

Islamic Reformism, the Modern State and the Reified Chishtī Sufi Shrine Cult of the Punjab

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The Islamic reformism of eighteenth and nineteenth century India deeply affected the shrine culture of the Punjab. Various movements contested the then prevalent phenomenon of saint and shrine veneration – a major trait of the Chishtī Sufism – thus engendering, locally as at a larger scale, fierce religious contestations in and around Sufism. Furthermore, the reformist propensity caused a subtle variation within the Chishtiyya itself, particularly in generating debates around the shrine rituals between the two branches of the order: the Chishtiyya Šābriyya and the Chishtiyya Nižāmiyya. The Chishtiyya Šābriyya, on the one hand, went under heavy influence from the reformist Sufi discourse of the Naqshbandiyya, which had played a decisive role in the birth and development of Dār al-‘Ulūm at Deoband. The Chishtiyya Nižāmiyya, on the other hand, whose Sufi shrines are mainly located in western Punjab, responded to the challenge through an internal revivalism, staying away from the reformist trend and defending its old practice of saint/shrine veneration. In consequence, the Chishtī shrine following of western Punjab was seriously affected by the ideological schism between the two branches of the order. The paper will analyze how, why and by whom in the 19th century Punjab the Chishtiyya legacy was contested, and how different Chishtī shrines of the Punjab, reifying their positive stance on shrine veneration, went against the reformist current.

Keywords: reformism, Chishtī, Sufi Shrine, Bābā Farīd, Punjab, Pakpattan, Chishtiyya Šābriyya,

The Islamic reformism of the eighteenth and, specially, the nineteenth century India deeply affected the Sufi shrine culture of the Punjab. Various reformist movements contested the then prevalent saint and shrine veneration – a major trait of Chishtī Sufism – thus engendering, locally as at a larger scale, fierce religious contestations in and around Sufism. The reformist propensity caused a subtle variation within the Chishtiyya itself, particularly in generating debates around the shrine rituals between the two branches of the order: the Chishtiyya Šābriyya and the Chishtiyya Nižāmiyya. These sub-*silsilas* were established by Shaikh ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī bin Aḥmad Šābir of Kalyār (d. 1291) and Shaikh Khwāja Nižām al-Dīn Auliyā of Delhi (d. 1325) respectively, the two main spiritual disciples of Shaikh Farīd al-Dīn Maśūd Ganj-i Shakar (d. 1265), in the late-13th century. Therefore, this paper is intended to analyze the reformist challenges and the pristine contestation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries faced by the Chishtiyya Sufi legacy before and in the wake of the emergence of the modern state in the region.

The accommodating approach of early Sufi masters in the Indian subcontinent brought them into direct contact with local people, leading to a strong personal relation with the local population.

Followers of the other Indian religions gradually became part of the process especially around several *khānqāhs* established by various Sufis and later on their shrines. The phenomenon gave way to the integration, syncretism, and enculturation of both the locals and the sheltering mystics thereby resulting into the emergence of a mystically inclined composite culture of the regions around different Sufi shrines (Chopra, 1999: 2, 48). Both the creeds - Islamic Sufism and the local Hindu traditions – influenced each other in one way or the other, and this resulted in the incorporation of many local practices in the religious-mystical ritualistic patterns followed at different *Chishtī* shrines of the region (Malik, 1990: 70; Ahmad, 1964: 119-190).

During the eighteenth century, the declining Muslim central political authority and the growing influence of Hindu, Sikh, and Maratha powers alarmed some circles of the Muslim religious leadership of the Indian subcontinent. A wide range of responses to the situation, with varied patterns, emerged from different quarters of Muslim clerics. A reformist movement of Islamic renewal emerged when some '*ulamā'*, mainly from the reformist Naqshbandiyya Mujaddadiyya and the puritanical Ahl-i Ḥadīṣ (People of the Prophetic Traditions), challenged the growing religious and social influence of the *Chishtī* Sufi saints in the Punjab.¹ They accredited the responsibility of Muslim political decline to the moral degradation of the Muslim community under the influence of the shrine cult. They attacked the rituals practiced at the Sufi shrines, especially those of the *Chishtīs*. This reformist trend called for the rejection of *bid'a* (innovation) and the return to Quran and *sunna* (the way of life) of the Prophet of Islam. "Accordingly, supporters of these reformist movements sought to replace the shrine as the source of Islamic moral authority with a reassertion of the Book as the only legitimate source. Theatre, in a word, was to be replaced by Scripture" (Eaton, 1984: 334-35).

