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**KHWĀJA MU'ĪN UD-DĪN CHISHTĪ'S DEATH FESTIVAL: COMPETING AUTHORITIES
OVER SACRED SPACE**

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Abstract

For over seven hundred years pilgrims have been attending the death festival in Ajmer, India, to pay tribute to one of India's respected Muslim *sūfi* shaikh Khwāja Mu'īn dīn Chishtī. The shrine has historically been an arena for senior Chishtī *sūfis* and state patronage to assert authority and spiritual legitimacy. The architecture of the shrine was elaborately developed by successive dynasties, while the spiritual authority of the shrine was balanced by elder Chishtī shaikhs who advocated their *sūfi* ideas of rejecting worldly pleasures. Today, through the rituals performed during the festival, pilgrims find a new community that is an alternative to their ordinary world. Pilgrims come to celebrate the life of the *sūfi* shaikh, reenact his love for social egalitarianism, and request intercession for their difficult hardships; this is all in the midst of architectural reminders of historical state presence at the shrine. This paper examines how the sacred space and time is created for pilgrims during the death festival of Khwāja Chishtī and the ways pilgrims transcend themselves to the *sūfi* shaikh given the competing forces at the celebration.

During the seventh Islamic month of Rajāb an estimated one million pilgrims from the Indian sub-continent celebrate the annual death celebration ('*urs*) of Khwāja Mu'īn ud-dīn Chishtī (1141-1236) in Ajmer, India. As a multi-religious festival, the leadership of the shrine, *Sajjadanishīn* ("keepers of the prayer rug"), serve as the spiritual guides for followers as well as, supervisors of daily social, political, and economic affairs of the shrine.¹ The *Sajjadanishīn* maintain their religious authority through their spiritual lineage from Mu'īn ud-dīn Chishtī and they assert their political legitimacy by being selected as members to this group by the government to manage the shrine.² In order to assert their authority in different areas of the shrine it is significant to generate a steady flow of resources to the shrine and simultaneously provide social services to pilgrims all year long. The '*urs* festival is an important opportunity for the *Sajjadanishīn* to go beyond their administrative duties, and enter public sacred space to assert their spiritual authority by supervising all of the rituals. The prestige of the *Sajjadanishīn* depends largely upon their ability to administer an efficient shrine and provide social services, as well as creating an ideal religious community for pilgrims to reconnect with Khwāja Chishtī. Through a series of *sūfi* rituals during the '*urs* festival the *Sajjadanishīn* attempt to augment a system of beliefs that allow pilgrims to transcend to a sacred time and place and simultaneously keep themselves at the center of all activity.

Within the Muslim *sūfi* tradition, since the eighth century there has been a division amongst *sūfis* as to adopting a world-embracing or world-rejectionist worldview, and either belief system would have made an immense impact on the direction of particular *sūfi* orders.³ One such example is the Chishtī order of the Indian subcontinent. From the eleventh century the Chishtī *sūfi* order have been deeply committed to the inner path of Islām, and like many other *sūfi* orders, it gradually evolved into a highly politicized group in which its members competed for spiritual authority and control over the *sūfi* order. In addition, historically various Chishtī shaikhs cooperated with political administrations and were given

large endowments that assisted in the expansion of the sûfi order. Alliances between the state and sûfi orders, provide perhaps, just one example of how modern religious and secular systems are intertwined, and in so far as the 'urs festival is a celebration for Khwâja Chishtî, it is also an arena to assert authority on sacred space.⁴ The 'urs festival activities such as shrine rituals, devotional music, congregational prayer, donating food to the shrine, and dancing are all important religious experiences for the pilgrims because it is designed to focus on an ideal religious community which is ultimately safeguarded by the eminent sûfi shaikh, Khwâja Chishtî. In every aspect of the 'urs rituals and written inscriptions in the shrine, there is a definitive relationship between Khwâja Chishtî and the pilgrim that affirms a sacred community which is being guided on the true path.

The Chishtî *dargâh* is a leading pilgrimage site for Muslims and non-Muslim pilgrims because of Khwâja Chishtî legendary spiritual imprint on the sûfi tradition, as well as religious myths that exist about the sacred *dargâh*.⁵ Khwâja Chishtî appeals to a wide range of pilgrims, Muslims and non-Muslims, and in particular during the 'urs it is an auspicious opportunity for the *Sajjadanishîn* to prove themselves as the single source of authority in the *dargâh*. There are two domains that compete for control of the *dargâh* and of the acknowledgment of pilgrims' loyalty. First, within the Chishtî order itself sûfi members, volunteers, and salaried persons work under the leadership of the *Sajjadanishîn*, all of whom strive to make their presence known during the 'urs.⁶ Second, the state of India displays their closeness to the shrine by actively ensuring a peaceful religious event and protecting a national historic monument. As designated members by the government, it is common to see the *Sajjadanishîn* make exceptional arrangements for politicians to perform their rituals in the *dargâh*. The 'urs celebration portrays a multi-dimensional phenomenon that not only fulfills the religious aspirations of the pilgrims, but allows various Sûfi and non-Sûfi groups to compete for authority over sacred space.

History and Religious Beliefs of Khwâja Mu'în al-dîn Chishtî:

The original history of the Chishtî sûfi order in the Indian sub-continent is not clear because most of the sûfi literature has conflicting dates, names, and places. However, it is believed that Shaikh Mu'în al-dîn Chishtî, commonly called *Khwâja Gharib Nawâz* ("Patron of the Poor"), established the Chishtî sûfi order.⁷ Shaikh Mu'în al-dîn Chishtî was born in Sijistan, an eastern province of Persia, was forced out of his town by invasions, and became itinerant until he settled in Ajmer, India. Khwâja Chishtî studied in a variety of prestigious Islamic colleges (*madaris*) in Baghdad, Samarqand, Tabriz, and Bukhara, where he mastered languages, philosophy, law, and ethics and then concentrated on an internal mystical approach to religion. It is recorded that Khwâja Chishtî met prominent sûfi shaikhs such as 'Abdu'l Qadir Jilânî, Najm ud-dîn Kubra, Abdul Qadir al-Suhrawardî, and studied under the eminent Shaikh Usmân Baghdadî for twenty years.⁸ Khwâja Chishtî reached Delhi in 1193, and then settled in Ajmer to establish his sûfi teachings and the sûfi order. Like earlier prominent sûfi shaikhs before him, Khwâja Chishtî implemented the standard sûfi hierarchical master-disciple (*pir-murîd*) structure for spiritual training and he also successfully assimilated local customs into the order. Khwâja Chishtî understood the benefits of cross-religious exchanges, and shared many Hindu *yogi* practices, like bowing before an elder shaikh, shaving the head of new members, presenting water to guests, and the use of devotional music (*samâ'*) for worship.⁹ What distinguishes Khwâja Chishtî's sûfi teachings and practices is that he initiated a localization of sûfi practices within the Indian religious context, while his contemporary sûfi and legal-minded scholars were interested in maintaining boundaries between Islâm and the Hindu tradition.

