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The third collective fieldwork session conducted by the MIFS team took place in November-December 2010. Four members of our team went to Sehwan Sharif during the month of Muharram and recorded the event through various research angles such as the reading of processional itineraries and the performance of rituals, the study of competition between local elites and the integrative nature of Muharram processions. A detailed report is available in this issue. Field research for the death anniversary of La'ī Shahbāz Qalandar (*'urs*) in July 2011 (19th, 20th and 21st of Shâ`ban) complements the latter since these are the two major events that punctuate the ritual calendar of Sehwan.

Besides this fieldwork activity, the team is currently working on a research notebook called "Sindhi Studies Group" (<http://sindh.hypotheses.org/>). The MIFS will use the blog to provide free access to a number of data collections created by the team members, such as a wide range of documents about Sindh and Pakistan. We thank especially the CEIAS (CNRS-EHESS, Paris) for its financial support for the digitization of a large number of maps. This scholarly blog will also allow us to develop further exchanges between students and scholars working in and about the Sindhi world, beyond the specific research project focusing on Sehwan Sharif (MIFS).

The present issue opens up with an interview of Ali Asani, Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures, Faculty of Arts & Sciences at Harvard University. Professor Asani is a leading scholar in the field of Sindhi Sufi poetry, as well as in other literary traditions of South Asia such as the rich corpus of Ismaili *gināns*. During the interview, he provided us with clues to better understand this neglected field of research that is Sindhi literature and poetry. Then follows the report of our latest field trip in Sehwan which was completed in December 2010, during the month of Muharram. In the third part of the present issue, we continue to introduce Sindhi poetry through excerpts by Miyun Shah Inat (c. 1623-1712). In a special book review, Delphine Ortis presents a book recently published by Alexandre Papas on three *qalandars* who originated from Central Asia. The author provides important historical data that helps drawing a comparative approach between the Qalandariyya of Central Asia and of South Asia.

Michel Boivin & Rémy Delage

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Interview with Ali S. Asani

Ali Asani is Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures, Faculty of Arts & Sciences at Harvard University. He is a renowned specialist in the field of Sindhi literary studies. Michel Boivin interviewed him during his passage to Canada for a conference in May 2011.



Could you tell us a few words about your background and training as a scholar?

I received my undergraduate and doctoral (Ph.D.) education at Harvard. My undergraduate (B.A.) degree was in the Comparative Study of Religion with a specialization in Islam and Indo-Muslim literatures, while my doctorate was from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations where I specialized in the study of Islam and Muslim Cultures in South Asia.

In receiving this education, which combined the study of religion with the study of South Asian Muslim literatures and cultures, I was fortunate to have two renowned mentors, Professors Annemarie Schimmel and Wilfred Cantwell-Smith.

How did you come to be interested in Sindhi literature? Did Annemarie Schimmel, who was your academic mentor, play a role?

I developed an interest in Sindhi literature for several reasons. While growing up in Kenya, I was always aware of my family's ancestral roots in Sindh. My father, in particular, educated me about many aspects of Sindhi culture. I also learnt from him the important cultural and social roles that my grandfather and great-grandfather had played in the history of the Khojah community of Sindh. When I came to Harvard to pursue my studies, my interest in Sindhi was further sparked by Professor Annemarie Schimmel who, as you know, was one of the few western scholars to engage in research on Sindhi literature. The fact that my undergraduate and doctoral theses, both supervised by Professor Schimmel, focused on aspects of the Ismaili *ginân* literature helped consolidate my interest in Sindhi. Several *ginâns* are regarded as examples of early Sindhi literature. In addition, Khojki, the script used in manuscripts to record the *ginâns* and other literatures of interest to Sindhi Khojahs, is one of several vernacular or local scripts used to write the Sindhi language.

According to you, why is Sindhi literature and culture understudied in the West, in comparison with Punjabi, Gujarati, and also Hindi and Urdu?

There are several reasons for this. Firstly, Sindhi is regarded as a language of limited political and cultural significance since it is mainly spoken in the province of Sindh in Pakistan. In addition, the language is of little significance in India as Sindhis, lacking a state of their own, have found it difficult to maintain the language among younger generations. In contrast, Urdu/Hindi is considered more influential as it functions as a *lingua franca* in South Asia and elsewhere. Similarly, the importance of Punjabi or Gujarati is sustained by the fact that they are associated with economically and politically significant populations in India and Pakistan as well as among the South Asian diaspora in the West, many of whom have maintained their connection and interest in their literary heritage. Secondly, Sindhi lacks adequately developed material to teach the language to speakers of Western languages. I have yet to come across a textbook that applies modern methods of language pedagogy to teaching Sindhi to English speakers that is accompanied by a sound set of exercises and audio recordings. Thirdly, Sindhi is more difficult to learn than any other North Indian languages. Its fairly complex grammar with its peculiar use of enclitics, its special sounds (especially the implosives) as well as the use of a modified version of the Arabic script are significant hurdles.

You have done extensive work on data written in Khojki script, the secret alphabet of the Ismaili Khojas. What is according to you the relation of Khojki with Sindh? In your work, did you come over Sindhi scripts like Khudawadi, Lohanaki or others?

