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THE POLITICS OF POPULAR ISLAM: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF ISLAMIC REVIVALISM IN PAKISTAN

Abstract

In the post-9/11 scenario, the rise of the Taliban and their coalition with Al-Qaeda have engendered new discourses about Islam and Pakistan. In this paper, I present a multi-sited ethnography of Bari Imam, a popular Sufi shrine in Pakistan while re-evaluating certain suppositions, claims and theories about popular Islam in the country. Have militarization, Shariatisation, and resurgence movements such as the Taliban been overzealously discussed and presented as the representative imageries of Islam? I also explore the Sufi dynamics of living Islam, which I will suggest continue to shape the lives and practices of the vast majority of Pakistani Muslims. The study suggests that general unfamiliarity of people outside the subcontinent with the Sufi attributes of living Islam, together with their lack of knowledge of the varieties of identification, observance and experience of Islam among Pakistanis, limit not only their understanding of the land of Pakistan, but also their perception of its people and their faith (Islam).

Keywords: popular Islam, Sufism, extremism, shrine, multi-sited ethnography, Pakistan

Introduction

The first decade of the 21ˢᵗ century witnessed a vitally important shift towards Islamic revitalization worldwide with Pakistan a flash point of the reformation discourse. The world news media, however, have associated this revivalism almost exclusively with extremism, fundamentalism, and violence, which have dominated the headlines regarding the depiction of Islam in Pakistan. This study asks whether militarization, Shariatisation, and resurgence movements such as the Taliban have been overenthusiastically debated and presented as the rep-

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resentative imaginings of Islam in Pakistan? The rise of fundamentalism with its bearing on the foreign and domestic policy of metropolitan countries is a critical question that has been debated at length in international media and scholarly debates. Subsequent to the events of 9/11, Muslims were connected with *jihaad*[2] in a way, which suggested that a clash of civilizations was inevitable[3].The notion that Muslims and Islam were essentially fundamentalists was presented as a cultural verdict by those with the greatest power to enforce their worldviews[4]. Ayoob[5] argues that the major effect of this essentialist and monolithic interpretation of Islam on Western perceptions was not only to paint all Muslims with the same tarred brush, but also to accord the most extremist and violent elements in the Muslim world the position of authentic representatives for Islam. Therefor, it is crucial to understand that there is no monolithic Islam, just as there is no single institution, individual or group that can claim exclusively to be the spokesperson of all Muslims.

In the context of Pakistan, although a large number of Pakistanis would like to see Islam playing a wider role in the public life of their country, there is little desire on the part of most Pakistanis to see Islamists managing or transforming their society nor do they admire Islamist militant groups such as Al Qaeda and local Taliban[6]. Contrary to this widespread discourse, popular Islam in Pakistan has historically been associated with the Sunni Barelvis[7], who prevail in vast area of the Punjab and Sindh. Better known for their respect of saints and shrines, their ritual practices show a strong preference for the Sufi path (*t:ariiqah*) over Sharia[8]. They believe that Sufi saints are a ladder to reach Allah since they are beloved by Him. They also claim that these Sufi saints are alive in their blessed graves and hear their prayers and problems even after death. Due to their influence (*sifaarish*), Allah fulfils their wishes and that visit to shrines can solve their life problems irrespective of their nature.

Historically, saints have played a momentous role in the institutionalization of Islam in South Asia[9]. The cult of saints, which originated in the medieval period

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2   Notes on Transliteration: For the purpose of this paper, I have used the Pritchett/Khaliq transliteration system for Urdu words.

3   Hugh Leach, Observing Islam from Within and Without, *Asian Affairs,* Vol. 21, No. 1, 1990, pp.3-19; Munck Victor, Islamic Orthodoxy and Sufism in Sri Lanka, *Anthropos,* Vol. 100, No. 2, 2005, pp. 401-414.

4   Judith Nagata, Beyond Theology: Toward an Anthropology of "Fundamentalism, *American Anthropologist,* Vol. 103, No. 2, 2001, p. 487.

5   Mohammed Ayoob, "Deciphering Islam's Multiple Voices: Intellectual luxury or Strategic Necessity", in: *Political Islam: A Critical Reader,* Frederic Volpi (eds.), Routledge, London, 2011.

6   Christine C. Fair, Clay Ramsay, Steve Kull, "Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy and Relations with the US", Washington DC, USIP/PIPA Report, 2008; William B. Milam, *Bangladesh and Pakistan: Flirting with Failure in South Asia*, Hurst & Company, London, 2009.

7   Barelvi and Deobandi are two major divisions within the Sunni branch of Islam who follow Hanafi *madhhab* (school of thought) also referred to as *Ahl-e-Sunah.*

8   Farzana Shaikh, From Islamisation to Shariatisation: Cultural Transnationalism in Pakistan, *Third World Quarterly,* Vol. 29, No. 3, 2008, p. 596.

9   Anthony H. Johns, Sufism in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Reconsiderations, *Journal of South Asian Studies,* Vol. 26, No. 1, 1995, pp. 169-83; Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012.

and has survived until the present, is a phenomenon highly specific to the spiritual heritage of the South Asian countries[10]. It provides one of the most dynamic and interesting dimensions of Islamic religious and cultural expression[11].

Sufism is of historical importance in the regions that became Pakistan. While it was not the only form of observance, it was arguably the most influential and enduring form of Islam during the early centuries of Islamisation of areas bordering the Indus. After the conquest of Sindh by Muhammad bin Qasim in the 8th Century, the Arabs were not interested in converting the masses to Islam; rather, Sufis were the main source of this transformation[12]. Later, during the period of the Delhi Sultanate, Sufis were patronized as inheritors of charisma. Their blessings were considered vital to the ability to rule. Sufi elders were seen as intercessors for their followers and their monasteries became places of pilgrimage[13]. The *pirs* (saints; singular *pir*), meanwhile, appealed to the devotional outlook of extant populations, i.e., the Hindus and Buddhists. There was a convergence of devotional traditions, and, it was this means of attraction (resulting in many cases in the long run in conversion to Islam) that accounts for the resemblances that can be found between Sufi Islam and certain Hindu outlooks and practices. Islam became, to some extent, an Indian religion and had it not done so, it is open to speculation whether it would have survived in India, and seen the establishment of Pakistan. Orthodox Sunni practices also came to India, and in time constituted the bulk of the Muslim community, the orthodox, among whom many disapproved of Sufism. But Sufism continued to play a historic role.

As late as 1260, Jat tribes moving down to the Punjab from the Sindh were attracted to Islam by their devotion to the shrine of [what is now known as] Pakpattan. The role of Sufis in converting the large numbers of local people of the Punjab and Sindh into Muslims remained indispensable. Jat and Rajput groups who became Muslim in the medieval period, claim to have been converted either by renowned Sufis, Baba Farid or by his contemporaries, Baha al Haq Zakariya and Sayyid Jalaluddin Bokhari of Uch, who also established early Islamic institutions in the Punjab[14]. In the second wave of Muslim conquest of India, which occurred in approximately the year 1000, a popular figure of the mystic school of thought, Hajweri, was to become famous. Bearing the title of Data Ganj Baksh (Generous Giver), he attracted thousands of people and converted them to Islam. His shrine

10   Anna Suvorova, *Muslim Saints of South Asia: The Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries*, Routledge Curzon, London, 2004, p. 201.

11   Jamal J. Elias, Sufism: Review Article on Coverage of Sufism in Encyclopedia Iranica, *Iranian Studies,* Vol. 31, No. 3/4, 1998, pp. 595-613.

12   Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam,* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, 1975; Rizvi Saiyid Athar Abbas, *History of Sufism in India: Early Sufism and its History in India to 1600 A.D,* Munshiram Manoharlal, India, 1978; Sarah F. D. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sind, 1843-1947*, Vanguard Books Ltd, Lahore, 1992; Dominique-Sila Khan, *Conversions and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan,* Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1997.