Khwāja Chishtī's sûfi beliefs were a combination of Islamic mystical beliefs with a strong emphasis on social reforms. Chishtī Sûfi mystical practices are rooted in the theory of the unity of being (*wahdat al-wujûd*), which stressed that the presence of the divine is manifested in everything in the universe and one is able to access the divine through inner spiritual exercises. In contrast to the legal-minded scholars or 'ulamâ' who claimed they had the exclusive rights to interpreting divine knowledge through the laws of the Qur'ân, sûfis like Khwāja Chishtī emphasized the ability for each individual, regardless of class and educational training, to experience the ecstasy of union with the divine. Khwāja Chishtī's esoteric path involved a disciple in relentless sacrifice and love to God.¹⁰ According to Khwāja Chishtī the individual needed to be guided and trained by a sûfi shaikh so that the disciple could live for God by employing a special kind of love (*muhabbat-i khass*).¹¹ This involved striving to a higher spiritual level where the sûfi disciple developed a spiritual emotional relationship between him/herself and the Divine. At this ideal state nothing else existed but a complete spiritual union with God.¹²

The difficult social and political conditions under which Khwāja Chishtī lived influenced his emphasis on incorporating social services with his sûfi theosophy. With a corrupt socio-political and economic system under the Delhi Sultanate, Khwāja Chishtī's rejection of all worldly material (*tark-i dūnyā*) was the foundation of his sûfi beliefs or at least remembered as the primary sûfi rule of the Chishtī order. According to Khwāja Chishtī, any possession of property was considered a compromise of one's faith because the world was a distraction to any spiritual union. To Khwāja Chishtī, "The highest form of worship to God was to redress the misery of those in distress, to fulfill the needs of the poor and to feed the hungry."¹³ During the time of Khwāja Chishtī, Chishtī sûfis lived on charity (*futuh*) and practiced several mystical breathing techniques, engaged in spiritual confinement in a cell for meditational purposes, involved themselves in devotional music sessions (*samâ'*), and the more advanced sûfis tied a rope around their feet and lowered their bodies into a well for forty days for prayer (*chilla-i ma'kus*).¹⁴ Khwāja Chishtī preached that fasting from food was a good method for increasing one's faith and if one desired food it should be a vegetarian diet. Since the sûfi order accepted any member without discrimination of religion, class, ethnicity, and gender, the Chishtī sûfis were popularly known for having a large section of the poorer classes and the dispossessed.¹⁵ When an individual became a member of the Chishtī sûfi order, which did not require a religious conversion, he/she needed first, to choose an elder shaikh as a spiritual guide and second, to commit him/herself to maintain the grounds of the shrine (*dargâh*). This blend of Khwāja Chishtī's mystical life and social services for the poor profoundly changed the Islamic mystical institutions in the Indian sub-continent. His Chishtī sûfi order served as an alternative form of popular spiritual expression as it empowered individuals to develop a spiritual discipline within a meaningful framework and identifiable context.

Communitas, Sacred Shrine and Inscriptions:

While Khwāja Chishtī and his immediate sûfi successors preached and practiced the rejection of any affiliation with the state, the structural development of the shrine (*dargâh*) was largely due to political patronage from the Delhi Sultans, Mughal rulers, Rajputs, Nizâms of Hyderabad, British empire and modern Indian government. By the mid-twelfth century, sûfi institutions evolved into centers of high intellectual, mystical, social, spiritual, and artistic exchange. Sûfis organized themselves into a network of orders (*tariqât*), each of which gave its members a strong sense of community in a period of unrest. The Chishtī *tariqats* in particular was a very attractive sûfi institution because of its combination of unconditional acceptance of members and intense concentration on providing social services.¹⁶ Like other

sūfi orders during his time, the Chishtī order had an area set aside for sūfi activity (*khānaqāh*), a fully equipped kitchen (*langar khanā*) to feed the poor on a daily basis, and, used its main room where people gathered (*jama'āt khanā*). It was common to have members of cultural elite such as scholars, politicians, and military officers be disciples of a Sūfi shaikh. Early political records tell that Sultan Firūz Shāh Tughluq (1351-52) visited Khwāja Chishtī's shrine to pay his respects to the sūfi shaikh. Sultan Ghiyās al-dīn Khiljī (1469-1500) was an official disciple in the Chishtī *tariqat* and built the grand gate (*Bulānd darwāza*) in the northern section of the *dargāh*.¹⁷ The contradiction in Chishtī non-state affiliation and imperial Tughluq endowments would increase the popularity of the Chishtī order, and also transform the rituals performed by pilgrims at the *dargāh*.

The face of the *dargāh* was significantly altered during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries during the Mughal period. Emperor Akbar's (1556-1605) intense love for Khwāja Chishtī is reflected in his fourteen visits and enormous endowments to the *dargāh* management and in building projects. Akbar initiated a masjid that was named after him and is still used for the five daily ritualistic prayers. In 1579 he expanded Khwāja Chishtī's mausoleum, dedicated a massive cauldron (*deg*) for food preparation, and also established a college (*madrasa*) on the grounds of the *dargāh*. Akbar's personal historian, Abu'l Fa-l, wrote: "His majesty was a seeker for truth, and in his zealous quest he sought union with travelers on the road of holiness, he conceived a strong inclination to visit Khwāja's shrine and his attraction to pilgrimage was always around his collar."¹⁸ Akbar's son, Salim Jahangir (1605-1627), followed his father's patronage and also contributed a *deg*. Jahangir was fond of donating pearls and rubies to the servants of the *dargāh* to show his appreciation of their work. Emperor Shāh Jahān (1627-1658) continued the expansion of Khwāja Chishtī's *dargāh* by building a majestic marble masjid and another grand door or *bulānd darwāzā*. His daughter, Jahān Ara Begum, was a loyal devotee to Khwāja Chishtī and built a marble porch (*begumī dalanī*) on the eastern entrance of the mausoleum. Mughal sponsorship to Khwāja Chishtī's *dargāh* changed it structurally, and enabled the *Sajjadanishīn* to expand their social services to pilgrims and at the same time to reinforce a specific Chishtī sūfi theology.

After conquering the city of Ajmer in 1709, Ajit Singh of Jodhpur ordered repairs to the masjid and other parts of the *dargāh* that had been destroyed. In 1800 the Maharaja of Baroda constructed an elegant covering over the mausoleum of Khwāja Chishtī. In 1911, Queen Mary of Britain visited the *dargāh* and endowed the repairs of the water tanks and the area where pilgrims perform ablutions (*hauz*). The Nizām of Hyderabad built a majestic northern gate (*Nizami gate*) that intersects the Ajmer bazaar and since the independence of India president Rajendra Prasad and Indira Gandhi attended the 'urs in 1951 and 1977, respectively. Khwāja Chishtī's *dargāh* is an official state historical monument, nearby an elaborate hotel was constructed for dignitaries, and another pavilion for shelter was built for poor pilgrims.¹⁹

In the *dargāh*, Khwāja Chishtī's tomb is at the center of all activity and is surrounded by a marbled courtyard on the eastern side and the Shāh Jahān mosque on its western side. Adjacent to the southern side of the tomb is an enclosure (*arhat-i Nur*) restricted to female pilgrims and contains the tombs of Khwāja Chishtī's daughter and granddaughter. Behind the Shāh Jahān mosque are over forty gravesites (*charyār*) popularly thought to be those of Khwāja Chishtī's immediate companions. There is a side entrance to the *dargāh* that passes the *charyār* leading to the courtyard. These gravesites are common areas for devotional music (*qawwālī*) and to practice meditational prayers.²⁰ Along the southern and eastern sides of Khwāja Chishtī's tombs are flower shops where pilgrims purchase fresh rose petal necklaces, satin sheets, incense, rose water, and sweetened cardamoms for 'urs rituals. *Qawwālī* sūfi devotional concerts are a major part of the 'urs festivities and a special stage platforms (*samā' khanā*) are

used for performances. At the northern end, past the *buland darwarza* is the *dargâh* office, two Mughal *degs* and the *langar khanâ*. In the northwestern section stands Akbar's masjid and a clinic.

