A SUFI SAINT'S DAY IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE LEGEND OF BÂDSHÂH PÎR[*]

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THIS article examines the rôle of *pîrs* (saints), *mazârs* (shrines) and *'urs* (death anniversaries) in forging Islamic culture and identity in South Africa, whose minority Muslim population of approximately one million originates mainly in the Indian sub-continent and Malay Archipelago. The focus of this study is the *'urs* in May 2002 of Bâdshâh Pîr, a revered saintly man who lies buried in the city of Durban, on the eastern coast of South Africa. While providing succour to many ordinary Muslims, Bâdshâh Pîr's shrine is a site of tension. This paper traces the establishment of the shrine, the rôle it played and plays in the lives of Muslims, its significance to those who administer it, and how conflict over the shrine and practices associated with it refract social relations among Muslims. More broadly, this study explores 'internal' debate among Muslims about the relationship between God and believers, and transitions in activities associated with popular Islam, in the context of historical and structural economic and political change in twentieth-century South Africa.

Migration and Settlement

Most Indian Muslims arrived in Natal between 1860 and 1911 as indentured workers for Natal's sugar industry or as traders. 152,641 indentured Indians came to Natal between 1860 and 1911, approximately 10 per cent being Muslim.[1] Migrants, drawn from a large area of India, were divided in terms of religious tradition, caste, language, ethnicity and regional cultures. The diversity of indentured Muslims is illustrated by language. Muslims who came via Madras spoke Tamil and Telugu, while northern Muslims spoke dialects of Hindi such as Braj, Bundeli, Awadhi and Bhojpuri.[2] After indenture, free Indians flourished throughout Natal, mainly as

market gardeners and hawkers of fruits and vegetables, and in the process established racially segregated settlements in places like Clairwood and Merebank in the south, Sydenham, Overport, Clare Estate and Cato Manor in the west, and Riverside in the north. In 1951 there was 91 per cent racial segregation between Indians and whites in Durban.[3]

Muslim traders from Gujarat on the west coast of India began arriving in Natal from the mid-1870s. They were incorrectly called 'Arabs' because most adopted the Middle Eastern mode of dress.[4] Swan estimates their number to have averaged 2,000 in the period 1890-1910.[5] The special circumstances of traders enabled them to keep their corporate character and social distance from other Indians. They saw migration as temporary and maintained family links through regular visits to India, marrying their sons and daughters in India, and remitting money to build mosques and schools in the villages of their origin.[6] In a confidential report to the Durban Town Council (DTC) in 1885, police inspector Richard Alexander pointed out that "Arabs will only associate with Indians so far as trade compels them to".[7]

Social and economic conditions made it difficult for indentured Muslims to fulfill the many requirements of Islam. Traders, on the other hand, possessed resources and built the Jumuah (1881) and West Street (1885) mosques within a few years of their arrival. It was around these mosques that they consolidated Islamic practices. Indentured Muslims' primary link with Islam was the festival of Muharram, which commemorated the martyrdom of Imam Husain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. Muharram was a major event in the local calendar and was given official sanction from the mid-1870s when employers granted their workers leave to observe Muharram. Although there was strong disapproval from the authorities and middle-class Hindus and Muslims, Muharram remained a central part of the Islam of indentured workers and their descendants.[8] The arrival of Soofie Saheb in Natal in 1895 had important consequences for working class Muslims. According to oral tradition, as soon as he arrived in Durban, Soofie Saheb established the shrine of Bâdshâh Pîr in central Durban. Together with mosques that he established throughout Natal,

this played a crucial rôle in establishing a distinct Islamic identity within the disparate working class Muslim population.[9]

Establishing the Mazâr *(Shrine) of Bâdshâh Pîr, 1895*

The *mazâr* (shrine) of Bâdshâh Pîr is located in the Brook Street cemetery in Durban. The cemetery, 16 acres in size, was opened in 1864 and apportioned as follows: four acres for Episcopalians, two acres for Wesleyans, two acres for Roman Catholics, six acres for 'other' Christians and two acres were set aside for Indians and Africans. A small portion of the Indian section was reserved for Muslims. It came to be known as the 'Brook Street Cemetery' because its entrance is in Brook Street. The records of the City Council were lost during the early years of the twentieth century and there is no means to verify who was buried in each site prior to the 1920s.[10]

Though there are no contemporary sources to positively verify Bâdshâh Pîr's historical identity, a number of works agree on the broad narrative of his life. Much of the information is legendary; in the process, as Beary remarks in another context, "historical truths" have become "a casualty".[11] Sheik Allie Vulle Ahmed (colonial number 282) has been identified as Bâdshâh Pîr.[12] According to records of the Indian Immigration Department, Sheik Ahmed was thirty when he came to Natal aboard the Truro in November 1860, the first ship to transport indentured workers from India. Although it is claimed that he came alone and lived most of his life as a recluse on the streets of Durban, the name following his name on the ship list is that of a lady Ameenah Bee (283), also from Arni in North Arcot, and belonging to the same caste, *julâhâ*'. Both were assigned to R.G. Mack, and both transferred to F. Salmon in December 1861. This suggests a relationship; she was most likely his wife since she listed her last name as Sheik Ahmed and he listed his as Vulle Ahmed. Sheik Ahmed left Natal in 1873. He most likely went to the Diamond Fields in Kimberley, which had just opened. He returned to Natal in 1876 and left for India aboard the *Umvoti* on 9th September, 1876, accompanied by Ameenah Bee.[13]

Sheik Ahmed most likely returned to Natal as many ex-indentured Indians did. However, this cannot be verified because ship records of passenger Indians were destroyed when the offices of the Department of Indian Affairs were flooded in the mid-1980s. Despite Bâdshâh Pîr's sketchy biographical profile and unclear genealogy, large numbers of Muslims visit his tomb site to pay homage. Who lies buried in the grave that bears Bâdshâh Pîr's name does not matter as much as the fact that large numbers of Muslims accept his existence without question. His shrine is part of the Islamic tradition of thousands of Indian Muslims in Natal.

According to Lawrence, genealogical purity, anecdote-filled popularity, and disposition to poetry and music mark a *pîr* as a leader of a mystical order.[14] Sheik Ahmed's popularity is based mostly on anecdote. According to legend, when his employers recognised "him to be of spiritual mind", Bâdshâh Pîr was "honourably discharged". He subsequently spent time in the vicinity of the Grey Street mosque, where he preached to locals. According to reports, he "did not have a home, neither did he have a family or relatives"; he did not care for food, "a sign of a typical saint who relies upon Allah (God) for his *rizq* (food)". He often visited the cane fields, where he "proved a source of inspiration" for indentured workers struggling to cope with the exploitative labour regime on plantations.[15] Shortly before his death in 1894, Bâdshâh Pîr is said to have foretold the arrival of another saint from India, Soofie Saheb, when he warned local Muslims:

> Too many people are on the wrong path. The time is near when a friend of Allah will come here and by the *barakat* (blessings) of his footsteps infidelity and darkness will disappear. . . . If you want peace in this world and in the hereafter you must follow him.[16]

Bâdshâh Pîr, it is held, died on Friday, a blessed day for Muslims, 6th Rabî al-Awwal, the month in which the Prophet was born.[17]

It was Soofie Saheb, full name Shah Goolam Mohamed, who gave birth to the legend of Bâdshâh Pîr. Soofie Saheb, whose descendants trace his genealogy to Abu Bakr Siddîq, the first Caliph of Islam and father-in-law of the Prophet, was born in 1850 in Ratnagiri, about 200 kilometres from Bombay.[18] He was the eldest son of local imam Ibrahim Siddiqi. Soofie Saheb studied under his father and succeeded him as Imam in 1872 at the age of 22. In 1892, he became the *murîd* (disciple) of Habîb 'Alî Shâh of Hyderabad, a Sufi in the Chîshtî order, which is regarded as the most authentic Indian Sufi order.[19] In 1895, 'Alî Shâh instructed Soofie Saheb to go to South Africa to propagate the Chîshtî *silsilah*.[20]