Khojki was one of several scripts prevalent in Sindh before a modified version of the Arabic script was introduced as the standard script for the language during British colonial times. As its name indicates, it was a script primarily associated with Sindhi Khoja communities. In this sense, the script served as a marker of Khoja identity. As a member of the Landa family of "clipped" alphabets, it is related not only to other vernacular Sindhi scripts (such as Lohanaki and Khudawadi) but also to Gurmukhi, the script used to record the Sikh religious texts. As with Khojki, Gurmukhi also served to foster religious sectarian identity. As a result of the central role that Khojki played in the manuscript tradition recording the *ginâns* of the Khoja communities, I

devoted a lot of time and effort in researching the script's origins and its relationship to other Sindhi alphabets. In the course of my research on Khojki manuscripts, I came across several varieties of Khojki which I suspect is the result of interaction with other script systems.

The leading “Sindhologist” Professor N.B. Baloch passed away in April 2011. What is your appreciation of his legacy? What would give as orientations?

Professor Baloch was clearly one of the most prominent scholars of Sindhi literature and culture. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he was the founder of Sindhi studies. With his demise, Sindhology has lost one of its shining stars.

The life of many Sindhi Sufi poets is shrouded in mystery. For example, you have devoted a study to Qazi Qadan (1453-1551). According to some sources, he was a *qâzi*, but also a Mahdavi. How could we understand what stands like a contradiction?

The Mahdavi were one of several groups who arose during the end of the first Islamic millennium in response to a widespread belief that a Mahdi (rightly guided one) would emerge to reform Muslim communities and bring them back to the path outlined by the Prophet Muhammad. This belief was shared by both Sunni and Shia groups, so for Qazi Qadan to be a Sunni Qazi and also be a believer in the Mahdi is not a contradiction. Although the Mahdi of Jaunpur, who is commonly regarded as the founder of the Mahdavi movement in South Asia, was persecuted for political reasons, his teachings can be considered in keeping with the religious mores of his time. From a literary point of view, what is significant about the Mahdavis is that they sought to propagate their ideas in vernacular languages. This is of course relevant to the history of Sindhi literature since Qazi Qadan is regarded as one of the early pioneers of Sindhi poetry.

What are the main features of the Sufi poetry of Sindh? What is shared with others like Punjabi and Gujarati? What are the main differences?

The use of folk poetic forms; the mystical interpretations of folk romances; the fusion of poetic and musical traditions; the dominance of the feminine voice and expressions of *viraha* (love in separation); imagery from agrarian work life (spinning, weaving, grinding grain, etc.); the influence of Sufi, *sant* and *bhakti* worldviews – these are some of the main characteristics of classical Sindhi poetry. There are certainly strong

similarities with Punjabi literature. I have not studied Gujarati literature in sufficient depth to comment on comparisons with Sindhi.

What are your favorite verses in Sindhi poetry?

My Sindhi favorite verse is from a *ginân* attributed to Pir Sadr ad-Din (14th c.) that interprets the traditional imagery of a woman spinning cotton as a symbol for an important Islamic mystical practice – the constant recitation of the *zîkr* or remembrance of God. I am drawn to it by the skillful way in which it fuses the material with spiritual significance.

How could we encourage the development of studies devoted to Sindhi literature and Sindhi culture?

The current political and economic climate in Pakistan, and specifically Sindh, is a particularly difficult obstacle to promoting studies of Sindhi culture. I do not see Sindhi studies thriving until there is stability in the province of Sindh. Political and economic stability are essential to promoting interest in Sindhi literature and culture. If European and American universities had more financial resources to devote to the study of Sindhi culture, perhaps through grants or private donations, I think that would also stimulate interest. In this regard, we should perhaps encourage wealthy Sindhis to donate to this cause. Equally critical is making available more research related to Sindh available in the languages of western scholarship. For instance, Professor Schimmel, through her studies and translations of Sindhi mystical poetry, did much to increase awareness about Sindhi mystical traditions among scholars of Islamic Studies. Finally, the study of Sindhi language needs to be made more accessible to those who want to learn the language. For this purpose, the writing of a pedagogically sound textbook providing instruction in the language from an elementary to advanced level with the appropriate audio-visual resources is crucial.

More about Ali Asani

2009 “Satpanth Ismaili Songs to Hazrat Ali and the Imams,” *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, edited by Barbara Metcalf, Princeton University Press, pp. 48-62.

2003 “At the Crossroads of Indic and Iranian Civilizations: Sindhi Literary Culture,” in *Literary Cultures in History. Reconstructions from South Asia*, edited by S. Pollock, University of California, pp. 612-646.

2002 *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia*, London: I.B. Tauris.

The MIFS team moved on to Sehwan in November-December 2010 to witness the commemoration of Husayn's martyrdom during the month of Muharram. With the death anniversary of the saint (*'urs* or *mela*), it represents the second major event structuring the ritual calendar of Sehwan Sharif. It is noteworthy to specify that we arrived in Sindh and Sehwan in the post-flood context. The monsoon which started in August 2010 was particularly devastating as 20% of Pakistan's territory was covered by water and Sindh was the most affected region. However, strangely enough the town of Sehwan was virtually untouched by the floods though it was surrounded by water and threatened by the over-flooding of the Manchar Lake on its western side. Some attribute this situation to the system of dikes built between the river bed and the locality of Sehwan. Others explain it by the miraculous powers of the saint preventing water from entering the town.