Inscriptions on tombs and buildings illustrate an intense passion and veneration for Khwâja Chishtî and a desire to maintain the memory alive of the respective state officials. Inscriptions are not only examples of political patronage to the sûfi *dargâh* but they are public visual reminders to pilgrims and to Chishtî Sûfis of a royal link to Khwâja Chishtî. Inside Khwâja Chishtî's tomb, an inscription from Akbar's period is written in golden *nasta 'liq* lettering reading:

"Lord of the lords, Mu 'in al-Dîn, most eminent of all Sûfi shaikhs in the world,
Sun of the sphere of universe, king of the throne of the dominion of faith,
What room is there for doubt as regards his beauty and perfection?,
I have composed another verse in his praise, which, in its style is like a precious pearl,
O ye, whose door is an altar for the faithful; even the sun and moon rub their foreheads at thine [sic] threshold,
It is at thine [sic] door that their foreheads are rubbed by a hundred thousand kings each as mighty as the emperor of China,
The attendants of thine [sic] shrine are all like Rizwan [the keeper of paradise], while in sanctity thine [sic] shrine is like the sublime heaven,
A particle of its dust is like ambergris in nature; a drop of its water is like limpid pure water,
The Sajjadanishîn of Mu'in Khwâja Husain, said this about the embellishments: "Old may assume fresh a new, the dome of Khwâja Mu'in al-Dîn, O Lord! As long as the sun and moon endure, may the lamp of the Chishtîs possess light!"²¹

Another inscription is over the frieze of the facade of Shâh Jahân's mosque with thirty-three verses in *naskh* style. A few of the verses read as follows:

"How excellent is the mosque of Shâh Jahân, which bears the stamp of the *Bait al-Muqaddas* [the name for the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem]
How happy is the dignity of this house that on account of its sanctity is the companion of the Holy Ka'ba [in Mecca],
It is considered a twin of the Ka'ba who has beheld a mosque with such splendor and grandeur?
When you rub your fortunate face on its floor, your sins are washed away like white marble."²²

Akbar's inscriptions reflect his personal spiritual and universal connection to the sûfi Shaikh. In one sense, to the king the *dargâh* is comparable to a royal garden; it is another place of timeless paradise, where the sun and moon are even humbled by Khwâja Chishtî's beauty. However, in contrast to Akbar, Shâh Jahân's inscriptions display his motives of sanctifying the *dargâh* to Islam's other holy sites like the *Ka'ba* and the Dome of the Rock. Shâh Jahân's inscriptions are more concerned with fixing Khwâja Chishtî's *dargâh* in this world as a sacred center.²³ The focus on Shâh Jahân's inscriptions is on the shrine itself, specifically on the ways in which the building can transcend from its profane nature. Being physically far apart from other holy sites was significant for Shâh Jahân's inscriptions who was more interested in associating it with other Islâmic holy sites. The shrine located in the Indian sub-continent may have been viewed by the Shâh Jahân, and other official patrons, that they were on the periphery of the Islamic community and needed to be at the center of Islâmic monumental architecture. Both inscriptions are examples of the *dargâh*'s physical structure was shaped by intense political involvement and how these influences affect the way pilgrims view the sacred space as a majestic and timeless holy event. Sûfi rituals are in turn centered around these structures, often dictate the space where people can move around and interact with other pilgrims, which reinforce the political-royal history and spiritual presence of Khwâja Chishtî in the *dargâh*.

Dargâh Administration and The Struggle for Authority:

The traditional sûfi way of appointing a spiritual successor, *khalîfâ*, in the Chishtî order was when the shaikh would symbolically designate his personal prayer rug, a staff ('*asa*), and a cloak (*khirqâ*) to a senior ranking disciple. Those who currently possess the prayer rug of past Chishtî shaikhs, the *Sajjadanishîn*, are the spiritual descendants of Khwâja Chishtî and are still considered inheritors of his blessings. This special lineage and spiritual connection allows them to have access to the moral authority of Khwâja Chishtî's proximity to God. In this way, *Sajjadanishîns* inherit Khwâja Chishtî's spiritual authority (*wilâyat*), which is critical to their religious, political, and social roles in the shrine. Sûfis in the order perceive them as modern day representatives of Khwâja Chishtî's mystical knowledge, and their continued activities in the shrine recreate a perfect and sacred space during the 'urs festivities, in which pilgrims can connect to Khwâja Chishtî's presence.²⁴

The *Sajjadanishîn* sûfis are primarily spiritual leaders of the shrine who supervise the spiritual training of Chishtî disciples, and traditionally traced their genealogy to earlier shaikhs in the Chishtî order for legitimacy. There is a vast amount of Chishtî literature pertaining to biographical and anecdotal collections about earlier shaikhs (*tazkirât*). These *tazkirât* are detailed accounts of famous Chishtî shaikhs, which include their educational background, and information about with whom they acquired their mystical training.²⁵ Other material sources include collected correspondences of Chishtî shaikhs (*maktûbat*) and collected discourses by various shaikhs (*malfuzât*). Of the many classic Chishtî *tazkirât* are: Amîr Khurd (d.1388), *Siyâr al-'Auliya'*; Hamîd ibn Fa-l Allâh Jamâlî (d.1536), *Siyâr al-'Arifîn*; 'Abd al-Samâd (d.1605), *Akhbar al-Asfiyâ*; 'Abd al-Haqq Dihlawî (d.1641), *Akhbar al-Akhyar*; and Allah Diya Chishtî (1647), *Siyâr al-Aqtâb*.²⁶ These three literary genres are extremely significant for Chishtî Sûfis in connecting to past Sûfi shaikhs, in terms of religious beliefs, rituals, and continuing the legacy of the Chishtî tradition. But more importantly, these sources assist *Sajjadanishîn* sûfis defend their rightful inheritance of their positions. It is important to note that hagiographers of these works were concerned with showing not only a continuity in the Chishtî sûfi tradition, but also the different ways in which Khwâja Chishtî's contribution had a lasting effect on human history.²⁷ Between miracle stories, esoteric theories of practice, Sûfi ideas on social justice, proper methods in following social and religious etiquette, and famous sayings by Chishtî shaikhs, there are number of questionable historical incidents that do not match one another, and this reduces their historic reliability. For sûfi sources, these are still very important in learning about a narrative in their tradition and then being able to embody the essence of that narrative within the sûfi religious tradition. Another interesting feature of the classic *tazkirât* is that nowhere in the texts is the word "*Sajjadanishîn*" used or referred to by hagiographers. One only finds the term in Mughal court documents, such as 'Abu'l-Fazl's *Akbarnamâ* and al-Badayunî's *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, which refer to the leading shaikh of Khwâja Chishtî's shrine as a trustee or *tuliyât*.²⁸ During this distinct period of early Mughal patronage of the Chishtî order, it is conceivable that court historians were familiar enough with sûfi institutions and hierarchy to include them in their chronicles and not refer to the leadership as *Sajjadanishîn*. This suspicious gap in the chronicles suggests that either official Mughal policy did not recognize certain sûfis who held Chishtî positions or that historians were selective in which sûfi figures they included in their reports. Intense Mughal involvement in Chishtî affairs support the former case, al-Badayuni records that when emperor Akbar came to the Chishtî *dargâh* to pay his respect after the birth of his son, he dismissed the leading sûfi *tuliyât*, Shaikh Husain, for not being qualified to govern the shrine.²⁹ Understanding the complex relationships between what was recorded by

sûfi hagiographers and court historians provide some insights into these historical discrepancies. Despite these questions, according to contemporary sûfi *Sajjadanishîn*, their sacred texts are primarily important because they are maintaining their place in Chishtî history and standing as guardians on earth for Khwâja Chishtî.

Although Chishtî ideas of world renunciation were at the heart of its teachings, this did not prevent the *Sajjadanishîn* from supporting political rulers, and allowing the ruling class to interfere in the affairs of the shrine. Shâh Âlam originally endowed the office of *Sajjadanishîn* in 1770 when he donated three villages of Hokran, Kishenpura and Dilwara to them. In addition, the Nizâm of Hyderabad even contributed one-third of his income to the *Sajjadanishîn* and constructed an impressive main entrance gate called the Nizami Gate. The *Sajjadanishîn* evolved from poverty embracing Sûfis to wealthy landlords (*jagirdar*) of these villages, and as a result, they drew an immense amount of income from these land grants. With an influx of new wealth under the Mughals, the position for becoming a *Sajjadanishîn* became an intense object and a competitive battle-ground for Chishtî shaikhs. Within Chishtî tradition the highest shaikh elevated a disciple to the level of *Sajjadanishîn* based on his mystical spiritual advancements, but with the greater involvement of Mughal emperors in the affairs of the shrine, Sûfis endorsed by the state were instated as *Sajjadanishîn* for political reasons.³⁰ During British rule, there were conflicts over who should inherit the title among various Chishtî factions and there was great emphasis on the social qualifications of the candidates.³¹ In 1945, the Chief Commissioner of Ajmer, Colonel Watson, made his recommendations for the seat of *Sajjadanishîn* to the Civil Court judge and stated that "Each claim is based on the assertion that the other claimants may be nearer by blood and others debarred by some disability or disqualification."³² At the time of 1947 independence, an unrecorded number of Muslims from the Chishtî order and administration migrated to Pakistan, which increased the legal complications in determining the promotion to a *Sajjadanishîn*. Fierce disputes over the position began at the District level, then proceeded to the Judicial Commissioner and eventually to the Supreme Court of India. In 1955, the court passed the "Dargah Khwâja Sahib Act," which established an administrative body to manage the affairs of the shrine called the *Dargâh* Committee. The purpose of this act is stated in the following:

"To make provisions for the proper administration of the *dargâh* and the endowment of the *dargâh* of Khwâja Mu'in al-dîn Chishtî, there will not be less than five and not more than nine members all of whom shall be Hanafi Muslims and shall be appointed by the central government... A member of the committee [*dargâh*] shall hold office for a period of five years and the central government may, in consultation with the committee appoint a person to be Nazim [supervisor] of the *dargâh*... Then that committee shall exercise its powers of administration, control and management of the *dargâh* endowment through the nazim."³³

The position of the *Sajjadanishîn* gradually lost its religious and political authority in the *dargâh* from the time of Emperor Akbar. Political patronage from the ruling class added an economic and elitist status element to the *Sajjadanishîn* equation, producing a cycle of internal disruption, which ultimately resulted in the total control of the *dargâh* in the hands of a government committee.

Besides the competition amongst Chishtî Sûfis to be included among *Sajjadanishîn*, they also need to be concerned with other members who work in the *dargâh*. Special servants (sing. *khadîm*, pl. *khaddâm*) to the *dargâh* work full time and earn a regular salary from pilgrims. Originally, Shâh Jahân established a seven rotational team (*haft-i chawkidar*) for the *khaddâm* servants in order to ensure an efficient schedule to perform duties. Abû'l Fazal reported that the *khaddâm* servant class earned an income from a charitable grant called the *madad-i ma'ash*, which was for "men who were searching for

true-knowledge and practiced self-denial, and were honorable and could not provide for themselves and took this trade.”³⁴ *Khaddâm* consisted of men, women, and children of various faiths, mainly from the lower classes. They may or may not be interested in the sûfi mystical path, but instead, they valued Khwâja Chishtî’s message of social welfare. Due to the nature of the job, it is difficult to calculate the number of *khaddâm* servants working on any given day, but according to one high ranking Chishtî Sûfi, “there could be anywhere from thirty-five hundred to forty-five hundred *khaddâm* working during the ‘*urs*.”³⁵ The *Sajjadanishîn* sûfis and Chishtî sûfi disciples in the order are aware of the time when the Mughals supported the *khaddâm* servant community to manage the affairs of the shrine, and a certain degree of rivalry between these groups still exists in front of pilgrims.

Chishtî sûfis in the *dargâh* are conscious of the fact that *khaddâm* servants have a high public profile because of their daily contact with pilgrims. Their services are viewed as vital for the *dargâh* to function and their role as personal hosts to pilgrims is important to reinforce the legitimacy of the *Sajjadanishîn*. In addition to *khaddâm* servants there is another group of helpers (*vakil*) who assist pilgrims around the *dargâh* with certain prayers in rituals. Throughout the year and during the ‘*urs* festival the duties of *khaddâm* servants include: being in charge of unlocking and locking Khwâja Chishtî’s mausoleum, washing the mausoleum daily and sweeping the floors before the pilgrims enter the shrine, assisting pilgrims into the shrine and helping them to perform their religious rituals, initiating rituals by bringing candles to the shrine, and ringing a particular bell after the last evening prayer so that musicians can begin their sessions, preparing and distributing daily meals in the *langar khana*, waiting at bus and train stations to escort pilgrims to their hotels and giving tours of Ajmer, taking contributions for the *dargâh*, and usually performing religious prayers for pilgrims.³⁶ By contrast, during the ‘*urs* the *Sajjadanishîn* and Chishtî Sûfis of the *dargâh* have a passive role in the lives of the pilgrims in exchange for maintaining their larger authority in governing the *dargâh*.

As members appointed by the Dargâh Committee, the *Sajjadanishîn* receive a regular salary from the government. The Dargâh Committee monitors salary rates for each member, funds a luxurious residence on the grounds of the shrine, and designates several servants for the *Sajjadanishîn*. In order to successfully exercise religious and political authority within the *dargâh*, the *Sajjadanishîn* became active in local politics.³⁷ The basis of maintaining religious legitimacy inside the shrine is directly related to the *Sajjadanishîn*’s ability to manage the shrine efficiently, and effectively raise enough material sources for the shrine. However, the *Sajjadanishîn*’s influence goes beyond the walls of the *dargâh*, and expands into the everyday political world.

The Sûfi ‘*Urs* Celebration and Rituals:

The celebration of Khwâja Chishtî’s death is (‘*urs*) is held every year, beginning at end of the sixth Islamic month of *Jumada-e Thanî* and culminating on the sixth day of *Rajâb*. According to sûfi theosophy, the physical death symbolizes the ultimate spiritual union with the divine. While the word ‘*urs* was originally associated with marriage festivities, it truly reflects the meaning to physically die and return to the creator. Over one million pilgrims from all over the Indian sub-continent, (an exceptional number of visas are granted to Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan citizens by the Indian government,) visit (*ziyarat*) the Chishtî *dargâh* and venerate Khwâja Chishtî.³⁸ Khwâja Chishtî’s appeal to Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain, Sikh, and Buddhist pilgrims is his timeless religious legacy that transcends ethnic, religious, class, and nationality boundaries. Each pilgrim views Khwâja Chishtî through his or her own religious kaleidoscope. Some see him as a savior to humankind, or a “friend” of God, or even as

God incarnate, while others view him as an important historical holy person whose mission was to aid poor people of India. The purpose of the 'urs for pilgrims is to leave their daily affairs and the problems of the ordinary world and turn to Khwâja Chishtî for spiritual favors that will bring about relief from personal hardships.

The heart of Ajmer's bazaar connects straight to the *dargâh*'s main northern entrance, commonly called the Nizami Gate. Pilgrims pass the gate and walk under the *Buland Darwarza* and pass the *dargâh* office. Immediately on the left on right are two massive cauldrons (*deg*) built by Emperors Akbar and Jahangir. Approximately thirty yards forward is Khwâja Chishtî's shrine with a green dome. Akbar's *deg* on the left is twenty-five by fifteen feet and is still used for collecting donations and food preparations. Pilgrims follow the ritual of dropping bags of rice, lentils or money to reenact Khwâja Chishtî's message of relieving worldly property for inner peace. *Khaddâm* servants sort the food and money and Jahangir's *deg* is still used for food preparation. The daily workings of a welfare kitchen (*langar khana*) function all year long and the *dargâh* management estimates that during the 'urs over fifteen thousand persons are fed daily.³⁹ During the 'urs the *Sajjadanishîn* and elder Chishtî sūfis personally direct the distribution of food and sweets to pilgrims simultaneously whisper quick and short prayers for each person in line. The *Sajjadanishîn*'s ability to successfully conduct the distribution of gifts, food, material wealth, and sweets supports their religious authority by connecting to both Mughal glory and Khwâja Chishtî's sūfi tradition. During the 'urs, their interaction with pilgrims in the public sphere is one of the only opportunities for their presence to be recognized as modern day custodians of Khwâja Chishtî's sūfi tradition.