Oral tradition has it that when he arrived in Durban in October 1895, Soofie Saheb asked for the grave of a recently deceased 'holy man'. As none of the locals knew the exact site, Soofie Saheb meditated at the cemetery until he located Bâdshâh Pîr's grave site. Given Bâdshâh Pîr's fame and attributes, it seems anomalous that local Muslims were unsure of his grave site. H.R. Smith has suggested spiritual contact between Soofie Saheb and Bâdshâh Pîr prior to the latter's arrival in Natal:

> The very fact that Bâdshâh Pîr foretold the arrival of Soofie Saheb, and the latter inquiring about the whereabouts of the grave of Bâdshâh Pîr immediately after his arrival is ample testimony that these two saints had spiritual contact.[21]

Soofie Saheb placed his shawl on the grave until a permanent structure was erected. Pîrs, shrines and festivals were central to the Islam of Konkani Muslims like Soofie Saheb. At least twenty fairs were organised annually in Bombay, attracting crowds of up to twenty thousand.[22] It is against this background of outward migration and popular practices that the activities of Soofie Saheb must be viewed. He organised the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet, and death anniversaries of saints at the shrine of Bâdshâh Pîr. This linked Bâdshâh Pîr to the chain of great Chîshtî Sufis who are remembered at his tomb. They include Sulaimân Taunsawî

(month of Safar), ʿAbd al-Qâdir Jîlânî (Rabî al-Akhir), Muʿîn al-Dîn Chîshtî (Rajab) and Habîb ʿAlî Shâh (Dhu ʾl-Qaʿdah).[23]

Until his death in 1911 Soofie Saheb was the *sajjâdah khâdim*, 'keeper' of Bâdshâh Pîr's tomb, a position subsequently filled by his descendants Abdul Aziz (1911-1947), Goolam Mohammed (1947-1978) and Mohammed Saeed (since 1978). Devotees believe that a saint's power is inherent in his bloodline and that his immediate remaining family should take over his religious function and administration of the shrine. The general principles of succession are birth (*jaddî silsilah*) and spiritual initiation (*niʿhmatî silsilah*). It is usually the eldest son who, when he has shown himself spiritually capable of understanding the "secret knowledge,… sits on the prayer mat of his father," whom he replaces as *sajjâdah-nashîn*,.[24] Soofie Saheb purchased land in Riverside on the banks of the Umgeni River, where he built a *dargâh*. By 1903 it comprised a mosque, residential home, *khânaqâh* (teaching hospice), *madrasah*, cemetery and orphanage.

Soofie Saheb and Sheik Ahmed had little in common. Soofie Saheb was from the élite class, urban and well-travelled, a speaker of Urdu/Marathi mixed with Arabic and Persian, Konkani, a Sufi of the Qâdirî and Chîshtî orders, and from western India; Sheik Ahmed was a Telugu-speaking, rural Muslim from south-eastern India, about whose Sufi lineage little is known beyond anecdote. Notwithstanding this, a recent study traced Sheik Ahmed's genealogical lineage to the Prophet, asserting not only that he was a Shaikh in the Chîshtî order, but that he ranked among the top ten *majdhûbs* in the world, that is, a saint in constant communication with God, and totally detached from worldly affairs.[25] This claim reinforces Bâdshâh Pîr's authenticity and the accuracy of practices and beliefs associated with him. The history Bâdshâh Pîr's tomb resonates with de Jong and Doorn-Harder's assertion that:

> Beliefs surrounding a tomb are constructed by its myths, its history and by the efforts of those who were and are in charge in the place. . . . This constellation of features can be called the 'landscape'

of any pilgrimage. The term 'landscape' here forms a powerful organising metaphor that consists not only of a physical terrain and architecture, but also of all the myths, traditions and narratives associated with natural and man-made features.[26]

Bâdshâh Pîr's Karâmât *(Miracles)*

Bâdshâh Pîr's *karâmât* (miracles) are legendary. *Karâmât* stories, according to Reeves, "display beliefs about saints, their character, and their doings. Saintly miracles attest to the superabundant supernatural powers of the *wâlî* and they explain why people are devoted to the saints'. Most *karâmât*", Reeves adds, "have a discernible ideological content":

> The saint is often described as bringing judgements against the wealthy and those who occupy positions of authority, especially when they are arrogant, fail to show respect for the saint, have hidden moral failings, or are unjust in their dealings with subordinates and dependents.[27]

Karâmât are important for establishing sainthood. Hagiographies emphasise the special qualities of Bâdshâh Pîr, particularly his ability to know things that are concealed and which he could not have known through 'normal' means. They relate to healing the sick, assisting the weak, foreseeing accidents and protecting others. As such stories increase the repute and standing of the followers of a *Shaikh* through vicarious holiness, "belief in miracles caught the imagination of the populace and led to extravagant and fantastic stories of the deeds of the Sufis".[28] Bâdshâh Pîr's k*arâmât* include the following:

- He is said to have meditated all day on the plantation, despite the pleading of fellow workers that he would be flogged by the Sirdar (overseer) for not completing his task. Yet by evening Bâdshâh Pîr's task was completed, to the amazement of his co-employees, and the often assisted others to complete their tasks.

- A municipal worker, specifically identified as a 'Mia Bhai gentleman' (descendent of indentured workers) and staunch devotee of Bâdshâh Pîr, by the Mazaar Society, was lighting the street lamp with paraffin one evening. It was already dark and he was in trouble for reporting late to work. When the supervisor reprimanded him, he is alleged to have said that if Bâdshâh Pîr wanted the lamps lit, they would light without human intervention. As he completed this remark, the street lights lit without paraffin.[29]

- Bâdshâh Pîr was on his way to Ladysmith to attend a wedding. The train conductor refused him a ticket because of his shabby dress. To the amazement of his friends he was on the railway platform in Ladysmith awaiting their arrival by the time they got there.

- In another incident, Bâdshâh Pîr advised a bridegroom, parents and close relatives to delay their departure to India, where he was to marry. The ship sank in a storm shortly after it disembarked from Durban.

- When a conductor refused Bâdshâh Pîr entry to a horse-drawn tram, he ordered the horse to sit down and rest in the middle of the street. The animal refused to move until the conductor apologised to Bâdshâh Pîr and allowed him to use the tram.

These popular anecdotes were important in the making of Bâdshâh Pîr as a saint. Symbolic tales about him resonate with the difficult voyages from India to Natal for indentured Indians who regarded the crossing of the sea, the 'Kala Pani' or 'Black Water', as a terrible ordeal; the brutal social and work conditions in nineteenth-century Natal, as well as racist policies of the Colonial government. Faced with these difficult conditions, many sought solace in the *barakah* of 'saints' to ease their suffering, and ensure their prosperity and wellbeing.

Tales of the conductor on the tram and trains reflect the dependence of ordinary people on the saint. While they are 'weak' Bâdshâh Pîr is portrayed as strong and proactive. Such stories derive their piquancy from being reported personal experiences, as well as from the pleasure taken in the discomfiture of overbearing and unjust officials. The saint champions the interests of the "the weak while those in authority are vulnerable to the saint's judgements".[30] Those who fail to recognise the saint's superordinate authority, like the tram conductor, are humiliated and punished. These stories foreground a concern with justice in interpersonal relations. The saint constrains the abuse of power by punishing the strong for their injustice.