According to its inhabitants, Sehwan Sharif is well-known all over Sindh for its colorful and fervent Muharram processions. During about thirteen days, the range of ritual practices, which are performed by both Shias and, to a lesser extent, by Sunnis, constitute what is referred to as *azâdârî* in the shia language of piety. It includes: the *majlis*, that is a gathering at a local *imâmbârgâh* during which the events of Karbala and the suffering of Imam Husayn are recalled; the *julûs* or ritual procession during which various elements of shia piety are displayed and paraded; the *mâtam*, which can take various forms and bear several meanings, is a practice of self-mortification by fervent shias – either beating on the chest or using sharp objects in remembrance of Husayn's suffering. We have observed all these ritual practices which were performed day and night until the day of Ashura marking the martyrdom of Imam Husayn.

We have attempted to show that the observance of the battle of Karbala is intimately related with the cult of La'l Shahbâz Qalandar. The ethnographic description of public procession and of the circulation of ritual objects enabled us to acknowledge how Sufism and Shiism were interrelated in the context of Sehwan. Secondly, Muharram is a particular time during which social hierarchies are sublimated and reinforced and sometimes reversed. It is such a particular event that it enables each group of actors to re-enact its position within the social space of Sehwan. Through the study of genealogical trees, of the design of processional routes or of the implication of non-Sayyid groups or community leaders, enough elements were put together so as to interpret the ongoing process by which social groups compete with each other to legitimate its status and position at the local level.



A refugee camp in Sehwan Sharif housing 7,200 people, originating mainly from villages located around the Manchar Lake (© MIFS 2011)



Sehwan Sharif wedged between the Manchar Lake and the Indus River (© NASA Earth Observatory)



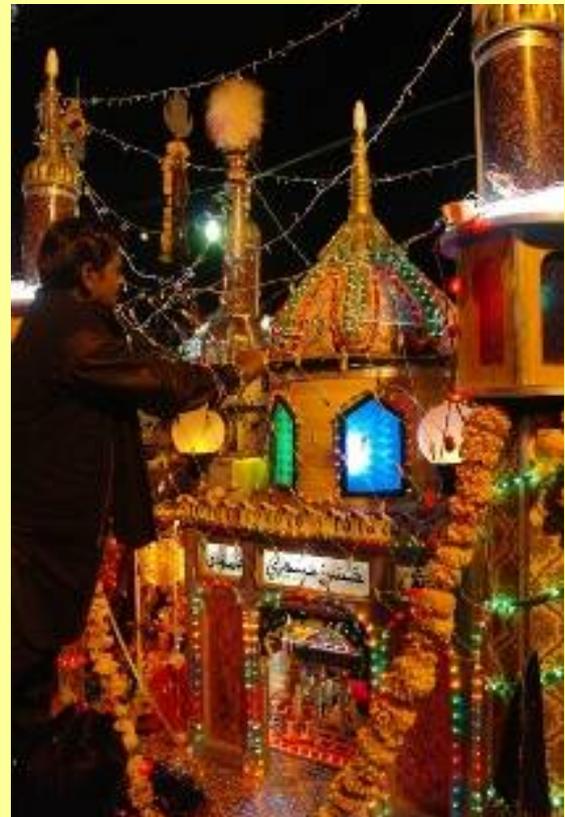
Floodwaters rising at Sehwan Sharif in mid-September 2010 (© <http://previous.prestv.ir>)

Ritual processions and social spaces across the locality (Rémy Delage)

After two field trips exploring the multiple layers of the urban history of Sehwan Sharif, I came this time during the month of Muharram with the intention to focus more on ritual processions (*ju'ûs*) and their role in structuring the social space of the locality. Though Sunnis outnumber Shias in Sehwan, it is first to be noted that most of the spiritual masters (*sajjâda nashîn*) at the head of Sufi lodges are fervent Shias deeply involved in all the stages of Muharram activities. It is not surprising to see the emphasis on Muharram as Shia Islam is well anchored along the Indus valley, from its delta to the region of Punjab. Although they are generally condemned by radical or more orthodox fringes of Sunni Islam, the ritual processions which are conducted, for instance, in the capital city of Karachi are probably among the largest in terms of attendance, and probably the most spectacular of the whole Muslim world. The processions that take place in Sehwan during ten to twelve days of mourning are also very popular and well known throughout the region of Sindh. However, they are mostly attended there by local groups and individuals.

One of the objective was to record all the processional itineraries and the alternating rituals that punctuate these movements. The recitation of *marsias* or *nauhas*, two literary types of devotional chants in memory of Husayn and the practice of *matâm* are certainly the most performed rituals during that period. However, due to lack of sufficient time, we have not yet investigated the range of private household rituals during Muharram, which are obviously important for our project. Along with the processions, a number of replicas of Husayn's mausoleum (*ta' ziyah*) and his miniature tomb (*tabût*), each symbolizing one of the imams, as well as a replica of the nuptial bed of Bin Qasim (*sej*), are paraded until the day of Ashura. Zûljinah, the horse representing the mount of Imam Husayn during the battle of Karbala, plays also an important role during these ritual processions. Turning now to the social and religious meanings of Muharram processions, our aim was to establish dynamic links between the specific pattern of ritual circulation and the urban setting of Sehwan Sharif. Does the organizational pattern of processions simply reflect the social dominance of high-status Sayyid? Or does this specific context also allow other segments of society to emerge and to occupy part of the processional space of Sehwan? How can the mapping of processional routes help us to better read the social configuration of the locality?

