



Editorial

The aim of the French Interdisciplinary Mission in Sindh (MIFS) is to bring to light the historical and sociological heritage of Pakistan which, by and large, has been largely neglected by researchers. Pakistan's rich heritage stems largely from its geographic position as a hinge between the Middle East, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. To date, the media and, to a lesser extent, academia, are largely responsible for having circulated catastrophic approaches on this region.

The MIFS is carrying out an interdisciplinary study of a pilgrimage centre (*ziyarat*), Sehwan Sharif, by drawing on diverse fields of expertise such as history, anthropology, literature, geography, topography, architecture and epigraphy. It seeks to highlight the many facets of the historical heritage of this site, as well as the processes of integration of various segments of the local population, particularly groups discriminated and marginalized such as women, musicians, Hindu castes, outcastes and *hijrah*. No major study has yet been done on Sehwan itself. Nor has a multidisciplinary approach of the Islamic heritage of such a site ever been conducted in South Asia.

This first issue of the MIFS newsletter, presents the research program and its participants, as well as information pertaining to the history and geography of Sufism in South Asia. The activities of the MIFS will be followed by upcoming issues presenting fieldwork activities and research seminars, as well as through a Web site presently under construction.

Michel Boivin

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History and Sufism in the Indus valley

This study lies in the continuity of the research carried out between 1996 and 2002 by the French Archaeological Mission of Sindh (MAFS) led by Monique Kervan. It became apparent that an interdisciplinary research program on the pilgrimage center of Sehwan Sharif was called for, as this site is now one of the largest religious gatherings in South Asia. The town of Sehwan Sharif, located in the Indus valley in southern Pakistan, is particularly well chosen for the dual spiritual and political role it has played in the region of Sindh. The study will also provide some answers regarding the inclusion of the Saint La'î Shahbâz Qalandar in the regional and local historical sequences of Sufism, his ability to structure urban social space and religious representations, both local and regional.

Shâh Inayât mausoleum (Jhok Sharif)



'Usmân Marwandî came from Persia and after travelling to the Middle East and India, he settled in Sehwan, where he died in 1274. Possibly affiliated to the Sohrawardî order (*tariqa*), his sobriquet was La'î Shahbâz Qalandar: *lâl* (red) because he had been burned by the fire of knowledge and *shahbâz* (Royal Falcon) for his mystical flight. Until recently, Sehwan was largely populated by fishermen-boatmen. These Mohânâs, who are said to be the descendants of the inhabitants of Mohenjo Daro, still play a role in some rituals but nowadays the Channâs, a community of farmers, are predominant.

The study of the relationship between Sufism and history in Sehwan Sharif requires an interdisciplinary approach to a site which is particularly rich in terms of both historical and ethnological heritage. The question which serves

here as a theme concerns the processes of social and territorial integration at work through Sufism. The integration of artistic traditions, as well as groups takes place at the urban and regional levels. The project is divided into three programs:

Program 1 History, arts et techniques

The first program is devoted to the study of the historical continuity of a monumental heritage based on the integration of various architectural and artistic traditions. Another aspect of the study is concerned by the production of original and industrial ceramics containing elements that can be traced to the Persian Gulf, but also to Yemen, East Africa and as far as Sumatra. A survey of pottery workshops in southern Sindh is essential to analyze both the manufacturing techniques and the processes of dissemination of designs.

Program 2 Sehwan Sharif, a pilgrimage town

The town of Sehwan Sharif shares a long urban history, both of the Indus civilization (Mohenjo-Daro), and that of a religious geography which has been redesigned over the centuries, particularly through the development of Sufi orders (*tariqa*). As a booming pilgrimage city in contemporary Pakistan, Sehwan Sharif is characterized both as a place of gathering and of religious circulation, whose social, ideological and political significances will have to be decrypted here.

Program 3 Devotional practices

The third program is based on the unity around the cult of the Saint La'î Shahbâz Qalandar in order to determine the common ritual heritage shared by Sufi, Shia, Hindu and others. The projects are here focused on the devotional literature, the ceremonial corpus, the most significant and specific rituals and processions in Sehwan Sharif (*dhammâl*, *chej*), as well as social groups representative of the local religiosity (women, *hijrah*, musicians, lower castes).