13   Barbara D. Metcalf, "Introduction: a Historical Overview of Islam in South Asia", in: *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, Barbara D. Metcalf (eds.), Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2009, p. 8.

14   David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan*, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, London, 1988; Richard Maxwell Eaton, *Essays on Islam and Indian History,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000.

in Lahore is still a focus of reverence.

All of the major shrines that appeared in the centuries after the advent of Islam functioned to some degree as links in the larger cultural system of Punjabi Islam. In 1915, the British recognized the symbolic role of the shrine under discussion (Bari Imam) in uniting the villagers; thus, they granted small plots of land to the shrine when the villagers prevented an attempted armed pilfering in the area, claiming that the shrine jammed the dacoits' guns. Centuries before the British occupation, networks of shrines and Sufi Orders spread through much of the province, establishing their own khanqahs, which were later transformed into new shrines[15] that functioned as native out-posts of Islam which allied the dispersed, tribally organized population of the Punjab to the larger Muslim community. Subsequently, it was to these local centers, which provided the focus for Islamic organization in most of Western Punjab, that the population looked for religious leadership[16]. At times the British had trouble with particular *pirs*, Pir Pagaro for example[17]. However, many of the shrines flourished in British times.

In South Asia, saints' shrines are variously known as *mazaaraat* (shrines*), ziyaarat gaah* (a place of visit or pilgrimage) or *dargaah* (lit. place of access*,* shrine)[18]. People in Pakistan use the terms *darbaar* (lit. royal court) and khanqah when referring to a shrine. In most cases, people simply refer to the shrine by its name: "we are going to visit Bari Imam or Golra Sharif". Saints and shrines in twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi commanded a huge following. There is no room even to list the names of all the shrines, which number well over 100, small and large. Renowned shrines, in addition to that of Bari Imam, include: the shrine of Sakhi Mehmood Badshah (the father of Bari Imam), those of Lala Jii[19] Sarkar, Golra Sharif, and Meena Thub Sharif in Islamabad, and the shrines of Eidgah Sharif, Shah ki Talyan, Hazrat Sakhi Shah Chan Charagh (a Shi'a shrine), and the Kalyam Sharif in Rawalpindi.

In most cases, people visit more than one shrine. Many will favor the shrine where as individual they took *baii`t* (the pledge to follow a spiritual leader) with a living saint (*zindah pir*). There were shrines where the spiritual or biological decedents of saints – caretakers of the shrines (*sajjaadah nashiins*)[20] and their families - both male and female represented the continuation of sainthood. Some of these families include Pir Naqeeb-ur-Reham and his family, descendants of Hazrat Khawaj Bawajee Hafiz Muhammad Abdul Karim at Eidgeh Sharif in Rawalpindi; the descendants of Pir Mehr Ali Shah at Golra Sharif, Islamabad, and the family of Khawaja Pir Muhammad Qasim Sadiq (Baba G Sarkar Mohrvi) at Mohra Sharif,

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15   David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam,...* pp. 46-52.

16   Muhammed Hassanali, Sufi Influence on Pakistani Politics and Culture, *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studie*s, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2010, pp. 31.

17   Sarah F. D. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power,...* pp. 129-149.

18   See: Christian W. Troll, *Muslim Shrines in India: their Character, History and Significance*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.

19   A form of address placed after a man's or a woman's name as a symbol of respect.

20   The terms *sajjadah nashiin*, *mutavallii* and *Gaddii nashiin* are used here interchangeably (caretaker of shrine).

Murree. For pilgrims, *diidaar* (to see or to get a glimpse of) and *du`aa* (act of supplication) of these living saints and their families is considered a great blessing; and, in the cases of those shrines where a living saint (or a saint lineage) does not exist, the saint's grave serves this purpose (as in the case of Bari Imam). However, a large number of Sufi adherents do not pledge spiritual allegiance to a particular Sufi order or saint. They visit different shrines within and outside their locality, considering all of them a source of blessing (*barkat)*.

No engrossment regarding Islam could be more widespread among the locals than the question of the various alternative forms of practice and faith. This is not only an issue of *takfiir* - the condemnation of a practice or belief as un-Islamic, which is a distinctive characteristic of militant Islam. It is rather a matter of the existence of numerous religious positions with which one person or another may disagree but which are recognized to be legitimate. This paper dealing with the practice of Islam in Pakistan asks a significant question that has been debated among scholars for many years not only for Pakistan, but for Islam in general. Its relevance to Pakistan will soon become apparent. Is there "one" Islam – throughout the length and breadth of the Islamic World? Or are there "many" Islams? This question has been explored in Indonesia[21], India[22], Iran[23], Jordon[24], Turkey[25], Egypt[26], North African[27], Lebanon[28]. The scholars of Islam in Pakistan[29] also debated this issue at length. Furthermore, there is a long list of scholars[30] who theo-

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21   Richard John Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society,* Princeton University Press, 1993; Richard John Bowen, *A New Anthropology of Islam*, Cambridge University Press, 2012; Muhamad Ali, Muslim Diversity: Islam and Local Tradition in Java and Sulawesi, Indonesia, *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies,* Vol. 1, No. 1, 2011, pp. 1-35; Ibrahim Nur Amali, *Improvisational Islam: Indonesian Youth in a Time of Possibility*, Cornell University Press, 2018.

22   Sebastian R. Prange, *Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2018.

23   Michael Fischer, Abedi Mehdi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition,* The University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 1990.

24   Sara Tobin, *In Everyday Piety: Islam and Economy in Jordan*, Cornell University Press, London, 2016.

25   Ayşe Saktanber, *Living Islam: Women, Religion and the Politicization of Culture in Turkey*, I. B. Tauris, New York, 2012.

26   Abdul Hamid El-Zein, Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam, *Annual Review of Anthropology,* Vol. 6, 1977, pp. 227-254.

27   Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981.

28   Michael Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam: An Anthropologist's Introduction*, Croom Helm, London, 1982.

29   Ahmed Naveeda Khan, *Muslim Becoming: Aspiration and Skepticism in Pakistan*, Duke University Press, Durham, N.C, 2012; Magnus Marsden, Mullahs, Migrants and Murid: New Developments in the Study of Pakistan. A Review Article, *Modern Asian Studies,* Vol. 39, No. 4, 2005, pp. 981-1005; Magnus Marsden, *Islam and Society in Pakistan: Anthropological Perspectives*, Oxford, Pakistan, 2012; Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Contestations: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, 2004; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan: A History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2018.

30   Dale F. Eickelman, The Study of Islam in Local Contexts, *Contributions to Asian Studies,* Vol. 17, 1982, pp. 1-16; Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, 1986; Patrick D. Gaffney, Popular Islam, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences,* Vol. 524, No. 1, 1992, pp. 38-51; Elizabeth S. Hurd, *Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2015; Richard Tapper, Islamic Anthropology and the Anthropology of Islam, *Anthropological Quarterly,* Vol. 68 , No. 3, 1995, pp. 185-193; Ronald Lukens-Bull, Between Text and Practice: Considerations in the Anthropological Study of Islam, *Marburg Journal of Religion,* Vol. 4, No. 2, 1999, pp. 59-60; Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005; Ovamir Anjum, Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and his Interlocutors, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the*

rized Islam as a dynamic construction that takes its form through discourse, debate, and contestation illuminating that anthropological study of Islam has been facing severe problems of definition that how to conceptualize Islam.