The reading of processional itineraries during Muharram provides indeed a key for interpreting the competition going on between the two main lineages of Sayyids, namely the Sabzwari and the Lakiyyari. Though the pattern of ritual circulation remains almost the same during the first week of observance, two new elements have to be considered simultaneously from the 7th of Muharram onwards. Firstly, the *gajgah*, that is an object representing the Prophet's family, which is kept near the tomb of La'î Shahbâz, starts circulating during the processions. Secondly, the two groups of Sayyids alternate continuously from evening to morning in driving the processions. At that time, there are three main poles structuring the system of processions into a specific circulatory territory: 1. the *alam* (banner) of the saint is a key point through which converge most of the procession and where the *matâm* on the chest is usually performed; 2. the neighborhood of Karbala where most of the *faqîrs* and its custodians are under the spiritual authority of the head of the Lakiyyari; 3. the graveyards of the ancestors of the Sabzwari's lineage.



Final changes on the decorated *ta' ziyah* before a Sabzwari procession, Sehwan Sharif (© MIFS 2011)

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This calls for at least two lines of interpretation. When the ritual object of *gajgh* is circulated in procession, it can be interpreted as an outing of the saint himself, who guides himself the processions. This is the key to interpret the close relationship between La'ī Shahbāz and Imam Husayn, between Sufism and Shiism, through the cult of saints and the power of intercession (*shafa'ah*) between disciples and God attributed to saints or the imams. Hence the commemorative rituals of Muharram take a very special turn in Sehwan because of their strong overlap with La'ī Shahbāz and the social system of Sayyids. Secondly, the reading of processional routes allow us to consider that there are relationships of social and symbolic domination which are exerted locally favoring one of the lineage over the other, one holding the spiritual authority through its link to Karbala and the other affirming his high social power through the possession of lands inherited from his ancestors.

Genealogy and prosopography: a new approach of the elites' competition (Michel Boivin)

Since I started working with the dominant lineages of Sehwan, which form the basis of the Sayyid system at the local level, I began to focus more and more on various types of inscriptions and genealogical information. This helped me to better understand how these lineages use some of these references to re-enact their position in the social landscape of Sehwan. I thus developed a prosopographical approach in order to unveil an array of discourses which are expressed by and for the local elites, especially the rival lineages of Sayyids, but also to highlight the harsh competition between them and the Awqaf Department.

Two types of sources have been identified: the writings on funeral tombs and the genealogical trees (*shujaras*) kept by Sayyids. The latter is of more interest here since these *shujaras* can be exhibited in public spaces, so that disciples of the spiritual masters can see them. They can also be restricted to the private or domestic area, where only the initiated devotees can see them. The detailed study of some of these genealogical trees proved to be fruitful since it shed new light on the competition between local elites and non-Sayyids, as well as between Shias and/or Hindus. What is more, the Muharram procession provided us with an ideal

context wherein the community leaders or notables of the locality or of a given neighborhood (*mohallah, paro*) re-articulate their social positions through the conduct of ritual processions.

Indeed, a *shujara* is an important tool for legitimizing social status at the local level as it is the case between lineages of Sayyids or between Sayyids and non-Sayyids. For instance, a dispute aroused years ago between uncle and nephew belonging to one of the dominant lineages of Sehwan, namely the Sabzwaris. At that time, the genealogical tree was kept by the uncle in his own house though he was not entitled to do so since he was not considered to be the head of the family (*khândan*). His nephew, however, requested his uncle to give it back, which the uncle refused to do. Since *shujaras* play a key role in distributing social power, they are constantly updated so that the holders can claim rights and privileges.

During our latest field trip in 2010, I discovered a new *shujara* in the house of the *sajjāda nashīn* of Bodlah Bahar (the companion of Lal Shahbaz and the name of an important Sufi lodge), Akhtar Husayn, who is not a Sayyid. Named *Kursī nāmāh* ("Book of the throne"), it was hung on the wall of the main room of Akhtar Husayn's house. The most surprising but interesting element I found in it is that the relation between the tradition of La'ī Shahbāz Qalandar and mystical traditions of the Western Iran were emphasized. At the top of the list, Prophet Muhammad is mentioned first, 'Ali is second, and "Murshid Sakhī Mahmūd Pâtīleh Sahâliyyah Langot Band" follows. The latter is a major character in the mythology of the Ahl-e Haqq and of the Khâksârs who originate in Iran. He is said to be the reincarnation of Salmân Farsî. In the mythological narratives, Mahmūd Pâtīlî was killed by disbelievers who cut his body and cooked the pieces into a cauldron. Interestingly, the episode of his death resembles in all respect to that of Bodlah who was brought back to life because of La'ī Shahbâz.

In sum, studying genealogical aspects of these Sayyids through the analysis of their *shujaras* enabled to see how various references have been incorporated into it to reinforce their social status through ascendance. I have identified three key elements: 1. The Quranic reference, 2. The Shia reference and 3. The Shahbazi

reference. The agency between these elements provided with clues to better understand how local elites try to re-construct their own legitimacy in the complex social system of Sehwan. This process is not only at work among local elites, especially between Sayyids and non-Sayyids. It was also interesting to discover how non-Sayyid lineages built their legitimacy through their incorporation into external mystical narratives, as it was the case of the Iranian heterodox Ahl-e Haqq's mythology. It is nevertheless important to note here that this peculiar affiliation to the Ahl-e Haqq order is completely hidden within the public space, since the figure of Mahmūd Pâtîlî was re-appropriated in the shape of a local renouncer belonging to the Sindhi tradition of the Nangos.