During the eighteenth century, the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddadiyya posed the most important reformist challenge to popular Sufism, its esoteric doctrines and mystical teachings under the leadership of its renowned reformist saint scholar of the century, *Shāh Valīullāh* (d. 1762). The latter stood for *tajdīd* (reform) in social customs, beliefs, and practices in the Indian Muslims. His lineal and spiritual descendants continued his message after him and this resulted in the growing influence of the *silsila* over other contemporary Sufi brotherhoods. However, this reformist wave was only confined to the urban centers due to the emergence of a retorting revivalist tradition within rural Sufism, which kept countryside under *pīrs'* (Sufi masters) influence (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Čishtiyya"; Ernst & Lawrence, 2002: 14; Siddiqi, 1971: 256-260. Gilmartin, 1979: 488).

In the pre-colonial period, both branches of the *Chishtiyya*, the *Chishtiyya Niẓāmiyya* and the *Chishtiyya Šabriyya*, responded to the reformist trends, but in different ways. An important outcome of this reform movement was the emergence of revivalism within the *Chishtī* order, especially the *Chishtiyya Niẓāmiyya*. The *Chishtī* revival initially emerged in Delhi around *Shāh Kalīmullāh Chishtī Niẓāmī* (d. 1729) who sought to revitalize the *Chishtī* order and infused a new life into the almost defunct *Chishtī* organization by reviving the old traditions. His chief disciple *Shaikh Niẓām al-Dīn* of Aurangabad (d. 1730) and, afterwards, *Shāh Fakhr al-Dīn* (d. 1785) continued his work and tried to revitalize the order from within through their mystic hospices established at Aurangabad and Delhi respectively (Green, 2006; Niẓāmī 1985: 427-59). However, later on, this revivalist trend shifted to the Punjab where it was led by the eminent disciple of *Shāh Fakhr al-Dīn*, *Khwāja Nūr Muḥammad Mahārvī* (d.

¹ The Naqshbandiyya Mujaddadiyya started from the prominent 17th century Sufi master, *Shaikh Ahmad* of Sirhind (d. 1624), popularly recognized as *Mujaddid Alf Šānī*. Ahl-i Ḥadīṣ are a group of Muslims who declare themselves as *ghair-muqallad*, non-follower of any of the four schools of Sunnī *fiqh* and endorse on the strict following of only Quran and *sunna* of the Prophet of Islam.

1791) and was later on propagated by his successors (Gilmartin, 1979: 489-91; Nizāmī, 1985: 510-690; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Čishtiyā").

Khwāja Nūr Muḥammad Mahārvī and his disciples did a lot, in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, to revitalize the Chishtī doctrine in the western Punjab and the upper Sindh province. They attracted a huge following through their personal adherence to the *sharī'a* (Islamic code of law) as well as revitalizing Chishtī Sufism. Khwāja Nūr Muḥammad's most famous spiritual successor, Khwāja Muḥammad Sulaimān Taunsavī (d. 1850) was the contemporary and the observer of the famous reformist *jihādī* movement of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvī (d. 1831) and felt the growing influence of Naqshbandiyya Mujaddadiyya and of Tarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya ("The Way of the Prophet Muhammad", a more reformed theological assemblage). Under such circumstances, Khwāja Sulaimān Taunsavī instructed his disciples to adhere to the strict following of the *sharī'a* in the light of Quran and *sunna*. He established a large number of *madrasas* (schools of religious education) in which more than fifty teachers were teaching *sharī'a* and Sufism. He saw in the misleading and distorted role of the '*ulamā'* the main cause of what he perceived as the shameful situation of the Muslim *umma* (Muslim nation). Similarly, Khwāja Shams al-Dīn Siyālvī (d. 1883), the most favorite *khalīfa* of Khwāja Sulaimān Taunsavī, issued strict instructions to his *murīds* for the adherence to *sharī'a* rules (Nizāmī 1985: 581-614, 673-76). The remarkable efforts of Khwāja Sulaimān Taunsavī and his disciples led to a network of Chishtī revivalist *khānqāhs* and *dargāhs* springing up throughout the western areas of the Punjab. In fact, their struggle was focused to alter the Chishtī shrines from centers of devotional Sufism into centers of Islamic piety and learning (Talbot, 1988: 25; Nizāmī, 1985: 510-690; Siddiqi, 1971: 256-260; Gilmartin, 1979: 489-91.).

In contrast to the Chishtiyā Nizāmiyya, the internal revivalist response in the Chishtiyā Śābriyya brought the *silsila* under heavy influence of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddadiyya and of Tarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya. This phenomenon can be inferred from the fact that Shāh 'Abd al-Rahīm (d. 1831), a renowned Chishtī Śābri master of early nineteenth century, was also part of the *jihādī* movement of Sayyid Ahmad and died fighting at Balākot. The same trend was followed by his successive Śābri descendants Miyārnī Nūr Muḥammad Śābri (d. 1843) and Ḥājī Imdādullāh (d. 1899).

Contemporarily, the British East India Company gradually succeeded in colonizing the whole India (1757-1857); however, the 1857 disturbances resulted in transfer of the governance and control from the Company to the British Crown thus establishing the British Government in India. Various historians have shown that after the emergence of the British colonial state in northern India, the reformist trends took more strength in the wake of the state policies towards the Muslim community (Metcalf 1982: 3-15). Following paragraphs will focus on the reification of the shrine cult in the wake of challenges that were posed by the modern state through its policies thereby infusing vibrancy into the existing reformist trends of the northwestern India.