The priority for pilgrims is to enter Khwâja Chishtî's shrine and make their prayers as often as possible. On the southern-western end of the shrine there is an enclosure containing Khwâja Chishtî's daughter and grand-daughter's tomb and female Muslim pilgrims use this separate section (*Arhat-i Nur*) to read the Qur'ân and recite their personal prayers. Along the northern end of *Arhat-i Nur* is a silver "door of heaven" (*Bihistî darwazâ*) where pilgrims follow a daily afternoon ritual of washing it with rose water. Popular belief among pilgrims is that any contact with the *bihistî darwazâ* will guarantee them a place in heaven. There are two main lines that lead into Khwâja Chishtî's tomb, one from the southern end and one from the eastern end of the tomb extending from the courtyard. During the high season of the 'urs, barefooted Indian police monitor traffic and are a visible force of the outer world and of the government to the pilgrims. Lines extend as far as the entrance of the *dargâh*. Before entering the line, pilgrims purchase rose garlands and silk sheets richly embroidered with Qur'anic verses to perform a ceremony called laying of the cloth (*Chadar charâna*). Standing in line with rose necklaces or *chardars* over their heads, pilgrims are instructed by *vakils* to pray for themselves in their mother tongue; "since Khwâja Chishtî is a "friend" of God he understands every language."⁴⁰ As a multi-religious festival, prayers from Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain and Christian faiths are heard simultaneously. Standing in line the air is filled with various melodic prayer chants, and *vakils* remind pilgrims that they were brought here by the grace of Khwâja Chishtî himself.⁴¹ For those pilgrims who can afford paying for a personal *vakil* for the entire ritual, they tie a colorful turban (*dastar-e bandî*), usually red or orange, on the pilgrim's forehead out of respect and as a final preparation for the shrine. With the diversity of faithful believers standing in line to enter the Khwâja's tomb, one is astonished with the level of cooperative piety and mutuality of love pilgrims show to each other; whether it is because the shrine area has been perfumed by the prayers of pilgrims or that Khwâja Chishtî's intercessionary work being played out during the 'urs, pilgrims are living out true brotherhood and sisterhood.

At the southwestern entrance, pilgrims are faced with a small passage that requires the individual to physically bend one's knees and bend forward to not hit their heads on top. This was purposely

designed to force the body to physically lower itself and pay respects as it enters the sacred space of Khwāja Chishtī. On top of the entrance is a common Islamic inscription that states “This is by the grace of my God” (*Hada min fazal rabī*). What is exceptional about this inscription is the way it is designed to reflect an universal message that is directed toward the multi-religious pilgrims and not only for the Muslim population. The simplicity of this inscription once again suggests to pilgrim the sense of inclusiveness and unity in Khwāja Chishtī’s sūfī teachings. Those pilgrims who are accompanied by a *vakīl* have personal direction inside the shrine and up to the silver cage that surrounds Khwāja Chishtī’s tomb. The *vakīl* stands on an elevated stand connecting to the Khwāja Chishtī’s tomb and instructs the prostrated pilgrim to repeat several prayers after him. The *vakīl* places his hand over the head of the pilgrim and states, “On behalf of the *Sajjadanishīn*, this person needs your direct intercession Khwāja Chishtī.”⁴² For a Muslim pilgrim, he/she will recite the first chapter of the Qur’ān or either the last four shorter chapters of the Qur’ān as often as possible.⁴³ On behalf of the pilgrim the *vakīl* beseeches Khwāja Chishtī in easing any pains and sorrows the pilgrim may be suffering and to ensure that the pilgrim returns home safely. After the recitation of several prayers, the *vakīl* completes his duty by taking rose petals that had been in contact with the tomb and placing them in the mouth of the pilgrim. These petals serve as a special sweet gift touched by the sacred tomb.⁴⁴ Digesting the rose petals from the tomb brings the pilgrim to the sūfī shaikh even closer to each other because the rose petal belongs to the body of the pilgrim. Other pilgrims without a *vakīl* strive to get as close as possible to the silver caged tomb and venerate the sūfī shaikh for spiritual blessings. Several *vakīls* stand on the elevated platform to direct pilgrims to be in a constant clock-wise motion, the limited space only allows the pilgrim a few moments of dialogue with the sūfī shaikh. Extraordinary as the activities are inside the shrine, there is a substantial amount of order, as pilgrims place their *chadars*, rose necklaces, and recite their prayers, they too are conscious to volunteer their space for incoming pilgrims. As each person walks out backwards to show his/her final respects, exiting pilgrims touch the shrine’s silver door for blessings while maintaining an arched back facing towards the profane world.⁴⁵

Immediately outside the tomb area, Chishtī sūfī disciples (*muridān*) sit besides their shaikhs (*pirān*) to give interested pilgrims instructions on sūfī spirituality and their spiritual exercises. Along various random spaces in the *dargāh* the *pir* and *murīd* gather a circle of devotees or pilgrims and conduct a class on spiritual purity and attaining ecstasy with the divine. At these gatherings it is common for the *murīd* to distribute gifts to listeners, usually a piece of paper (*ta’widh*) on which names of God or Qur’ānic verses are written down. Accompanying with *ta’widh* are different kinds of sweets, usually sweetened cardamoms called *tabarukh*. Pilgrims cherish these gifts as they represent not just another paraphernalia from the sūfī shrine, but sincere spiritual guidance from a Chishtī sūfī and real proof of their pilgrimage.

Sūfī Devotional Music as Worship at the ‘Urs:

There is an interweaving relationship between Indian religious traditions and music as a source of spiritual expression. Historically, sūfī orders around the world have used music (*samā’*) as a central technique for increasing their spiritual awareness and inducing themselves into another state of consciousness.⁴⁶ In the Indian sub-continent devotional *samā’* or *qawwālī* has the function of invoking an emotional-spiritual relationship between the listener and the subject of the song. There are several different types of styles and approaches to singing *qawwālī*, but, mostly songs focus on praising God, the Prophet Muhammad, his family, major sūfī shaikhs and their achievements, legendary powers of religious

centers, significant historical events, immortal love affairs, life, and death.⁴⁷ *Qawwālī* music has a precise spiritual role to play at the 'urs and pilgrims use this ritual to further connect to Khwāja Chishtī. Alan Merriam's work illustrates how certain music, such as *qawwālī*, has a multipurpose function for each particular society and it is employed in conjunction with other social activities. In a context of Khwāja Chishtī's 'urs, a religious setting where the central figure is shared by numerous groups, *qawwālī* functions to stimulate, express, and share spiritual love for the sūfī shaikh. There is a function of aesthetic pleasure, of entertainment, of communicating the moment of celebration. It has the function of validating social and religious rituals, and highlighting the continuity of a tradition and placing themselves in it.⁴⁸ *Qawwālī* music functions to give pilgrims an opportunity to leave their fixed places in society, and to create an independent ideal journey. *Qawwālī* music during the 'urs creates an extraordinary sacred time for the pilgrims where they can re-visit Khwāja Chishtī and visualize him protecting the poor and defeating evil forces. In many ways, *qawwālī* integrates the 'urs culture because pilgrims, devotees, visitors, and the *Sajjadanishīn* all sit next to each other for the purpose of worship without any conventional social restrictions. While music at these *qawwālī* concerts is a type of worship, a type of visionary worship, it can not substitute the formalized Islamic prayers which have set prayer practices.⁴⁹ Sūfī thinkers have argued over the legitimacy of music in the tradition and its place in spiritual development and function to bring the listener closer to the source of veneration. One famous sūfī shaikh stated, "devotional music has a divine influence that stirs the heart to seek God, those who listen to it spiritually become closer to Allāh."⁵⁰

The use of music as a means of spiritual enlightenment and as a form of devotion has been one of the most contentious issues within the sūfī tradition and between the legal-minded 'ulamā' scholars.⁵¹ But even major sūfī orders such as the Suhrawardī, Qādirī and the Naqshbandī orders are critical of the use of music as part of Islamic devotion.⁵² They are in agreement in the recitation of panegyric poetry for the Prophet or *nât 'iyyā* as important source to celebrate the life of the Prophet, but to move beyond that by using musical instruments, clapping hands, and choral groups is contrary to the Islamic tradition. Historically, Chishtī sūfīs have argued that music performance (*mahfil-I samā'* or *qawwālī*) is accepted by the Qur'ān and by the practices of the Prophet Muhammad himself. They argue that the call to prayer (*adhān*) and the recitation of the Qur'ān are perfect examples of melodic chants of devotion and that to label the divine praise of *qawwālī* as illegal is to go against the will of God.⁵³ A famous sūfī thinker and philosopher, 'Alī ibn 'Uthmān al- Jullābī al-Hujwīrī (d.1070), who wrote a major significant sūfī treatise *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, stated that, "The most beneficial sūfī devotional music to the mind and most delightful to the ear is that of the word of God, which all believers and non-believers alike are commanded to hear."⁵⁴ One often quoted saying of the Prophet or *hadīth* is, "It is permissible to hear poetry. The Prophet heard it, and the Companions not only heard it but also spoke of it. He (the Prophet) also said that some poetry is wisdom."⁵⁵ Early proponents for the use of music in sūfī spirituality and as part of Islamic devotion was argued theologically that music was not the source for divine distraction, but instead it was the neglect of the individual's constant remembrance of God (*dhikr*). Chishtī sūfī scholars like Sayyid al-Husayn Gīsūdirāz (d.1422) adamantly argued that the benefits of connecting the sound of music, the spiritual path and the love of ever-growing faith.⁵⁶ Despite historical polemical arguments against the use of *qawwālī* music for sūfī devotion, the music used in this context is a public celebration of remembrance of the sūfī shaikh as well as an important sacred narrative for pilgrims to connect and internalize. From a phenomenological perspective, *qawwālī* music during the 'urs is part of an oral tradition that commemorates the sūfī shaikh collectively and individually. The musical sound of *qawwālī* is not just expressing passionate adoration of the sūfī shaikh, but the sound itself is reinforcing religious practices,