A procession through the lanes of the new part of the locality (© MIFS 2011)



Sabzwari Sayyids, Zikris and the integrative process of Muharram (Hasan Ali Khan)

In the likeness of my effort during the fieldtrip during 2009, I had the initial idea that I could uncover some relationship between the Qalandar and the Ismaili Satpanth accredited to his elder maternal cousin, the famed Ismaili missionary Pir Shams, or Shams Sabzwari. During the 2010 fieldtrip, I anticipated a better chance to find these connections during the Muharram period, when some Shia ceremonies would take place and which could have connected Qalandar to Ismailism. Alas, this did not turn out to be the case, and the only way such a connection can still be made, as mentioned in last year's report, is to visit the shrine and collect further information during the `urs. This is when large numbers of Punjabis flock to Sehwan, including the Shamsi *Lohars* or blacksmiths, who may still practice some rituals that can be traced back to the Satpanth. Hence, as the only possibility of discovering such a connection between Ismailism and the Qalandar is through the last and final `urs, a fieldtrip during the month of July 2011 has been planned. Any other connection which might emerge through the Bodlah Bahar *faqîrs* will also have to be explored during the death anniversary of the saint (`urs).

During my last passage to Sehwan for Muharram, I covered the Muharram ceremonies performed by the members of the Sabzwari line of Sayyids. I first witnessed that rituals were Twelver Shia ceremonies, albeit practiced in non-clerical manner. On the basis of this, I started exploring the Satpanth connections which deal with the Muharram ceremonies and rituals found in the mourning processions of the Sabzwari lineage. The processions conducted by the Sabzwari of Sehwan have some peculiarities in terms of mourning for Imam Husayn that are not found amongst other Shia commemorations in the Middle East or the rest of South Asia. Their processions preserve motifs of what might have been the Muharram rituals and iconography of the Qalandari Sufi order, and which are said to have been set up by La`l Shahbâz himself. Amongst other ritual practices, emphasis is placed on the continuous ritual performance of conducting processions during which very elaborate *tabûts* or mock sarcophaguses are paraded. The Sabzwari processions and their iconography have yet to be analyzed in the backdrop of other orthodox Twelver Shia practices in the region.

In parallel, I also collected ethnographic data about the Zikri community who use to visit their two main lodges in Sehwan. It seems that the Zikri community has made the Ashura trip for generations. Although their main rituals are celebrated during the `urs, they have certain incantations and recitations from their own religious tradition which are observed when visiting and leaving the shrine. The rest of ethnographic data related to the Zikri community will be collected during the `urs itself. In addition, I had an interview with Asan Das, the Hindu keeper of a specific place related to the ritual activity during the `urs, on the Hindu connection to the Qalandar, as well as on how the saint is perceived as by Hindus. He also gave interesting details about the *kanunga* families who lit the lamps at the shrine.

Muharram at the shrines of La`l Shahbâz Qalandar and of Bodlah Bahar (Delphine Ortis)

During this second fieldwork, I pursued the comparative study of shrines of La`l Shahbâz Qalandar and of Bodlah Bahar (his closest companion). Firstly, the data on the rites of the pious visit and the ecstatic dance (*dhammâl*) performed by the *faqîrs* were completed in both places. Secondly, the study of the configuration of the administrative and ritual organization was resumed. I tried in particular to obtain information on the transmission of the ritual knowledge between both dominant lineages of Sehwan – the Lakiyyaris and the Sabzwaris – as they were both

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in charge of the sanctuary of La'ī Shāhbāz until the nationalization of *waqf* in the early sixties. Today, the servants of the shrine are under the authority of the Awqaf Department. I also tried to see if there was a particular link between La'ī Shāhbāz Qalandar and the Makrani community, to which the assistant manager of the Awqaf Department belongs to. In the sanctuary of Bodlah Bahar, the hierarchy between the various persons recognizing a relation with its spiritual master (*sajjāda nashīn*) was also cleared up. Finally, I studied how the Sufi hospice of Bodlah Bahar was somehow integrated within the Lakiyyari system.

The main objective of this second fieldwork was not only to observe how the ceremonies of the Muharram were organised by the two dominant lineages but also to see how this major event impacted the daily ritual life of both the shrines of La'ī Shāhbāz and of Bodlah Bahar. The celebrations can be divided into two major rites performed by different Sufi hospices in the city according to different procedures, during the thirteen days of commemoration: the removal/change of banners (*alam*) and the processions commemorating the various stages of the battle of Karbala. It is to be noted here that the daily performance of *dhammāl*, as it is usually practices in both shrines, stops during the whole period of Muharram. Secondly, the centre of religious gravity which is normally located in the *dhammāl* court of La'ī Shāhbāz mausoleum is transferred during Muharram to the main entry, where the *alam* is located. This place becomes the major transit point of all ritual processions.

The first objective was to describe the way the city of Sehwan, mainly Sunni but dominated by Shia elites, commemorated the martyrdom of Husayn, in the name of La'ī Shāhbāz Qalandar. The second one was to determine the roles played by or attributed to La'ī Shāhbāz Qalandar and Bodlah Bahar in these ritual activities. The different rites underline the specific place of Bodlah Bahar in the religious life of Sehwan, as initiator of the La'ī Shāhbāz Qalandar's *tarīqat*, and demonstrate his integration into the Lakiyyari lineage of Sayyids.