The subsequent study is meant to highlight the reification process of the Chishtī Sufi shrine cult in the Punjab during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that, on the one hand, distanced the Chishtī shrine cult from the main stream Chishtiyā Sufism because of its nonconformist stance on collaboration with the political authorities, and on the other hand, ultimately led to the emergence of new realities in the religious settings of the western Punjab thereby generating the present religious identities of various sections of the Muslim population of the region. In the end of the discussion, an

example of the shrine custodians of the shrine of Bābā Farīd (Pakpattan - Punjab) is presented who were on the forefront of the reification deportment of the Chishtī shrine cult of northwestern India. The generalized scenario of the Sufi shrine cult of the region is a diversified reinterpretation of the existing scholarly historical researches relevant to the evolution of the saintly airs of the region through segregating the conventional stance depicting the shrine cult as the clamorous representation of the modern south Asian Sufism. The data pertinent to the custodians of the shrine of Bābā Farīd is collected from the Punjab Archives Lahore and the Auqāf Department offices in Lahore and Pakpattan.

The Modern State, Islamic Reformism, and the Chishtiyya Legacy

The first major challenge to the Indian Muslim community in the post-annexation period came from the British authorities when, in their historiography, the supplanted Muslims (rulers) were depicted as 'fierce invaders'. Similarly, the revolt of 1857, which was ignited by both Hindu and Muslim communities of northern India, was 'widely viewed as a product of enduring Muslim animosity' (Metcalf, 1997: 139-40). The second major challenge to the Muslim religious leadership in the Punjab, during the post-annexation period, was the Christian missionary activities, which grew massively. During the post-1857 decades in northwestern India – and especially the Punjab –, the Christian missionary activities thrived under the patronage of the colonial administration through print and open preaching and resulted in the large scale spreading of the Christianity in the province. During the second half of the nineteenth century, waves of large-scale conversions were launched through 'mass conversion movements' by different missionaries in the rural Punjab thereby resulting into the rise of Christian converts from 3,912 in 1881 to 37,980 by 1901, in the province (Harding, 2008: 1; Jones, 2006: 85-121). Similar type of developments also emerged in the Punjab from the reformed Vedic version of Hinduism in the shape of the Arya Samaj launched by Dayananda Saraswati (d. 1883) in 1875 (Harding, 2008: 55).

Elimination of the Muslim political authority, political domination of the foreign power and subsequently imposition of the British colonial rule, new state's policies in the shape of western secular legal system, and rising politico-religious influence of Hindus and especially of the Christian missionaries in the region under colonial patronage were resented by the religious leaders of the Muslim community. The situation, actually, worried those whose own authority was undermined by such developments as it deprived them not only of their Muslim patrons but also of their position in society and their traditional role as advisers and guides to the ruling classes (Jones, 2006: 87).

Different responses emerged from different sectors of Muslim religious elite, which are well summarized by Ira M. Lapidus in his work (Lapidus, 2002: 621-22). The Muslim religious leadership realized the gravity of the situation and identified the imperfections and weaknesses inside the practice of Islam along with what had gone wrong politically. Therefore, in response to the basic changes introduced into the local Muslim political and cultural life by the British takeover of the region a variety of Islamic reform movements developed in the course of the late 19th-century. Different reformist groups that remained prominent to revive and safeguard Islamic traditions included the Deobandīs, the Ahl-i Ḥadīṣ, the Barelvīs, '*ulamā'* of Nadvat al-'Ulamā' of Lucknow, '*ulamā'* of Farangī Maḥall and Sir Sayyid Ahmād Khān's Aligarh Movement. These movements can be arranged on a spectrum from panoramic view concerning their stance towards the rejuvenation of Muslim community in India as well as the phenomenon of saint and shrine veneration during the colonial period. Two major divisions between them were of reformist movements and counter-reformist movements. The reformists can further be categorized into two major groups inferring from their basis for reformist stance. The western influenced modernists of the Aligarh movement as well as the fundamentalist '*ulamā'* of the

Ahl-i Ḥadīṣ took *ijtihād* (personal reasoning) as the core of reform whereas the traditionalist Naqshbandīs-Chishtī Śābṛīs-Deobandīs remained stuck to the *taqlīd* (submission or following) of the Ḥanafī School of thought in jurisprudence and demanded large scale reforms in shrine culture. The counter-reformist movements comprised the conservative revivalist Sufi masters of the Chishtiyya Niẓāmiyya, the ‘*ulamā*’ of Farāngī Maḥall who favored the shrine culture and the Barelvī movement that emerged to safeguard the saint and shrine veneration. Now, I would like to briefly describe different attitudes of the reformist movements towards the matter.