Axis 1: The mausoleums of the Masum Pak complex at Sehwan (Pauline Piraud-Fournet)

The monuments, many mausoleums and shrines of Sehwan, most probably built prior to the 18th century, show important connections with memorials of Central Asia. Their shared characteristics are their cubic basis topped by a dome, a main entrance enhanced by an *îwân* or a *peshtâq*, niches in the structure of facades and the placing of pillars within the angles. Today, these buildings are in an advanced stage of deterioration, for the base of their walls is systematically eroded. The painted ceramic tiles ornamenting the front walls are disappearing.

A systematic survey of these monuments as well as an architectural investigation (including material appraisal and historical contextualisation) and a patrimonial study (maintenance, restoration, enhancement of the buildings) are required. The study's objective is to pursue this systematic survey in the mausoleums situated in the cemetery of "Masum pak", on the outskirts of the holy city of Sehwan Sharif.

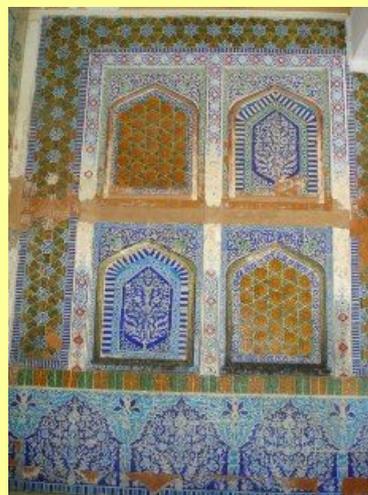
Axis 2: Ceramic techniques and material culture (Audrey Peli, Jürgen Wasim Frembgen)

During the excavations conducted by Monique Kervan in Sindh, a series of glazed tiles whose stratigraphic context pertain to the late period (between the 16th and 18th centuries) were discovered. The study of these tiles discovered on the sites of Sehwan, Lahori Bandar and Kalan Kot and, more generally, those of Sind raises several questions.

Systematic research in the potters' workshops will give us a better understanding of the technical process of manufacturing these tiles. The coexistence in Sehwan of tiles decorated with geometric forms and the typical Sindhi tiles shows that the city was at the crossroads of two architectural traditions. In more general terms, the tiles of Sindh reflect the breakthrough of the Turkish-Persian culture in India as they appear with the arrival of the dynasties of Mongolian origin and adorn monuments whose architectural model is clearly inspired from the Turkish-Iranian world.

Axis 3: The epigraphic corpus of Sehwan Sharif and the epigraphic production of Sindh (Johanna Blayac)

Situated at the crossroads of the Iranian world, Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent, the southern part of Sindh shows various influences, particularly in terms of architecture. The evolution of architectural motifs can be observed at the site of Makli (13th/14th-18th centuries), located near Thatta, some 80 kilometres east of Karachi. Strongly influenced by the stone carving art of Gujarati at earlier stages, the Makli site was subsequently known for coating tiles derived from the Turkish-Persian world. It was also a hotbed of epigraphic production, both monumental and funeral, and can therefore serve as a benchmark for our comparative study of the epigraphic corpus of Sehwan. Located in the Indus valley, the two cities of Thatta and Sehwan are historically linked. They both lost their political significance with the fall of the Mughal empire, Fort Sehwan fell into disrepair during the 19th century. However, since then, the sites have developed differently.



Ceramics from the Shah Inayat mausoleum

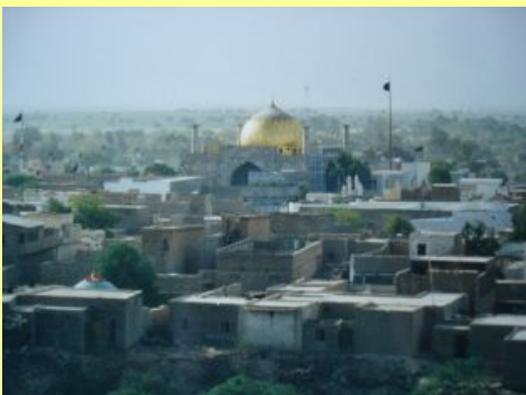
While the old part of Thatta has been abandoned, the town of Sehwan has grown since the 1960's through the planning activities of the Auqaf Department. The survey of the epigraphic corpus of Sehwan will help us to assess the relevance of the regional production, as well as to analyze, in a second stage, the contents of these inscriptions in comparison with the local traditions. It will also examine how recent epigraphic production is articulated with the older one.