sacred history, and distinct identity of the Chishtî sûfi order.⁵⁷

Traditionally during the 'urs, after the last evening prayer ('isha), a khaddîm rings a bell which commences the qawwâlî rituals. The Sajjadanishîn supervise qawwal groups and invite popular qawwal singers to perform at the 'urs. As invited guests of the Sajjadanishîn, qawwâlî singers design their music to represent Khwâja Chishtî and dargâh institutions.⁵⁸ As patrons of the Sajjadanishîn, the qawwâlî musicians will enjoy the comfort of performing on the main stage (samâ' khanâ), which has the luxury of an acoustic sound system, proper lighting, personal musical equipment set up, an elegant Indian rug and pillows for seating, and a recording system to market their dargâh concerts at a later date. The qawwâlî concerts tend to form three concentric circles with the solo performer at the center. On one side of the main qawwâlî soloist is usually a music accompanist, usually a harmonium player; on the other side is the primary tenor vocalist; behind the qawwâlî soloist are six to eight vocalists, with tabla, dholak (double ended-drum), and jhinka (frame cymbals) players.⁵⁹ Sitting directly across from the qawwâlî soloist is a Sajjadanishîn representative, and individuals who are personal friends of the singer. In qawwâlî performances there are several codes of etiquette (âdâb) whereby the qawwâlî soloist will follow a strategy of shaping his music and behavior to achieve a certain objective: the performance is entertainment for some but for most pilgrims it is a musical devotional worship which lifts them back up to the divine.⁶⁰ These qawwâlî concerts are performer-audience interactive, and it is expected that the performer will develop a spiritual kinship with the audience.⁶¹ In exchange, audience members who are emotionally touched by the music, shower the Sajjadanishîn and qawwal singer with money, sweets, or rose necklaces. Qawwâlî singers reciprocate the âdâb by acknowledging the praise either with a smile or raising their right upturned hand toward their foreheads. The qawwal singer can continue to reciprocate the âdâb by singing with more enthusiasm the very poetic lines that are being appreciated. The âdâb of qawwâlî concerts and the lyrics together can have several uniting messages to bring cohesion to the group. In addition, the music redramatizes a perfect moment in time and the qawwal singer attempts to take pilgrims to that particular sacred place and time. It cultivates a certain degree of spiritual tension between the musician and the pilgrim that sends some individuals into spiritual ecstasy.⁶²

For the majority of qawwâlî groups who do not have the privileges of established performers, the 'urs is the perfect opportunity to display their talents and enter the devotional music industry. As novices, they may have one tabla and one harmonium player, who also are vocalists. Without a sound system they fiercely compete over voices of other qawwâlî singers, that may be a few yards away. However, different branches of sûfi orders may support some semi-established qawwal groups, and their spiritual leaders do accompany their performances. Religious doctrine and allegiances are evident through their lyrics and their use of religious paraphernalia. For example, sûfi orders that emphasize Imâmî Shî'î tenets will sing about themes of Shî'î justice, venerating Imâm Husayn's martyrdom at Kerbala while displaying a symbolic silver hand (pânjah) of Hazrat Abbâs. The participation of transvestites (hejras) in qawwâlî concerts is highly encouraged by the Sajjadanishîn, who usually lead dances along with the music and take an active role in donating money to the qawwâlî singer or Sajjadanishîn. Qawwâlî performances last the entire evening up to the break of dawn, when pilgrims prepare for another day of rituals.

Conclusion:

The annual 'urs celebration of Khwâja Chishtî is a multifunctional event with a series of purposes for pilgrims and sûfi organizers. For pilgrims who wait the entire year for the 'urs, or in some cases an entire lifetime, traveling to the dargâh is their opportunity to request Khwâja Chishtî for spiritual blessings and

guidance from the sūfis of the shrine. Prayers may include asking for relief from hardships or be a request to intercede on their behalf in the hereafter. Pilgrims perform their rituals as often as possible, and some hire a *khaddim* servant or have a Chishtī sūfi as a personal spiritual guide for the festival. Pilgrims view their spiritual guide as an intermediary to Khwāja Chishtī who can petition their prayers with more force. A fascinating aspect of the 'urs is the way prayers recited inside and outside the tomb are not monolithically attached to any one religious tradition. While Muslim pilgrims may perform their regular prayers in Akbar or Shāh Jahān's masjid, non-Muslim pilgrims also perform their particular prayers on the very same grounds of the *dargāh*. Each religious group has their own separate spiritual perception of Khwāja Chishtī, and at least according to the *Sajjadanishīn*, this is due to their preservation of the original religious sūfi beliefs of Khwāja Chishtī. The 'urs festival establishes an ideal community, and allows pilgrims to leave their daily religious, class, caste, and provincial differences. Pilgrims pray together in public, circulate together inside Khwāja Chishtī's tomb, drink rose water from the same bowl during *qawwālī* concerts, clean the *bihishtī darwarza* and floors of the courtyard, and eat from the same *langar khana*, all of these rituals unify pilgrims and installs an element of spiritual and social solidarity. For pilgrims, the 'urs provides an alternative structure to their daily lives, where they can enter a new community that is governed by principles of love and equality set by Khwāja Chishtī.⁶³

From the perspective of the *dargāh* management, the 'urs celebration is an annual test to prove their competency to the pilgrims while at the same providing spiritual guidance to them. The *Sajjadanishīn* draw their religious legitimacy from claiming their direct lineage to Khwāja Chishtī, and assert their political authority from their competitive positions designated by the government. Throughout the year the *Sajjadanishīn* are consumed with administrative and political business, but during the 'urs they make a conscious effort to be at the forefront of sūfi rituals and be involved with the thousands of pilgrims that are visiting the shrine. They will lead in the daily ritualistic prayers, assist in distributing food to pilgrims, and supervise the main *qawwālī* performances. The *Sajjadanishīn* are aware of the competition for public interaction from the *khuddām* servants, but believe that their roles are vital in making the 'urs festival complete for pilgrims. By providing social services and an efficient political management for the *dargāh*, the *Sajjadanishīn* strengthen their moral authority and keep themselves at the center of all activities during the 'urs. The *Sajjadanishīn*'s efforts in maintaining the *dargāh*'s prestige consist of incorporating it into a larger social, political and religious framework so that pilgrims feel a working ideal outside the *dargāh*. As the modern day representatives of Khwāja Chishtī, the *Sajjadanishīn* need to constantly increase resources for the shrine and distribute them to pilgrims as proof of their authority and also as custodians of Khwāja Chishtī's sūfi order. To the *Sajjadanishīn* the 'urs festival requires a careful balance, demonstrating their spiritual and political authority and at the same time keeping the *dargāh* as an ideal society for a diverse faithful community.

Endnotes

¹ While the 'urs is clearly a Muslim sūfi religious celebration, I use multireligious only because the presence of pilgrims from other religious traditions like Hinduism, Jain, Christianity, and Sikh are visibly involved in every aspect of the celebration.