Proponents of the dominant modernist discourse of the time looked down upon the popular phenomenon of saint veneration and intercession as being un-Islamic, archaic superstition and backwardness that takes away from the unique worship of one God. Being rationalists, they preferred exoteric legalism to the esoteric mysticism in order to face the confronting challenges to the Muslim community (Malik, 1990: 68). The modernists, predominantly under the leadership of renowned modernist social reformer of the colonial India Sir Sayyid Ahmād Khān (d. 1898), sought to eliminate such Sufi practices from Indian Islam by reinterpreting the religious scriptural texts and making the Muslim community of northern India more and more adaptable to the socio-political advancement of the West through western education. The Aligarh Movement of Sir Sayyid exerted a social upsurge amongst the Indian Muslims through rationalized reinterpretation of religion, modern education, and political activism to bring them out of the socio-religious confusion of the time (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Ahmad Khān, Sayyid”). During the latter half of the colonial period, another modernist colonial thinker of the Muslim community, Iqbāl (d. 1938), criticized the persianized-pantheistic-*taṣavvuf* of the colonial India and regarded monotheistic approach as an essence of Islam and the Muslim community (Shaikh, 2009: 26-27).

During the nineteenth century, the growing influence of Vahābī movement (the fundamentalist movement in Saudi Arabia under the leadership of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Vahāb – d. 1792) further influenced the Islamic reformism in the Indian soils. After the emergence of the colonial rule, some Ahl-i Ḥadīṣ scholars, inferring inspiration from Shāh Valīullāh, and the Tarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya of Sayyid Ahmād Barelvī and his disciple Shāh Muḥammad Ismā‘il, arose as an organized and most radical reformist group of the colonial India (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Ahl-i Ḥadīth”). They regarded themselves as the follower of ‘purified’ Islam of the Prophet Muḥammad and his companions (*ṣaḥāba*), free of Hindu influence and popular custom. Furthermore, they regarded the *taqlīd* (following) of a single *mazhab* (school of law) or a saint to be an ‘unlawful innovation’ (*bid‘a*) of Islam and an aberration (*dalāla*) leading to Hell. These Ahl-i Ḥadīṣ scholars completely rejected not only the saint and shrine veneration but also Sufism as a whole (Metcalf, 1982: 274). The adherents of the movement, just like the Vahābīs of Saudi Arabia, disapproved of the veneration of shrines associated with early Islam on the ground that only God should be worshipped and that veneration of sites associated with mortals leads to idolatry. They further denounced certain rituals and practices at the shrines of the Sufis as ‘un-Islamic’ and *bid‘a*, and denoted them as a curse, which must be eliminated. They denied the miraculous powers of the Sufi saints and tried to stop shrine cult activities at various shrines (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Ahl-i Ḥadīth”).

Under such circumstances, alternative tendencies emerged within the Indian Sunnī Islam whose proponents were initiated into all four Sufi *silsilas* prevailing in the colonial India. The Naqshbandiyya stance on Sufi reformism was already very clear in the pre-colonial period and it had

left some imprints on both the branches of the Chishtiyya. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the phenomenon of Islamic reformism caused a substantial variation within the Chishtī Sufi order. An ideological schism appeared in the Chishtiyya that was not only confined to its two branches (Chishtiyya Nizāmiyya and the Chishtiyya Sābriyya) but also within its shrine cult and meditating Sufi masters. Sufi masters of both the branches reacted to the reformist waves in their respective ways taking their separate deportments on the phenomenon of shrine veneration whereas the shrine cult, representing custodians of various Chishtī shrines, managed to stay away from the reformist trends by defending shrine veneration.

Although, the Chishtī pīrs of the time were initiated into various other tariqas (ways, paths, orders of Sufism), the most prominent Sufi master of the Chishtiyya Sābriyyab, Hājī Imdādullāh seriously inclined towards the Naqshbandiyya doctrine. His spiritual deputies, the well-known Chishtī Sābrī 'ulamā' of the post-1857 British India like Maulānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānautavī (d. 1880) and Maulānā Rashīd Ahmād Gangohī (d. 1905), started the Dār al-'Ulūm (house of religious sciences) of Deoband (1866-67), under the influence of Naqshbandiyya, aiming at training Muslim religious scholars (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "(Hādjidjī) Imdād Allāh"; *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2nd ed., s.v. "Deoband). Working in the tradition of Shāh Valīullāh (d. 1762) and of Muslim reformism, proponents of the Deobandī Movement sought to renew Islamic spiritual life by teaching early Islamic principles including Sufi doctrines and to strengthen Muslim religious life by improving the practice of Islam. Heterogeneous doctrinal background of the Deobandī 'ulamā' gathered the roles of *muftī* (the term referred to an independent '*ālim*' or religious scholar who wrote *fatāvā* or expert opinions in response to questions that arose within the Muslim community) and *shaikh* in the same person (Metcalf, 1982: 138-97). The Deobandīs maintained the traditional stress of the Chishtiyya Sufism on refraining collaboration with the political authorities. However, the Chishtī stance towards the *samā'* and saint and shrine veneration was put in the background. They challenged the authority and inspiration of Sufi proponents of shrine veneration as well as the people associated with tombs of medieval saints. They encouraged the meditational practices such as *taṣavvur-i shaikh* (conceiving of the *shaikh*'s image as an incentive for spiritual concentration), distributed amulets, and were credited with *karāmāt* (spiritual powers) but opposed the lavish ceremonies followed at Chishtī shrines, which they considered deviant. In sum, the Deobandīs sought to reconcile the *shari'a* and *tariqa* by maintaining the Sufi character of the religious learning in the limitations of the Naqshbandiyya tradition in spite of following the ecstatic traditions of the Chishtiyya.