Procession passing through the southern gate of La'ī Shāhbāz mausoleum (© MIFS 2011)



Changing of the *alam* at Bodlah Bahar mausoleum (© MIFS 2011)



Changing of the *alam* at the main entrance of the La'ī Shāhbāz mausoleum (© MIFS 2011)

Excerpts from Sindhi poetry

Miyun Shah Inat (c. 1623-1712)

The works of Miyun Shah Inat (c. 1623-1712), not to be confused with Shah Inayat of Jhok, can be seen as a bridge between the pioneers of Sufi poetry in Sindhi, like Qadi Qazan or Shah Abd al-Karim, and the classical poetry of Shah Abd al-Latif. He used folktale heroines to symbolize the quest of the soul for God. He also addressed the issue of *jogis* as models of renunciation. His *kalam* was published by N. B. Baloch in 1963 but his verses were first translated into English by Ghulamali Allana (d. 1984).

Behold the flushes of fire,
Aroused by the Yogis and their ire,
They, in the darkness of the night,
Betook themselves to flight.
How can I of their love speak publicly,
Which to me they entrusted secretly?
Throughout the night I weep,
And in my heart their remembrance keep.

Insatiable is their greed,
Which in their hearts they feed.
They beg from country to country,
These Yogis with blankets heavy.
Where others feel uneasy,
There the Yogis rest easy.
Ram, the Lord, they entreat,
As begs the lotus sweet.

"I trust in God," say and repeat,
These words repeat, these words sweet.
Listen the Sayed say "O Sanyasi,
Learn to master that mystery.
O yogis, from your heart efface
Scepticism that within yourself you face,
Learn to practice what you preach,
Then from love learn to beseech."

Inat says the rains have arrived,
And the river's tributaries are flooded.
The grass has sprouted in abundance,
Of every kind, hue and refulgence.
O Lord, end my days of imprisonment,
You are the Mighty, the Omnipotent.
O Lord, let those days arrive,
I see my family members and thrive.

Source: Ghulamali Allana, 1983, *Four classical poets of Sindh*, Jamshoro, Insittue of Sindhology, University of Sindh, pp. 12-15.

Selective works of Ghulamali Allana

Allana, Ghulamali (1984), *Ginans of Ismaili Pirs*, Karachi, His Highness Prince Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismailia Association for Pakistan.

Allana, Ghulamali (no date), *Selections from Risâlo*, Karachi, Government of Sindh.

Not to be confused with another Ghulamali Allana, an academic from Hyderabad

Allana, Ghulam Ali (1973), "Qalandar Shahbâz jo silsilo ain masliq", *Nain Zindagi*, Sept.

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Special book review

Portraits of three Qalandar Sufis, by Alexandre Papas

Alexandre Papas, *Mystiques et vagabonds en islam. Portraits de trois soufis qalandar*, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 2010, 338 p.

The book by Alexandre Papas, a specialist of Sufism and a historian of Central Asia, is a poetic peregrination in the universe of the Qalandars of the Oriental Turkish world (from Xinjiang to the Bosphorus), from the middle of the 17th century until the middle of the 18th century. It arouses as much the emotion as the reflection on this mystic lifestyle, so far largely unknown.

Right from the start, the author questions the relevance of writing the history of the Qalandariyya's path, considering the heterogeneity of its principles and practices (p. 13). He suggests following instead the journeys of three Qalandars as attested in their writings, inviting us to familiarise ourselves with the enjoyments and sorrows of their lifestyle, characterized by wandering, poverty and provocation. Based on their own writings (poetry, journey story and Sufi treatise), the author thus draws contextualized portraits of Mashrab "the Drinker" (1640-1711), Zalîlî "the Vile" (1676-1753) and Nidâ'î "the Boisterous" (1688-1760), three mystics who follow each other in time and space. The book closes with two appendices describing the Qalandar of Xinjiang at the turn of the century. These stand for yet another aspect of these mystics, accentuating, if it was really necessary, their irreducibility. However, the material presented in the first appendix enables to draw analogies between ancestor cult and mystic practice, an aspect which remains regrettably ignored in most studies on Sufism.

Despite his unusual approach, the author does not give up any idea of studying history. He tries to grasp the steppes of Asia through the mirror which these three Qalandars hold out to him and which reflects, on one hand, the effects of their practice of wandering, of provocation and of poverty on their society and, on the other hand, the life of the people. It is regrettable that the central hypothesis of the study, the idea of a resurgence of the Qalandar's movement as an answer to a changing society in Central Asia and at an important turning point of its history is not supported by much evidence. Is this hypothesis only the result of the author's analysis of the *qalandari* writings presented here or is it also based on other data, not set out in this book?

This book is an important contribution to the knowledge of a mystic path relatively unknown so far. It gives for the first time access to data concerning Central Asia in a western language. The second remarkable achievement of the book is its demonstration of how Islam is perceived by us, as clearly defined and limited categories "rarely find its reality in history" (p. 263). Indeed, during more than a century, the most opposite paths – Qalandariyya and Naqshbandiyya – were inseparable in the Central Asia Sufi practice. This book concerns all those interested in Sufism and the important historical data that the author provides will certainly help drawing a comparative approach between the Qalandariyya of Central Asia and of South Asia.

Delphine Ortis, MIFS member



More about Alexandre Papas

With Thomas Welsford et Thierry Zarcone, *Central Asian Pilgrims. Hajj Routes and Pious Visits between Central Asia and the Hijaz*, Berlin, Klaus Schwarz-IFEAC (under press).

With Lisa Ross, *Les saints, la vie, la mort. Essai sur l'islam des Ouighours au Xinjiang* (forthcoming).

