according to the state, may be equated with the "real" Islam.

Conclusion

This article discussed the impact of politics and policies of the state on Sufi shrines with an example of

10 For copies of the newspapers see Hashmi (2010: 134).

the shrine of Bari Imam. We have argued that the "developments" in and around the shrine of Bari Imam have diverted it from the cause and directions of this saint's teachings and mission. This shrine was an institution of social welfare for the disadvantaged people who were, on the one hand, a product of the given society and at the same time unacceptable for it. The saint has not only taken up their cause but also adopted their way of life. I do not think that the Sufi saints abstained from the ordinary way of life to be able to worship God undisturbed as their actions are often interpreted, especially in the so-called *malamti* interpretation. Instead, the Sufis of this order must have witnessed the miseries of these people. They showed compassion by loving God in loving them. The modern state, claiming to eradicate "superstition," has by its massive intervention punished the destitute in a manner that is the very opposite of the Saint's message.

A policy to eliminate moral corruption and superstitious practices could have resorted to rather different methods. Thus, the state could have opened the access to doctors and lawyers for the poor, supported women against the threats of a unilateral divorce, and generally provided for those who had been forced into prostitution or begging. Such had been the message of the saint. However, in the name of the saint the modern state has done away with this message.

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