Bâdshâh Pîr's tomb became a site of veneration for large numbers of Muslims who believe that praying to God in his presence was "much more likely to be efficacious". For example, R. Rehman, a teacher at Orient Islamic School in Durban, explained in 1986 that:

> . . .the Sufi is a 'Wali-Allah', that is, an individual who is closer to God. The followers of Bâdshâh Pîr are not grave worshippers. They do not worship Bâdshâh Pîr. The followers of Bâdshâh Pîr really look up to Bâdshâh Pîr as a spiritually enlightened person, close to God and therefore ask him to intercede for them to God. I too am looking for God. So I go to Bâdshâh Pîr and ask God to look favourably upon me.[31]

Local Muslims continued to believe that Bâdshâh Pîr, having special attributes of divinity, exuded *barakah*, a supernatural power of divine origin. Contemporary followers could not readily explain what this meant, except that the saint was "a blessed man", "a descendent of the Prophet", "did not care about the world", "walks in the Prophet's footsteps". In her study of Bâdshâh Pîr, Zohra Dawood found that although most Muslims in her sample visited the site regularly, they knew little about him except that he worked miracles. They nevertheless looked upon him as intercessor between them and God. Adherents compared the saint to a lawyer. Just as

lawyers resolved legal problems because of their deeper
knowledge of the law, they had to pray before the shrine of
Bâdshâh Pîr, who was closer to God than mere mortals, in or-
der to increase the likelihood of their problems being re-
solved. Devotees felt that their difficulties were better ex-
plained and resolved by a benefactor.[32] Some came to solve
marital problems, others to seek jobs or children, cure from
disease, assistance to pass examinations, or because they
wanted a house from the City Council, and so on. For adher-
ents "the fact of coming, being blessed, drinking the holy wa-
ter and making an offering, was the most important facet of
worship". Ultimately though, success and failure depended
largely on the extent to which they pleased their benefactor.
When prayers were not answered, adherents explained that it
was because their own faith was weak.[33]

Contextualising Bâdshâh Pîr: the 'Saint' Cult in Indian Islam

Pir, a Persian word and etymologically 'elder', denotes a
spiritual guide among Sufis. The functionary described by the
title is also known under the names *Shaikh*, *murshid* and
ustadh.[34] *Pîrs* and shrines have traditionally played an im-
portant rôle in the lives of Indian Muslims because Islamisa-
tion had been "a lengthy process of attrition, of continuing in-
teraction between the carriers of Islam and the local environ-
ment",[35] in which remnants of former religious practices were
eradicated very slowly, if at all. Large parts of rural India
were converted to Islam through the efforts of eclectic Sufis
who tolerated syncretism. Respect for mystic teachers was el-
evated to total veneration. *Pîrs* enhanced the cause of mysti-
cism by stressing the advantages of esoteric knowledge to
scriptural and scholastic knowledge.[36]

Richard Eaton has shown that in India, conversion to Is-
lam took place through gradual absorption into shrine cults as
the local Hindu population were drawn to the fame of pil-
grimage centres and hagiographical accounts of saints' mira-
cles. Eclecticism in Indian shrines was encouraged by the Sufis
who allowed free access to Hindus and Sikhs, Yogis and Sa-
dhus, despite criticism from orthodox *'Ulamâ'* that they were
diluting Islam with Hindu practices.[37] According to Mujeeb

rural Islam and Hinduism sometimes merged to form new cults, or local people did not concern themselves with the religion of the saint.[38]

According to Alavi, Indian rural Islam, "infused with superstition, and syncretism", emphasised "belief in miracles and powers of saints and *pîrs*, worship at shrines and the dispensing of amulets and charms".[39] *Pîrs*, considered closer to God, were regarded as important intermediaries who softened the stark boundary that separated Heaven from Earth, and interceded on behalf of locals with God.[40] There is consensus in the literature that Sufi preachers and *pîrs* played an important rôle in "winning over the hearts of the masses, ground down by the social rigours and indignities of the caste system".[41]

Pîrs were "valued because of their capacity to cut through worldly constraints so as to make direct and immediate contact with the divine".[42] In pre-reformist India, Muslims believed that when *pîrs* died they were receptive to intercessory pleas on their burial site.[43] From around the 11th century large numbers of Muslims visited local tombs because they believed that praying to God in the presence of a saint was "much more likely to be efficacious".[44] While the "Court of God as a cosmological construct seemed to lie beyond the devotee's immediate grasp, he did have a 'friend in court', as it were, who represented his interests there".[45]

Two institutional innovations, the pir's hospice (*khânaqâh*) and tomb (*mazâr*), were very important. Most converts, being low-caste or untouchables, had been denied direct access to temples or Brahmin priests because of 'ritual pollution'. *Khânaqâhs* and m*azârs* were therefore extremely attractive as they provided 'open and total access'. According to Roy, devotees

> … were attracted not only towards the personal and religious charisma and thaumaturgic powers of a living saint but also to such memories of a dead 'saint', perpetuated in his shrine by his followers. In the case of a tomb, in particular, it is interesting to speculate on the possible psychological

impact of the Muslim practice of burying the dead and erecting tombs, contrasted with the Hindu-Buddhist practice of consigning the corpse to flames. If the atmosphere of these institutions was emotionally congenial for rural folk, no less attractive were those institutions capacity and willingness to offer material comforts to the people.[46]

The urgency with which Soofie Saheb established Bâdshâh Pîr's shrine is consonant with the Sufi world-view. Migrating devotees did not lose their bond to local shrines but built "new shrines, inspired by the belief that each was an equally potent repository of *barakat*" (blessing). Migration resulted in a "widening and intensification of the original cult tradition, and certainly not a turn towards a more universal or transcendent faith devoid of shrines, magical intercessory power and all other features of the *pîr* cult".[47]

The Chîshtîyyah *tarîqah* demonstrates a common pattern. Saints of the *tarîqah* developed new centres in places where they were sent by their Shaikh to promote Islam. Family descendants of the original saint became custodians of the tomb and *dargâh*. These became shrine centres upon the death of their founders. In this way a vast network of *silsilahs* developed, all tracing their lineage to Khwâjah Mu'în al-Dîn Chishtî, the original Grand Shaikh of the *tarîqah*.[48] Important tomb sites in Natal include Bâdshâh Pîr (1895), Soofie Saheb (1911), and two of Bâdshâh Pîr's companions Saiya Bawa (father) and Qaasim Bawa.

Contesting Hegemony: The Tomb of Bâdshâh Pîr

The hegemony of the Soofie family over Bâdshâh Pîr's tomb was contested from the 1940s by the Bâdshâh Pîr Mazaar Society whose president Goolam Mustapha Essop-Sarrang (1921-1985) claimed a link to Bâdshâh Pîr through his maternal grandfather Ajam Hoosen, who arrived in Natal in the early 1860s. Hoosen displayed strong leadership qualities on the ship, and was named 'Sarrang', meaning leader, by fellow passengers.

After completing his term of indenture Hoosen lived in Queen Street, opposite the Jumu'ah Masjid. It was here that he met Bâdshâh Pîr. According to family folklore, Hoosen and his wife were having difficulty conceiving children, so he called on Bâdshâh Pîr to seek a *karâmat* (miracle). While Hoosen was explaining his predicament to Bâdshâh Pîr two flowers fell from a nearby tree. Bâdshâh Pîr set Hoosen's mind at ease by predicting that he would have two daughters, one of whom would "do my work".[49]

Mariam and Sakina were born in the 1890s. Mariam married Yusuf Amod Essop. They had seven children, five sons and two daughters. Goolam Mustapha, their second son, was born in 1921. He married Sakina Somerey in the early 1940s. They had nine children, four sons and five daughters. Their second son Iqbal has continued his father's tradition. Iqbal took keen interest in activities associated with Bâdshâh Pîr from a very young age, and it came as no surprise when Goolam Sarrang announced that Bâdshâh Pîr had informed him in a 'vision' that Iqbal should succeed him as *khalîfah*.[50]

Goolam Sarrang was devoted to 'saints' and devoted most of his spare time to renovating tombs throughout Natal at his own cost. Having grown up in the heart of the city, Sarrang and his friends took particular interest in Bâdshâh Pîr's shrine, and especially his *'urs*. In a handwritten recollection shortly before his death in 1984, he wrote:

> When the older people got tired and could not manage to organise the *'urs* Shareef they made an approach to the young boys who had lots of faith in Bâdshâh Pîr. The young people accepted this offer to carry on with the affairs of Bâdshâh Pîr and the Mazaar. Then was formed a body known as Bâdshâh Pîr Committee. First thing this committee body did was to alter and enlarge the Mazaar Shareef and bring it to the position it stands today. Then after the first year, the *'urs* was organised in small way. The *'urs* Shareef was organised thereafter year after year in a more and more bigger way. Peoples of all races from all over the world visit

this shrine everyday. Hundreds of people visit the shrine for faith healing, peoples who are in distress, and people with many problems come to this shrine and pray for help and they get their prayers answered. During the 'urs Shareef 16000 to 20000 people take part and join the celebration.