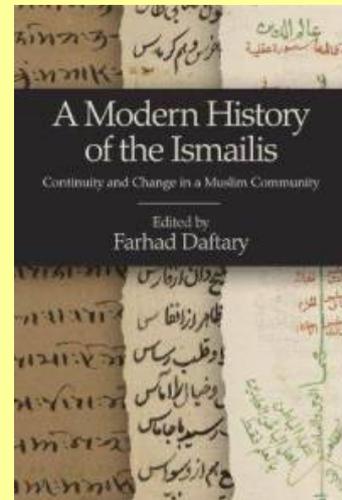
Voyage au pays des Salars (Tibet oriental, début du XXI^e siècle), Paris, Cartouche, 2011.

Soufisme et politique entre Chine, Tibet et Turkestan. Etude sur les Khwajas Naqshbandis du Turkestan oriental, Jean Maisonneuve, Paris, 2005.

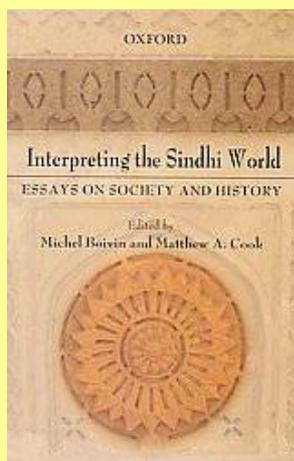
What is new? Recent publications

Farhad Daftary (Ed.), *A Modern History of the Ismailis. Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community*, London New York, I.B. Tauris Publishers in association with The Institute of the Ismaili Studies, 2011.

This book edited by the well-known scholar Farhad Daftary is the first synthesis proposing academic papers on a number of Ismaili traditions in the Modern period. The 400 pages book is divided into four parts: Nizari Ismailis in Syria, Central Asia and China; Nizari Ismaili in South Asia and East Africa; Nizari Ismaili in Contemporary policies, institutions and perspectives; and Tayyibi Mustalian Ismailis. According to the author, the Modern period was distinguished by two main features implemented by the Ismaili imams, better known as Agha Khans. First is the construction of a “distinctive Ismaili identity” and second a focus on reform and modernization (pp. 12-13). Interestingly, the book highlights the diversity of the Ismailis in terms of cultural area, although the majority of the papers are devoted to the Khojas, the South Asia Ismailis. Last but not least, the book ends with three papers on the Tayyibi Ismailis, authored by Bohra scholars belonging to the other South Asia Ismaili community who does not acknowledge the Agha Khan as their spiritual head.



MB



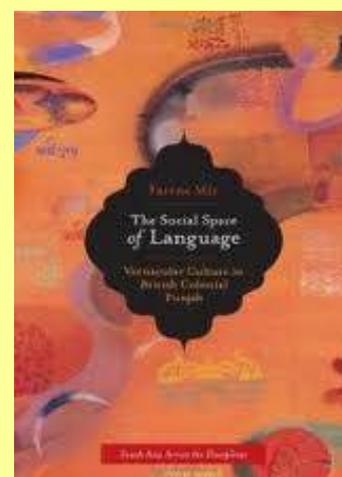
Michel Boivin & Matthew A. Cook (Ed.), *Interpreting the Sindhi World: Essays on Culture and History*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2010.

The book edited by Michel Boivin (CNRS, Paris) and Matthew Cook (North Carolina State University) provides an array of papers dealing with society and history. The topics are thus varied. Some of them are devoted to Pakistan, others to India and also to the Sindhi diaspora. One of the main effects of the book is to show that Sindhi studies are growing all over the world, since the authors belong to a world wide diversity of academic institutions. Among the most innovative papers, one has to mention Lata Parwani’s study of Jhule Lal. She “deconstructs” the myths of Jhule Lal, a regional Hindu god who was made the community God of the Hindu Sindhis of India. It played a leading role in the construction of a Sindhi Hindu identity in India. Paulo L. Horta highlights how Sindh was a salient experience in Richard Burton’s formation in Orientalism. He was nevertheless highly embedded in the British colonial agenda in asserting poetry as the expositor of the Sindhis.

MB

Farina Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab*, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2010.

Farina Mir’s book is the published version of the Ph.D. she defended with Ayesha Jalal as supervisor. Her book is a highly sophisticated study of the vernacular culture in colonial Punjab. It argues that Punjabi vernacular culture “reveals a different story of social and cultural relations that suggested by socioreligious reformists’ tracts, language activists’ propaganda, and the Urdu press” (p. 24). Mainly based on literature published into booklets and other tracts, which were neglected both by the English officers and nowadays by scholars, Mir’s book is a quite innovative study since it gives evidence that the imposition of Urdu by colonial power in Nineteenth Century Punjab did not destroy vernacular culture of Punjab. Her study is mainly based on the exploration of what is usually coined as folklore in a more or less derogatory tone, like for example the different versions of the tale of Hir and Ranjhe. It demonstrates how vernacular culture, and also the use of Punjabi language, was able to resist State policy as well as religious nationalist discourses.



What is new?

PhD dissertations

Raheja, Natasha, *Digital Diaspora: Online Articulations of Sindhi Hindu Identity*, M.A. Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2010. Supervisor: Madhavi Mallapragada.

This project is located at the intersections of diasporic cultures, new media spaces, and identity building. My thesis is concerned, in particular, with the digital mobilization of and negotiation between Sindhi regionalism, Hindu nationalism, and Indian secular nationalism. In an attempt to problematize Sindhi Hindu diasporic identity formation, I have turned to websites that seek to engage as well as represent the Sindhi Hindu diaspora. I argue that the study of Sindhi Hindu identity production and cultural representation in these new media spaces can enhance our understanding of the larger ideological discourses that inform reconfigurations and imaginings of “community” and the “homeland.” Highlighting the heterogeneity of cyber-imaginings of Sindhi Hindu identity both across and within these sites, I hope to point to the ways in which the formation of a collective diasporic identity is in constant flux and negotiation as well as hesitant to be fixed within binary taxonomies.