El-Zein[31] provided an influential response to this question while arguing that there are many forms of Islam and denounces those anthropological enterprises, which attempt to determine which are more "authentic". Anjum[32], strongly critical of El- Zein's view, proposes that Asad's concept of "discursive tradition" provides the tool with which to deal with the diverse manifestations of Islam and to understand Islam's unity in multiplicity: "If one wants to write an anthropology of Islam one should begin, as Muslims do, from the concept of a discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Islam is neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs, and morals. It is a tradition."[33]

Asad's notion of a discursive tradition - as a "discourse that seeks to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice[34]…" - is of a piece with his critique of Clifford Geertz. Geertz[35] in "*Islam Observed*" presented his notion of diverse Islamic traditions. But to Asad, to argue that there are in fact many Islams is to overlook the existence of a common enduring tradition, which in effect binds these many manifestations together in the one faith. Asad[36] arguing that Geertz ignored the role of indigenous discourse in the tradition, claims that "the integrity of the world of Islam is essentially ideological, a discursive representation".

The concept of "many" Islams would be offensive to the Muslims in Pakistan who are conscious of the essentials of Islam that are common among them; all Muslims, Shi'a, Deobandi, Barelvi, Ahl-e-Hadith, and others would approve of the centrality of those fundamentals called the five pillars of Islam[37], the Qur'an, and *Hadith*[38] (plural *Ahadith*). They might differ over which *Ahadith* are admissible and which are not, but there would be predominantly an understanding among all Muslims on certain parts. Not all would acknowledge that there are in fact many lawful expressions of Islam - that although Islam is in a sense one, it is also the case that it is in practice far more diverse than many orthodox Muslims would agree to be the case.

A large number of people in the area regularly visit Sufi shrines within and

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Middle East, Vol. 27, No. 3, 2007, pp. 656-672.

31 Abdul Hamid El-Zein, Beyond Ideology and Theology… pp. 227-254.

32 Ovamir Anjum, Islam as a Discursive Tradition… p. 658.

33 Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*… p. 14.

34 Ibidem.

35 Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968.

36 Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*… pp. 8-14.

37 *Shahadah,* confession that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is Allah's Prophet, Prayers, Fasting, Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) and Zakaat (obligatory charity).

38 A collection of traditions delineating the actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

outside of their locality for various purposes. At the same time, there are those (mainly Deobandis and Ahl-e-Hadith)[39] who reject shrine pilgrimage, who consider it as innovation in Islam (*bid`at;* plural *bid`aat*) and polytheism (*shirk*, the act of associating partners with Allah). Deobandi and Barelvi, two major divisions within the Sunni branch of Islam which are also referred to as *Ahl-e-Sunnat* (people of the Sunnah), dominate the area. The two sub-sects stand in obvious opposition and hostility due to abiding differences in their interpretations of the Sharia, religious rituals and practices.

However, the various interpretations of Islam in Pakistan render its very essence widely misunderstood and misinterpreted. Despite the variety of Islamic traditions, specialists of Islam are typically concerned with Islamic reformism as the main driving force behind the homogenization of the thinking and practices of Pakistan's Muslims, not with the activities of the Sufi brotherhood[40]. The so-called Islamic reformation has monopolized the discourse on Islam[41]. Excellent work on saints and shrines in Pakistan[42] and other countries, such as in Iran[43], India[44], Egypt[45], Palestine[46], Senegal[47] and in other South Asian countries[48], elaborates the consistent presence of Sufi Islam in the face of militant version of Islam. However, the majority of those who discuss Islam in Pakistan do not primarily distinguish between the various orientations and aspirations of Islam. Researchers, journalists, and their audiences in the West are well informed about the Pakistani state, the Army, and their policies, but not about what is happening at the grassroots level. The historical and current circumstances of Pakistan, in which both local and international governments have used Islam politically, have not been given much attention, an omission that has resulted in two main failures:

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39 Contrary to other sects of Sunni Muslims who follow one of the four *madhabs* (schools of thoughts), i.e., Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafeyii, Ahl-e-Hadith do not follow *imams* in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence).

40 Magnus Marsden, Mullahs, Migrants and Murid… p. 1001.

41 Akbulut Zeynep Kuru, Ahmet T. Kuru, Apolitical Interpretation of Islam: Said Nursi's Faith-based Activism in Comparison with Political Islamism and Sufism, *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations,* Vol. 19, No. 1, 2008, pp.99-11; Amin Tariq Khan, Issues of Power and Modernity in Understanding Political and Militant Islam, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* Vol. 29, No. 3, 2009, pp. 544-555.

42 Sarah F. D. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power…*; Michel Boivin, *Historical Dictionary of the Sufi Culture of Sindh in Pakistan and India,* Oxford University Press, Pakistan, 2015; Katherine Pratt Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam,* Duke University Press, Durham, 1997; Pnina Werbner, Helene Basu, *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality, and Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults*, Psychology Press, 1998; Pnina Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love: The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2003; Robert Rozehnal, *Islamic Sufism Unbound: Politics and Piety in twenty-first Century Pakistan*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, 2007; Wasim Jürgen Frembgen, *Journey to God: Sufis and Dervishes in Islam,* Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2009; Samina Qureshi, *Sacred Spaces: A Journey with the Sufis of the Indus*, Peabody Museum Press, Ahmedabad, 2010.

43 Alireza Doostdar, *The Iranian Metaphysicals: Explorations in Science, Islam, and the Uncanny,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2018; Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam,* Columbia University Press, New York, 2013.

44 Anand Taneja, *Jinnealogy: Time, Islam, and Ecological Thought in the Medieval Ruins of Delhi,* Standford University Press, Delhi, 2017.

45 Amira Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination,* University of California Press, 2010.

46 Daphna Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufis and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine,* Cambridge, 2008.

47 Laura L. Cochrane, *Everyday faith in Sufi Senegal,* Routledge, London, 2017.

48 Deepra Dandekar, Torsten Tschacher, *Islam, Sufism and Everyday Politics of Belonging in South Asia*, Routledge, London, 2016.

1. Talibanization has been taken as an Islamic movement (a symbol of Islamic resurgence) and possibilities of considering it a socio-cultural or political response to the changing geo-political landscape have been largely ignored.

2. This miscalculation has eclipsed the importance and practice of Sufi Islam across the country.

Approaching the Shrine of Bari Imam

The current study is based on 1 1/2 years of my doctoral fieldwork conducted at the shrine of Bari Imam in Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. The study re-examines certain claims about popular Islam in Pakistan, and asks whether Sufi Islam has been relegated to an unjustified unimportance due to the narrative of Islamic resurgence.

The shrine of Bari Imam is located in Islamabad 2 kilometres northeast of the Pakistan Secretariat in a village called Noor Pur Shahan. The silver-mirrored shrine of Bari Imam was first built on the orders of the Mughal ruler Aurangzaib-Alamgeer, and rebuilt after the creation of Pakistan in 1947[49]. Some items commemorating Bari Imam are said to have lasted till this day. Among these are the Loh-e-Dhandi, behind the shrine, the cave where the saint performed *cillah* (the austere vigil) and the banyan tree under which Bari Imam meditated. The shrines of Bari Imam's four deputies (*xulafaa*; singular *xaliifah*) are located inside the surrounds of the major shrine. Those of Shah Hussain, Mithe Shah and Dhang Shah are all placed towards the west side of Bari Imam's grave. The fourth famous deputy Inayat Shah returned to Sindh after the departure of Bari Imam. There is an explanatory advantage in studying a particular region of a Pakistan city and shrine where people from across the country visit to pay homage to the saint. This is a way of revealing some impression of living Islam, rather than a statistical summary.