Axis 4: The city, its social and spatial organization (Rémy Delage, Sophie Reynard)

The town of Sehwan Sharif should first be contextualized within the urban history of the Indus valley (Mohenjo-Daro) and its changing religious geography throughout the centuries. Then, it is the socio-spatial organization of the contemporary city will be the subject of multiple investigations in the field, given its rapid transformation due to the increasing popularity of the pilgrimage site. In this first phase, the changes in the morphology of the city, the structure of its population and the distribution of social groups in the urban space, as well as the business sectors structuring the economy of Sehwan, will be described.

The sphere of influence of Sehwan will also be evaluated through the study of networks of places of worship, internal and external to the city, as well as the pilgrimage routes that lead to Sehwan. To do so, a more specific study of the system of Sufi hospices (*kâfi*) in the city is expected to reveal the existence of social networks that transcend the limits of the town. The mapping of the spaces created by the activity of the pilgrimage will be done by a topographer, Sophie Reynard. Her contribution to the MIFS is to develop a Geographic Information System (GIS), i.e. a geo-referenced database, that will require the survey of various places *in situ*: the old and new cities, the main (mausoleums) and secondary (hospices) places of worship, as well as religious schools (*madrassas*), and facilities for pilgrims, but also information on the occupation of urban space by social groups, based on criteria such as community, social and religious belonging.

Sehwan and the golden dome of the LSQ mausoleum

**Axis 5: Public processions (Michel Boivin et Rémy Delage)**

Ritual processions conducted by different groups during Moharam and 'urs constitute a particular approach of the town of Sehwan on several levels. Firstly, the processional itineraries structure the course of pilgrimage activities, according to the ritual calendar. They are also a factor in the organization and delimitation of urban space in the sense that the routes were designed by groups in such a way that they respect the divisions of the social space. The study of these itineraries will enable, as a first step, to better understand the organization of the city.

In addition, the ceremonial processions which take place in the public space of the pilgrimage is a privileged occasion for staging divergent interests of different groups fighting for various positions in the conduct of ritual activities. They are a place of mediation in the struggles of influences usually running at the local level. Their analysis could therefore reveal the challenges and hierarchies of power between different social groups involved in the organization and management of the pilgrimage.

Axis 6: Sehwan in Sindh and contemporary Pakistan (Rémy Delage and Jérémie Nechtschein)

Today Sehwan has become one of the most important mass religious gatherings in Pakistan. The discussions initiated here by Rémy Delage and Jeremie Nechtschein revolve around two issues. Firstly, would the pilgrimage be indicative of a Sindhi regional identity or rather a factor of national integration? And, secondly, how within a few decades, has the shift occurred from a place of local worship to a place of social and territorial "condensation", i.e. a place socially and politically constructed in such a way that society gives itself to be seen and read through it? The double instrumentalization of the figure of La'1 Shahbâz Qalandar and Sufism by political leaders, hypothetically, contributed to this process. These thoughts are then proposed to evaluate the role of various interlinked structures, geographic and economic, ideological and political, in the construction of discourses and representations of Sehwan as a cosmopolitan pilgrimage city.

Axis 7: Multiple expressions of devotion (Michel Boivin, Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, Lata Parwani)

This research focuses on the various aspects of devotion in the mausoleums of Sehwan Sharif. Lata Parwani is working on the literature devoted specifically to La'ī Shahbâz Qalandar. In a first stage, she will study the literature from the colonial period to assess the impact of colonization on the relationship of devotees with the mausoleum. Secondly, she plans to focus on the various shapes taken by devotion as seen through vernacular literature and the oral tradition.

Looking at devotion through another lens, Jürgen Wasim Frembgen focuses his attention to the study of the process of iconisation of La'ī Shahbâz Qalandar. His aim is to trace the sources of this genre of iconography, and to view it in the larger context of the production of the Indus valley and the Indian subcontinent. Particular attention will be paid to the production of posters produced for the occasion of the *`urs*.