There was disagreement between Sarrang and the Soofie family over Bâdshâh Pîr's tomb from the early 1940s. The shrine was heavily patronised and an important source of revenue as visitors contributed *nadhars* ("offerings") in anticipation that their prayers would be answered. These "offerings", including money, were controlled by the custodian of the shrine, called *sajjâdah-nashîn*, and his family members, *mutawallis.* Situated close to the Indian Market, bus rank and Indian-dominated CBD, Bâdshâh Pîr's shrine provided convenient access for large numbers of devotees, and control of it was keenly contested. Sarrang and the Mazaar Society challenged Soofie custodianship of the shrine.

Differences culminated in a court case in 1959 between applicant Essop-Sarrang, *khalîfah* ('organiser, sponsor or leader') of the Bâdshâh Pîr Mazaar Society, and respondent Goolam Soofie, son of Abdul Aziz Soofie who died in 1947, and grandson of Soofie Saheb. In his affidavit dated 20 February, 1959 Essop outlined the history of Bâdshâh Pîr's shrine:[51]

> According to legend, the late Bâdshâh Pîr was gifted with supernatural powers. He was a very holy man and saint. When he died about sixty years ago, he was laid to rest in the Brook Street cemetery and his grave became a shrine, where people who professed the Muslim faith would come and pray.

The shrine consisted of a simple dome erected over the grave. A corrugated iron structure was erected by a Hindu, Bhaga, around the dome in 1917. F.W. Thorns, Director, Parks, Recreation and Beaches Department, confirmed to the Town Clerk on 11 December, 1958, that the "shrine in its present form was built in 1917 or 1918". A collection box was installed at the shrine for devotees to make a 'voluntary' cash offering.

A *mujâwir* took care of the shrine. The first *mujâwir* was Mohamed Ally (c. 1890s-1910s), followed by Mohamed Khan (c. 1910s) and Lalla Mia in the 1920s and 1930s. The *mujâwir* was directly responsible to the 'sponsor' of the shrine, the Soofie family. The sponsor, according to Essop, was a person who:

> . . .voluntarily, as a representative of the people, saw to it that the shrine was properly maintained, and also collected the moneys put into the collection box. The money had to be spent on the poor and the sponsor had to account for the expenditure to the leaders of the community.

Sarrang took an active interest in the shrine from 1938. He claimed that he was "disturbed" because Abdul Aziz had allowed the tomb to become derelict, and was determined to build a memorial "fit enough" for a "great personality". Sarrang approached Abdul Aziz who refused to contribute funds from the collection box for the shrine's upkeep. Together with some of his friends who shared his concerns, Sarrang formed the Bâdshâh Pîr Committee on 20th August, 1945. the Committee was made up of fifty members, with Sarrang elected president.

The Committee formally adopted a constitution on 22nd September, 1945 and met with Abdul Aziz on 23rd November, 1945. Their request for funds to renovate the shrine was rejected by Abdul Aziz. The Committee collected £ 1000 from members and obtained permission from cemetery inspector Y.W.C. Imerson on 21st September, 1946, to replace the wood and iron building. After completing renovations in early 1947 the Committee organised what became an annual function, an '*urs* Sharîf' to commemorate the death of Bâdshâh Pîr. It included a *qawwâlî* concert as well as offerings of food and refreshments to the public. The '*urs* became a major event in the local Muslim calendar and imposed a huge financial burden on organisers. In 1957, for example, the Committee spent £ 330 to hire a tent, *qawwâlî*-singers and provide food. Abdul Aziz

continued to turn down the Committee's request for assistance (Affidavit).

According to Sarrang, when Abdul Aziz Soofie died in 1947 his son Goolam Mahomed, who became *mujâwir*, agreed to contribute financially towards the shrine's upkeep, as well as build a *khânaqâh* in Bâdshâh Pîr's honour:

> The Society has a great ambition to build a Monastery (*Khânaqâh* Shareef) in the name of Bâdshâh Pîr because the Society feels there is no Institution existing on the name after this great Walli-Allah. We feel that we are duty bound to fulfil our most wanted ambition. This is about time Bâdshâh Pîr had his name on the walls.

Though G.M. Soofie failed to honour his pledge, the Committee did not take legal action because his "late grandfather was held in high esteem by all Muslims, and partly because we did not want to create a community scandal". By 1958 the Committee was restless against G.M. Soofie, who

> . . .many thought was living like a wealthy man but had no business or occupation, and were no longer prepared to be put off. Members wanted to start a school, home for the aged and more actively assist poor and destitute.

Sarrang, Cassim Amod Somerey, the secretary of the Bâdshâh Pîr Committee, Ismail Mahomed Suleman and Ally Mahomed met G.M. Soofie in November 1958, but the latter remained "intransigent". The Bâdshâh Pîr Committee revised its constitution and changed its name to Bâdshâh Pîr Mazaar Society at its annual meeting on 28th September, 1958. G.M. Soofie was invited but did not attend the meeting, where it was resolved to take 'full control' of the shrine from 1st January, 1959. On the designated day, Sarrang and Solly Desai, assistant secretary of the Society, put an extra lock on the collection box. Sarrang felt that after they had renovated the shrine "the public frequented the shrine in greater numbers and more money was donated".

On 2nd January, 1959, Ismail Mahomed Suleman, Solly Desai, Sultan Ally and Abdul Kader Bâdshâh Pîr Mazaar Society waited at the shrine. When G.M. Soofie arrived at 4:30 pm to empty the box, they instructed him to remove his lock as they intended collecting the money in future. G.M. Soofie rejected their request and left the shrine, with both locks intact. On 8th January, 1959, Sarrang received a letter from G.M. Soofie's attorneys Darby and Higgs instructing him to remove the lock. Replying through his attorneys Wartski, Sanan and de Jager on 16th January, 1959, Sarrang said that he had not affixed the lock in his personal capacity but on behalf of the Mazaar Society's 500 members who were 'concerned' that G.M. Soofie was not interested in the condition of the shrine, which they regarded as public property:

> Who vested control in your client as he alleges and by what authority? Furthermore, by what authority has he placed a lock on the shrine collection box and by what authority does he collect the money? Would he be so kind to give a full statement of account of all monies collected from the donation box? Can Soofie explain how and in what ways he has spent the money collected for the benefit of the poor?

G.M. Soofie arrived at the shrine on 22nd January, 1959, with an entourage in two vehicles, broke the lock with a saw and hammer and removed the money. Ally Mahomed of the Mazaar Society, who was keeping watch, locked the cemetery gate and called the police, who took possession of the money and shepherded the men to the police station. "Offerings" between 2nd and 22nd January, 1959, had amounted to £138.5.8, as well as 382 *châdars*. These were pieces of cloth that devotees "offered" to place on the grave of Bâdshâh Pîr. Satin, linen, and cotton *châdars* measured approximately 7 by 5 feet, and averaged between 12/6d and 25/-d each. Sarrang stated in his affidavit that he himself had donated a velvet *châdar* costing £ 16 when his prayers were answered in 1951. He alleged that while *châdars* were meant to cover the tomb, members of the Soofie family took them for personal use. While control of the

shrine, which meant influence over public manifestations of the saint's identity, was partly linked to immediate material gain, it also provided prestige, power and authority.