This study employs the classic anthropological technique of participant observation, supplemented by tape-recorded in-depth interviews. The participant observation was carried out at the shrine attending daily rituals and observing and talking to pilgrims from across the country (both male and female of various age groups belonging to varied educational levels and diverse socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds) regarding their beliefs about the saint and practices they perform at the shrine such as lighting oil lamps (*diyaas*) for the fulfilment of their vows (*mannats*), *giyaarahviiN shariif* (the festival which takes place on the 11th of every lunar month, is celebrated in remembrance of the founder of the Qadiriyya Sufi order, Sheikh Abdul-Qadir Jilani), and offering oblation (*CaRhaave*). Along the same line I, as a participant observer, spent time at the adjacent bazaars including at cauldron houses (*daig houses),* hotels and other places such as soda corners which remain open till late night. These places,

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49   Muhammad Qadri, *Seerat Hazrat Bari Imam Sarkar*, [Life of Sain Bari Imam], Akbar Book Seller, Lahore, n.d, p. 107.

besides offering food, also offer spaces for socialization. My position of being a local helped me immensely to connect with local residents in such informal settings to know their opinions regarding the role and influence of Sufism on their lives and everyday practices. There are 15 cauldron houses from where pilgrims buy and offer rice cauldron as vow, or as thankfulness (*shukraanah)* after the realization of a vow or in some cases only to seek merit (*s:avaab*) by distributing food among the poor. It is also offered as charity; and people eat *langar* (free food) believing that it contains blessing and cures (*tabarruk* and *shifaa'*). I also spend time at the *caadar* shops (*caadar;* A long piece of cloth which pilgrims offer over the saint's grave out of respect). I also spent time at barber shops, superstores, fruit and vegetable shops, milk bars and bread shops (*tanduur)* occupying the main streets in each neighbourhood. Monthly credit (*udhaar)* is still extended by shopkeepers and superstores though not as frequently as in the past. Minor services are provided free of charge and it is considered impolite of the provider to ask for money. For example, a man will ask the barber to quickly fix his moustache and the barber will put a towel over the person's shoulder and take two or three minutes to fix it without charge. Many similar offered services by tailors, electricians, auto-mechanics and carpenters are provided free of charge. In cases where the customer tries to pay, he usually receives the following comment from the service provider: "why are you embarrassing me, it was not a big deal". Another courteous gesture allows the customer to pay what he/she wants to pay. At this point, the service provider will say, "pay whatever you want". I also did participant observation at the office of Auqaaf Department. The Auqaf Department took formal control over the shrine of Bari Imam in 1976, constructing its office barely 50 yards from the grave.

Besides participant observation and informal discussion, 60 male and female pilgrims of various ages, with diverse socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds were interviewed. In order to enrich the data collection, it was made sure that selected respondents hold diverse sectarian affiliation. The fieldwork was also conducted in Noor Pur Shahan village where the shrine is located. Heterogeneous samples or maximum variation sampling strategy was employed[50] with a rationale to identify and comprehend the various perceptions and diverse interpretations pertaining to popular Islam and practice of Sufi Islam in Pakistan. The data collected from various sources helped to achieve the goal of data triangulation in three different points what Denzin[51] referred to as people, space and time. From Noor Pur Shahan village, 42 respondents including caretakers of the shrines, the members of the shrine management committee, general residents of the area, ulama, teachers of schools and madaris (Islamic religious school: singular madrasah) belonging to varied educational, economic and sec-

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50   Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, Sage Publications*, Thousand Oaks. *Cal,* 2002; Colin Robson, *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers*, Vol. 2, Blackwell, Oxford, 2002.

51   Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods,* Transaction publishers, 2009.

tarian backdrops were selected for the indepth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted at the shrine, homes, mosques, madaris, hotels, and gathering places frequented by the pilgrims and inhabitant of Noor Pur Shahan to grasp a holistic picture of the role played by the shrines in the religious and everyday life of Pakistani Muslims.

This is how research was conducted along the lines of "follow the people" multi-sited fieldwork[52] and I have participated as a native anthropologist in shrine rituals during an extensive period of time while observing their practices, talking to pilgrims and listening to their conversation in order to explore religious attitudes and practices and regularly recorded events and conversation in detailed field notes. My native status, however, was a mixed blessing as there was a constant probability to take many aspects of Islam for granted. I, therefore, do not propose my nativeness as an assurance for the validity and reliability of my field data. Although my assumptions about my religion, people and country show my fragility in the field, insider positionality helped me immensely to approach locals allowing me to delve into their experiences of living Islam. Working in my own cultural backyard, proved propitious while approaching pilgrims, members of the shrine management committee, ulama, teachers and local residents who otherwise may have been cautious to express their opinions to a foreign anthropologist. My familiarity with the area and its inhabitants assisted me while carrying out participant observation and arranging interviews and informal group discussions as the main research methods for data collection. I hold the same religious beliefs as the "natives" a fact which provided me with approachability and drew the approval of the community. Similarly, my status as a local put my respondents at comfort when reflecting on various sensitive issues such as terrorism, militancy, sectarianism and blasphemy. Yet I am conscious of possible inadequacies in my approach, which stemmed directly from my circumstances as a "native" anthropologist. The first of these was my propensity to take many things for granted, as in many respects I share the outlook of other inhabitants of Noor Pur Shahan village. Not only did I observe them: they observed me, and typically asked me for clarifications or support on a range of issues. It was also a challenge for me to keep a difference between a researcher (who was visiting his native place to study the influence, forms and orientations of popular Islam in Pakistan) and an advocate for my people, religion and country at a critical juncture when Pakistan has become the focus of the world's disquiet as an epicentre of the extremist threat. In order to deal with the researcher's bias and to ensure the trustworthiness, rigour and quality of data, I employed methodological triangulation while combining different data collection methods including participant observation, Indepth interviews, informal group discussions and key informants to crosscheck the information. This strategy was used in order to achieve depth,

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52   George E, Marcus, *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin*, Princeton University Press, 1998.

reliability and validity of the ethnographic data and results[53].

The technique of thematic analysis was employed for studying the outlooks of various research participants in order to grasp the indigenous understanding of popular Islam in Pakistan. The following account of shrine pilgrims and non-pilgrims highlights the different colors and experiences of Islam.

Debating Islam and Muslims in Pakistan: Battle over Islamic Authenticity and Accusations of Shirk-O Bid`At

Shrines have been criticized heavily in the literal Islamic tradition (particularly by the Deobandis and the Ahl-e-Hadith) as places of *shirk* (polytheism - the sin of associating partners with God) and of *bid`at* (innovation in Islam). The contrasting understandings of polytheism (*shirk*)*, Sufism (*taSavvuf*), and intercession (*tavassul*) are the principal foundations for the sectarian encounter between shrine pilgrims and those who oppose such practices. Deobandis believe that the shrine pilgrims are mainly Barelvis, but I observed during my fieldwork that pilgrims cannot be restricted to this particular category. I met a young man at the Bari Imam shrine, for example, who said he belonged to the Ahl-e-Hadith sect (the sect most critical of visiting Sufi shrines) and that he attended the shrine in search of mental peace. He rejected certain practices at shrines especially intercession and prostration at a saint's grave (*sajdah*) saying there is no place for such acts in Islam. A number of people who distanced themselves from certain Barelvi beliefs said that they visited the shrine because the saint was beloved of Allah and that their purpose of pilgrimage was to follow his teachings and not to make any vow or prostration at a saint's grave.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I observed that apart from being sites of religious observance, shrines in Pakistan also provide a space for social gatherings and entertainment activities that may not hold a direct connection to spiritual homage. I met a group of five men who were making chit-chat (*gapshap)* at the shrine of Bari Imam. I asked one of them about his reason for visiting the shrine. He answered that "I am a kind of Wahhabi[54], Ahl-e-Hadith person and do not believe that this grave could benefit me. I just came here because my friends invited me for the chit-chat".

At the shrine of Bari Imam, families bring food for a picnic and children play around. Similarly, while the `*urs* (`*urs* denotes a saint's death ceremony, representing the death as the reunion of the saint with his beloved God) may seem a wholly Sufi event, stalls selling henna, toys, and sweets, constant performances of spiritual dance (*dhamaal)* and the beating of a *Dhol* (a double-sided barrel drum, widely used in India and Pakistan) provide a festive atmosphere. Outside

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53   Phil Turner, Susan Turner, Triangulation in Practice, *Virtual Reality,* Vol. 13, No. 3, 2009, pp. 171-181.