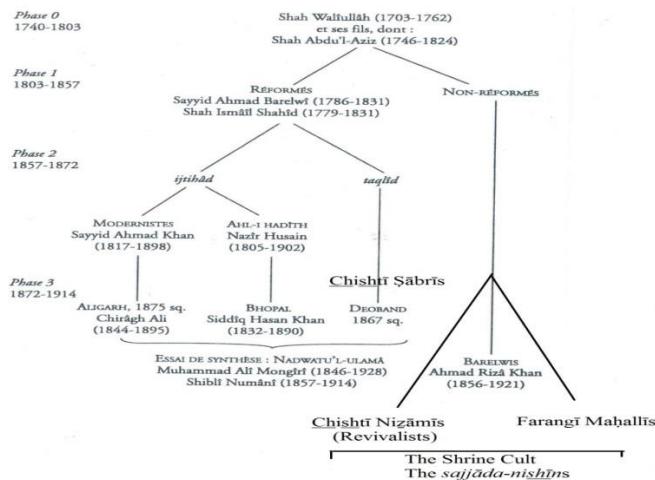
In such a situation, when the Sufis themselves contested the shrine veneration, various counter-reformist Sufi-cum-'ulamā' from different quarters emerged on the scene to defend this popular phenomenon of Indian Islam on scholarly grounds. The three leading groups were of the Sufi masters of the Chishtiyya Nizāmiyya, the 'ulamā' of Farangī Mahall and the Barelvī Movement of Maulānā Ahmād Rizā Khān Barelvī (of Bareilly - India) (d. 1921), a saint scholar of the Qādiriyah Sufi Order.

The spiritual disciples of the revivalist Chishtī Nizāmī Sufi masters continued their revivalist mission in the Punjab, during the colonial period, under the leadership of *silsila*'s patron Pīr Mihr 'Alī Shāh (d. 1937) of Golra Sharīf (Jones, 2006: 85-121).² He was the chief spiritual successor of Khwāja Shams al-Dīn Siyālvī and was also initiated with Hājī Imdādullāh Chishtī Sābrī. Confronted to the reformist discourse the revivalist Nizāmī Chishtīs tried to harmonize 'ulamā' and Sufis in order to

² He is famous for his anti-Ahmadiyya or anti-Qādiānī stance in the early 20th century. For details, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Ahmadiyya".

revitalize the Muslim community and its socio-political prestige while staying away from the reformist trend and defending its old practice of saint/shrine veneration (Siddiqi, 1971: 258).

The ‘Ulamā’ of Farangī Mahall (Lucknow) remained prominent under the Mughal royal patronage for their efforts towards the traditional Islamic learning of jurisprudence and logic from the eighteenth century to the era of revival and reform until the beginning of the twentieth century. Initiated into different Sufi *silsilas* like Qādiriyya, Chishtiyā Nizāmiyya, and Chishtiyā Shābriyya, they were not just scholars but clairvoyants stressing Sufi teachings, veneration of Sufi saints and their shrines through the celebration of ‘urs (Sufi saints’ death-anniversary ceremonies) at the saints’ tombs (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Farangī Mahall”). During these centuries, they remained attached to different Sufi shrines and accepted many members of various *sajjāda-nishīn* (hereditary shrine custodian) families into their discipleship for religious-mystical learning thereby enjoying wide range of respect from different Sufi networks (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Farangī Mahall”; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Abd al-Bārī”). In response to the reformist trends and attacks on shrine veneration, the leading scholar from Farangī Mahall, ‘Abd al-Bārī (d. 1926) remained active for safeguarding the popular shrine culture and fully used his influence in northern India during the early decades of the twentieth century. Concerned much about the future of *taṣavvuf*, he did a lot to impart modernized teachings of the *shari‘a* and *taṣavvuf* to the old-styled *pīr* families through establishing various madrassas. He took three major steps in this regard. Firstly, in 1905, he established the Madrasa-yi ‘Āliya Nizāmiyya at Farangī Mahall in order to equip the children of ‘ulamā’ and *pīrs* for modern life along traditional lines through an improved and modernized syllabus of Dars-i Nizāmī. Secondly, in 1913, he actively participated in the formation of the Anjuman-i Khuddām-i Ka‘ba aimed at organizing an India-wide movement to protect the holy places of Islam (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Anjuman-i Khuddām-i Ka‘ba”; Robinson, 2007: 208). Thirdly, in 1916, he played a leading role in establishing the Bazm-i Şüfiya-yi Hind at the ‘urs of Shaikh Khwāja Mu‘īn al-Dīn Chishtī of Ajmer, an organization aimed at reviving and reforming Indian Sufism (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Abd al-Bārī”).