² Mu'īn ud-din Chishtī, has several popular names; *Sultan-i Hind* or the "King of India" and *Gharib-i Nawaz* or "Patron to the Poor." From here on I will refer to the Sūfi Shaikh as contemporary sūfi literature refers to him as Khwāja Chishtī or "Respected Chishtī."

³ See William Chittick, *The Sūfi Path of Knowledge: Ibn 'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989); Abu Bakr Muhammad al-Kālābadhī, *Kitāb al-ta'arruf li-madhab ahl al-ta'awwuf*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanjī, 1934); Muhammad Māndawī Ghawthī, *Gulzar-i abrār*. Urdu translation by Fazl Ahmad Jēwarī, *Adhkār-i abrār, Urdū tarjuma-yi gulzār-i abrār* [1808], reprinted (Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1975);

⁴ David Gilmartin's work in this area of politics and religion in South Asia is an important part of this study, see "The Shahidganj Mosque Incident: A Prelude to Pakistan," in *Islām, Politics, and Social Movements*, edited by Edmund Burke and Ira Lapidus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) and his *Empire and Islām: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁵ See Christian Troll, ed. *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989) and another good example of the legendary myths of the sūfi shaiikh is Paul Jackson, *The Way of a Sūfi: Sharafuddin Manerī* (New Delhi: Idarah-I Adabiyat-I Delli, 1987).

⁶ On shrine political authority see, Katherine Ewing, "The Politics of Sufism: Redefining the Saints of Pakistan" in *Journal of Asian Studies* 42/2 (February 1983): 251-68; Arthur Buehler, *Sūfi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sūfi Shaikh*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998); Hafeez ur-Rahman Chaudhry, "Traditional and State Organizations of the Shrine of Bari Imam" in *Al-mushīr* 36/3 (1994): 85-104; and, Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983).

⁷ See Khaliq A. Nizami, *Tar'ikh Mash'āik Chisht* (Delhi: Urdu Adabiyat, 1980) pp. 12-25.

⁸ Amīr Khurd, *Siyār-ul 'Auliya'* Urdu tr. Lahore: 1914, 47-50. For a comprehensive history of the Chishtī order, see Khaliq A. Nizami, *Tar'ikh Mash'āik Chisht* (Delhi: Urdu Adabiyat, 1980) and Mirza Wahiduddin Beg, *The Holy Biography of Hazrat Khwaja Muinaddin Chishtī* (Ajmer, 1960).

⁹ Khaliq A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1961), 178-179.

¹⁰ Khwāja Chishtī's continued in the Sūfi tradition of meditation, remembrance, fasting, and love practiced by leading sūfi shaiikhs before him, for more see Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Kitāb al-Adhkār wa'l da'awāt*, translated by K. Nakamura as "Book of Invocations and Supplications" (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1990); *Kitāb Dhikr al-mawt wa mā ba'da*, translated by T.J. Winter, "The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife" (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1989); Margaret Smith, *An early mystic of Baghdad: a study of the life and teachings of Harith b. Asād al-Muhāsibī, AD 781-857* (London: Sheldon Press, 1977 reprint); and, Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islām* (Chapel Hill: South Carolina Press, 1975).

¹¹ See Nur Ahmad Maqbul, *Khazīna-yi karam*. (Karachi: Kirmanwala Publishers, 1978) and Shan Qalandar, *Tasawwuf was Sūfi*. translated by Chaudhry Muhammad Yusuf Suhrawardī, (Lahore: Muhammadi Press, n.d.) For more on the relationship between disciples, Sūfi shaiikhs, and God see Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islām: The Qur'ānic Hermeneutics of the Sūfi Sahl at-Tustari*, (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1980); Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity." *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80-101; Simon Digby, "The Sūfi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Mediaeval India." In *Islām et Société en Asie du Sud*. Edited by Marc Gaborieau, (Paris: L'École des hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1986), pp. 57-77; Ahmad Siddiq, *Dhikr-i-Mahjūb*, (Gujranwala: Bazm-i Tawakuliyya, 1977).

¹² Nizami, *Tar'ikh Mash'āik Chisht*, pp. 105-110.

¹³ Amir Khurd, pp.45-46.

¹⁴ The *chilla-i ma'kus* was not practiced by all Chishtī sūfis, instead only those who were understood to be advance spiritual aspirants and received the permission by the senior sūfis to follow this.

¹⁵ Nizami, pp.205-207.

¹⁶ Nizami, pp.215-220.

¹⁷ 'Abd al-Haq Dihlawai, *Akhbār al-Akhyār*, p.48.

¹⁸ Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnamā* vol.2, 237.

¹⁹ Paul Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-Din Chishtī of Ajmer* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 110-116. For a good account of the *dargarh*, see Muhammad Akbar Jahan, *Ta'rīkh-i Khwaja Ajmer* (Ajmer, 1903).

²⁰ For more on meditational practices within the Sūfi tradition see, Mir Valiyuddin, *Contemplative Discipline in Sufism*, (London: East-West Publications, 1980) and Maybudī, *Kashf al-asrār wa 'uddat al-abrār*, edited by 'Alī Asghar Hikmat, 10 vols. (Tehran: 1962-1969).

²⁴ For studies on the Sūfi shaikh and shrine, see P. Lewis, *Pirs, Shrines, and Pakistani Islām* (Rawalpindi: Christian Study Centre, 1985); Harald Einzman, *Ziarāt und Pir-e Murīdī* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1988), 115-38; Liyaqat Hussein Moini, "Rituals and Customary Practices at the Dargarh of Ajmer," in *Muslims Shrines*, edited by Christian Troll, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 72.

²⁵ See Annemarie Schimmel, *Islamic Literatures of India* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1972); M. Garcin De Tassy, *Histoire de la littérature hindouie et hindoustanie* (Paris: A. Labitte, 1870-1871); Bruce Lawrence, *Notes from a Distant Flute: Sūfi Literature in Pre-Mughal India* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978); and Marcia Hermansen, "Religious Literature and the Inscription of Identity: The Sūfi Tazkira Tradition in Muslim South Asia" in *The Muslim World* 87 (1997):315-329.

²⁶ For interesting articles on Chishtī literature, see Mohammed Habib, "Chishtī Mystic Records of the Sultanate Period," *Mediaeval Indian Quarterly* 3 (1950): 1-42; R. Islam, "A Survey in Outline of the Mystic Literature of the Sultanate Period," in *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society* 3 (1955): 200-208; and, M. Salim, "Reappraisal of the Sources on Mu'īn al-din," in *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 16 (1968):145-152.

²⁷ For more work on texts and liturgy see, Harry Buck, "Saving Story and Sacred Book: Some Aspects of the Phenomenon of Religious Literature." In *Search the Scriptures: New Testament Studies in Honor of Raymond T. Stamm*, edited by J.M. Myers, O. Reimherr, and H.N. Bream. Gettysburg Theological Studies, no.3, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), pp. 79-94 and, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, ed. *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts* (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1979).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.155-56.

²⁹ Al-Badayuni, *Muntakhāb al-Tawārīkh* tr. Wolseley Haig (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delhi, 1973), vol.3 pp.136-140.

³⁰ An excellent study on the influence of political dynasties on the Chishtī order, see Carl Ernst, *Eternal Gardens: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sūfi Center* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), particularly pp.191-226; Sara Ansari, *Sūfi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sind, 1843-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islām and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilwi and His movement, 1870-1920* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

³¹ Currie, pp.156-159, referring to the educational and class of the *Sajjadanishīn*.

³² *Ibid.*, p.157.

³³ Indian Government Publications, *Ajmer Regulations, Dargarh Khwaja Sahib Act*, No. 36, section 21 (1955): 70-71.

³⁴ Abu'l Fa-l A'īnī- Akbarī vol.1, 268.

³⁵ Interview of Shaikh M.S. Ahmed Hussain Chishtī, Ajmer: December 27, 1994.

³⁶ For further studies on *khaddām*, see Har Bilas Sarada, *Ajmer: Historical and Descriptive* (Ajmer: Fine Art Printing, 1941), and Maulvi Ghazi Khan, *The Khadims of the Khwaja Sahib of Ajmer and the Baneful Effects of the Dargarh Khwaja Sahib Bill on their Rights* (Ajmer: Kitab Mahal, 1936).