The protagonists and their lawyers agreed that monies would be held in Trust pending settlement. "To avoid any risk of violence" both sides affixed locks on the box. Representatives from each side met at 3 pm each Wednesday to count the money, record the amount and hand the money to attorneys Darby and Higgs. £ 129.14.3 was collected between 22nd January, 1959, and 11th February, 1959; and £ 49.7.0 between 11th February, 1959, and 18th February, 1959. G.M. Soofie wrote to the Town Clerk on 26th January, 1959, to "get his occupation of the shrine properly recognised" through a lease. His application was supported by affidavits by 80-year old Shaik Hoosen, 70-year old Hajee Omardeen, Mohammed Bashir Siddiqui, a 75-year old marriage officer, and 85-year-old Sayed Fakroodeen. Their affidavits affirmed that the shrine was established by Soofie Saheb and that after his death his son Abdul Aziz and then grandson Goolam Mahomed administered it. They felt that it "would be in the interests of the Muslim community for Goolam Mahomed Soofie to be recognised by the Durban Municipality as the caretaker in sole charge of the shrine".

The Mazaar Society applied to the Supreme Court in February 1959 for the estimated £ 2000 collected annually to be given to their society, the only body 'directly connected' to Bâdshâh Pîr. After hearing both sides of the argument Justice E.L. Jansen ruled that control of the shrine would remain with the Soofie family, but that the Mazaar Society could retain its name and hold the *'urs* and Muharram festivals in the name of Bâdshâh Pîr.

Tension simmered between the groups. There was another altercation in July 1965 when four members of the Mazaar Society, who were praying at the shrine, were turned out, and the doors of the shrine locked. Sarrang arrived shortly thereafter and ordered the door to be broken down, explaining that:

. . .this is the latest of many incidents between us.
It all started with a court case over funds. I'm just
waiting to see if the opposition take any further ac-
tion. I shall be calling a public meeting over this
business.[52]

Soofies, on the other hand, felt they had the right to lock
the door because "the court gave us full control of the
shrine".[53] Mediation resulted in peaceful settlement of the
dispute. This marked the end of public feuds as the Mazaar
Society came to terms with Soofie legal control of the shrine,
and instead focused on organising the 'urs and Muharram fes-
tivities.

A fire in 1978 added to the legend of Bâdshâh Pîr. When
the caretaker Abdul Bawa arrived one morning in August
1978 he found the tomb filled with smoke. He managed to put
the fire out, but damage was estimated at several thousand
rands. Devotees of Bâdshâh Pîr pointed to things not damaged
- the expensive Persian carpets surrounding the marble rail-
ings of the grave, the Qur'ân and other religious books in the
tomb, and yellow and green cloth that covered his grave - as a
further sign of Bâdshâh Pîr's powers. Devotees told reporter
I.A. Khan of *Post Natal* that the carpet folded on its own to es-
cape the inferno.[54]

Sarrang appointed his son Iqbal 'spiritual' leader
(*khalîfah*) of the Mazaar Society shortly before his death in
1984. The appointment of successor is important because it is
through the leader that followers of several generations are
united in allegiance to a common 'saint' even though descent
is not common. Through Iqbal, a "notion of timelessness, tran-
scendental reality (*haqiqat*) is affirmed" and "firm social bond"
created within the group.[55]

Reformist Islam and Rising Opposition

Most Muslims accommodated a wide range of practices,
including those associated with folk Islam, which was the Islam
of the majority of Durban's Muslims. Those who did not partake
directly in activities such as Muharram and 'urs engaged as ob-

servers. The *'urs* was an important component of local Islam. *'Urs* meaning 'wedding' or a 'happy occasion' in Arabic, signified the meeting of two beings, and was akin to what mediaeval saints fairs must have been in Europe. The anniversary of the 'death' of a saint is seen as the time when his soul departs his body and he meets His Maker. The saint's passing away is regarded as a wedding ceremony in which the saint, who is a bridegroom, will join God, the Beloved Bride, in an eternal marriage. Thus, as van der Veer points out,

> . . .the death anniversary of a saint is an occasion of great power, since the saint who lives in his tomb derives his ability to help the supplicants from his unhindered access to God. The saint's day is said to be a powerful occasion in which one can be cured of all kinds of affliction.[56]

Centred on the shrine of Bâdshâh Pîr, the *'urs* generated an influx of people and combined religious and non-religious activities, such as visits to the shrine, street processions, fair, *qawwâlî* entertainment, eating and drinking. The Mazaar Society formally observed the *'urs* of Bâdshâh Pîr from 1947. The Society obtained permission from the City Council annually to erect a temporary bamboo structure on vacant land opposite the shrine, install loud-speakers, decorate the portion of Queen Street from Albert Street to Brook Street with buntings and flags; and carry out a sandal procession from Victoria Street through Grey Street into Queen Street to the Brook Street ceremony.

The local Council imposed stringent conditions to control the activities, and ensure that proceedings did not deviate from what was acceptable to local whites. For example, in granting permission in 1952, the Council warned the Committee that the singing of songs and hymns had to be "toned down to the satisfaction of the police"; the erection of the structure to commence the day before the ceremony and no earlier; the ceremony was to terminate on receipt of complaints from the neighbourhood; the area was to be left "clean and tidy"; the "promoters of the ceremony comply with the requirements of the Local Police"; and the Committee had to

indemnify the Council against damages or accidents that
might arise as a result of the fixation of flags and decorative
streamers.[57] This was the standard response from the City
Council each year.

In the local context, Muslims who took part in the *'urs*,
Muharram and other such activities, took intellectual inspira-
tion from Ahmad Radâ Khân (1856-1921) of Bareilly who
founded schools in Bareilly, Lahore and Pilibhit.[58] He was a
mujaddid (reformer) to his followers, and defended orthodoxy
in alliance with hereditary *pîrs* of the countryside.[59] At the
centre of Ahmad Radâ's teaching was the Prophet, whose
birth he celebrated. He gave public deference to *Sayyids*, de-
scendants of the Prophet, and 'saints'. In Radâ's notion of Is-
lam, 'saints' retained a bodily existence after death. As Jones
explains,

> Saints could thus both hear prayers and grant re-
> quests from the grave. The position led him to ac-
> cept the celebration of *'urs*, revere saints, tombs,
> and the rituals associated with these powerful fig-
> ures. The Prophet, saints, *pîrs*, and sheikhs could
> all act on behalf of Muslims who sought their assis-
> tance. Ahmed Radâ accepted as valid customs and
> parochial cults, as long as they were not in contra-
> diction to established sections of *hadîth*. . . . He
> wanted to preserve Islam unchanged; not as it was
> idealised in the texts or the historical past, but Is-
> lam as it had evolved to the present.[60]

Radâ strongly opposed those seeking to reform Islamic
practices, broadly labelled Wahhâbîs, after Muhammad ibn
'Abd al-Wahhâb, an eighteenth-century reformer in present-
day Saudi Arabia who advocated removal of what he regard-
ed as 'innovations'.[61]

The reformist tradition established in the 1860s in Deo-
band, India, subjected the 'Indian' heritage of Indian Muslims
to scrutiny. It advocated a 'pure' Islam, shorn of aspects of
Indianness, including the historical experience of being Indian
and Indian cultural survivals.[62] The gap between the 'ideal'

and 'actual' was attributed to 'incomplete conversion' or 'religious degeneration'.[63] Deobandîs associated taken-for-granted practices such as Muharram, 'urs, and visitation of gravesites with Hindu cultural and religious influences, and rejected them on theological grounds. Closely allied was the rôle of the Tablighi Jamaat, the transnational religious movement founded in India by Muhammad Ilyas (1885-1944).[64]

The movement first made inroads in South Africa in the early 1960s among Gujarati traders. Later, however, it attracted support from Memons as well as some Urdu-speaking descendants of indentured Muslims.[65] This reformation drive condemned rituals like 'urs and Muharram as non-Islamic. However, while the putative right of reformists to change practices was strong, the Barelwi tradition was resilient and the 'urs remains a feature of Islamic practice in Durban, though support for the public aspects has dwindled and aspects of it have changed. This paper now examines the 'urs observed in Durban in 2002.