Picture: Categorization of Reformist Movements of the late Nineteenth Century India

Source: Marc Gaborieau. 2007. *Un autre islam: Inde, Pakistan, Bangladesh*. Paris: Albin Michel. (Tableau 2: Généalogie du réformisme indien – p. 142) – (Modified)

In the 1880s, when the Chishtī Sufism and its shrine ritualism were under attack from different reformist movements, another movement emerged in northern India under an eloquent *muftī*, Ahmād Rīzā Khān Barelvī (d. 1921). The Barelvīs (after Ahmād Rīzā's patronymic name), being the followers of various Sufi *silsilas*, predominantly of the Qādiriyya, engaged regularly in Sufi-related rites, the most important of which were the annual '*urs*' held at the burial places of various medieval Sufi saints. Ahmād Rīzā advocated, through his *fatvā*-writing, the importance of observing the *sharī'a* at all times through revivalist notions of 'individual responsibility' and 'self-consciousness of belief and practice' along with his affirmative approach towards the devotional practices for the saint and shrine veneration, thereby attempting at reducing the dichotomy between Sufism and Reformist Islam (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Barelwīs"; Sanyal, 1996: 57, 73–6, 97–110).

Therefore, the phenomenon of saint and shrine veneration became an issue of hot scholarly debates between different schools of thought of Indian Islam, and especially between the Deobandīs, the Barelvīs, and the Ahl-i Ḥadīs. However, the Deobandīs played a crucial role in bringing a huge portion of the Sufi discourse nearer to the *sharī'a*, thereby causing a substantial decrease in the extent of the shrines' following and the prestige of the shrine cult.

This reformist wave further left deep imprints on the Indian Chishtiyya legacy by creating a petty schism between the meditational Chishtī Sufi masters and the hereditary custodians of different Chishtī shrines of the region – representing the Chishtī shrine cult. Until the late 19th-century, a network of influential shrines had been established in the western parts of the Punjab, mainly of the 18th-19th revivalist Chishtī Niẓāmī Sufis. These shrines, like the early Chishtī shrines, also came under the control of their respective *sajjāda-nishīn* families. These shrine custodians did not take up the revivalist attitude of their Chishtī Niẓāmī ancestors. While the '*ulamā*' of the Deoband, the Farangī Maḥall, the Barelvī Movement and the Sufi masters of the Chishtiyya Niẓāmiyya, were working to revive and reform Sufi Islam with their respective approaches on the shrine veneration, most of the Chishtī shrines of the Punjab, reifying their positive stance on shrine veneration, went against the reformist current. The *sajjāda-nishīns* of different Chishtī shrines, realizing the gravity of the hour – when their socio-religious authorities based on the shrine-veneration came under threat from the modernist as well as reformist trends, took a number of steps to retain and sustain the status-quo so far as the culture and practice of shrines and their own identity was concerned.

The first step headed for the reification of the shrine cult towards the shrine veneration and the challenge to reformism was manifested by the *sajjāda-nishīns* when they used their spiritual authority as a political tool. They organized and portrayed the *dargāhs* (shrines) in their custody as the core religious centers of the Punjabi Muslim community thereby using them as the tool to exert their political prestige in the colonial settings. Actually, the loss of pre-colonial economic and political power of various shrine authorities made them dependable over the traditional means of religious authority (Gilmartin, 1979: 491–92). Therefore, the "*pouvoir de la tombe*" was structured through networks of holiness coupled with the royal-type ceremonial set-up of coronation (*dastār-bandī*) and front drum-marchers (Boivin, 2002: Book review).

Then, the social influence of the *sajjāda-nishīns* through their vast following enabled them to team-up with locally powerful *zamīndārs* (landowners), thereby leading to the emergence and strengthening of a strong and lasting *pīr-zamīndār* feudal nexus in the Punjab (Aziz, 2001: 50).

In line with this re-boosting of their socio-religious influence in the colonial context, the Chishtī *sajjāda-nishīns* adopted a policy of collaboration with the British government when the official administrators were looking for local intermediaries. They acted as intermediaries in the colonial power structure, as patrons for the masses who needed leaders to negotiate on their behalf with the colonial state (Gilmartin, 1979: 491; Siddiqi, 1971: 409). The *sajjāda-nishīns* of the newly established Chishtī shrines also joined hands with the custodians of the old pre-Mughal Chishtī shrines. The collaboration with the socially and religiously influential *sajjāda-nishīns* also helped the colonial state to legitimize its rule as well as to counter the insurgent radicalized *shari'a*-inspired notion of Islamic reformism in the British colonies (Shaikh, 2009: 28).