Michel Boivin is interested in the different modes of expression of devotion through the morphology of the relationship between masters (*murshids*) and disciples (*murīds*), and rituals of exchange. Several case studies will be conducted according to the confession of the master (Shiite, Sunni, Hindu), and in doing so he will evaluate the impregnation of Shiite elements in the charismatic discourse produced inside the Sufi hospices.

Axis 8: The involvement of discriminated groups (Sohail Bawani, Michel Boivin, Emmanuelle Novello, Frédérique Pagani)

Various groups are involved in the organization, management and conduct of the activities of the ritual pilgrimage to Sehwan. Apart from the pilgrims and local elites, many of the groups involved are socially discriminated against and yet they play a fundamental role, such as outcastes, musicians, *hijrah*, and women. Sohail Bawani and Frédérique Pagani look at the ritual of *dhammâl* which is an ecstatic dance performed primarily by women in honor of the La'ī Shahbâz Qalandar. Possession may be one of the dramatic elements. Sohail Bawani will focus on performing arts and social meanings attached to *dhammâl*, while Frédérique Pagani focuses her analysis on the therapeutic aspect

of this ritual, in order to compare them with the *chej* of Hindu Sindhis in honor of Udero Lâl.

Michel Boivin will study the role of musicians in the private and public rituals that take place in the holy city of Sehwan Sharif. Music plays a key role in the practice of devotional Islam, the different categories of musicians will be studied to determine the hierarchy of statutes according to different ritual moments. Another marginalized group plays a ritual role in Sehwan, that of *hijrah*. Emmanuelle Novello will describe their ritual through which these individuals, who are born as men or hermaphrodites and dress like women, claim the spiritual heritage of La'ī Shahbâz Qalandar. She will question the nature of these sufi pilgrimages in the negotiation of the category "Hijrah" in Pakistani society.



An improvised *dhammâl* in front of the LSQ mausoleum

Axis 9: A comparative approach of the representations of sainthood (Hasanali Khan, Jérémie Nechtschein)

A better understanding of the contemporary importance of the figure of La'ī Shahbâz Qalandar in Pakistan calls for a comparative approach of the representations attaches to saints. The work of Hasanali Khan is focused on the complementarity of the ceremonies between Sehwan and Multan, which eventually fitted into the ceremonial grounds of the Sohrawardī order in the Indus valley and played a major role in the formulation of the legacy of plural heritage of the medieval Sindh. Jérémie Nechtschein aims to study the figures of sainthood which are currently participating in the redefinition of Sufism. Through the analysis of discourses conveyed today on the Saints, a double analysis will emerge on the role of various actors in the construction of representations of sainthood and the social and political role of saints in the debate around modernity in devotional Islam.