Bâdshâh Pîr's 'Urs, 2002

A four-day 'urs is held annually at the shrine of Bâdshâh Pîr. In 2002 the 'urs of "South Africa's most illustrious Majzoob Wali-Allah", as Bâdshâh Pîr was described in a pamphlet put out by the Mazaar Society, was held "at his only address, his Darbar in Bâdshâh Pîr Square in Durban" from the evening of Thursday 16th May, 2002 to the afternoon of Sunday 19th May, 2002, 3-6th Rabî al-Awwal in the Islamic lunar month. According to the pamphlet, this was the 116th 'urs of Bâdshâh Pîr, implying that he died in 1886. this is contested by the Soofies. While Sarrang insisted that Ajam Hoosen told him that Bâdshâh Pîr had died in 1886, according to the Soofies he died in 1894.[66]

The 'urs was attended by an eclectic crowd. It included those seeking *barakah*, blessing inherent in saints and his intercession with God or the Prophet; professionals who made money out of the occasion selling food, Islamic frames and other wares; and those who simply attended for the enter-

tainment. The function began on Thursday evening, Jumu'ah being a blessed day. There was a prayer and supper after the *Maghrib namâz* (prayer) at sunset. This was followed by recitation of the Qur'ân, ladies *Na't* (poetical praise of the Prophet), *Mahfil-i-Salâm* (salutation ceremonies of the Prophet). On Friday evening, after *Maghrib* there was *Fâtihah or du'â* (convocation), supper and *Mahfil-i-Na't,*after *Ishâ* prayers by South Africa's most prominent *Na't-Khwâns*.

The main events were reserved for Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday, the 'Sandal Sharîf' procession began officially at the offices of Iqbal Sarrang on the 8th floor at Tasneem Centre in Victoria Street. The procession is called 'sandal' because sandalwood paste is carried during the procession and applied to Bâdshâh Pîr's tomb. The *shâmiyânâ*, a piece of green *châdar* (cloth) placed on the shrine of Bâdshâh Pîr, was 'washed' with *'itr* (perfume) imported from India. Two fragrances were used, Majmua and Hina, which, according to Iqbal, have been used by living saints for generations.

After a short *Fâtihah* (prayer), Iqbal and about a hundred followers who were able to squeeze into his office walked eight floors down to street level, to the retail store *Kool Kids* in Victoria Street. Around 300 people gathered at 2.00 pm in the shop with several hundred more outside. While the atmosphere was buoyant, the impact of reformism was evident in the fact that during its heyday in the 1960s this procession drew up to 10,000 people. At *Kool Kids* a long prayer blessed those who were present. This was followed by *Na't*, 'Sandal' and *Salâm*. The *Na't*, sung by a Qawwal Essop Kaloo Party of Durban, comprised praises of the Prophet. This was followed by a *Manqabat* (poetic praise of the 'saints'), or songs of praise to Bâdshâh Pîr, written by Iqbal Sarrang (See Appendix).

The focal point of the day was the 'Sandal' procession. This tradition began in 1947 when the 'Sandal Sharîf' procession originated from Sayed Fakroodeen's shop at 128 Victoria Street to Ashana Sheriff at Brook Street. The procession presented a stark contrast, as it consisted of two distinct sections. Iqbal, as 'servant' of Bâdshâh Pîr, led a procession of around fifty followers who carried sandalwood paste and new covers

(*châdars)* for the grave. Iqbal's position and power, it should be remembered, is entirely genealogical and derived from his ancestors. This group walked slowly and introspectively, Iqbal presenting a picture of total calm and benevolent aloofness, stopping every few steps to honour the memory of Bâdshâh Pîr.

The second group, more buoyant, comprised men and boys engaged in Ratib and singing devotional songs, accompanied by musical instruments such as drums and tambourines, swords and special maces (*gurz*). Some participants were in a state of possession or trance. This activity consisted of beating one's chest; as well as the miraculous piercing of body parts, including cheeks and tongue by swords, iron pins and other instruments. Although the instruments were extremely sharp there was no blood when they were removed. Participants and onlookers considered the absence of blood an indication of the spiritual power of Bâdshâh Pîr. During the slow and largely self-managed procession, the heads of participants were thrown back passionately, arms flung in the air, and knees lurched forward. Meer's description of the procession in the 1960s remains fairly accurate and is worth quoting:

> Slim men and little boys pull up their shirts and knot them almost neck high, bare their stomachs and then plunge the raathies (long lengths of steel with sharply pronged ends) into their bared stomachs. The assault develops into a graceful dance. Heads are thrown back, arms flung forward, for a moment the raathies remain tense and poised in mid-air, as if drawing strength, then torsos curve in, knees spring together, and the points dig into flesh. The movement continues up and over and in, matador-like rhythm to the beat of cymbals and large tambourines tautly stretched with skins and edged with bells. And all the while others in the procession intone in rich voices, verses from the Qur'ân. Within a short time, the exposed parts of the body are covered with red pinpoint scars. The procession moves slowly, the raathie players pausing in between for breath.[67]

Beyond these immediate participants were several hundred followers. Interviewing them it was clear they saw the saint's day as combining sacred time and space. By observing what was happening they felt they were participating in the occasion, with special religious feeling and fervour flowing through the crowds. Many looked in awe at the body piercing and became possessed when the sandalwood paste was applied.

When the procession reached the cemetery, Iqbal and his followers crowded inside the shrine while their followers stood outside. *Salâm*, salutation to the Prophet, was read by a blind Qârî, Shama, a muezzin at the Jumu'ah Masjid. Thereafter the *Manqabat* was read again, followed by the placing of the shamiyânâ (*châdar*) on the shrine. This is the most poignant and powerful moment of the ceremony, the point when the grave is uncovered and everybody tries to lay a hand on it. Many were overcome by the moment and became possessed. All the time *dhikr*, praises to the Prophet and 'saints', was read loudly. Around 1000 mainly yellow and green *châdars* were laid, taking approximately ninety minutes. The *châdar* that was placed on top of Bâdshâh Pîr's tomb was imported from India. It was expensive and ornate, looking very attractive with the gold glitter that adorned it. This *châdar* was also donated by a member of the public, as happened each year. Iqbal, the *Khâdim*, took the *sandal* (sandalwood paste) from a bowl with his *shahâdah* finger and two other fingers, and made three lines, each six inches long, on the head side of Bâdshâh Pîr's tomb. Thereafter, a flower bed, made from the interweaving of 1500 red and pink carnations, was placed on the *châdar*. Around 100 bottles of 'itr was sprinkled on the flower bed. Then the Manqabat was read, followed by a *Fâtihah* of approximately ten minutes by Shabir Mohammed, nephew of Iqbal, and *Salâm* by Shams. The *Salâm* was very inspiring and read with great feeling. Many were moved and threw around R600 as a matter of appreciation in a matter of minutes. This was followed by a final *Fâtihah* by Iqbal. Practices such as reading of the dhikr are more recent introductions and suggest an attempt to eradicate elements of syncretism while moving towards normative Islam.

Devotees then proceeded to the *jhandî*, flag hoisting ceremony. The flag, with its green and yellow border, green background and yellow moon and star, denoted the colour of the particular Sufi tradition, the Chîshtî *Silsilah*, to which devotees belonged. This particular flag was sewn in the 1960s by the wife of the late Solly Desai, a pioneer member of the Mazaar Society. Once the *jhandî* ceremony was completed, members greeted each other with glad tidings, and congratulated and thanked others for a 'job well done'. Greetings were also passed on from the public to members of the Mazaar Society. The ceremony ended just before sunset. Both the *Maghrib* and *Ishâ'* prayers were read at the on-site tent, led by local Mawlana Murtaza. After *Ishâ'* the *Katam-i-Kwâjagân* was read. It comprised praises to God, the Prophet and 'saints', in that order, and was compiled in India from the Saint Khwaja Gharîb al-Nawâz.