In the present scenario, the Barelvis form one of the dominant religious groups in Pakistani Punjab. Members of the Barelvi School adhere to the contemporary shrine authorities thereby engendering the religious authority of the shrine cult and the cult of saints (*pīrs*) (Malik, 1990: 72). In the current Pakistani Punjab, the phenomenon of shrine worship and of the *pīr's* or *sajjāda-nishīn's* role of intercessory communication with the Divine remains a topic of criticism from the reformist circles as being the representative of obscure polytheistic (*shirk*) deviation, a leftover from the Punjab's superstitious past (Ballard, 2006: 166; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Barelvis"). The reformist organizations like that of Ahl-i Ḥadīṣ, Deoband, and Tablīghī Jamā'at, which continued their activities in the post-Partition state of Pakistan, have left long lasting effects on Islam and the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent and influenced the state policies (Ewing, 1983: 266-67).

The Case Study of the Shrine of Bābā Farīd (Pakpattan)

In this pre-colonial scenario, while the spiritual descendants of Bābā Farīd were struggling for the revival of the Chishtiyya in different mystic centers of the Punjab, the *jamā'at-khāna* established by Bābā Farīd in Pakpattan disappeared from his shrine and its successive *sajjāda-nishīns* were struggling for their political and economic hold in the region. Nonetheless, the shrine of Bābā Farīd in Pakpattan, the most important as well as the oldest Chishtī shrine in the western Punjab, was still enjoying an influential spiritual status in the Chishtiyya ranks being the lasting aura of Bābā Farīd. Various renowned Chishtī masters of the time used to attend regularly the shrine of Bābā Farīd and valued it as a point of meeting (Green, 2006: 94, 113).

There is no substantial evidence that the reform movements of 19th-20th centuries had any considerable influence over the practices of this shrine. However, this institution can be seen through the active prism of the Chishtī Sufism as well as network of its daughter Chishtī shrines scattered in different parts of the Punjab. Both the sub-*silsilas* of the Chishtiyya, which came into being from the *khānqāh* Faridiyya of Ajūdhan (old name of Pakpattan) and were, in a way, source of regional religious and Sufistic prestige of the shrine of Bābā Farīd, were heavily affected by the reformist trends.

The response of the shrine authorities to the modernist and puritanical reform movements and the immense impact on the life of Muslims in India casted by them was more or less ambivalent. First, the shrine of Bābā Farīd not only stayed away from reformism by defending its culture of shrine veneration but also claimed to be above all divides in the Chishtiyya and to represent the 'original' Chishtiyya Sufism. But in fact, the shrine of Bābā Farīd wherefrom the Chishtiyya Nizāmiyya and the Chishtiyya Šābriyya took birth in the thirteenth century, was affected in one way or the other by the internal split in the Chishtiyya and the contestation on the issue of the shrine veneration. In actual, the

proclaimed neutrality of the shrine of Bābā Farīd was itself a reaction to the divisions among the Chishtiyya on the question of shrine veneration.

Second, besides all their efforts to stay away from the reformism, the shrine of Bābā Farīd could not prevent its practices from being criticized by the reformist and puritanical voices within Sufi tradition, though the shrine authorities tried to show that they were open to reform, and that reform could go along with the shrine rituals. The Deoband School's reformist influence and the resulting deprivation of a bulk of the Sufi shrines' following cannot be ignored in the case of the trans-local following of the shrine of Bābā Farīd in Pakpattan, even if no visible presence of Deobandī preachers can be found in the colonial-period-Pakpattan. It is remarked by some interviewees that Dīvān Said Muḥammad (custodianship 1894-1934, d. 1934), the 25th *sajjāda-nishīn* of the shrine, went under the dual influence of the modernists as well as of Deobandī reformists, and of Pīr Mihr 'Alī Şah of Golra Şarīf to some extent. He was witnessed to be more regular in his prayers and other Sufi ritualistic practices than the preceding and subsequent *sajjāda-nishīns*.³ Similarly, Miles Irving in his 1911 article narrates that in the early years of the twentieth century, Dīvān Said Muḥammad had established a modern Anglo-Vernacular School within shrine premises where both religious and secular education was imparted (Irving, 1911: 76). He also opines that this development was opposed or contested by the contemporary fellow *sajjāda-nishīns* on the grounds that this educational initiative could harm the local hold of the *sajjāda-nishīn* of the shrine of Bābā Farīd (Leigh, 1922: 171; Ali, 1989: 105-06).⁴

Third, besides, the *sajjāda-nishīn* of the shrine of Golra Şarīf, who is present annually at the shrine of Bābā Farīd during 'urs days and is also a Chishtī Nizāmī Sufi master, is critical of the patterns of certain rituals followed at the shrine of Bābā Farīd.⁵ But overall, the reformists did not affect much the strong Sufi centers like that of Pakpattan, whose religious set-up is still dominated by the *pīrī-murīdī* (master-disciple relationship of a spiritual nature) culture as well as by the Barelvī school of thought: there are thus many more Barelvī *madrasas* than Deobandī or Ahl-i Ḥadīṣ *madrasas* in the city and its vicinity.