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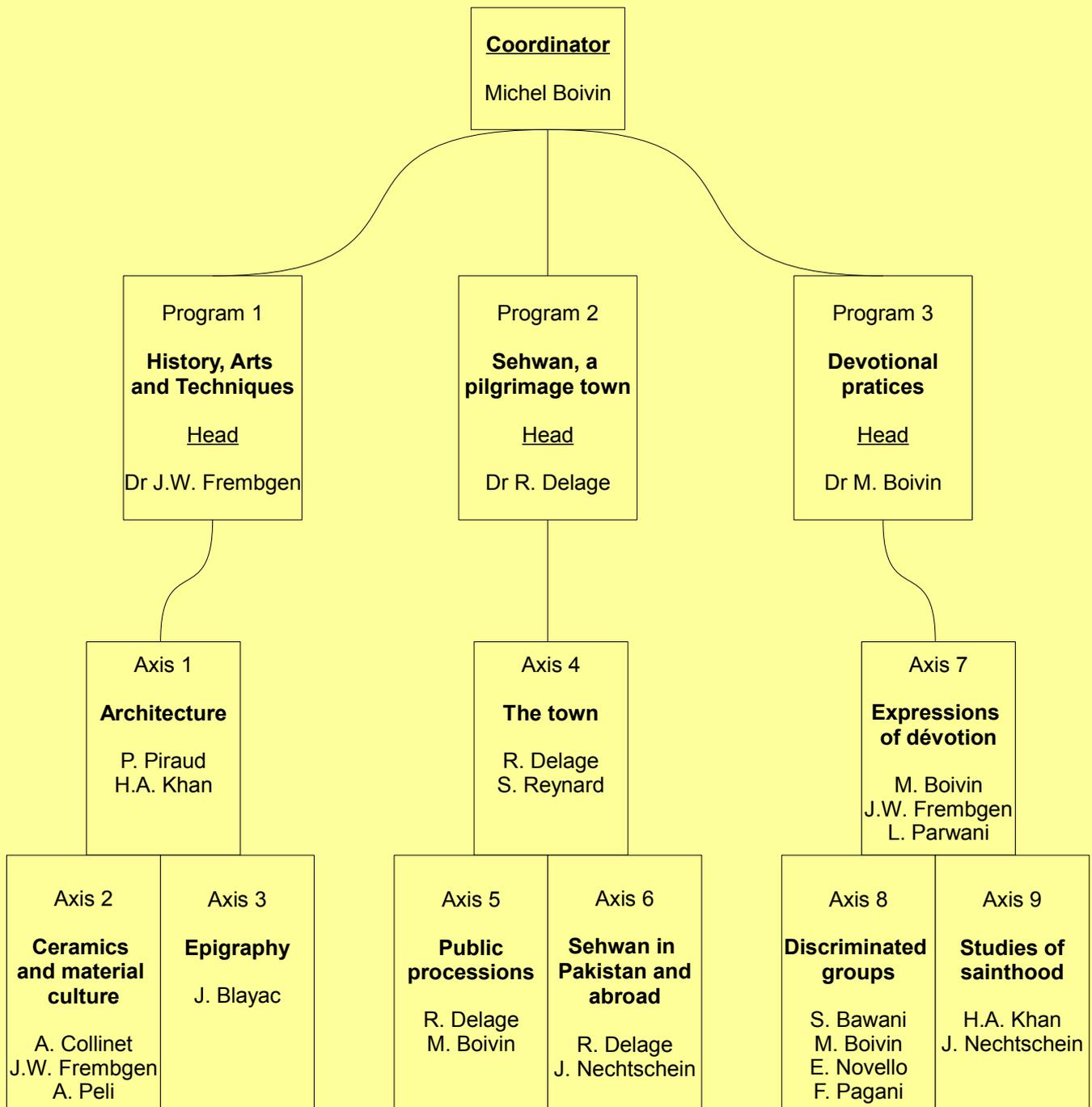
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French Interdisciplinary Mission in Sindh (MIFS)



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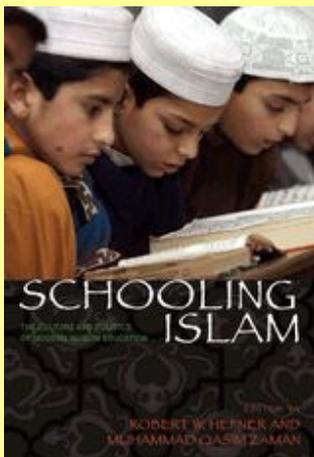
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Alessandro Monsutti, Silvia Naef & Fabian Sabah (eds) (2007) *The Other Shiites. From the Mediterranean to Central Asia*, Bern, Peter Lang.

This collective volume is the proceedings of an international conference, which took place at the University of Geneva in 2002. The « Other » in the title refers to the fact that none of the articles are devoted to Iran. It provides a general perspective on the diversity and multiplicity of Shiism outside Iran during the past two centuries. The word Shia is used here in a wider sense, since one paper is devoted to the Alevi and another to Ismailis. The book brings together thirteen contributions, five of which are devoted to South Asia, particularly Pakistan. Of particular interest is the contribution of Mariam Abou Zahab on the politicization of Shiites in Pakistan in the 1970's and 1980's, and that of Alessandro Monsutti on the social organization and the role of 'Ashura' among the Hazaras of Quetta (Baluchistan) .



MB



Robert W. Hefner & Muhammad Qasim Zaman (eds) (2007) *Schooling Islam. The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press.