54   An umbrella term used in Pakistan for those who reject certain Sufi practices, shrine pilgrimage and other principles of the Barelvi *maktaba'e fikr* (school of thought). Persons who use this term are not explicitly refers to the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia, of which they may know nothing.

the shrine, approximately 100 shops (both small and large) constitute one of the main attractions for visitors. Children and women are the major visitors to these shops. The observance of *pardah* (the practice of veiling to conceal women from men), one major symbol of orthodox Islam, is largely absent at the shrine.

I repeatedly noted during the fieldwork at the shrine as well as in Noor Pur Shahn village that both the Deobandis and the Barelvis accuse each other as *bid`atii* (one who invents new practices in Islam). There is a long list of *bid`at* allegations from both sides. According to the Deobandi school of thought (*maktaba'e fikr*), only Allah can be called upon for help - neither the Prophet Muhammad nor the saint. They attribute such practices to polytheistic (*shirkiyyah)* beliefs. During an interview, a Deobandi respondent in his sixties said in this regard "what is the difference between Hindus and those who seek help from the shrines? Hindus seek help from the idols and they (shrine pilgrims) do from the graves"[55].

The ground for condemning the cult of Muslim saints on the resemblance of saints' worship with the idol worship of the Hindus is an old one in Indian Subcontinent. Those who criticize tomb worship deem that Muslims borrowed this evil practice from Hindus resulting from their long-term contact with them[56]. Yet many of these practices may be found among Muslims outside the Subcontinent[57].

When I suggested to opponents during interviews that pilgrims believe that visiting and praying at shrines help to alleviate their worries, they responded angrily that only Allah can solve issues, they insisted. Not even the Prophet Muhammad can do this. They expressed their resentment of the different practices undertaken at shrines, for example, the breach of *pardah,* participation in spiritual dance by men and women, the open use of drugs, prostitution, prostration at a saint's grave, and offering food in the name of the saint (*langar*). They considered *langar* as a case of polytheism arguing that every sacrifice (*qurbaanii),* and act of vow, gift or charity (*naz:ar-o niyaaz*) which invokes any name except that of Allah, places the practice in that category.

A significant interpretation of *langar* is offered by Pnina Werbner who conceives it as perpetual sacrifice and as an act of identification with an unbounded Muslim community, the Ummah[58]. Werbner's account would be disputed by many Muslim. For one thing, *langar* itself is too controversial practice to function in this way for the Muslim community as a whole. What pilgrims call *"darbaar pah daig diinaa"* (offering cauldron at a shrine), like the offering of any vow, gift or charity in the name of someone other than Allah (*Giir ullah*) is to many Muslims

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55   Ahmed Anwar, personal communication with author, May 15, 2018.

56   For criticism on shrine pilgrimage as a form of idolatry see: Carl W. Ernst, "An Indo-Persian Guide to Sufi Shrine Pilgrimage", in: *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam,* Smith Grace Martin & Carl W. Ernst (eds.), The ISIS Press, Istanbul, 1993; Christopher S. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyara and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt,* Brill, New York, 1999.

57   Marc Gaborieau, "A Nineteenth Century Indian Wahhabi Tract Against the Cult of Muslim Saints: Al Balagh al Mubin", in: *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance,* Asani, Ali S. & Christian Troll (eds.), Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.

58   Pnina Werbner, Helene Basu, *Embodying Charisma: Modernity...* pp. 106-107.

forbidden (*Haraam)* and polytheism. Werbner's interpretation registers a viewpoint to which many Muslims are deeply attached, but which not all Muslims share. But more generally, to compare *langar* with the Islamic concept of sacrifice seems an unwarranted argument on Werbner's part. *Langar* cannot be equated, for example, with the sacrifice at Eid-ul-Adha concerning which Muslims are in agreement whatever their different views on other matters. Werbner also uses *niyaaz* (vow, gift, charity) and *qurbaanii* (sacrifice) as interchangeable terms[59]. The Barelvi and Shi'a Muslims in Pakistan and India do offer *niyaaz*, but with them too the terms *naz:r-e Allah* and *niyaaz-e Hussain* distinguish the *niyaaz* typically directed towards sacred personalities (such as Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad) from *naz:r* (making a vow to Allah). Sacrifice pertains to no one but Allah. *Langar* is typically conceptualised among Muslims, including the majority of pilgrims to shrines, not as a sacrifice but as a saint's blessing for the poor (*sarkaar kaa langar*), an individual way of fulfilling a wish, and an expression of gratitude to the saint.

I asked the shrine pilgrims for their opinions of such criticisms. Their reactions were as follows.

Pilgrims' Reactions

Ihsan Ali, a university student, deplored the case of Muslims who opt not to visit shrines seeing this omission as iniquitous that "Allah stamped their hearts (They are cursed by God)"[60]. The reference here is to the Holy Qur'an where it is stated that Allah put a seal on the unbelievers' hearts (The Qur'an 2, 6-7). In the case of those who choose not to visit shrines, an invisible seal has been placed on their hearts: they can never visit holy places like the Bari Imam shrine, he added. A 55-year-old low-ranking government employee, during an interview contested to the reference to polytheism that "we cannot specify what is shirk. The spiritual relaxation we find at shrines cannot be felt in the company of the ulama (Muslim religious scholars trained in Islamic law; singular alim)"[61].

Another visitor from rural Punjab claimed during interview that the Qur'an states that one should visit shrines, follow the saints, and do what the saints did in their lives. In the opinion of yet another, illiterate ulama have created this controversy. To the respondent Asad who works as a daily wedge labourer those who are against shrines are religious hypocrites (*munaafiq)*. Yet some visitors (both male and female of diverse educational levels) distinguished between different aspects of pilgrimage (*ziyaarat*). Visiting shrines is not against the Shari'a; but bowing before a saint or his grave is unacceptable. Yet when people stray into polytheism they do it out of love (`*ishq*). However, many visitors defended

59   Ibidem, p. 104.

60   Ihsan Ali, personal communication with author, September 15, 2017.

61   Taj Muhammad, personal communication with author, August 11, 2018.

the practice of prostration, identifying it with *sajdah-e ta`z:iimii* (bowing to pay respect) as the angels did before Adam. They distinguished it from *sajdah-e `ibaadat* (bowing to worship), which is only for Allah Almighty. During an interview, a 40-year-old housewife replied in this context: "It is a matter of understanding and we do not do *shirk* here. For example, if we want to talk to someone in London, we use the telephone as a means of connection. In the same manner, Allah is close to these saints and they are a means to grasp Allah. Due to them, our prayers get accepted just so instantaneously"[62].

Several visitors (both male and females of diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds) made the same statement: neither do they believe that saints fulfil their wishes, nor do they make them partners with God. It is Allah who fulfils their wishes. The saint, however, is the mediator between Allah and man.

Contrasting orthodox and Sufi Islam, many respondents held the view that it is only in shrines that one can find spiritual peace and relaxation. We Muslims, they said, have divided the mosques on a sectarian basis. But in shrines, both men and women from every sect are always welcome. Pilgrims praise Sufis over the ulama using the popular social argument that "the whole mess is made by the ualama (*sab jhagRaa maulviyoN kaa Daalaa huvaa hai)".

Saint Bari Imam

Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Qadri, who became known by the title of "Bari Imam" was born in 1617 in Choli Karsal, a village which is located about five miles away from the city of Chakwal, Punjab. His genealogical tree may be traced to Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law. Ali and Abu Bakr (closest companion of Prophet Muhammad and the first Muslim Caliph following Prophet's death) are considered vital links in chain (*silsilah*), connecting Sufis to the Prophet Muhammad (direct spiritual lineage).