³⁷ On the subject of politically active *Sajjadanishīns*, see David Gilmartin, "Shrines, Succession, and Sources of Moral Authority," in Barbara Metcalf (ed.), *Moral Conduct and Authority* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

³⁸ It is interesting to point out that same word for visiting a sūfi tomb, *ziyārāt*, is used by Shī'ī Muslims when they perform their religious rites at the tombs of particular shrines of Imāms.

³⁹ Personal interviews of Shaikh M.S. Ahmed Hussain Chishtī, Ajmer: December 1994, 1995, and 1996.

⁴⁰ According to the Sūfi tradition it is integral to celebrate the Shaikh's unique status with God "The Friend of God" because it is primarily supported in many places in the Qur'ān, for example, in chapter 10:63 it states "The friends of God- for them there is no fear, neither do they grieve." Michael Chodkiewicz. *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī*. Translated by Liadain Sherrard. (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993); and, Bernd Radtke, "The Concept of Wilāya in Early Sufism" in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.) *The Heritage of Sufism*, (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993, reprinted by Oneworld Publications, 2000).

⁴¹ An interesting note is that lines to the shrine and rituals inside the shrine permit free mixing of the sexes, and the only space that is separated is the shelter for single female pilgrims.

⁴² There is little work on modern sūfi vocabulary during rituals, for a good reference to the field see, Carl Ernst. "Mystical Language and the Teaching context in the Early Sūfi Lexicons" in Steven Katz (ed.) *Mysticism and Language*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁴³ The recitation of the Qur'ān is not limited to the boundaries of rituals within the tomb area but rather most Muslim pilgrims at the 'urs read or recite the Qur'ān seated on the ground. For more on the Qur'ānic recitation see, William Greene, "The Spoken and the Written Word." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 60 (1951): 23-59 and William Graham, "Qur'ān as Spoken Word: An Islamic Contribution to the Understanding of Scripture" in *Approaches to Islām in Religious Studies*, edited by Richard C. Martin. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), pp. 23-40; and, André Louf. "The Word Beyond Liturgy."

Cistercian Studies 6 (1971): 353-68.

⁴⁴ The serving of rose petals from the tomb of the sûfi Shaikh to the believer is strikingly similar to the Christian Eucharist. Within the Indian religious context these rituals open the possibility of ritual syncretism.

⁴⁵ For further discussion on 'urs rituals, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), especially chap. 4, and Christian Troll, (ed.) *Muslim Shrines in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁴⁶ The debate over the use of devotional music in the Sûfi tradition has not always been an unanimous agreement by Sûfi thinkers, for more on this subject see Abu Bakr Muhammad al-Kâlâbadhî, *Kitâb al-ta'arruf li-madhab ahl al-tasawwuf*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanjî, 1934); Abu Nasr as-Sarraj, *Kitâb al-luma' fi'l tasawwuf*, edited by Reynold A. Nicholson, (London, 1914); Abu'l-Qasim 'Abdulkarim al-Qushayrî, *Al-risâla al-qushayriyya fi 'ilm al-tasawwuf*, 2 volumes, edited by 'Abdulhalim Muhmud and Mahmud b. Ash-Sharif, (Cairo: Matba't al-Hassan, 1974) and 'Alî ibn 'Uthmân al-Jullâbî al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf al-Mahjûb* translated by Reynold A. Nicholson, (London: Luzac and Company, 1967 and 1970).

⁴⁷ For a good ethnographic study on *qawwâlî*, see Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, *Sûfi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); idem, "Exploring Time Cross-Culturally: Ideology and Performance of Time in the Sûfi Qawwâlî," in *The Journal of Musicology*, 12/4 (1994), 491-528; Hiromi Loraine Sakata, "The Sacred and the Profane: *Qawwâlî* Represented in the Performances of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan" in *The World of Music* 36 (1994): 86-99; and, Jean During, *Musique et extase: L'audition mystique dans la tradition soufie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1988).

⁴⁸ Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 209-210. Also, Theodor Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, tr. by E. Ashton (New York: Continuum Publishing Co, 1989).

⁴⁹ The sûfi concept of hearing and listening are sometimes distinguished as separate experiences; the first being related to cerebral activity and the second one tied to physical sensations. However, the sûfi experience views both of these activities together as a single complete experience when they are involved with the inner path. See, Jean During, "Hearing and Understanding in the Islamic Gnosis," in *The World of Music*, 39,2 (1997): 127.

⁵⁰ Stated by the famous sûfi Shaikh Dhu'l Nun Misrî, in Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf al-Ma'jûb*, Urdu translation by 'Ulama Fazal ud-din Gohar (Lahore: Zia al-Qur'an Publishers, 1989) p. 563.

⁵¹ For more on music and Islâmic law, see, Lois L. al-Faruqi, "The Shari'ah on Music and Musicians," in *Islâmic Thought and Culture*, ed., by Isma'il R. al-Faruqi (Washington, DC: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982); Isma'il Hikmi, *Samâ' dar Tasawwuf* (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1938); and, Samha El-Kholy, *The Function of Music in Islamic Culture, in the Period up to c. 1100* (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1984).

⁵² See Majid ibn Sardar Khan Muhammad, *Qawwâlî: Qur'an wa Sunnâ aur Sulaha-i Ummat kî Nazar men* (Abbotabad: Islamiyâ Press, 1985 and Mirza Ashfaq Salim, *A Note on Qawwâlî* (Islamabad: Lok Virsa Institute, 1975).

⁵³ See Bruce Lawrence, "The Early Chishtî Approach to Samâ'," in *Sacred Sound: Music in Religious Thought and Practice*, ed. Joyce Irwin (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 93-109.

⁵⁴ 'Alî ibn 'Uthmân al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf al-Mahjûb*, Urdu translation by 'Ulama Fazal ud-din Gohar (Lahore: Zia al-Qur'an Publishers, 1989), 540.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 548. This *hadith* is also available in the Bukharî, Muslim, and in Tirmidhi sources.

⁵⁶ See Syed Shah Khusro Hussaini, *Sayyid Muhammad al-Husaynî-i Gisûdirâz on Sufism* (Delhi: Idarah-I Adabiyat Delli, 1983).

⁵⁷ See Regula Qureshi, "Musical Sound and Contextual Input: A Performance Model for Musical Analysis," in *Ethnomusicology*, 31/1 (1987): 56-86 and "Sûfi Music and the Historicity of Oral Tradition," in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, eds., Stephen Blum et al. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 103-20.

⁵⁸ For more on Indian music, please see Daniel Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India: The Organization of an Artistic Tradition* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980).

⁵⁹ A *qawwâlî* party can range from five to fifteen members and the number of singers and instruments used all depends upon the main soloist. This person is commonly a disciple of the *Sajjadanishin* or a member of the Chishtî Sûfi order.

⁶⁰ For studies on the subject of Sûfi practice and *âdâb*, see Ian Richard Netton, "The Breath of Felicity: Adab, Ahwâl, Maqâmât and Abû Najîb al-Suhrawardî" in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism* (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993); Javed Nurbakhsh, "The Rules and Manners of the Khânaqâh" in *The Tavern of Ruin* (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1975); and, Miles Irving, "The Shrine of Baba Farid at Pakpattan," in *Notes on Punjab and Mughal India: Selections from the Journal of the Punjab Historical Society*, edited by Zulfiqar Ahmed, (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1988), 55.

⁶¹ Brian Silver, "The Adab of Musicians," in Barbara Metcalf (ed.), *Moral Conduct and Authority* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 318-320.

⁶² Qureshi, *Sûfi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali*, pp. 25-30.

⁶³ For more on the subject of pilgrims, see Victor Turner, "The Centre Out There: Pilgrim's Goal," in *History of Religions* 12 (1973): 191-230; Muhammad Din Kalim Qadiri. *Halaat wa Rifaat Dâtâ Ganj Bakhsh*; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sûfi Essays*, 2nd edition (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991); and, Spencer Trimingham, *The Sûfi Orders in Islâm*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

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