Mukherjee, Soumen, *Community Consciousness, Development, Leadership: The Experience of two Muslim Groups in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century South Asia*, Ph. D, South Asia Institute (SAI), University of Heidelberg, 2010. Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Gita Dharampal-Frick.

My Doctoral research makes an intervention in a relatively underworked sub-field of scholarship on Islam in South Asia, viz. the history of (sub-)sectarian traditions. My work studies the political, and social life of the Shiite Muslim sub-sects of (mainly Daudi) Bohras and the Nizari Khojas. It juxtaposes smaller sub-sectarian history and culture with broader social and political questions and deconstructs the role of leadership and the different facets of their public career. From a historical perspective my dissertation explicates the entanglement of community consciousness, political and social identity, of contesting versions of social reformism and their eventual development into religiously underpinned welfarist ventures under politico-religious leaderships. The role of politico-religious leaderships in the process of identification of these splinter sub-sectarian traditions with the broader Muslim community along political lines — a process hinging upon a rhetoric of universal Islamic values and social commitment — even as retaining certain (sub-)sectarian specificities documents this nuanced trajectory of shifting community consciousness (exemplified best by the case of Aga Khan III, the 48th Khoja Imam). This was a complex process in which political and socio-religious boundaries of the smaller sub-sectarian traditions were being continually redrawn, the position of spiritual heads reappraised and the idioms of political and socio-religious negotiations reframed. My dissertation analyses this complex process. In doing so, it: (i) sheds light on the role of politico-religious leaderships in evolving certain religiously informed political culture and consensus, as well as social policies catering to community interests; and (ii) contributes to scientific enquiries into the interconnected themes of religion, various ramifications of socio-religious reformism amounting to welfarist concerns, development (understandably, encapsulating much more than mere economic concerns), the role of religious inspiration in such endeavours, religious revivalism, political mobilisation, and above all visions and functional modalities of politico-religious leadership(s).

Nazeer, Saleha, *The Iqbalian Critic of Modernity. A comparative Approach*, Ph.D., Iranian Studies, University of Paris 3, La Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2011.

Discussion about the characteristics, opportunities and challenges of modernity has been a prominent theme in Western and Eastern poetry, literature and philosophy over the past few centuries. Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) has also contributed to this discussion but his thought remains largely unknown outside the Muslim world. The present inquiry will be a small step in redressing this shortcoming. The first part of the inquiry seeks to identify the defining characteristics of modernity and the challenge that they pose to human well-being, with reference to the ideas of well-known Western thinkers (most notably Goethe and Blake). Quantification, detached objectivity, excessive reliance on technology, and subjugation of others for economic gain are the key factors in this regard. The next part describes Iqbal's analysis and critique of modernity with respect to these four characteristics using his poetical works where his position is most succinctly expressed. Iqbal uses a wide range of sources from both the East and the West—poetry, literature, philosophy, theology, and modern science. As wide ranging as his use of different sources is, Iqbal's analysis of modernity remains self-consciously attached to the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition. This analysis also shows his ideas have been expanded upon in one part of the Muslim world – post-Independence Iran, using the works of two modern Iranian thinkers, Ali Shariati and Jalal Al-e Ahmad. The inquiry seeks to demonstrate that Iqbal's insights remain relevant even today for all those experiencing modernity – whether in the East or in the West.

30 June-1 July 2011

Lisboa, Portugal
Conference
Identidades em migração no espaço lusofono os
ismailis do
ISEG/CNRS-Univ. Paris I
<http://pascal.iseg.utl>

30 June-1 July 2011

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Conference
Politics and Religion in South Asia
CERI, CEIAS
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7-8 July 2011

Lisboa, Portugal
Conference
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Travel and Transformation in the 21st century
CRIA, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa
GSPM, École des Hautes Études en Sciences
Sociales
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14-16 September 2011

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The 4th Congress of the Asia and Pacific
Network
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Conference
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Manchester Metropolitan University
German Historical Institute, London
<http://h-net.msu.edu>

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Conference
Banaras Revisited: Scholarly Pilgrimages to the
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Department of Archaeology and Religious
Studies
India-NTNU
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Poitiers, France
Workshops
Politics of Pilgrimage
Université de Poitiers-GERHICO-CERHILIM
<http://calenda.revues.org>

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New Delhi, India
Conference
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Prospects and Implications for Nation States
Indira Gandhi National Open University
<http://www.ignou.ac.in>

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Afghanistan and the English-Speaking World
since 1979:
From the Cold War to the Global War on Terror
University of Paris VIII
lori.maguire@univ-paris8.fr

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Center for South Asia
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16-18 November 2011

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Conference
Performing Religion: Actors, Contexts, and Texts
Orient-Institut Beirut
Dr. Ines Weinrich
weinrich@oidmg.org

23-25 November 2011

New Delhi, India
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Structures of Exclusion in South Asia
University of Delhi
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26 November 2011

Kolkata, India
Conference
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Asian Scenario
University of Calcutta
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27-28 November 2011

Islamabad, Pakistan
Conference
Public Action in Pakistan: Vacillating between
Apathy and Anger
Institute of Social and Policy Sciences
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Photos

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