It is well known that Bari Imam belonged to the Qadiriyyah mystical school of thought due to his spiritual teacher, Hazrat Sayyid Jamal-ul-llah Hayat-Al-Meer, who was believed to be the grandson of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani[63]. The Bari Imam's life cuts across two styles of Sufism, and this dualism provides a conflicting legacy. As an orthodox Qadiri, his tomb serves as a focus of devotion. As a Qalander, he left only his reputation for spiritual self-sufficiency. He left neither an order (*t:ariiqah*), which could be taught, nor heirs who could inherit his blessings[64]. According to one account, the title Bari Imam was conferred on him by his spiritual master Hazrat Sayyid Hayat-Al-Meer, who ordered him to come out of a stream called "Neelan Nadi" where he was performing his vigil. The meaning of the word *bar* is dry piece of land, while *imam* is one who should lead. Hazrat Sayyid Hayat-Al-Meer told him that now he had performed enough worship. He

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62   Amna Bashir, personal communication with author, September 5, 2017.

63   There are some contradictions in this narration as it is being verbally told, but has not been discussed in any authentic book.

64   Hafeez Rehman, *Saints and Shrines in Potohar Area*, Ph.D. dissertation, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad, 1996, p. 329.

should undertake to teach the people of his area about the right path, now that he was the *imaam* of this *bar* (Leader of the land). With the passage of time, the appellation *bar* (land) became *bari*. He died in 1708 aged 91 years[65].

He married a woman of a *saadaat*[66] family, Sayyidah Daman Khatoon, who bore a daughter who died in infancy. Soon after the child's death the mother also died, freeing the Imam from domestic responsibilities. He started to spend most of his time in worship (`*ibaadat*)[67]. In his account of the Majzub Mama Ji Sarkar, Frembgen[68] states that the saint Mama Ji Sarkar led a life of celibacy like his spiritual guide, Bari Imam. During my discussion with the pilgrims and local population, I found that popular discourse today as well as booklets at the shrine on the saint's life, did not endorse this assertion at all. Devotees do not believe that Bari Imam led a life of celibacy. At the end of April and the start of May, the `*urs* of Saint Bari Imam is celebrated. This occasion attracts thousands of pilgrims from all over the country, and particularly from the Potohari region.

Shrine Management

Until 50 years ago, sixty or seventy families who claim to be descendants of Bari Imam's four deputies' functioned as caretakers (*mutavalliin)* of the shrine. But in the era of General Ayub Khan (1958-1969), under a new administrative policy, the government was poised to take direct control over shrines, mosques and other properties dedicated to religious purpose. The West Pakistan Waqf Properties Rules of 1960 was passed with a view to curtail the influence of the saints and to regulate the endowments, which were allegedly exploited by the caretakers of the shrines and the ulama in their own interests. These endowments were to become State possession[69]. The powers of the Auqaf Department were regularized and increased by the West Pakistan Waqf Properties Ordinance of 1961, and the Auqaf Act of 1976, introduced under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto[70]. In principle, most of the major shrines were taken over by the government between 1959 and 1961. Yet caretakers of the shrines continued to exercise the actual management of the shrines and the organization of their religious activities[71]. Resistance against the Auqaf Department's takeover of shrines was mounted in a number of places, most notably at the Golra Sharif shrine in Islamabad. Hazrat Syed Ghulam Muhyuddin Shah (Hazrat Babuji), the only son of Pir Mehr Ali Shah (the chief saint

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65   Muhammad Qadri, *Seerat Hazrat Bari Imam Sarkar*…

66   Titles, *saadaat, sayyid*, and *shaah jii* used for the descendent of the Prophet Muhammad.

67   Muhammad Qadri, *Seerat Hazrat Bari Imam Sarkar*…; Karmani Hazrat Pir Syed Irtaza, *Hazrat Imam Bari Sarkar* [Saint Imam Bari], Azeem & Sons Publishers, Lahore, 2001.

68   Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, "The Majzub Mama Ji Sarkar", in: *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality and the Performance of Emotion in Sufi cults*, Pnina Werbner & Helene Basu (eds.), Routledge, London, 1998, p. 142.

69   Jamal Malik, *Colonization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Institutions in Pakistan*, Vanguard Books, Lahore, 1996, pp. 59-60.

70   Katherine Pratt Ewing, The Politics of Sufism: Redefining the Saints of Pakistan, *The Journal of Asian Studies,* Vol. 42, No, 2, 1983, p. 258.

71   Muhammed Hassanali, Sufi Influence on Pakistani Politics… p. 42.

of Golra Sharif) challenged the Department in the court of Law and won the case. Another famous shrine in Rawalpindi, the Eidgeh Sharif, along with many smaller shrines, has not been brought under the Auqaf Department. However, the Auqaf Department took official control over the shrine of Bari Imam in 1976.

Reflections From the Saint's House: Pilgrimage To Bari Imam

Daily, hundreds of pilgrims visit the shrine of Saint Bari Imam for prayers and in the fulfilment of their numerous vows. The majority of pilgrims I spoke with said they visited the shrine to pay homage to the saint. The terms they used were *salaam and HaaZrii* (attendance). If one finds oneself in the area, it is imperative to visit the shrine and offer *salaam* to the saint as a gesture of etiquette (*aadaab*). People also offer *salaam* as a routine. Many confide their wishes (*mannats*) to the saint and when they are fulfilled, they offer something to the shrine: cauldron, *caadar*, animals for sacrifice, wood for sacred fire (*mac)*, clarified butter for the lightening of the lamps (*caraaGii)*. Arshad who runs a clothing business said that "the name of Bari Imam is in my heart, I am his lover, he comes in my dreams. He has completed my wishes. First to me is Allah, then the Prophet Muhammad, then my mother and then Bari Imam".

To progress with one's education is a significant vow amongst Pakistani youth. A student said during the interview "I had been visiting here since he was doing matriculation. I wished to the saint for my success in matric exams and I was rewarded with very good marks although I could not do well in exams"[72]. There were many such examples. In a similar view, a young man[73] told me that he recently found a job with the blessing of the saint believing that his honour and prosperity are because of Bari Imam.

Lovers too seek the removal of hurdles regarding their marriages, including the disapproval of parents. It is believed by lovers that praying at the shrine will soften the heart of beloved. Another important vow that people seek here is the birth of a son. One female respondent told me that by the blessings of Bari Imam, Allah blessed her with a beautiful son. Business problems, unemployment, matrimonial disagreements, property disputes and legal difficulties are other major issues that people mentioned as reasons for visiting the shrine. Such concerns are brought to shrines across Pakistan.

Shrines Under Attack

Violent attacks on shrines were unheard of in the earlier years of Pakistan. Despite the fragile sectarian history, attacks on Sufi shrines were unprecedented in Pakistan. The first notable sectarian protest was the anti-Ahmadiyya movement in 1953, which was at last victorious when parliament affirmed the Ahma-

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72   Muhammad Naseer, personal communication with author, October 14, 2017.
73   Usman Rasheed, personal communication with author, September 11, 2017.

dis as a non-Muslim minority in 1974[74]. Sectarian violence in Pakistan became intensified during the presidency of General Zia-ul-Haq in 1980s. The focus of sectarian resentment then shifted to Shi'a-Sunni violence.

The tendency towards violence that has emerged in more recent times began with a bomb blast on 19 March 2005 that killed 49 people at the shrine of Pir Rakheel Shah in Jhal Magsi (a central district in Baluchistan province). This was followed by a suicide bomber attack on 27 May 2005 at Bari Imam shrine, Islamabad on the last day of a festival when a Shi'a *majlis* (gathering) was in progress. This attack left 25 dead and hundreds injured. I myself, along with a classmate, narrowly escaped the blast.