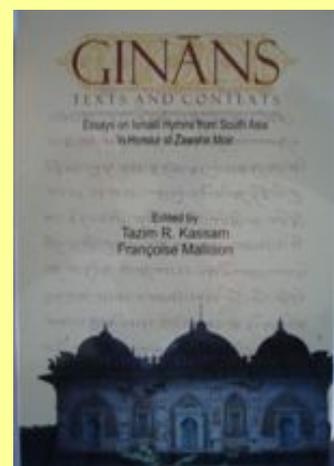
The topic of religious education of Muslims has become of interest to many researchers for at least two decades. This volume reflects the momentum generated by a gathering of eminent specialists of the Muslim world, including here Morocco, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. In contrast to the image portrayed by Western media of the Muslim educational system, often described as motionless and a vector of militant and radical Islam, contributors here provide a more nuanced vision. While describing the diversity of cultural contexts of educational institutions, they raise the question of the evolving nature and modernity of the relations between Islam and the State.

RD

Tazim Kassam and Françoise Mallison (eds) (2007) *Ginân. Texts and Contexts. Essays on Ismaili Hymns from South Asia in Honour of Zawahir Moir*, New Delhi, Matrix Publishers.

The *ginâns* are devotional hymns of the Khojas, Nizari Ismailis of South Asia, disciples of Shâh Karîm, better known in Europe as Aga Khan IV. The contributions collected in this volume by Tazim Kassam and Françoise Mallison are offered to Zawahir Moir. Following the foreword by Christopher Shackle, the book offers a bibliography of Zawahir Moir who is without doubt the most knowledgeable expert on *ginâns*. The fifteen contributions reflect the diversity and dynamism of *ginân* studies. Among the issues under discussion, are *ginâns* the devotional heritage shared by the Khojas and other communities in Gujarat and Sindh. Historians also point out the interest of the role of the *ginâns* in the construction of Khojas identity during the 19th and 20th centuries.

MB



Seminars in France 2007-2008***Histoire et soufisme dans la vallée de l'Indus***

Seminar coordinated by Michel Boivin, CEIAS-EHESS, Paris.

En attendant le mahdī : islam et messianisme en Inde au XIX^e siècle

Seminar coordinated by Elisabeth Allès, Marc Gaborieau, Eric Germain, Aminah Mohammad-Arif, IISMM/EHESS, Paris.

Anthropologie religieuse de l'Orient musulman médiéval (saints hommes et élites religieuses)

Seminar coordinated by Denise Aigle, EPHE, Paris.

Anthropologie historique des pratiques religieuses dans l'Islam méditerranéen. Les confréries religieuses au Maghreb moderne et contemporain : objets, modèles et pratiques de connaissance

Seminar coordinated by Hassan Elboudrari, IISMM, Paris.

Mystique musulmane. L'eschatologie dans l'exégèse mystique du Coran

Seminar coordinated by Pierre Lory, EPHE, Paris.

Soufisme et confréries dans le monde turco-persan du XVI^e siècle à nos jours

Seminar coordinated by Alexandre Papas et Thierry Zarccone.

Inde médiévale et moderne. Textes et contextes

Seminar coordinated by Nalini Delvoe, EPHE, Paris.

Exégèse et théologie dans l'islam shi'ite

Seminar coordinated by Mohammad Ali Amir Moezzi, EPHE, Paris.

La déculturation du religieux dans le monde contemporain

Seminar coordinated by Olivier Roy, EHESS, Paris.

International conferences in 2008***South Asia conference, March 29-30, Claremont, California***

- Organized by the South Asian Studies Alliance
- Website: www.sasia.org

The 22nd Pakistan Workshop : « Spaces of Dialogue », May 9-11, Rook How, Lake District

- Organized by the department of anthropology, Durham University
- Website: <https://anthropology.dur.ac.uk/anthrowiki/workshop2008/Home.html>

20th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, July 8-11, Manchester

- Organized by the School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, Manchester University
- Including an exhibition of contemporary Pakistani religious poster art, Manchester Museum
- Website: www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/ecmsas

About us

We would like to thank all the members of MIFS for their team spirit in transmitting to the editors the necessary documents for the speedy implementation of this first Newsletter of the MIFS.

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