A *Qawwâlî* concert (*Mahfil-i-Samâ'*), was held on Saturday night from 9:30 pm until 3:15 am at the Bâdshâh Pîr Shelter. Prominent local *qawwâls* (singers) played Sufi music and sang songs originally associated with the Chîshtî brotherhood. The root of the word *Qawwâl* is the Arabic 'Qu'al', which refers to the sayings of religious personalities that inspire individuals and help purify their thoughts. Samâ' or *Qawwâlî* refers to the singing of religious hymns in Persian and Urdu in praise of God/Allah, and popularise the dictums of his Prophet, saints and other holy personages, in addition to extolling their greatness. Usually accompanied only with a harmonium, *qawwâlî* has played an important part in the development of Sufism in India. Songs mostly comprise compositions of popular and internationally famous Urdu and Persian poets such as Rûmî, Jâmî, Farîd al-Dîn 'Attâr, Shiblî, Shîrâzî, Junaid Baghdadî, Shams Tabrîz and Amîr Khusro. According to Greaves:

> . . .the qawwali is the unique form of *dhikr* practiced by the Chîshtîyya *tarîqah*. The chanting and sometimes up-tempo songs of divine love and longing are adored by Indian people from all religious backgrounds. It is believed that the qawwali

was introduced by the Chîshtî Sufis because they
knew that the Indian love of devotional music
would attract converts to Islam. . . . The music and
songs serve not only to promote spirituality but al-
so function to preserve a sense of community
through shared memories and nostalgia for the
place of origin.[68]

The privilege to sing is strictly by invitation. Six qawwâl
groups were invited; Goolam and Party of Maritzburg;
Sportsy and Party, a Hindu singer who has been performing
for almost half a century; Kaloo Brothers of Durban; Hajee
Sayyid and Party of Johannesburg, a young group performing
for the first time; Hajee Faisal Niazi of Durban and Khali Na-
waaz of Durban. Each group performed for between 45
minutes and an hour, to the great excitement of the crowd
which numbered between 12,000 and 15,000. The tent was
packed to the brim with large crowds standing outside. Many
in the audience went into a trance, moved by the music and
poetry. They lost awareness and performed 'strange' move-
ments, even going into ecstasy. It sometimes leads to hypnotic
spell and inspires an intense feeling (*jadhbah*) that culminates
in trance.[69] Many showed their appreciation and love by
throwing gifts of money on to the platform.

The loudest applause was reserved for Kaloo Brothers,
whose lead singer was a seventeen-year-old matric pupil and
grandson of old favourite Yusuf Kaloo who sang in the 1950s.
His style and presentation was likened to the great Ustad
Nusruth Fateh Ali Khan. The crowd went into raptures when
he sung the line after building a crescendo:

> *Yeh dil aur yeh jân tere liyeh*
> *My heart and my soul is for you* [Bâdshâh Pîr]

The sacred combined with the less than sacred for there
was a festive atmosphere outside where many were gathered
in what resembled a village fair (*mêlâ*). The enclosed *qawwâlî*
area was separated from the trading area by a gateway of four
minarets, 25 metres long and 15 metres high. It was light or-
ange and cream with green lights, creating, most felt, an 'Is-

lamic' ambience. There was brisk trade in tea and Indian deli-
cacies. The most popular item was sîkh kebabs, mince balls
barbecued over open fires and served with lemon. This has
become synonymous with the *'urs*. Vendors took in between
R200,000 and R300,000 for the evening. Speaking to the crowd,
no single reason was cited for attending. Some referred to the
need for cures or other needs, others to the demands of reli-
gion and others for the sheer pleasure of festival.

    The crowd began dispersing around 3: 15 am. For
Mazaar Society members there was no rest. They divided into
two groups, one went to the headquarters in Stratford Road
while the other remained at the tent. With the help of hired
labour they arranged tables to feed 3000 people at the site. The
second group went to Stratford Road where a hundred strong
cooking team began preparing 220 dêgs (large pots) of food
for Sunday lunch. The programme began at 11:00 am on Sun-
day, and consisted of recitation of Qur'ân, recitation of *Na'ts,
Manqabats,* lectures in English and Urdu, followed by
Chîshtîyyah Langar Niyâz (lunch). A *wa'z* (sermon) was de-
livered in the masjid yard and later at the Brook Street ceme-
tery by Mawlana Murtaza and Mawlana Alkhekir, Khatib of
the Ladysmith Soofie Musjid. Lunch was served to approxi-
mately 6000 people over two sittings. The Mazaar Society in-
vited many homeless African street children, seeing it as a
way of giving dawah (invitation to Islam) to Africans. Food
was also distributed until 5:00 pm. The menu included _khîr_, a
pudding made of rice and milk and usually served at funerals,
sweet yellow rice, and dhal (lentil soup) and rice, a very tradi-
tional Indian dish.

    In the evening, when the crowd had left, a final *Fâtihah*
(prayer) was read at the shrine for forgiveness for any short-
comings on the part of members. Members thanked God for
giving them strength and fortitude to carry out His work.
Mazaar Society members moved to the cooking area where
they worked until late into the night washing the hired pots
and cooking utensils and cleaning up. It took three months to
prepare for the occasion and about a week to clean up. The
cost was around R200,000 which was obtained mainly from
donations from the public.[70] Why is there such massive ex-

penditure in honouring Bâdshâh Pîr, and why do the poor not oppose it? According to Reeves, businessmen are motivated by the fact that capital contributions are 'sanitised'. Capital is transmuted into 'the symbolic capital of piety and as a consequence evade moral censure'. The saint's judgement does not fall on those who pay him the respect that is his due. The powerful win legitimacy at financial cost. The masses participate because they are not an organised group who can indulge in unified action. Poorer members of society:

> . . .gain from being able to define an ideal of piety and justice in interpersonal relations in accordance with their experiences and interests. Symbolic power appears to be qualitatively different from more overt forms of institutionalised power because it inspires positive-sum appraisals in power-holders and subjects alike. Because of its positive-sum nature, symbolic power is also immune to the accrual of resistance, at least at some levels of discourse. Consequently, a diagnostic of symbolic power would entail the absence – rather than presence – of resistance.[71]

Conclusion

The shrine of Bâdshâh Pîr has been important in the development of Indian Islam in Natal. As a result of practices such as *'urs*, a popular form of Islam became hegemonic among descendants of indentured Muslims. Many new communities of Muslims have developed in this way; the new location of sacred space appearing upon the death of a saint providing traditional authority based on an age-old custom. The shrine also connected local Muslims to the history and geography of places of origin. The focus of attention being the shrine itself, it included followers from all areas of India and not just area of origin. The tomb site has also served as a means to transcend narrow ethnic, locality and class boundaries as many Muslims gathered around the lifestyle and leadership of the shrine and cult.

Activities connected to Bâdshâh Pîr's shrine are very much a product of historical and structural contexts. As a result of economic, political and social changes, as well as the impact of reformist Islam from the 1960s, participation in the public aspects of 'urs, such as the procession. Attendance at the night activities and Sunday lunch however continues to be massive and buoyant. The decrease in crowds is probably partly due to changes in lifestyle, with the shopping mall, television, sport and extra work taking up people's time. As a result of reformist Islam, which rejected over-veneration for saints, extra-emphasis on genealogy and saintly hierarchy, the format and meaning of popular practices have also changed. The strong discursive influence of reformists has not succeeded in terminating popular practices, but has resulted in changes. For example there is noticeably more emphasis on the reading of Qur'ân and *dhikr*.

A multiciplicity of meanings was attached to Saint's Day by participants. In a context of disenfranchisement, for some these practices were historically an important source of self-respect and resistance to race, class and ethnic hegemony. Others took the tomb and adapted it to their own background, education, hopes and beliefs. The multiple and contradictory meanings of participants with diverse interests seem to be re-affirmed during the *'urs*. Some came simply to recite the Qur'ân, others for the inspiration of being close to the burial site of a 'saint', some to make requests and prayers, others to ask for the blessings of the 'saint', or seek proper spiritual guidance or even worldly gains.