Shrines have been the frequent targets of the Pakistani Taliban and militant jihaadi groups. These groups consider shrine practices as *bid`at* and Pakistan's shrine culture as a form of idolatry[75]. Their aim is to rid Islam and the Ummah of the strongholds of polytheism (in this case, shrines) and polytheists (*mushrikiin*, in this case, pilgrims). The Court's decision in imposing the death sentence to Behram Khan, the Taliban member and mastermind of the 2011 terrorist attack on Sakhi Sarwar shrine[76] also referred to their engagement in terrorist acts.

However, confusion still seems to exist among pilgrims about which forces are behind these occurrences. The majority of pilgrims visiting the shrine of Bari Imam were not convinced that the Taliban were the only or real perpetrators. A young government officer during an interview said, " It is the agenda of foreign powers to collapse Pakistan"[77]. They believed that America, India and Israel – referred to as anti-Islamic powers (Islam *dushman quvvatiiN)* are involved in these massacres in order to create instability and sectarian violence in the country. Many respondents appeared confused and showed their feebleness when required to discuss who really are involved in these attacks.

The vulnerability of Pakistanis to conspiracy theories could be a possible explanation for their scepticism regarding the culprits. Pakistanis are forever detecting conspiracies due to the information gap, lack of transparency and mistrust towards the government. However, there are more substantial reasons for the prevalence of conspiracy theories. Many turn out to be true. Among proven facts once dismissed as rumours are the presence of Blackwater (US private military and security company, renamed as Academi in 2011) and the CIA in Pakistan, the Government's complicity in US drone attacks in the country's tribal belt[78].

The intellectual void among Muslims further provides a space for conspira-

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74   Mahmood Amjad Khan, Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan: An Analysis under International Law and International Relations, *Harvard Human Rights Journal,* Vol. 16, 2003, p. 225.

75   Christine C. Fair, Lashkar-e-Taiba Beyond Bin Laden: Enduring Challenges for Region and the International Community, Testimony Prepared for the U.S. Senate, Foreign Relations Committee, May 24, 2011.

76   "Sarwar shrine attack mastermind gets death on 52 counts", *Dawn,* March 7, 2013, available at: *http://x.dawn.com/2013/03/07/ sakhi-sarwar-shrine attack-mastermind-gets-death-on-52- counts/,* (date accessed 13.07.2019).

77   Zeeshan Asghar, personal communication with author, August 13, 2018.

78   Yusuf Huma, "The Truthers of Pakistan", *International Hearald Tribune*, February 28, 2013.

cism. Although there are great scholarly ideas tempting to the Muslim world, lack of interpretation in the modern world remains an unsolved quandary engendering the crisis in global Islam along with momentous socio-cultural and political issues. There is an exhaustive list of such classical work. Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Habib al-Mawardi (974-1058) is one of the earliest and widely respected Muslim jurists and political theorist to have recognized the corruption engendering confusion over the role of Islam in the state's affairs. Consequently, he sought to reform it while employing a legalistic interpretation of the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions. Al-Mawardi authored several books on politics, law, and other Islamic sciences[79]. 'The laws of Islamic Governance' (Al-Ahkam As-Ṣulṭaniyyah) is considered the first book of Islamic jurisprudence exclusively devoted to political implementation and governance. Notably, Al-Ahkam has been the standard reference in traditional Sunni political thought as well as modern studies of Islamic medieval political thought. In Al-Ahkam, Al-Mawardi made innovative legal guidelines in positioning the caliph within the Islamic legal framework. Al-Mawardi's political writings can be divided into two periods[80]. The first period focuses on the ruler as a social figure, his ideal demeanours and learning from previous leaders. The second period discusses the theory of Caliphate (Imamah). His writings belonging to the first period include 'Advice to Kings' (Nasihat Al-Muluk), 'Facilitating Judgment and Hastening Victory' (Tashil Al-Naẓar Wa Ta'jil Al-Zafar), and 'Book of Vizierate' (Kitab Al-Wizara)'. Works that belong to the latter are 'Ethics of this World and in Religion' (Kitab Adab Ad- Dunya Wa Ad-Din), and the famous Al-Ahkam As-Ṣulṭaniyyah.

Political instability and religious-based social disintegration are prominent challenges Muslims are facing in today's world. An important thesis in this regard is presented by Abul Malik Juwayni[81] (1028-1085) through his approach of 'objectives of Islamic law' (maqaṣid Sharia) in order to safeguard the nation (ḥifẓ al-dawlah). Al-Juwayni is considered as the last important representative of classical Ashʿarism, a school of Sunni rational theology (kalam). Imam al-Juwayni, as a scholar of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (uṣul fiqh), laid the grounds for studying objectives of Islamic law. His prime concern was the enforcement of justice values through leadership. This can also be seen in the title of his book 'Helping People in Shackling Tyranny' (Ghiyath al-Umam fiIltiyath al-Ẓulm). According to al-Juwayni, the responsibilities of leadership include protection of the state, fostering people's welfare, and promoting Islamic values in a committed manner. Al-Juwayni elaborated on the 'objectives of Islamic law' in relation to legal causes dividing the purpose of law enactment into three categories – namely necessities, needs and luxuries. He also elucidated the legal reasoning of the law by corresponding it with the reality rather than only looking for the conformity

79 Asghar Ali Engineer, *Theory and Practise of the Islamic state*, Vanguard Books, 1985; Noah Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State*, Princeton University Press, 2012.

80 Naim Wan Mansor, Abu Hasan al-Mawardi: The First Islamic Political Scientist, *Unpublished Paper,* 2015, pp. 1-8.

81 "Jan Thiele al-Juwaynī", in: *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, Henrik Lagerlund (eds.). Springer, Dordrecht, 2018.

to principles (uṣul) with branches (furu') as previous scholars did. To him, if something is buttressed by reason and a proposition, then it is a principle[82].

Another renowned Hanbali jurist and theologian Ibn Taymiyah's (1263-1328) journey to modernity remains a comparatively unexplored subject. His seminal work 'Treatise on the Government of the Religious Law' *(Al-Kitab al-Siyasa al-shar'iyya)* theorizes the role of religion in politics and governance arguing for equilibrium between the law, processes of Islamic jurisprudence and the practical demands that can be informative to understand the current perplexity of the place of Sharia in modern governance. Ibn Taymiyah's emphasized on the accountability of rulers making them acquiescent to the law. However, he also recognized that there are zones of activity where Sharia doctrines are silent. In such areas, the ruler must have discretionary power to penalize criminals within the lawfully defined limits of that discretionary authority[83]. Buttressing the aforementioned point, Khallaf[84] argues that the fundamental principal of Islamic politics is governing an Islamic state to promote goodness and shunning evilness.

Ibn Khaldun's (1332-1406) theorization of history, social cohesion and change, economic prosperity, good governance, leadership and rise and fall of civilizations based upon his monumental work 'al-Muqaddimah' (Prolegomenon) merits scholarly attention in regard to popular Islam and governance crisis in the Muslim World. Ibn Khaldun argued that exploration of holistic cultural life is imperative to determine the authentic history of a nation. He further proclaimed that the notion of good governance and great leadership are interweaved as the leaders hold significant positions as inheritors of the Prophets and are responsible for implementing the Laws of Allah in all aspects of life. He further asserted that leadership must be free from corruption in order to establish law and order, group cohesion and a sense of belonging that will ultimately provide power and authority to a ruler engendering a sense of obedience among the people[85]. The intellectual vacuity coupled with the rising gap between public and state institutions have been promoting conspiracism making Pakistanis vulnerable to be easily trapped into religo-political propaganda and exploitation.

Linking Sufism And War On Terror: A Successful Strategy?

The participants regardless of their sectarian association disapproved the policy of using Sufism and shrines in the politics of counter-terrorism. During an interview, a 50-year-old male pilgrim commented in this regard: "The politiciza-

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82   Iffatin Nur, Susanto Susanto, Social Conflict in Indonesia: Safeguarding a Nation as a New Approach for Resolving National Disintegration, *Journal of Social Studies Education Research,* Vol. 11, No. 2, 2020, pp. 151-173.