Table 1

Mosques and madrassas in Pakpattan Tehsil

| | Sunni Barelvī | Sunni Deobandī | Ahl-i Ḥadīṣ | Şī'a | Total |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|------|-------|
| Mosques | 175 | 20 | 13 | 1 | 209 |
| Madrassas | 14 | 14 | 4 | -- | 30 |
| Imām Bargāh | -- | -- | -- | 2 | 2 |

Source: Interview with Pīr Ghulām Quṭb al-Dīn (President Jmā't Ahl-i Sunnat, District Pakpattan) on October 23, 2010 (consulted personal collections).

³ Interviews carried out on December 10, 2009 with Justice (Retd.) Sayyed Afzal Haidar and Dīvān Bakhtiyār Said Muḥammad on November 10, 2010.

⁴ Ibid. Dīvān Said Muḥammad enhanced his local prestige by becoming part of the State's collaborative policy. He remained a member of the Divisional as well as Provincial Courts (*List of Divisional Darbāris* and *List of Provincial Darbāris*, 1873, 1912, 1919-33). The British Government also rewarded him with many villages for war services as well as some other loyal services.

⁵ It was observed that during the annual 'urs of December 2010, the *sajjāda-nishīn* of the shrine of Golra Şarīf criticized the mixing-up of males and females in the courtyard of the shrine during the performance of certain rituals, which is a normal thing for the other *sajjāda-nishīns* and the *sajjāda-nishīn* of the shrine of Bābā Farīd.

As for the official policy of the post-colonial state, it becomes clear when the official management depicts Bābā Farīd as only a pious religious teacher, and not as an ecstatic Sufi master, on the basis of his *shari'a*-oriented sayings (Ewing, 1997: 77). The process started in 1960s-70s and continues nowadays through instruction boards established in and around the shrine premises by the Auqāf Department, in order to educate and guide the pilgrims. The teachings of these boards seem nearer to the reformed Sufism of the Deoband School as is evident from the picture given below.



Picture: Instruction Board, near one of the entry of the shrine of Bābā Farīd, says (tr.) "The real purpose to visit the Darbār Ḥaṣrat Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i Shakar is to follow the teachings of this great saint. To which extent are we following his teachings?" - Department of Religious Affairs and Auqāf (Punjab).

Conclusion

In sum, the 18th–20th Islamic reformism deeply affected the well-developed Sufi shrine culture in the Punjab. In the pre-colonial context, Chishtī Sufism was considered to be a single entity, though its two main Sufi branches were there. However, the reformist trend of the late 19th century created a divide between the traditional Chishtī Sufi masters of its two sub-branches on the one hand, and the custodians of the major Chishtī shrines on the other hand. The growing Islamic reformist and modernist critiques against Sufi cult practices led to an increasing self-consciousness among Sufi adherents, and to the emergence of reformist Sufi doctrines, which denigrated some of the remaining traditional Sufi shrine practices. On the one hand, the reformist wave took the prominent Śābrī Chishtīs of the mid-19th century India away from the popular devotional Chishtīsm and brought them under the influence of the restrained Sufi discourse of the Naqshbandiyya, giving birth to the Dār al-'Ulūm in Deoband. On the other hand, the Chishtiyya Nizāmiyya responded to the challenge through its internal revivalism. Likewise, reformism and especially its contestation of saint and shrine veneration further dichotomized the meditational and ritualistic currents of Chishtī Sufism; distancing the Sufi masters of the Chishtiyya Śābriyya (Deobandīs) from the Chishtī shrine cult, whose social, political, and religious influence took anti-Chishtiyya stance of state-oriented political collaboration. The custodians of the shrine of Bābā Farīd stood as vanguard of such an inclination. Nonetheless, the Chishtī Nizāmī Sufi masters remained partisans of saints' veneration and continued to remain with the shrine custodians. The active role of the Barelvī Movement to safeguard the shrine practices brought the Chishtī shrine cult under its umbrella, and nowadays, most of the Chishtī shrines are venerated by the Barelvī following. Therefore, it can be concluded that this reinterpretation of the Chishtī shrine cult evolution gives a clear cut idea

of the impact of the reformism and the appearance of the modern state on the Chishtī shrine cult of the Punjab that emerged as a divergent group from the Chishtiyya conformism of distancing from political circles. Similarly, the Chishtī Sufi shrines of the Punjab emerge as focal points of the Qādiriyā/Barelvī symbolism at large.

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