ENDNOTES

(1) Figures supplied by Tom Bennett and Joy Brain who are compiling an inventory of indentured Indians. Of 130,000 immigrants analysed thus far, 7874 were Muslim, comprising 4958 males, 2418 females, 233 girls and 248 boys

(2) R. Mesthrie, *Language*, p. 29.

(3) Davies, 'Growth of Durban', p. 26.

(4)   Bhana and Brain, *Setting down Roots*, pp. 65-66.

(5)   Swan, *Gandhi*, p. 2.

(6)   Ginwala, 'Class, Consciousness and Control', p. 181.

(7)   Alexander, 'Progress f Arabs and Indians', p. 3.

(8)   See Vahed, 2002.

(9)   See Vahed, 2001.

(10) Murison, 'Cemeteries', p. 2.

(11) Beary, 1998.

(12) See Dangor, 1995; Mahida, 1993; Bâdshâh Pîr Mazaar Society (BPMS), 2000; and Soofie and Soofie, 2001.

(13) Information supplied by Professor Joy Brain, who got the data from 'Unregistered File' of the Department of Indian Affairs during the 1980s. These files were subsequently destroyed by floods.

(14) Lawrence, 'Islam in India', p. 33.

(15) *Post Natal*, 30 August 1978.

(16) Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, p. 42.

(17) *Sunday Times Extra*, 28 September 1986 and 14 February 1988; *BPMS*, p. 25.

(18) Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, p. 45.

(19) Rizvi, *History of Sufism*, p. 114.

(20) Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, p. 50.

(21) Chetty, 'Bâdshâh Pîr', p. 7.

(22) *Gazetteer 1909*, pp. 265-7.

(23) Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, p. 70.

(24) van der Veer, 'Playing or Praying', p. 550.

(25) BPMS, *60 Golden Years*, p. 22.

(26) Doorn-Harder and de Jong, p. 331.

(27) Reeves, 'Power, resistance, and cult of Muslim saints', p. 310.

(28) Greaves, *Sufis*, p. 18.

(29) BPMS, *60 Golden Years*, p. 25.

(30) Reeves, 'Power, resistance, and cult of Muslim saints', p. 310.

(31) Chetty, 'Bâdshâh Pîr', p. 12.

(32) Dawood, 'Influence of Bâdshâh Pîr', pp. 57-8.

(33) Dawood, 'Influence of Bâdshâh Pîr', p. 62.

(34) Roy, *Islam in South Asia*, p. 101.

(35) Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power,* p. 13.

(36) Roy, *Islam in South Asia*, p. 104.

(37) See Eaton, 'Political and Religious Authority', p. 1984.

(38) Mujeeb, *Indian Muslims,* p. 9-26.

(39) Alavi, 'Pakistan and Islam', p. 94.

(40) Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, p. 41.

(41) Roy, *Islam in South Asia*, p. 108.

(42) Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, pp. 76-77.

(43) Lawrence, 'Islam in India', p. 30.

(44) Robinson, 'Islam and Muslim Society', p. 189.

(45) Eaton, 'Political and Religious Authority', p. 61.

(46) Roy, *Islam in South Asia*, p. 109.

(47) Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, p. 93-4.

(48) Greaves, *Sufis*, p. 88.

(49) Interview, Iqbal Sarrang.

(50) Interview, Iqbal Sarrang.

(51) Affidavit and correspondence located in the files of the Durban Town Clerk, NAR, 3/DBN, 4/1/4/898, 1959.

(52) *Sunday Tribune*, 11 July 1965.

(53) *Ibid.*, 11 July 1965.

(54) *Post Natal,* 30 August 1978.

(55) van der Veer, 'Playing or Praying', p. 555.

(56) *Ibid.,* 'Playing or Praying', p. 553.

(57) Town Clerk to Bâdshâh Pîr Committee, NAR, 3/DBN, 22 October 1952.

[58] See Sanyal, *Devotional Islam.*

(59) Jones, *Socio-religious reform movements,* p. 72, 83.

(60) *Ibid.,* p. 71.

(61) *Ibid.*, p. 8.

(62) *Ibid.*, p. 8.

(63) Roy, *Islam in South Asia*, p. 116.

(64) See Anwarul Haq, 1972.

(65) Moosa, "Worlds 'Apart…'", p. 33.

(66) Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, p. 42. Both sides agree that Bâdshâh Pîr died on 6th Rabî al-Awwal. In 1886 this would have been 2 December and in 1894 this would have been 6 September 1894.

(67) Meer, *Portrait*, pp. 204-5.

(68) Greaves, *Sufis*, p. 87.

(69) Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, p. 26.

(70) Interview, Iqbal Sarrang.

(71) Reeves, 'Power, resistance, and cult of Muslim saints', p. 318.

Appendix-I

Huzoor-E-Akram Nabie Muhammad Durood Tum Par Salaam Tum Par Quraan Me Bhi Farmaan Hai Rab Ka Durood Thum Par Salaam Tum Par

Jismaani Mehraj huwa tha aala Allah ka didaar huwa tha beshaq ahadh Ahmadh me parda hai meem ka yakeenan hum ne yeh maan liya heh

Mehraj ka Lamha koi kya jaaneh rab yhi jaane ya habeeb jaane shammeh risalat ki ek yeh shaan hai yakeen hum ne yeh maan liya heh

Koi yeh maaneh ya na maaneh huzoor akram yahaan moujood hain har unki mehfil meh who heh shaamil yakeenan hum neh yeh maan liya hai.

Rahegi roshan suneri gumbadh rahe salaamat woh pehla qibla, Islam deen ko fateh milegi yakeenan hum ne ye maanliya hai.

Makta Hai
Iqbal Sarrang ki yeh hi Umeed hai masjid al-Aksa ki ziyaarath kar leh, yehi seh masjid huzoor akram ne me-raj a pehla kadam liya hai.
Translation

Praises to the Prophet: Naath Shareef

Salutations to you, O' Prophet Muhammad. The Almighty also states in the Quran, Salutations to you, O' Prophet.

The journey to the Heavens was in body form. You saw Allah, the Almighty, with you naked eyes. Definitely, we believe that.

The time frame of your journey, who can measure, but only the Almighty or His Beloved One. This is only one of your miracles that we believe in.

One can believe or not, our Prophet is always present on our occasions. We believe that.

May the green dome of Your shrine always glitter. May the religion of Islam get victory. We believe that.

Makta hai (writer's vese)
Iqbal Sarrang has this wish that he visits Masjid-al_Aqsa in Jerusalam. From this mosque, the Prophet took his first step on his journey to Heaven.

Iqbal Sarrang

5 May 2002

Appendix-II

Manqabat

Kitneh Pyaareh Heh Yeh Badsha Jis Peh Hum Mar Theh
Heh Yeh Haqeeqat Heh Tasawwar Meh Unka Deedar
Kartheh Heh

Unka roza heh beshaq makaam-e-madad hum ghareeb
ki taqdeer koh acheheh meh badal dehthe heh

Koee aaj tak no gaya heh
Is darbaar she khaali
Har mangtho keh daaman koh
Khoob seh hi bhar deh theh heh

Hum koh itna yeh khabar heh
Tho heh majzoob walee
Hum naseeb daar heh ya badsha
Theri
Kidjmat kar theh heh

Koee mushkil jab pareh tho
Darbar peh chaleh mwoh
Yeh sakie ibneh sakie heh
Roteh huwe ku hasan deh theh heh

Maktsa
Thera mangtha thera Iqbal Sarrang
Ab aur kya maangeh
Unka naam thereh hi naam seh
Log hi liya kar theh heh

Translation

Manqabath

How loving it this Bâdshâh Pîr who we 'die' for, that we see him in our imaginary vision.

Truly his shrine is the destiny for help. He changes our luck to good.

Nobody has left his shrine disappointed. He fulfils everbody's wish.

We are aware that you are a Saint of highest calibre. We are fortunate to be doing your work.

If you have any problems come to the shrine of Bâdshâh Pîr. He makes a crying person smile.

What else can your Iqbal Sarrang ask for, when people mention his name with yours?

Iqbal Sarrang
17 April 2002.

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