83   Anver M. Emon, Shari'a and the Modern State, *Islamic Law and International Law: Searching for Common Ground,* 2012, pp. 52-81.

84   Khallaf Abd al-Wahhab, Al-Siyāsah al-Shar'iyyah fi al-Syuūn al-Dustūriyyah wa al- Kharijiyyah wa al-Māliyyah [Islamic Politics in the Constitutional, Foreign, and Treasury Affairs], Dar al Qalam, Kuwait, 1998.

85   Suhaila Abdullah, Ibn Khaldun's Theory of Good Governance in Achieving Civilization Excellence, *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences,* Vol. 8, No. 9, 2018.

tion of Sufism and shrines is extremely dangerous. It has been spreading hatred and engendering violence between different sects. Sufism is nothing but love and thus must not be made controversial".

Issues of sectarian identity were not prominent during the Pakistan Movement. However, they gripped the nation soon after the conception of Pakistan[86]. The first notable sectarian protest was the anti-Ahmadiyya movement in 1953, which was at last victorious when parliament affirmed the Ahmadis as a non-Muslim minority in 1974[87]. Sectarian violence in Pakistan became intensified during the presidency of General Zia-ul-Haq in 1980s. The focus of sectarian resentment then shifted to Shi'a -Sunni violence. By connecting Shi'as with Ahmadis, Deobandis have demanded a ban on all public Shi'a rituals and the more radical elements among them, such as the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), have demanded that Shi'as should be declared non-Muslims[88]. In the 1990s, hundreds were killed in Sunni - Shi'a sectarian violence across the country[89] and this violence has persisted to the present day. Despite the fragile sectarian history, attacks on Sufi shrines were unprecedented in Pakistan.

The onset of the current wave of attacks in 2005, when militants targeted the shrine of Pir Rakheel Shah in Jhal Magsi, coincided with the time when the Pakistan Government began to propose Sufi images as an alternative in responding to the resurgent Taliban[90]. One example of this trend was the formation of the National Council of Sufism (NSC) by military dictator General Pervez Musharraf (1999 – 2008) whose aims was to promote Sufi poetry and music in support of his version of "enlightened-moderation"[91]. The succeeding government (The Pakistan Peoples Party) initiated the Sufi Advisory Council (SAC) with the aim of combating extremism and fanaticism by spreading Sufism throughout the country[92]. But, the idea of SAC did not emerge as an internal deliberation among religious scholars in Pakistan. It appeared instead from American think tanks like the Rand and Heritage Foundation[93]. Due to this political use of Sufism, jhadi groups started to consider Sufism as an anti-jihaad philosophy and its supporters as anti-Islam. Owing to this and some other reasons the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan

86 Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Sectarianism in Pakistan: The radicalization of Shi'i and Sunni identities, *Modern Asian Studies,* Vol. 32, No. 3, 1998. p. 691.

87 Mahmood Amjad Khan, Persecution of the Ahmadiyya... p. 225.

88 "The state of sectarianism in Pakistan", *ICG Asia Report No. 95,* 2005, p. 4, available at: *http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/ publication-type/media-releases/2005/asia/the-state-of-sectarianism-in-pakistan.aspx#* , (date accessed 25.08.2012).

89 Saima Afzal, Iqbal Hamid, and Mavara Inayat, Sectarianism and its implications for Pakistan security: Policy recommendations using exploratory study, *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (JHSS),* Vol. 4, No. 4, 2012, p. 20.

90 Ayesha Siddiqa, Pakistan's Counterterrorism Strategy: Separating Friends from Enemies, *The Washington Quarterly,* Vol. 34, No. 1, 2011, p. 159.

91 Enlightened-Moderation was an approach introduced by Ex-military rural of Pakistan, General Musharraf (2001-08) was primarily based upon the western philosophy of life in which Islam as religion would have very limited impact on life and the individual is free to determine his/her life style.

92 Ministry of Religious Affairs, Government of Pakistan, Notification, Reconstitution of the Sufi Advisory Council, 2010.

93 Tom Heneghan, "Sufi Card Very Hard to Play Against Pakistani Taliban:", *Reuters,* June 26, 2009, available at: *http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2009/06/26/sufi-card-very-hard-to-play-against-pakistani-taliban/*, (date accessed 12.08.2012).

intensified its attacks on popular Sufi shrines[94]. The impression that America was promoting the Sufi version of Islam to support its war in Afghanistan was later proved as Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), a alliance of Barelvi groups, received $36, 607 from Washington in 2009 to organize anti-Taliban rallies[95].

This politicization of Sufi Islam has serious repercussions. This strategy has been encouraging a sectarian tension between the Deobandis and the Barelvis and also creating scepticism in the society regarding the role and impartiality of shrines.

Conclusion

Contrary to popular belief, it is not the extremes of Talibanization that define Islam in Pakistan. In scholarly works and debates of international media, Pakistani Muslims who oppose the militant agenda are largely missing, leaving a marginal section of extremist elements to emerge as representative icons of Islam and Pakistan. As a consequence, the world's understanding of Pakistan tends to be confined to negative images. The inflated portrayal of such movements as Talibanization as representative imaginings of Islam in Pakistan has eclipsed attention to the strength and continued following of Sufi Islam, both in rural and urban Pakistan.

Orthodox Islam and Sufi Islam are two faces of Islam in which people feel and interpret their lived experiences differently. Male-female social intermixing, the non-observance of pardah, and female participation in the various shrines' rituals and practices are taken by many as contrary to the orthodox teachings of Islam. Yet shrine worship survives and flourishes, despite the violent attacks on shrines. Apart from spiritual ease and observance, shrines offer diverse attractions to their visitors including a space for social gatherings and entertainment that may not hold a direct connection with spiritual homage. Sufi music and dance, which are dear to the hearts of Pakistanis, are indispensable components of their cultural lives.

In Noor Pur Shahan, as elsewhere in Pakistan, various orientations and aspirations of Islam exist among the inhabitants**.** Regardless of sectarian differences, adherents of different sects such as the Deobandis, Barelvis, and Ahl-e-Hadith co-exist without bloodshed. The strong family networks, traditions of *maHalledaarii* (neighborhood system), and friendship (*dostii)* dominate sectarian identities.

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94   Thomas K. Gugler, "Pakistan's Barelwiyat Between Sufism and Love for the Prophet", available at: *https://www.academia. edu/590654/Pakistan_s_Barelwiyat_between_Sufislamism_and_Love_for_the_Prophet2011.*

95   Brummitt C. D'Souza, "US Aided Pakistan Group which Supported Extremists", *The Guardian,* January 11, 2012.

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Мухамед Билал

ПОЛИТИКА НАРОДНОГ ИСЛАМА:
ЕТНОГРАФСКО ИСТРАЖИВАЊЕ ИСЛАМСКОГ
РЕВИВАЛИЗМА У ПАКИСТАНУ

Сажетак

Након 9/11, успон талибана и њихова коалиција са Ал Каидом утицали су на настанак нових дискурса о исламу и Пакистану. У овом раду представљам етнографску анализу Бари имама, популарног шија светилишта у Пакистану и ре-евалуирам одређене тврдње и тезе о народном исламу. Да ли су милитаризација, шеријатизација, и настанак покрета као што су талибани прекомерно представљени као репрезентативна слика ислама? Поред тога, истражујемо и динамику живота суфија, за које сматрамо да ће наставити да обликују живот и праксу великог броја муслимана у Пакистану. У чланку се закључује да је генерално непознавање суфизма од стране људи изван овог дела света, поред недостатка знања о неколико облика идентификације и искуства ислама међу Пакистанцима, лимитира њихово разумевање земље, људи и ислама.

Кључне речи: народни ислам, суфизам, ектремизам, светилиште, етнографија, Пакистан